

THE IMPACT OF TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES ON THE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE
TEACHING PRACTICES THEY IMPLEMENT IN LITERACY

by

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ABSTRACT

REBECCA L. KAVEL. The impact of teachers' knowledge and professional development experiences on the culturally responsive teaching practices they implement in literacy education. (Under the direction of DR. MARYANN MARZ)

With substantial demographic shifts in the U.S. student population, today's teachers educate growing numbers of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Kena, Aud, & Johnson, 2010). While these students bring an abundance of different cultures and languages from their families and communities, these dynamic shifts add to the instructional intricacy faced by teachers in providing reading instruction for diverse learners (Bui & Fagan, 2013). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) practices and to examine how professional development impacts teachers' implementation of CRT practices. This study explored instructional practices teachers used, examined teachers' familiarity and knowledge of CRT, specifically the impact of professional development, and how this collectively translated into literacy instruction. The study took place at an elementary school site in a rural school district of North Carolina. Three participants were interviewed at the start of the study and once again after observations were completed in their classrooms. I observed each participant six times over the course of seven weeks during the 2nd and 3rd quarters of the 2016-2017 school year. In addition to interviews and observations, documents such as lesson plans and professional development agendas were collected. Data were coded and the following five major themes surfaced: multicultural literature, acceptance of others, cooperative work, technology, and lack of resources.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is not only a pedagogy but also a way of thinking, teaching, and reaching all students while recognizing the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Gay (2000) defines CRT as combining cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles of diverse students to make learning more effective for them. All students, regardless of background, deserve equal educational opportunities, yet this is not a true reflection of today's school environment for many children. Unique teaching challenges accompany the diverse populations present in schools, and changes are needed to foster success in the classroom. Considering the demographics of today's public schools and acknowledgment of the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds of students, studies suggest that CRT is deemed essential rather than optional (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2004; Nieto, 2003). The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) showed that more than 40% of the student population encompasses students of color. As well, Boser (2014) reported that there has been a 50 percent increase in the country's Hispanic population over the past 20 years. Given these trends, teachers are faced with instructional challenges when choosing strategies that fit their classroom makeup. CRT is one avenue to assist with these challenges. Many features of CRT are positive and have the potential to increase student outcomes. Gay (2000) claims that CRT has several important characteristics such as acknowledgement of cultural heritages of different ethnic groups and fostering home-

school relationships, while using a variety of instructional strategies. Ladson-Billings (1995) extends these thoughts explaining how culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, and emotional learning by “using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 382). Purposeful planning is essential, as these acts of lesson planning do not come naturally. There is a critical need for teacher education programs and professional development in schools to adapt curriculum, methodology, and instructional materials, which are responsive to student’s cultural norms. Professional development should include practical strategies for classroom teachers to incorporate culturally responsive strategies for instruction.

Preparing and retaining high quality teachers to teach in a culturally responsive manner requires preparation and practice. The three teacher participants at the site for this study have had opportunities for various training sessions on CRT. Specifically, the trainings have provided teachers with strategies, which focused on personal culture, the art of storytelling, exposure to various cultures through language, and interaction with text. Additionally, one session focused on stereotypes and the negative associated connotations. The professional development sessions offered teachers opportunities to identify, discuss, and plan for differences within their classrooms based upon stereotypes and how students can be impacted. The primary goal has been to enhance teaching in the classroom.

Professional development that offers specific goals for teachers with sustained support is one way to strengthen teaching in the classroom. Janelli (2014) suggests that professional development can be powerful in addressing ways to reach teachers by individualizing teacher needs just as differentiation is planned. Hollins (1996) asserts

that culturally responsive teachers realize not only the significance of academic achievement, but also the preserving of cultural identity. Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that this approach also supports empowering students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically while valuing and recognizing all students' cultures. Consistent with this line of thinking, Hollins denotes that there is a connection between culture and classroom instruction that impacts the thinking processes that shape learning in and outside of schools. Nieto (1999) also claims that CRT recognizes, respects, and uses students' identities and backgrounds as meaningful sources for creating optimal learning environments. Professional development is a viable tool for support, as this style of teaching does not always come naturally.

Existing research claims that CRT is one option for improving students' academic success (Gay, 2007; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2003). Ladson-Billings (1995) proposes that the underachievement of diverse cultures strongly correlates with the lack of CRT. Studies also suggest that in order to meet the educational needs of children, teachers must be able to understand the social and cultural backgrounds of their students (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Howard 2003; Nieto, 2000). Extending this notion, Howard (2003) posits that, as the population of diverse cultures increases in schools, there will be major implications for teaching and learning in these classrooms as well as challenges for teachers who are teaching students whose culture differs from their own. Many teachers are from the dominant culture whereas the students they serve may be from diverse linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). Culturally responsive pedagogy is just as critical as the need for trained teachers.

The role of the teacher is as important as the actual curriculum. Research indicates the importance of the teacher's role in facilitating and mediating the academic curriculum (Gay, 2000). While culture does not determine success and ability, it can affect the way children learn (Protheroe & Turner, 2003). To that end, studies also suggest that teachers have a monumental role in shaping a student's esteem, respecting all students as learners and maintaining an understanding of each student's background and culture (Bui & Fagan, 2013; Nieto, 1999). Ladson- Billings (1995) reaffirms this thought by suggesting that culture is vital to learning where communicating and receiving information impacts the shaping and thinking process of students. Teachers who are culturally responsive know that, if they cannot connect with students' interests, needs, or experiences, the effective teaching that leads to increased levels of engagement and learning cannot and will not occur (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

With substantial demographic shifts in the U.S. student population, today's teachers educate growing numbers of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Kena et al., 2010). While these students bring an abundance of different cultures and languages from their families and communities, these dynamic shifts add to the instructional intricacy faced by teachers in providing reading instruction for diverse learners (Bui & Fagan, 2013). Across the United States, there exists a progression of diversity requiring teachers to ensure all students have the best opportunities for academic success. Moreover, there is a need for change in teaching practices and the delivery of culturally responsive instruction. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data report (2012), diverse populations are significantly rising nationwide for school-aged

children and the analysis of racial and ethnic group distributions nationally shows the non-Hispanic white population is statistically the largest race and ethnic group in the United States yet it is also rising at the slowest rate. Hispanic and Asian populations have grown considerably, in part because of higher levels of immigration (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Diversity in the classrooms and nationwide is on the rise, and teachers must be prepared to teach multi-cultural populations of students. Professional development is one way to provide such support.

Supportive and effective professional development is significant for teachers. Mraz, Vacca, J., and Vintinner (2014) describe effective professional development as that which is sustained and easily integrated into daily curriculum. Supportive of this notion, Harwell (2003) explains that professional development is successful when it is supported by staff and teachers are engaged while receiving new knowledge. Recognizing that changes in teaching practices can often be uncomfortable for teachers, a number of research studies offer suggestions for navigating change and supporting teachers professionally (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2008; Hall, 2005; Mraz, Vacca, J., & Vintinner, 2014). Strategies for supporting teachers include extending professional development to include observations from peers, offering mentors to model lessons, and providing access to readily available resources to support professional development (Hall, 2005; Mraz, et al., 2014). These layers of additional support serve as resources for teachers so that they can effectively implement what they have learned from professional development (Echevarria et al., 2013; Hirsh, 2005; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2014). Professional development is considered to be successful when it empowers teachers to be successful in the present and grow with new knowledge over time (Harwell, 2003).

An area of high importance in education today is CRT practices in literacy instruction (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2004). As noted by Hiebert (2014), educators face many challenges, specifically, an increasingly diverse student population and a society that requires a great deal of literacy instruction. Becoming culturally responsive means that teachers have to negotiate new standards and norms that acknowledge the differences and similarities between individual groups (Lee, 2007). Recognizing cultural differences and fostering positive rapport with students can reap positive outcomes with instruction. Supportive of this concept, Bui and Fagon (2013) found that culturally responsive teachers negotiate classroom cultures by embracing sociocultural realities and the histories of students through chosen curriculum and purposefully planned delivery. Hammer, Miccio, and Wagstaff (2004) claim that the process of children's literacy development is influenced by many factors that involve sociocultural and ecological perspectives of learning. Researchers suggest that a key factor for every child's reading success is a classroom teacher with the expertise to support the teaching of reading to children with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005; Vogt, 2014). Literacy teachers are needed who can create collaborative and peer assignments that use students' backgrounds to foster literacy proficiency. Studies propose that diverse students have unique cultural differences varying in writing, oral language skills, and questioning styles (Fleishman & Osher, 2005; Pinkard, 1999). The idea of culturally responsive education is grounded in the notion that culture is key to student learning.

CRT is one way to address the diverse needs of today's classrooms. This delivery of instruction is not only a pedagogy but also a way of thinking, teaching, and reaching

all students while recognizing the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Colbert, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Extending this notion, Gay (2000) defines CRT as combining cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles of diverse students to make learning more effective for them.

Recognizing the changing needs of student populations, it is essential that teachers become skilled in reaching students of diverse backgrounds holding the highest expectations for all. Many teachers today face instructional complexities due to the increase of diverse cultures in schools, and teachers must be able to use instructive practices that have relevance and significance to students' social and cultural realities (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). There is a critical need for teacher education programs to adapt curriculum, methodology, and instructional materials, which are responsive to student's cultural norms. Preparing and retaining high quality teachers who are prepared to teach in a culturally responsive manner requires purposeful planning and preparation (Colbert, 2010). Changes are needed, and the question of teacher preparation is valid as concerns are present regarding teachers' instructional delivery to diverse populations (Greenburg & Jacobs, 2009). This is of particular concern when data also proposes that students with cultural differences and students of color are at risk for not achieving reading proficiency, achievement gaps are prevalent, and diverse population continues to rise (Boser, 2014; Moats & Foorman, 2008). Professional development is important when considering how to support effectively teachers who will navigate this critical curriculum (Boser, 2014; Colbert, 2010).

To maximize learning, teachers have to acquire knowledge of the culture within their classrooms and recognize the impact of culture on learning. These instructional

practices are not naturally acquired; they require instruction and ongoing professional development, specifically training, which includes the process of how to link culture and design lessons around students' strengths, interests, and areas of need (Protheroe & Turner, 2003). Kozeleski (2005) stresses that teachers must know how to approach a literacy curriculum in a culturally responsive manner and incorporate multiple paradigms. Lacking in the literature, however, are examples of how professional development can support teachers' knowledge and application of culturally responsive practices used in literacy instruction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore three elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices in literacy and to examine how professional development impacts teachers' implementation of CRT practices. CRT is not an innovative concept. In fact, many studies have explored the value of culture in teaching. However, there is a void in the literature describing instructional practices used in literacy instruction, which exemplify CRT. This study explored instructional practices that teachers are using, examined teacher's familiarity with and knowledge of CRT, specifically the impact of professional development and how this collectively translated into literacy instruction. The research investigated the pedagogy for a better understanding of the aspect of culture in teaching. Research reveals that literacy instruction and CRT practices are important in student learning. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore three elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT and examined how professional development impacted these three teachers' implementation of CRT practices in literacy instruction.

Research Questions

1. How do teachers define CRT?
2. What are elementary teachers' professional development experiences with CRT?
3. How does professional development impact teachers' implementation of CRT in literacy instruction?
4. How do teachers implement CRT in literacy instruction?

Significance of the Study

This study explored the intersection of teacher's knowledge of and professional experiences with culturally relevant teaching as part of their literacy instruction. This study was significant because literacy competency is a critical skill needed by all students. Many educators suggest that effective teaching requires mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills. Research suggests that current challenges faced by diverse populations will not increase if teaching styles are not reflective and responsive to student learning. Noted by Villegas and Lucas (2008), teachers need metacognitive strategies to gain awareness, not only of their own knowledge and skills in the classroom but also of the efficacy of their activities on students' learning. Results from studies indicate the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and instructional suggestions for second language learners, yet there is a void in the literature examining the process of knowledge acquisition, including professional development as it relates to CRT and delivery of literacy instruction in elementary schools (Gay, 2000; Protheroe & Turner, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2008). As well, an examination of how teachers perceive professional development as influencing their CRT practice is also lacking in the body of literature.

Furthermore, this study was significant because there is considerable research surrounding the need for CRT, but there are few studies that show how teachers' knowledge of CRT transfers into their literacy instruction. This study attempted to add to the scholarly research by exploring teachers' knowledge of CRT and the impact that professional development had on their literacy instruction.

Theoretical Framework

This study followed the theoretical frameworks of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2009) and the model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 1986). The purpose of this study was to investigate schoolteachers' perceptions of CRT practices and how their knowledge and professional development experiences translated into literacy instruction. The primary assertion of this study was that CRT is important to education while making use of diverse instructional approaches, which are linked with various styles of learning. Per Gay (2004), a notable aspect of CRT and learning is that it integrates multicultural information with numerous teaching and learning modules that are regularly administered in the classroom. Likewise, a natural outcome of this context is that the information taught in the classroom would be representative of the diverse ethnic viewpoints and literary genres. Similarly, Gay (2000) argues that CRT is multidimensional, incorporating curriculum, teacher-student rapport and student outcomes. As well, professional development is deemed essential to improvements in education (Guskey, 1986; Guskey, 2002) and is a viable element in supporting the aforementioned processes. Accentuating the concept that knowledge can be socially constructed as well as can create change, the theoretical lenses of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978),

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and the model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 1986) collectively framed this study.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, based heavily on the work of Vygotsky (1978), establishes that learning and language development are rooted in experiences, dialogue, and social interactions with others and cannot be separated from a social context. Additionally important are culture and history, which impact peoples' understanding and knowledge. This concept is further substantiated within a belief from culturally relevant pedagogy, which asserts that teachers nurture the cultural competence of students. Cultural competence recognizes culture and the social context of learning as something that is not separated from the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, a culturally competent teacher seeks out the social and cultural knowledge and experiences that students already have and makes connections to classroom instruction. Gay (2000) extends this notion claiming that teachers who embrace sociocultural realities can negotiate classroom cultures with their students through what is taught and how and how it is taught.

For the purposes of this study, this means that context, discourse, and relationships are vital to learning. In relation to culturally relevant pedagogy, a teacher must be aware of the cultural indicators such as beliefs, values, and norms of the diverse student population that she/he serves (Purcell-Gates, 2011). The application of Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory aligned well with this study, specifically, the tenet that cognitive development is mediated by culture and social interaction relate to answers sought pertaining to delivery of instruction.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

As noted by Ladson-Billings (1995), CRT is not only a pedagogy but also a way of thinking. Culturally relevant pedagogy enables teachers and students to be critical beings who make decisions about teaching based on their understandings of the historical, social, and economic factors that have relegated diverse populations for centuries (Ladson-Billings, 2009). As well, this theoretical framework notes culturally relevant teaching as a pedagogy of opposition specifically committed to collective empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy recognizes the disproportions in different schooling experiences and offers a guide to create opportunities for teachers and students. Culturally responsive teachers value multiple perspectives and co-construct knowledge with students (Ladson-Billings, 2009). This style of teaching embraces many ways of thinking and validates the cultural resources and knowledge that students bring to the classroom. As well, Ladson-Billings (2009) proclaims that teachers who are culturally responsive rely on the development of social, emotional, intellectual, and political learning and teaching through the use of referents of culture. These referents are utilized in a capacity to pass on knowledge, expertise, and attitudes to their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Teacher Change

Guskey (1986) defines the teacher change model as the chronological sequence of events from professional development experiences to steady changes in teachers' perceptions. The process of teacher change is inclusive of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions (Fullan, 1999; Guskey, 1986; Guskey, 2002). A primary component of CRT aligns well with the model of teacher change, as the mindset of teachers is a key factor in

promoting change in instructional practices (Guskey, 1986; Guskey & Huberman, 1995). To that end, Guskey (2002) claims that the process of teacher change through professional development is complex, but not haphazard, as creating new knowledge into practice can reap positive outcomes, but planning and support are important for the changes to occur (Fullan, 1999; Guskey, 2002). The model of teacher change also highlights the importance of high-quality professional development as a vital component in nearly every proposal for improving education (Guskey, 2002). Supporting the aspect that knowledge can be socially constructed as well as can create change, the theoretical lenses of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and the model of Teacher Change (Guskey, 1986) built a solid framework for this study.

Definition of Terms

Cultural competence

Evolving over time from diverse perspectives, cultural competence has varied meanings. In the seminal work of Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989), the authors describe cultural competence as having a set of consistent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professions to work efficiently in cross-cultural situations. Specifically, the authors break down the term with individual meanings. According to Cross et al., culture suggests the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. Likewise, the word competence is used because it denotes having the capacity to function effectively (Cross et al., 1989).

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT)

Drawing from the work of Gay (2010), Bergeron (2008), and Ladson-Billings (2009), teachers who utilize CRT practices value students' cultural and linguistic resources and view this knowledge as a foundation to build upon. Culturally responsive teachers use this foundation as the basis for instructional networks to facilitate student learning and development.

Culturally responsive curriculum

A culturally responsive curriculum is one that allows students to learn from a familiar cultural base and through which individuals can connect new knowledge to their own experiences (Menchaca, 2001).

Culture

Culture refers to the common set of beliefs, values, and language patterns of a social unit, often recognized through one's ethnic identity (Bergeron, 2008). Culture is integral to the learning process and is the organization and way of life within a community of students and teachers; culture directs the way teachers and students communicate and interact in the classroom (Colbert, 2010).

Diversity

Diversity describes the vast set of experiences and attributes of an individual including socioeconomic status, gender, and religion that contribute to each person's uniqueness regardless of cultural identity (Banks, 2004).

Professional development

The term professional development means a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student

achievement. Professional development fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards, as well as related local educational agency and school improvement goals. Professional development is conducted among learning teams of educators, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and other instructional staff at the school and should be facilitated by well-prepared school principals and, or, school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders (Crow, 2015).

Sociocultural

Sociocultural refers to the social and cultural aspects of human interaction and participation. It refers to a set of beliefs, customs, and practices that exists within a population (Nieto, 1995).

Teacher change

The teacher change model is described as the chronological sequence of events from professional development experiences to steady changes in teachers' perceptions. The process of teacher change is inclusive of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions (Guskey, 1986; Guskey, 2002).

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore teachers' knowledge of CRT and the impact that professional development had on their literacy instruction. Through this study, teachers were interviewed and observed to examine how their knowledge acquisition of CRT and experiences with professional development transferred into their literacy instruction. By embracing the sociocultural realities of students through what is

taught and how it is taught, culturally responsive teachers can acclimate classrooms that are reflective of the communities where students learn and grow. This study addressed the intersection of how teachers perceive culturally responsive pedagogy and their instructional practices in literacy. Using Sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), Teacher Change theory (Guskey, 2002) and Culturally Relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2009) as a theoretical framework, I observed three teachers during literacy instruction and conducted semi-structured interviews. Chapter 1 defines the purpose of the study, provides background information, and presents the significance for this research. As well, Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical framework and establishes the premise for the study. Chapter 2 provides the context of the research demonstrating how the literature defines CRT and students with cultural differences including the relevance of CRT. Additionally, implications of teacher preparation and professional development experiences were linked through literature concerning the definition of CRT. Lastly, literacy challenges facing students with cultural backgrounds were examined in the literature related to how instruction is received. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology of the study including a research plan, details of the setting, and information about the participants. This chapter also describes the data collection and data analysis process and discusses ethical issues, validity, and the reliability of the study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices and examine how professional development impacted teachers' implementation of CRT practices. The literature review focuses on seven major areas that provide a detailed synopsis of CRT. The literature review begins with an overview, which leads into the relevance of CRT, what it looks like in a literacy classroom, and the resources needed to make this teaching practice successful. The literature review continues with an exploration of professional development including effective characteristics, developing cultural competence through professional development, and the important role of literacy coaching.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Overview

CRT is not only a pedagogy but also a way of thinking and teaching all students while recognizing the importance of including each student's culture in all aspects of learning. Ladson-Billings (1995) describes this type of teaching as connecting student's cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge in ways that legitimize what students already know. CRT requires teachers to be knowledgeable about their students socially, emotionally, and academically and to transfer that knowledge into instruction. When teachers embrace the sociocultural realities and histories of students through what is taught and how, culturally responsive

teachers can negotiate classroom cultures with their students that reflect the communities where students grow and develop (Lee, 2007). The knowledge that teachers need to have about cultural diversity goes beyond awareness and respect for various ethnic groups' different values. In developing a knowledge base for CRT, acquiring comprehensive factual information about different ethnic groups is vital. Incorporating this knowledge into what is taught and how leads to high levels of student interest and engagement. CRT helps to bridge different ways of knowing and engages students from dissimilar cultures in demonstrating their abilities in language and communication to navigate their everyday lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995). While there is no single method that will solve all educational challenges faced by culturally diverse students, educators should choose culturally responsive practices that meet the needs of the students they serve (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002). When considering the impact of CRT on diverse populations, it is important to explore the relevance of CRT in literacy and what CRT looks like in an elementary literacy classroom.

Relevance of CRT

With substantial demographic shifts in the U.S. student population, today's teachers educate growing numbers of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Kena et al., 2010). While these students bring an abundance of different cultures and languages from their families and communities, these dynamic shifts add to the instructional intricacy faced by teachers in providing reading instruction for diverse learners (Bui & Fagan, 2013). Across the United States, there exists a progression of diversity requiring teachers to ensure that all students have the best opportunities for academic success. Moreover, there is a need for a change in mindset, teaching practices,

and delivery of culturally responsive instruction. According to the U.S. Census Bureau data report (2012), diverse populations are significantly rising nationwide for school-aged children, and the analysis of racial and ethnic group distributions nationally shows that the non-Hispanic white population is statistically the largest race and ethnic group in the United States, yet it is also rising at the slowest rate. The Hispanic and Asian populations have grown considerably, in part, because of higher levels of immigration (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Thus, diversity in the classrooms is on the rise, and teachers have to be prepared to reach multi-cultural populations of students.

Recognizing cultural differences and fostering positive rapport with students can reap positive outcomes with instruction. Supportive of this concept, Bui and Fagon (2013) found that culturally responsive teachers negotiate classroom cultures by embracing sociocultural realities and histories of students through chosen curriculum and purposefully planned delivery.

CRT is one way to address the diverse needs of classrooms today. This delivery of instruction is not only a pedagogy but also a way of thinking, teaching, and reaching all students while recognizing the importance of including each student's cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Extending this notion, Gay (2000) describes CRT as combining cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles of diverse students to make learning more effective for them. Recognizing the changing needs of student populations, it is essential that teachers become skilled in reaching students of diverse backgrounds and hold the highest expectations for all. Many teachers today face instructional complexities due to the increase of diverse cultures in schools, and teachers must be able to use instructive practices that have relevance and

significance to students' social and cultural realities (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRT is particularly relevant in literacy instruction.

CRT in literacy instruction

Early literacy success can provide huge societal gains for all students but specifically for culturally diverse and minority students who are currently overrepresented in special education programs. A synthesis of research suggests that providing literacy instruction that is culturally responsive promotes high achievement among culturally and linguistically diverse students (Callins, 2004; Hale, 2001; Padron et al., 2002). Supportive of this notion, Hale (2001) claims that teachers who embrace CRT can serve as a catalyst for improved reading achievement among students who are culturally diverse. Reading programs or legislative mandates cannot replace the power and influence that a teacher possesses to improve student achievement.

While there is no single method that will solve all educational challenges faced by culturally diverse students, educators should choose culturally responsive practices that meet the needs of the students they serve (Padron et al., 2002). While considering the impact of CRT with diverse populations, it is important to explore the literacy curriculum, the classroom climate, the instructional delivery, and effective ways to prepare teachers. To maximize learning, teachers have to acquire knowledge of the cultures within their classroom and recognize the impact of culture on learning. These instructional practices are not naturally acquired; they require instruction and ongoing professional development, specifically training, which includes the process of how to link culture and design lessons around students' strengths, interests, and areas of need (Protheroe & Turner, 2003). Kozeleski (2005) stresses that teachers must know how to approach the

literacy curriculum in a culturally responsive manner and incorporate multiple paradigms. Lacking in the literature, however, are the precise practices used in literacy instruction, which exemplify CRT.

CRT in a Literacy Classroom

An area of high importance in education today is CRT practices in literacy instruction (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2004). As noted by Hiebert (2014), educators face many challenges, specifically, an increasingly diverse student population and a society that requires a great deal of literacy instruction. Becoming culturally responsive means teachers have to negotiate new standards and norms that acknowledge the differences and similarities between individual groups (Lee, 2007). Hammer, Miccio, and Wagstaff (2004) claim that the process of children's literacy development is influenced by many factors that involve sociocultural and ecological perspectives of learning. Researchers suggest a key factor for every child's reading success is a classroom teacher with the expertise to support the teaching of reading to children with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and needs (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005). Literacy teachers are needed who can create collaborative peer assignments that use students' backgrounds to foster literacy proficiency. Studies suggest that diverse students have unique cultural differences varying in writing, oral language skills, and questioning styles (Pinkard, 1999; Fleishman & Osher, 2005). The idea of culturally responsive education is grounded in the notion that culture is key to student learning, and teachers are needed to facilitate instruction.

Teachers have a major role in disseminating knowledge to students. The actual curriculum is just as significant as how the curriculum is taught. Protheroe and Turner

(2003) found that diversifying instruction can be meaningful for students whose communication style at home differs from that at school. Teachers who gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classrooms and adapt their lessons to reflect of home communication styles can maximize learning in the classroom. As well, Schmidt (2005) found that the planning step is critical as teachers should incorporate a variety of styles such as cooperative learning, instructional conversations, and technology-enriched instruction. Equally beneficial, as noted in Foster (2001), is recognizing differences in learning styles and differentiating instruction, which can reap positive outcomes for diverse learners.

Creating classroom climates conducive for learning is important. Pedagogical actions are just as important as the curriculum. Teachers need to know how to use cultural scaffolding by using their own cultures and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement (Callins, 2004; Gay, 2000). This begins by demonstrating caring learning communities where teachers are placed into an ethical and emotional partnership with students anchored in respect and integrity (Gay, 2000). This act of caring is a social and pedagogical responsibility (Callins, 2004; Ladson-Billings 1995). Additionally important are strategies, resources, and specifically the selected texts that teachers use through CRT in literacy instruction.

CRT Strategies and Resources

Strategies employed by teachers during instruction can reap positive student gains particularly with diverse populations. As noted by Gay (2000), encouraging students in their use of literacy is important as many students from diverse backgrounds have the ability to use literacy but are not willing to do so (Callins, 2004; Bui & Fagon, 2013).

Bringing in a variety of texts and modeling teacher read-alouds is helpful in encouraging all students to participate through discussion and questioning. As well, Bui and Fagan (2013) emphasize the importance of daily reading and writing and describe the benefits of constructing meaning while reading and writing. The authors claim that interactions among the reader, the text, and incorporated schema yield positive outcomes in reading success (Bui & Fagan, 2013). These literacy strategies work best with accompanying instructional resources. Multicultural literature can be a vital element in a culturally responsive curriculum and can help influence the context of the reader (Vacca, R. Vacca, J., & Mraz, 2016).

Multicultural literature refers to narrative stories, folktales, or poetry that includes themes, images, characters and dialogues from various cultures. By including multicultural literature, students can meaningfully connect familiar sociocultural themes found in the text with their own life experiences. This practice is a good way to activate students' background knowledge and increase motivation (McCollin & O' Shea, 2005; Vacca, R. Vacca, J., & Mraz, 2016).

Hollins (1996) asserts that culturally responsive teachers realize not only the significance of academic achievement, but also the preserving of cultural identity. Teachers can weave these concepts and practices into the curriculum by using the following CRT strategies in literacy:

- **Cooperative learning-** Rather than encouraging a sense of competitiveness among students, collaborative learning strategies inspire teamwork with various assignments (Callins, 2004; Reyes & Molner, 1999; Diaz, 2001).

- **Literature-** Teachers should use a variety of texts for read-alouds, independent reading, and collaborative work. In the classroom, to promote culturally responsive teaching, teachers should employ the use of multicultural texts that have characters of various backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1995; McCollin & O' Shea, 2005).
- **Journals-** Teachers should have students respond, in writing, to make connections to characters, story plots, free writing, reflections of experiences, and answer questions about texts (Bui & Fagan 2013).
- **Interviews-** Teachers should ask students to interview a family member or someone in their community; the teacher can assist with creating questions and have students share their findings in class (Callins, 2004 Bui & Fagon, 2013).
- **Reader's theater scripts-** Reader's theater is a non-threatening way for students to work collaboratively while reading orally. The teacher invites students to add or change their script for writing practice and as a way to gain insight into each individual student's personalities (Rasinski, 2011).
- **Poems-** By reading a variety of poems, students will have a chance to explore different ways of expressing themselves. Poems can be written individually or with a partner and read aloud to the class. This collaboration promotes rapport within the class culture, which supports CRT practices (Rasinski, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2005).

Studies indicate that cultural texts, curriculum, and materials for CRT are available; however, but other studies question the delivery of instructional practices in literacy. Professional development for teachers can be valuable in supporting teachers as they manage CRT curriculum and delivery of literacy instruction.

Professional Development

National and regional demographic changes reflect an increasing minority student population (Greenburg & Jacobs, 2009; Ingersoll, 2001, Waddell, 2010). Similar findings are reiterated in Habermas (1987) claiming one in three youths served by schools in urban settings with populations greater than 500,000, is a person of color, lives in poverty, or has multiple learning handicaps. To reach diverse populations of students, teachers have to be adequately prepared and acquire cultural competence. In many cases, teachers simply lack sufficient training and experience prior to entering the classroom. As noted by Howard (2003), “We can’t teach what we don’t know.” This training and experience applies a need to gain knowledge of the students and the subject, yet too many teachers are inadequately prepared. Wong (2001) claims that ongoing professional development is a dire need. Purposeful planning of workshops to support the diverse needs of schools is a solution to keeping teachers well informed and better prepared for teaching diverse populations of students (Davis, 2001). Thus, teachers need to provide students with literacy and learning experiences that will foster cross-cultural knowledge that is needed in our diverse nation (Au, 1993; Diaz, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Moll, 1992; Vacca, R., Vacca, J., Mraz, 2016). Professional development can aid teachers in meeting diverse student needs. When considering the model of teacher change, Guskey (2002) claims that teacher-change is, in part, due to teachers’ intrinsic motivation to become better leaders. A shift in the mindset of teachers and a desire to acquire new knowledge is a vital aspect in making necessary changes. Moreover, research reveals that, while many teachers are generally required to take part in professional development,

most report that they also engage in the professional development activities because they want to become better leaders (Guskey, 2002).

In Guskey (2002), the author describes the teacher change model claiming that the vast majority of teachers truly believe that becoming a better teacher means enhancing student outcomes. Therefore, teachers are attracted to professional development because it can expand their knowledge, confidence, and skills (Guskey, 2002). As research suggests, when teachers receive multicultural preparation and professional development opportunities, they are effective and confident in their instructional delivery (Rogoff, 2003).

Characteristics of Effective Professional Development

Professional development can help teachers build their knowledge of CRT. Aujla-Bhullar (2011) claims that the discourse of diversity and globalization are becoming progressively significant in addressing the ever-changing demographics of classrooms and schools, and teachers require the training to meet student's needs. There can be positive student gains as teachers are taught about the role of culture in instruction. Supportive of this notion, Rogoff (2003) suggests that professional learning for CRT is grounded in research on teacher learning that is aware of the role culture plays in the knowledge that educators bring to their profession. There is a need for professional development in schools that affirms views about diversity, being socio-culturally conscious, and provides strategies for instruction, specifically, literacy strategies. Hammer, Miccio, and Wagstaff (2004) claim that the process of children's literacy development is influenced by many factors that involve sociocultural and ecological perspectives of learning. Researchers suggest that a key factor for every child's reading

success is a classroom teacher with the expertise to support the teaching of reading to children with diverse backgrounds, abilities and needs (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005).

Stance, et al. (2005) describe a professional development model, delivered by literacy coaches, that trains teachers to hold affirming views about diversity in classrooms. In Nieto (1999), the author describes how evidence suggests that many teachers see students from socially secondary groups from a “deficit perspective.” This can be a hindrance for learning if teachers have low expectations of certain students merely based upon their racial/ethnic background and do not see the full potential that these students have (Nieto, 1996). Professional development is one way to address these concerns. Stance, et al. (2005) detail specific ways that professional development can assist teachers with literacy instruction by addressing how children learn oral and written language in varying sociocultural contexts and how to help children make connections between home and school literacies. The connections that the authors recommend permit ongoing support as literacy coaches manage the professional development and attend to colleagues throughout the course of a school year (Stance et al., 2005).

Other strategies to incorporate within the professional development model include specific instructional methods that support reading and writing such as read-alouds, independent reading and writing, shared reading, as well as writing conferences and why they are critical to supporting literacy growth. The authors also emphasize the need to explain the values of building professional learning communities that encourage risk taking and honor individual voices (Janelli, 2014). Professional development, which recognizes individuality of teachers and offers guidance, aids in developing rapport, which is a valuable component of professional development (Hirsh, 2005). Villegas and

Lucas (2008) extend this notion suggesting that CRT is supported when professional development explicitly provides guided opportunities for teachers to examine their own culture, experiences, beliefs, and biases as related to their teaching of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Being culturally competent is a key aspect of CRT, which can be addressed and supported through professional development for teachers.

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence offers teachers communicative tools necessary for relating to diverse populations. Often a missing criterion in teacher education programs, cultural competence can be acquired through professional development opportunities at the school level. According to Cardelle-Elawar (1992), the ability to function comfortably in cross-cultural settings and to interact with people from various cultures is not a “natural act” and must be purposefully sought after, experienced, and acquired. Based on the research of effective intercultural communication, Giles and Copeland (1991) and Villegas and Lucas (2008) describe how culturally competent individuals cope effectively with the psychological and emotional stress of dealing with the unfamiliar, quickly establish rapport with others, sense other people's feelings, communicate effectively with people from varying backgrounds, and respond adequately to miscommunication. These skills require knowledge and the cultural understanding that develop over time from cross-cultural interpersonal experiences.

Metacognitive strategies are also needed by teachers to gain awareness, not only of their own knowledge and skills in the classroom, but also of the efficacy of their activities on students' learning (Aceves, et al., 2014; Cardelle-Edward, 1992,). Professional development can play a vital role in this support by including practical

strategies for classroom teachers and incorporating culturally responsive strategies for instruction. Components such as student empowerment, connections between learning and student's background, and high expectations should be also embedded in these sessions. These elements assist in constructing teachers' knowledge and understanding of CRT. To that end, literacy coaches play a role in supporting this learning. As noted in Mraz, Kissel, and Algozzine (2009), an important quality of a literacy coach is to have a desire constantly to build content expertise and inspire the teachers who are being coaches to do the same. Professional development, supported by literacy coaching, can enhance this type of learning.

Literacy Coaching

Schmidt (2005) describes CRT as having components of high expectations, positive rapport with students and their families, cultural sensitivity, active teaching methods, teachers in the role of facilitator, and collaborative learning in small groups and pairs. According to Hirsh (2005), literacy coaches can assist teachers with training, guidance, and support with new strategies. To that end, the collaboration of the literacy coaches and the teachers being coached is vital. DuFour (2003) claims that literacy coaches should not only collaborate with teachers but with principals as well, since having administrative backing is key for successful learning to occur between teachers and students (DuFour, 2003). Successful collaboration with literacy coaches fosters the literacy development in students, which can be promoted through reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing providing the foundation for the characteristics of CRT (Rodgers & Jenkins, 2010; Schmidt, 2005). Collaboration includes developing good rapport and taking the necessary time for observations. Literacy coaches who observe

teachers and provide feedback with suggestions for lesson planning and on-going support are a vital aspect (Gibson, 2006). Planning lessons that reflect CRT can be daunting, but literacy coaches can assist teachers with this task to make it manageable and meaningful (Gibson, 2006; Mraz, Kissel, & Algozzine, 2009). As research suggests, when teachers receive professional development training, they are effective and confident in their instructional delivery (Aceves et al., 2014; Cheesman & DePry, 2010.)

Summary

Research suggests that providing literacy instruction that is culturally responsive fosters high achievement among culturally and linguistically diverse students and teachers who embrace CRT and can promote reading achievement among students who are culturally diverse (Hale, 2001; Padron et al., 2012). CRT helps to link varied ways of knowing and engages students from different cultures through language and communication in everyday lives (Ladson -Billings, 1995). While there is no single technique that will solve all educational challenges faced by culturally diverse students, teachers should choose culturally responsive practices that meet the needs of the students they serve (Padron et al., 2002).

CRT requires teachers to be knowledgeable socially, emotionally, and academically about their students and transfer that knowledge into instruction. When teachers embrace sociocultural realities and histories of students through what is taught and how, culturally responsive teachers can negotiate classroom cultures with their students that reflect the communities where students grow and develop (Lee, 2007). The knowledge that teachers need to have about cultural diversity goes beyond awareness and respect for ethnic groups' different values. In developing a knowledge base for CRT,

acquiring comprehensive factual information about different ethnic groups is vital. Professional development, including literacy coaching, can support this learning. CRT helps to bridge different ways of knowing and engages students from dissimilar cultures in demonstrating their abilities of language and communication to navigate their everyday lives (Kozleski, 2005). Literature reveals many studies recounting the need for culturally responsive pedagogy and instructional suggestions for diverse learners, yet there is a void in the literature examining the process of knowledge acquisition as it relates to CRT, the delivery of literacy instruction, and the role of professional development in elementary schools. The studies reviewed indicate that further research is needed in culturally responsive literacy instruction. The setting of the study, the population of the students, and the focus of the role that professional development has on CRT in literacy instruction make the following study unique. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices and examine how professional development impacted teachers' implementation of CRT practice.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices and examine how professional development impacted teachers' implementation of CRT practices. CRT is not an innovative concept. In fact, many studies have explored the value of culture in teaching. However, there is a void in the literature denoting specific ways that professional development can support teachers' knowledge and application of CRT in literacy. This study explored the instructional practices that teachers are using, examined the teachers' familiarity and knowledge of CRT, and investigated how this translated into literacy instruction. The researcher investigated pedagogy for a better understanding of the aspect of culture in teaching. Research reveals that literacy instruction and CRT practices are important in student learning; therefore, the aim of this study was to seek and suggest specific culturally responsive literacy practices, while adding to the existing body of scholarly research. The study focused on the following questions:

1. How do teachers define CRT?
2. What are teachers' professional development experiences with CRT?
3. How does professional development impact teachers' implementation of CRT in literacy instruction?
4. How do teachers describe their implementation of CRT in literacy instruction?

Research Design

This chapter explores the design of this qualitative case study research and addresses the methodology of the study. It explores content and thematic analysis as tools of interpretation. This chapter also examines ethical issues and researcher bias, and presents possible limitations to the study.

Merriam (2009) describes basic interpretive qualitative studies as one of the most common types of qualitative research. A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality through interaction with their social worlds (Strauss & Corbin 1994). Some areas of interest in this type of study involve analysis of how people interpret their experiences and the meanings that they attribute to their experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) extend this description by claiming that qualitative research investigates in a systematic manner. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and experiences (Patton, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Qualitative case studies can be found throughout the disciplines and in applied fields of practice and have been used as a common form of qualitative research in education (Merriam, 2009). More specifically, a qualitative case study design is effective at answering questions that begin with how or why (Yin, 2003).

The current study explored the instructional practices that teachers are using, examined the teachers' familiarity and knowledge of CRT, specifically the impact of professional development, and investigated how this collectively translated into literacy instruction. Baxter and Jack (2008), Yin (2003), and Merriam (2008) all claim that the qualitative case study method is an approach to research that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data source collections. This design

was relevant for the current study because the questions investigate pedagogy to find a better understanding of the place of culture in literacy instruction. Therefore, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were conducted.

Research Context

Description of Setting

The study took place at an elementary school site in the Cabarrus County School district of North Carolina. The rural school reports an enrollment of 1,090 students in grades kindergarten through grade five compared to the district average of 766 and the state average of 510 (Cabarrus County, 201; ProPublica, 2015). However, even with these high enrollment numbers, this elementary school is below both the state and district averages in terms of the percentage of its students who qualify for free or reduced lunches. On average, 34 percent of students in North Carolina, and 33 percent of students at the district level are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs, while only 14 percent of this elementary school's students are eligible. Race and ethnicity at the site of this study are broad with a population of 1,025 students. The demographic breakdown of Harrisburg Elementary is slightly different from that of a school in the state of N.C. Specifically, three students are identified as American Indian, 126 are Asian, 196 are African American, three are Native Hawaiian, 604 are White, 39 are Hispanic, and 60 students are listed as being from two or more countries. This diverse population of students has its origins from sixteen different countries including the United States, Germany, Italy, India, Bahrain, France, Bolivia, Guatemala, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Nepal, Canada, Liberia, Jordan, Mexico, and the Sudan (Cabarrus County,

2016; ProPublica, 2015). Demographically, this school adheres to the definition of a multi-cultural school.

This site was chosen for the study because access to teachers was critical to answer the research questions guiding the study. As well, the school offers teachers training in Visiting International Faculty (VIF) modules, which includes international education training. Because there is a deep-rooted interest in how CRT is carried out through instruction, this site seemed fitting as many teachers have completed various training through VIF. As a Cabarrus county employee and current reading teacher at the school site, the researcher was familiar with the culture of the school and the community. Previous rapport with the school principal was also positive, and as she was in favor of having this study at her school. While the researcher's interest in CRT instruction has been ongoing, she was prepared to keep an open mind in regard to data collection and remained open to all data collected.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher's roles included interviewing three teacher participants, observing literacy lessons in their classrooms, and collecting related documents such as lesson plans, professional development agendas and handouts. The researcher did "backyard" research, which is research at one's "own institution or agency" with whom one has a relationship (Glesne, 2010, p. 41). This was beneficial in the data collection process because the researcher established good rapport with the teacher participants in her workplace and access was easily attainable. Glesne (2010) claims that researchers must be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of conducting backyard research. A disadvantage could have been ethical concerns such as These concerns were taken

into consideration. Because of the researcher's role and position as a teacher in the setting of the study, she adhered to care and consistency with data collection. Utilizing an interview protocol, as listed in Appendices A and B, ensured that the same questions were asked to all three of the participants. Likewise, a prepared observation protocol to record data, as listed in Appendix C, aided in consistency and fidelity of data collection. As noted by Glesne (2006), the benefits of having access to the data outweigh possible difficulties that may occur.

Participant Selection

The participant inclusion criteria included choosing teachers who were actively employed in the selected elementary school with more than three years of teaching experience. These teachers were identified as English Language Arts teachers in grades 3-5 because these grade level teachers attended the CRT training held at the school site during spring 2016, fall 2016, and winter 2017. This ongoing county initiative provided teachers with tools that can be used in the classroom to support CRT practices. Additionally, third through fifth grade levels were chosen as they include content area reading during their literacy block, which allowed for observations and interviews that are aligned with the focus of this study. Email invitations were extended to three third through fifth grade teachers who had been identified as having three or more years of teaching experience and were currently teach English Language Arts (ELA). After receiving acceptance from the participants to be part of the study, the researcher contacted each teacher to arrange our first meeting.

Data Collection Methods

During the planning phase of this study, the researcher talked with the school principal to explain her role and responsibilities for this study and reviewed the University of North Carolina-Charlotte's Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. After the three teacher participants were chosen for this case study, data was collected through interviews, classroom observations with field notes, and a review of documents. Specifically, the documents included lesson plans for the specific classes that were observed and any handouts that the three teachers had received from the professional development training that they had attended. According to Merriam (2009), multiple sources of data are needed to provide a comprehensive study as a single source may not be trusted or sufficient. Multiple data sources allowed for validation and cross checking of data findings. Prior to data collection, IRB protocol was completed and informed consents were collected from the three teacher participants.

Semi-structured Interviews

Rubin and Rubin (1995) describe interviewing as a “philosophy of learning,” suggesting that it takes reflective practice to improve technique. Extending these thoughts, Patton (2002) discusses how the purpose of qualitative interviewing is to provide a semi-structured nature to the interviews, which allows the researcher to “explore, probe, and ask questions that elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (Patton, 2002). During the process of interviewing in qualitative research, the interviewer guides the questions and focuses the study. Therefore, the qualitative inquiry technique of semi-structured interviews with teachers fit well with the purpose of the study.

The participants completed two interview sessions, which took approximately 30 minutes each. These sessions were arranged at the school for convenience. The first interview took place during the third week of November, 2016. This session was an informal discussion, which allowed the researcher to gather background information about the teacher, share the focus of the study, and review the IRB protocol. During the first interview, questions included asking about background information, years of ELA teaching experience and discussion of professional development sessions and outside coursework related to CRT. Question and leading statements used during the first interview are listed in Appendix A. As well, during this first session, the researcher confirmed with the participant the times and dates of six class observations, which occurred between November 15, 2016 through January 20, 2017. The second round of interviews occurred during the week of December 20, 2016. In the second set of semi-structured interviews, the three teacher participants were asked five questions or were given leading prompts regarding their current teaching practices and professional development experiences with CRT. These questions are outlined in Appendix B. Both interviews were semi structured in nature and followed a set of pre-written questions/leading prompts in an interview protocol designed to ensure consistency. Semi-structured interviews were critical as the background knowledge and teacher perceptions pertaining to CRT were discussed, which led into the second part of data collection, which was participant observations. Following each interview, the researcher arranged six separate classroom observations, lasting 40 minutes each session, during each teachers' literacy instruction.

Observations

According to Webb (1991), during fieldwork, the researcher must work out her/his relationship to the field and to the members of the setting being observed. This allows for a better understanding of what is being seen and recorded. The three teachers were observed during literacy instruction during data collection phase for this study. As described by Schmuck (1997), participation observation methods are useful to researchers in a variety of ways. They provide investigators with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, understand how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002; Schmuck, 1997). Extending this description, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) believe that “the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method” (p. 92). In Strauss and Corbin’s study (1994), the authors claim that qualitative methods, particularly participant observation, can be used to understand better any phenomenon about which little is yet known. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data. For this study, third through fifth grade literacy classrooms were the setting for the observations. Winter (2000) suggests that qualitative researchers have come to embrace their involvement and role with research. As well, Patton (2002) supports the concept of a researcher’s immersion into the research claiming that the real world may be subject to change and the researcher’s presence is needed before and after to record events. To that end, consistency is critical and observation protocols are needed for accuracy and uniformity. According to Hancock and Algozzine (2011), observation

protocols should be established and used for each observation to ensure consistency across each classroom observation. These protocols are considered valid when they serve a formulated research purpose, are purposefully planned and systematic (Merriam, 1998).

Classroom observations were important during the course of the study to capture how teachers disseminated literacy instruction and how, or if, culturally responsive techniques were employed. The observations for this study occurred over a seven-week period during the second quarter of the 2016-2017 school year. The 40-minute observations were scheduled during the teachers' literacy block or content area reading blocks. Throughout the observations, careful attention was placed on delivery of instruction and resources used during the lesson. During the delivery, a focus was made to note any observable rapport within the classroom, questioning the techniques used in the lesson, the grouping of students (such as peer, collaborative, or independent work), and interactions were noted between the teacher and students. Resources used during the lesson were of importance as well. When seen, text titles and other documents used in the lesson were recorded. Any use of multicultural books, videos, and/or other technology utilized was documented during the observation. Careful attention to teacher's delivery of instruction was sought and recorded with detail during each of the six literacy lesson observed using an observation protocol (see Appendix C). This was useful for staying organized and keeping with the fidelity of data collection. Field notes were essential during the observation process to keep accurate records.

Webb (1991) describes field notes as transcripts created by the researcher to remember and record the behaviors, activities, and other features of the setting being observed. The use of field notes was a viable part of data collection as narratives were

promptly written after classroom observations. Field notes are meant to be read by the researcher to produce meaning and an understanding of the culture, phenomenon, or social setting being studied. Field notes were essential during the observations to capture aspects of the lessons such as questions used, notations of the groupings of students, aspects of classroom rapport, and to document texts, resources, and other tools that were used during the delivery of the lesson observed.

The research questions and design of the study inform the criteria of what and when data was recorded (Webb, 1991). Note taking is important and must be organized; therefore, field notes and observation protocols combined were critical during the data collection process. Demunck and Sobo (1998) suggest using a separate notebook for keeping field notes so questions to be answered will remain separate from personal observations that may or may not fit with the study. The authors advocate the importance of recording memos, questions, and comments, which can also add rich content to the analysis (Demunck & Sobo, 1998).

Documents

According to Bowen (2008), collecting and analyzing documents is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, which are both printed and electronic. Similar to other analytical methods in qualitative research, Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that document analysis necessitates that data be examined and interpreted in order to produce meaning, gain understanding, and cultivate empirical knowledge. Documents that may be used for systematic evaluation as part of a study can take an assortment of forms per Bowen (2009), including “advertisements, agendas, attendance registers, minutes of meetings, manuals, background papers, books, diaries, and

journals,” to name a few (p. 27). For this study, the documents collected included teacher lesson plans, professional development agendas, and handouts. These documents were useful for the researcher to review and as a way to connect the information that the teachers attained through professional development sessions and view how they applied that knowledge in their handouts, agendas and lessons plans.

Data collection tools for this proposed study produced information that was appropriate for the level of accuracy needed in the analysis. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) claim that rigorous or trustworthy research applies the appropriate research tools to meet the stated objectives of the investigation. Data collection of interviews, observations, and documents collectively supported the objectives for this study.

Triangulation

Triangulation of data provided a robust account of the data collected. As described by Denzin (1970), document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation. Denzin defines triangulation as the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon whereby the qualitative researcher is expected to draw upon multiple sources of evidence to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods. By examining information collected through different methods, the researcher can verify findings across data sets and, therefore, reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study. Maxwell (2013) claims that triangulation reduces the risk of chance associations and biases. Triangulation was employed to ensure that the analysis was comprehensive and well-developed. Data retrieved from interviews, observations, and documents allowed for rich interpretation of data.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices and examined how professional development impacted teachers' implementation of CRT. Through interviews and class observations with field notes and documents, the researcher attempted to understand the teachers' methods of instruction and how or if their instructional practices were used in a culturally responsive manner.

Trustworthiness

In order to maintain quality data analysis and collection, transcriptions of the data were made immediately following each interview to preserve a first-hand interpretation of the recorded data. As suggested by Ezzy (2002), to ensure clear understanding of the participants' voices, recapping interpretations of the interviews with each participant is vital when checking for clarity. For this study, trustworthiness was established through triangulation of data (Glense, 2006; Maxwell, 2013). The data came from teacher interviews, classroom observations, and field notes. Using multiple data sources provided necessary data for the study. Consistency and dependability across data collected were sought and analyzed (Glense, 2006). The researcher attempted to separate any pre-expectations for the study apart from actual outcomes. Additionally, the researcher consulted with my dissertation chair and committee for insight and feedback.

Risks, Benefits, and Ethical Considerations

Any study involving people may present some level of risks; however, this study involved minimal risks to the three teacher participants. While there were no foreseeable risks involved in participation in the study, there are potential benefits. This research provided valuable insights regarding changes needed in professional development

regarding CRT in literacy. The attained knowledge from this study could be used by administrators, literacy coaches, and teacher educators within schools who provide professional development to teachers working with diverse populations.

Ethical issues, specifically confidentiality and bias, were taken into consideration during this study. The three teacher participants were given pseudonyms for the study (participant #1 was Andrea, participant #2 was Sherry, and participant #3 was Tracy). Identifying information from this study was only available to the researcher. As well, efforts were made to keep bias out of the research setting. Due to the researcher's role as an educator at the setting of the study, she employed an objective lens during observations and through interviewing sessions. While the sessions were semi-structured, all efforts were made to remain focused on the research questions for the study. As mentioned previously, a detailed review of IRB protocol was shared with each participant.

Limitations

According to Price and Murman (2004), limitations are described as characteristics or designs of the methodology that may impact or influence findings from research. One limitation to this study was that there were two cancellations of scheduled observations due to school cancellations because of inclement weather. Additionally, there were a couple of observations that had to be rescheduled due to unforeseen class schedule changes because of assemblies. This caused slight difficulty in scheduling observations. Another limitation to this study was the number of settings for the research. A larger number of settings might have provided deeper insight into the transference of PD into culturally responsive teaching of literacy instruction as this is a

countywide initiative for elementary schools. Lastly, as an employee of the school and an educator with background knowledge of CRT and literacy instruction, extra efforts were made to avoid bias as much as possible during observations. While this was not a specific limitation to the study, it was an issue that required acknowledgement and was addressed. To that end, professionalism and open mindedness to data were at the forefront of the data collection.

Summary

There is considerable research surrounding the need for CRT, but there are few studies that show how teachers' knowledge of CRT transfers into their literacy instruction. This case study investigated elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices and examined how professional development impacted teachers' implementation of CRT. The study was conducted at a rural elementary school in Cabarrus County, which has a multicultural population of students. I observed and interviewed three upper-elementary teachers over the course of eight weeks. The data analysis process involved a specific set of steps including: key word identification, coding, category identification, and discerning overall themes. Transcripts of the interviews were coded for context and meaning, noting themes, patterns, differences, and exceptions. Triangulation of data provided a robust account of the data collected. Patton (2002) asserts that triangulation involves using multiple data sources in an investigation to produce understanding and promotes the use of triangulation by suggesting that triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This study attempted to add to the scholarly research by exploring teachers' knowledge of CRT and the impact that

professional development has on their literacy instruction. The research investigated pedagogy for a better understanding of this particular aspect of culture in teaching.

Subjectivity Statement

My interest in CRT began over 20 years ago when I was a first-year teacher placed in a school where 85% of the students identified as African American, and the other 15% of the students were from other races and ethnicities from around the globe. I was surrounded by a team of teachers who were also novice educators and had little experience working with diverse students. I wanted to make a positive impact by teaching each child and differentiating lessons, as I had been trained. I quickly realized how little I knew about working with diverse students with cultural and linguistic differences. I taught the way I had been taught and socialized the way I had always socialized. It was eye-opening experience and helped me to realize that I lacked essential skills and knowledge. Equally daunting was the realization that amending the situation was up to me.

My journey through professional development and returning to higher education helped tremendously. I recognized, then and now, that there exists a discourse between what is taught and what is left out. In my recent years as a mentor for new teachers, I have made a conscious effort to share culturally responsive practices that can easily be embedded in classroom instruction. During those opportunities, I acquired an interest in CRT. Since then, I have attended training sessions and have worked as a reading teacher with multicultural students. I do realize that there is more work to be done and that professional development in schools can provide support to teachers.

I am also aware that because of my role within the setting, as an English Language Arts teacher, that potential conflicts could have arisen during the study. I recognized that my own familiarity with the participants and the setting might influence how I conduct my study and interpret my findings (Glesne, 2010; Creswell, 2009). Proactively, I adhered to care and consistency with data collection through the use of prepared protocols as described in Appendices A, B, and C. To that end, while my expertise and background is in literacy, I do not have firsthand experience with implementing CRT practices in literacy instruction. It is important to understand that I do have extensive experience working with multicultural students delivering reading remediation, I do have knowledge of how CRT can be used, and I have studied many aspects of classroom implications. Thus, I kept an open mind as data unfolded and employed fidelity and objectivity to the best of my ability during data collection and analysis. As well, I openly admit and acknowledge that professional biases needed to be avoided and expectations must be evaded to allow data to unfold in the most natural way. My interest in this study has many roots including my studies in graduate school, extensive work as a reading teacher in diverse settings, and, currently, my experiences as a teacher at the school where this study took place. Considering my background, it was important to point out that any preconceived notions, assumptions, or biases were avoided as much as possible.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices and to examine how professional development impacts teachers' implementation of CRT practices. This study explored instructional practices that the teachers used, examined the teachers' familiarity and knowledge of CRT, specifically the impact of professional development, and observed or analyzed how this collectively translated into literacy instruction. The study took place at an elementary school site in the Cabarrus County School district of North Carolina. As an employee and current reading teacher at the school site, the researcher was familiar with the diverse culture of the school and the community. A well-developed rapport with administrators and staff made this a suitable site for this research.

The following research questions framed this study:

1. How do teachers define CRT?
2. What are teachers' professional development experiences with CRT?
3. How does professional development impact teachers' implementation of CRT in literacy instruction?
4. How do teachers their implement CRT in literacy instruction?

The qualitative case study approach to research facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data source collections (Baxter & Jack; Yin, 2003; Merriam, 2008). This qualitative case study design was relevant for this

research as the questions investigated pedagogy for a better understanding of how professional development impacted teachers' implementation of culturally responsive teaching in literacy instruction. Therefore, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis were conducted.

Chapter 1 defined the purpose of the study, provided background, and presented the significance of this research. As well, Chapter 1 introduced the theoretical framework and established the premise for the study. Chapter 2 provided a context for the research, demonstrating how the literature defines CRT and students with cultural differences including the relevance of CRT. Additionally, the implications of teacher preparation and professional development experiences were linked through literature concerning the definition of CRT. Lastly, literacy challenges facing students with cultural backgrounds were explored in the literature related to how instruction is received. Chapter 3 addressed the methodology of the study including a research plan, details of the setting and identification, recruiting, and selection of the participants. This chapter also described the data collection and data analysis process and discussed ethical issues, validity, and the reliability of the study. Chapter 4 describes the setting of this study and the background of the selected teacher participants. Detailed descriptions of each case study are presented including a summary of the interviews, observations, and the documents collected for analysis. Also included are the research questions that were used to guide the interviews. The chapter concludes with a final summary that addresses the teachers' experiences with CRT and the connection of professional development into literacy practices.

Study Description

This study was conducted during the second and third quarter of the 2016-17 school year. Interviews and classroom observations began in November 2016 and concluded in mid-January 2017. Scheduling was conducive for weekly classroom observations with each teacher participant, and first and second interviews were scheduled before and after school hours for optimal timing. The combined data collection consisted of seven and a half weeks inclusive of six interviews and eighteen classroom observations. Documents such as lesson plans, electronic links to lesson resources and professional development agendas were collected during this time period as well. Three female teachers participated in the study. One teacher was African American with eleven years of teaching experience, and there were two Caucasian teachers. One who has been teaching for twelve years and one with seventeen years of teaching experience.

The study began with initial interviews of each participant. Interview protocols (see Appendix A) were used to guide the semi-structured interviews. During the first round of interviews, rapport-building questions and leading statements inquiring of the teachers' background, teaching experiences, and philosophy of reading were employed. The last half of the interview included questions that addressed the student population of the class, the teacher's preparedness to meet student needs, personal definition and knowledge of CRT, and professional development experiences involving CRT and literacy.

After each initial interview was conducted, classroom observation dates were scheduled. The purpose of the classroom observations was to capture how the teachers

delivered literacy instruction and how, or if, culturally responsive techniques were employed. Careful attention was placed on the dissemination of instructions and the resources used during the lessons. Observations were planned during literacy instruction, which occurs during the English Language Arts (ELA) block at this school. An observation protocol (Appendix C) was valuable for diligent note taking of the lessons observed. Specific criteria were sought for each observation including how students were grouped (whole group instruction, small guided groups, partner-work, or independently) and all of the materials that were used: resources, texts, technology, multicultural literature, cooperative learning, journals, and poems.

The second round of interviews was scheduled following the last classroom observations. As with the first interview, a protocol was used to guide the conversation (Appendix B). The purpose of these questions/leading prompts was to collect information regarding teachers' experiences with PD, specifically, culturally responsive teaching PD for literacy instruction. As well, the questions/leading prompts focused on resources used in the classroom, how PD has been woven into instruction, and the types of groups teachers used during literacy instruction such as whole group instruction, small guided groups, partner work, and independent work. The final questions gave participants a chance to express their thoughts about the type of PD they would like in the future. Lastly, additional documents were collected. While, throughout the course of the study, lessons plans, professional development agendas, electronic links to lessons and resources were collected either before or after a classroom observation, since many lessons did not have formal lesson plans, the teacher participants offered to send copies of resources or links to websites that had been used in the literacy lessons. These resources

were helpful in supplementing the researcher's notes taken during observations. A crosswalk document (Appendix D) was developed for the purpose of organizing data. This document was a valuable tool to link four of the research questions to the researcher's observation field notes, teacher lesson plans, the researcher's interview notes, and PD Agenda information. This process helped to connect the knowledge that the teachers acquired through professional development sessions (PD Agenda information) to what they prepared for instruction (lesson plans) and finally to what was actually implemented (observation field notes). Three data sources were used for this study. Those sources included two semi-structured interviews with each participant, field notes from six classroom observations per teacher, and supporting documents including three professional development agendas and eleven lesson plans from PD training sessions that one or more of the teachers attended. This allowed for triangulation, which was employed to ensure the analysis was comprehensive and well-developed. Maxwell (2013) claims that triangulation reduces the risk of chance associations and biases. Data retrieved from interviews, observations and documents allowed for rich interpretation of data.

Summary of PD Agendas

The following PD agendas were collected from the school: Personal Growth Experience, Deep Equity, and Visual Literacy. The agenda for the Personal Growth PD, from spring 2016, had, as its objective, the challenge to "create your own personal growth experience." Pictures were included in the handouts of staff attending local Indian festivals such as a Holi Festival and The Festival of India Tour in Charlotte. The discussion was focused on stereotypes, how teachers feel about the stereotypes that they

have, and how this can translate into beliefs held about other staff, families, or students. The group activity consisted of grade levels grouping together to make a list on large chart paper of typical stereotypes of various cultures. Then participants walked around to label their thoughts on the chart pages. The reflection question was “In what ways were authentic relationships or cultural competence either missing or present in the challenges you discussed with your groups?” The challenge was restated at the end of the training session to encourage staff to try an authentic meal from another culture or attend a local cultural festival and then share experiences with other staff. This session was held during a half day of planning and lasted about two hours.

A review of the Personal Growth Experience PD from the spring 2016 was done at the start of the 2016-2017 school year, and an invitation was extended once again for all staff to experience another culture by attending a festival or trying a new food from another culture. Different administrators and staff shared about possible opportunities and encouraged everyone to experience another culture.

The Deep Equity PD agenda consisted of defining deep equity, describing the difference between race and culture, viewing a list of differences, and describing which one has been the greatest challenge in each participant’s life. All discussions started out in small groups with participants seated at tables; then, the individuals shared their comments with the larger group by calling out loud while the leaders recorded responses for all to see. The lenses of differences included: age, religion, disability, values, appearance, personality, learning styles, gender, economics, culture, role, education level, sexual orientation, family background, race, language, accent, status, body size, politics, and other. The last part of the PD session was a read-aloud of the book *Only One You*.

The leader read the book and then discussed how the participants, as adults, can relate to the story and so can students. The idea was that people from different backgrounds are both alike and unique. A final activity involved painting a rock and the leaders invited teachers to use this lesson with their students.

The third PD agenda collected was a Visual Literacy PD consisting of a one-hour session held after school. This agenda included a Ted Talk video that focused on how perceptions vary and listening is key, which all the participants viewed as a group. The next item was a reading from novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice. The activity was a visual literacy lesson where images were shown of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Participants viewed the pictures and then shared their perceptions with a partner. The PD session was brief but provided all participants a visual literacy tool. Small groups shared how this lesson could be used with all grade levels. All participants in this study attended each of the PD sessions with the exception of participant #3, Tracy, who did not attend the spring 2016 PD. She was, however, given a review of the training, along with all staff, at the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year. The spring PD served as a springboard for the remaining PD scheduled for this school year.

Individual Case Studies

Participant #1: Andrea

Summary of interviews

Andrea is a Caucasian English Language Arts teacher. She currently teaches 3rd grade, holds an Elementary teaching license, and is working towards her master's degree in Education. She has taught school for seventeen years including second, third, and

fourth grades, and preschool. She describes her philosophy of teaching as believing in students and “meeting students where they are so they can grow and be successful.” She has a strong sense of feeling that she is prepared to meet students’ needs claiming, “Experiences have prepared me not just in college but with teaching a variety of students with different backgrounds over the years.” She described her teaching strategies as assessment-driven, stating, “The assessments help guide how I teach. I use small group instruction, guided reading groups and partner work.” Andrea also described an awareness of CRT, defining it as a “way of showing respect to students by bringing in other cultures to lessons like with multicultural books.” She described the importance of “being caring and open to learning about other cultures.” When asked what has informed her definition of CRT, she described experiences of teaching in various schools including Title 1 populations and high-poverty rural areas with various cultures represented in her classrooms. As well, she claimed that professional development trainings offered at other schools over the years have helped. She stated, “My former trainings have helped me understand CRT better and gave me good ideas with topics to research and projects for student learning.” Specifically, she described sheltered instruction training and CRT training. Andrea described sheltered instruction as “a way to teach English language learners focusing on how to integrate language and content.” She continued saying that it “promotes the development of ELL [English language learner] students and helps them become proficient in reading and writing.” She also described CRT training offered at her school, which focused on an activity done during the training called “Only One You.” The book on which the training was based, *Only One You*, is a brightly animated story about rockfish who are teaching their offspring about the sea of life. The story uses

whimsical quotations and illustrations to suggest that we are all unique and have an important part in life. The underlying message is that we may be different but we all have an important role in making this life a better place for others. The story was used to offer a classroom lesson to use with students to encourage acceptance of others. Andrea described the activity by stating that it started with a discussion of stereotypes which made her “feel awkward” at first but then, after group talks, she became more at ease. She described the activity of “Only One You” saying that she has “used ideas from the PD” but has not read the book with her class. She did claim that this PD prompted her to think about other projects such as researching endangered animals. When asked if the PD session has helped her plan literacy instruction, she claimed that it was helpful when “doing nonfiction and research projects.” She regularly uses CultureGrams™ so that her students can learn about other countries and people around the world. Staff and students at the site of this study have access to CultureGrams™, which is an on-line reference for current and reliable cultural information on the countries of the world. The site offers a kid’s edition that students can use to learn more about the world. There are also links to information on religion, history, life as a kid, climate, government, food, and culture. In addition, the site offers students the opportunity to listen to interviews with students in other countries. Andrea’s students “listened to text and interviews on CultureGrams™ to learn about other kids around the world.” Andrea described other materials that would assist with literacy planning that were missing in the PD. She claimed that “more books and resources, such as lessons are needed. I mean we get some ideas during PD, but it’s like a onetime deal.” She continued by discussing specific strategies that she did gain from the PD such as “learning the value of building background knowledge and filling in

missing parts with picture walks [add description here] and vocabulary lessons.” She also stressed the importance of “collaboration and partner work where students learn from each other.” When probed with questions regarding follow up from the PD and needs, Andrea stated, “We need more follow up, maybe informal observations and sharing of resources; also, lessons would be helpful and for someone to give us feedback.” She ended by emphasizing the need for additional cultural resources and texts in the book room saying, “We have access to a lot online, but we need books students can hold and learn from.”

After observations were completed in Andrea’s classroom, the researcher scheduled the second interview. As with the first interview session, she was excited to be a part of this study and willing to take the time to meet. The researcher started by thanking her for her time and then got right into the questions. The interview started with questions pertaining to professional development for CRT in literacy instruction. Andrea described her experiences by describing the recent PD she attended at school, which focused on visual literacy. Visual literacy was presented at the PD as a tool to use to enable students to see the “big picture.” Presenting images and having two people write down their perceptions of the images allowed each participant to see another point of view. Andrea described the session stating “

They taught us about visual literacy in CRT, but actually, I had already started planning out a lesson because I have been reading about using visual literacy in writing lessons from a planning meeting I went to; it was a good refresher.

When asked about this specific lesson, Andrea described the resources that she needed to supplement a literacy lesson she was planning for a culture unit. The lesson involved

having students research a culture other than their own to learn about everyday life.

When asked what types of images she chose for the visual literacy lesson, she stated that she had created a specified technology as a tool claiming, “I used pictures from different pictures in Asia. I just looked on the internet. There were plenty to pick from.” She described images of a girl on a bridge in China. She displayed the pictures on her SMARTboard and had pairs of students write down what they saw in each image and then discuss the images together. Andrea claimed that the lesson was meaningful as it allowed students to see another perspective and discuss what they thought the image represented.

Andrea continued describing other experiences with PD sessions she has attended that focused on literacy lessons in CRT. She talked about the Visiting International Faculty VIF training that has been completed online. This online training is offered to all employees at this site. Teachers watch tutorials and videos to learn how to create global lesson plans in the areas of math, science, literacy, and social studies. Resources are provided and lesson plan templates are offered for creating lessons. Teachers earn credits, called “badges,” for each lesson that they teach, which usually averages one lesson per quarter is. This entailed a project to use with students researching endangered animals in Asia. While the VIF training that Andrea mentioned occurred in the 2015-2016 academic year, she was able to reuse parts of it this year, stating “We learned about this last year at a PD online, so this project I just did, well it went along with things I did last year. I just tweaked my old plans a little bit to make it fit.” Affirming that she believed that technology is a useful asset in student learning, Andrea described the Quick Response Code (QR Codes) that students can attach to their projects claiming, “They

loved it.” Andrea claimed that, at first, the QR Codes that she found for students to see pictures of endangered animals “didn’t really fit what we were studying with the endangered animals, so students created QR codes with help from the teacher and used their research to connect it all.” The finished projects that Andrea displayed in her hall had visible QR codes so other students could use I-Pads to scan the codes and read about the animals in the research projects. This was a helpful technology tool for other students to use to learn about the endangered animals.

The next part of the interview involved questions regarding literacy lessons obtained through CRT professional development. In response, Andrea referenced her first interview and the lesson she had discussed previously using the text *Only One You*. She said that she finally read the book with her class, and then she went on to discuss new ideas that she had obtained after the reading. She explained some of the possible benefits,

When I read that book, it reminded me of ways to easily build rapport with everyone in the class. We didn’t paint rocks, as was suggested in the PD, but we read and talked about the story and how we are all different and unique. I think that is a big part of CRT, if I’m not mistaken.

She went on to explain the importance of rapport stemming from partner and group work that she had been reminded of in PD sessions stating,

We talked about using partner work and group work at that PD too.

Cooperative work allows students to not only work together for assignments but also to help with building classroom community.

Andrea went on to describe a part of a former PD session that taught a lesson about researching names and how the students enjoyed learning the history of their names. “We did research on our own names to see the cultural origin and that was really cool; students seemed to enjoy the sharing part the best.”

Andrea responded to questions regarding the resources that she uses when planning for literacy instruction by saying that more CRT resources are needed because being ready is important.

It is pretty much essential to have materials ready. I mean, I do have a good class library, but I have so many levels in my groups that I use the book room to check out books for small groups and ones I read aloud.

Andrea also stated her belief that the book room needs more CRT materials and leveled books that teachers check out to use for literacy instruction. She referenced technology again, as a good resource for students, claiming that her students use Chromebooks daily to access Discovery Education videos (an online resource produced by Discovery Communications, LLC, the parent company of the Discovery Channel) and the CultureGrams™ website for research. She said students really enjoy CultureGrams™.

I think I mentioned this before but students love CultureGrams™. They use the site for researching countries and also listening to other students in interviews.

This is a way for them to learn more about [the country that they are studying]. It has lots of neat facts and links.

The next portion of the interview focused on how or if PD has been woven into her instruction methods or lessons. Andrea has a large class library and spoke highly about her use of read-alouds and texts “I would say definitely with global read-alouds.

We are using our books from Russia and other Asian books during reading.” Research was mentioned again as she claimed that Project Based Learning (PBL) ideas have been shared in PD sessions and she recently did one with Asian animals. “We talked about having students do PBLs; like research such as the project of Asian animals that has been a lot of fun.” She claimed that projects are often integrated with social studies right into the literacy time block. “I am able to integrate social studies in my ELA literacy block and all of my global read-alouds happen during ELA.”

The next part of the second interview was a discussion of examples of Andrea’s teaching that was reflective of CRT. Using groupings of students and peer interviews (students interviewed one another about their family background and culture) were mentioned again.

I would say cooperative groups, partners and small groups allow students to gain rapport. Also, [I] like our living museum at the beginning of the year when students brought in items that describe their culture. It’s good for students to hear about each other’s’ cultures to get to know each other and kind of build respect for each other.

The use of probing questions with the participant brought about talk of multicultural literature and the value of reading. “Reading books from cultures that are in my class like books that have students from India or China are good for students so they can see themselves in stories through characters; we can all relate.” Andrea continued by describing how these books are also an integral part of the third grade social issues unit where it’s important for students to relate to characters. “When we do the social issues unit, I try to find books about divorce or different things like that. I try to find books that

will get them talking and stories they can relate to.” Andrea described this as being connected to CRT. “I think CRT covers more than just culture but being kind of responsive to students’ needs if that makes sense.”

Andrea described a personal connection that a student from Africa made when a Kenyan story was read in class, “I do look for books from cultures of students in my class like my student from Africa. She really got excited when we read a book about Kenya and then did a writing activity to go with it.” She continued by discussing personal connections that can be made. “There was a part when the book talked about a type of chocolate in Kenya, and she was excited to talk about how she had eaten that same type of chocolate. It was neat to see her expression.” Andrea continued by stating how it made the student feel proud that she “could relate and share with other students.” This discussion led to probing questions that addressed additional ways PD has impacted instruction and technology was mentioned again “I also use Discovery Education video and clips when they fit in lessons so students can see other cultures. Our culture unit in ELA coming up soon which will give us more time to dig deeper in this.”

The last part of the interview involved a discussion of strategies used during literacy that addresses CRT. Andrea reminded me again of her daily use of partner work and groups and asserted that research is a big part of her lessons,

I do a lot of work with pairs and share the computers in small groups of three or four. I use small group lessons a lot. Also, we interview each other and watch Culture Gram™ videos of other students around the world.

Probing questions gave more information about her use of the CultureGrams™ website revealing projects that students are able to make.

We use it for research of various countries and to take notes and also for learning about kids from 3rd grade in other countries. We also make posters or power points; students get choices with how to share research on topics we are studying. She seemed proud of the lessons she has done and claimed that there were good benefits for her students.

They get to see that we are different in many ways but also alike. I know that sounds cliché but the students need the chance to hear the books and see the videos and pictures of what life is like in other places.

The next part of our interview focused on engaging diverse learners and grouping. When asked about the engagement of diverse students Andrea explained that she really doesn't have a high population of diverse learners stating "Well, all of my students speak English so I really don't have any ELL students." She also mentioned how she chooses texts. "I include different books my library and for reading out loud so we can learn about other cultures in literature." Regarding her groupings, as mentioned previously, Andrea said that she uses small groups, whole groups, and partner work. Specifically, she highlighted how students enjoy partner work. "They love working with partners and we do group work daily, too." The interview ended with a question of professional development wants and needs. Andrea expressed a few wants and needs related to PD, "I would like more PD focused on strategies that would be beneficial." She also explained a need for more books and PD that has specific strategies and "hands-on take-aways." She concluded by addressing the value of ready-made lessons, "I think there are a lot of fun neat ideas out there but I want to know more ways to bring hands-on cultural lessons into the class that are accessible and don't cost a lot of money."

Summary of observations

The setting of these observations was in a third grade ELA classroom.

Observations were scheduled ahead of time to occur during Andrea's Block B, which is during the second half of the school day. The timing was optimal and six separate observations were scheduled per participant. The observations occurred over a seven-week period during the second quarter of the 2016-2017 school year. The 40-minute observations were scheduled during teachers' literacy block or content area reading blocks. The student demographics of the class included six Caucasian females, six Caucasian males, two Hispanic females, five African American males, one Chinese male, two Indian females, and one Indian male. Based on a conversation prior to this first visit, my expectation upon entering this classroom for the observation was students would be working in groups and students would have uninterrupted sustained silent reading time to freely choose texts. While I was unsure of the order of mini lessons and group rotations, I expected this might be explained at the start of the lesson. Apparently, the students knew I would be in their room and two students waved to me as I came in. I know many of the students at the school so my presence did not impact their attention as they are used to seeing me in the hallways. My first impression of the class was that students were very chatty but the teacher had to get the students' attention by reminding them to work at "level zero," which means no talking.

I found a seat at a table in the back of the room where I could see the SMARTboard and the students seated around the room. Students were busy and the room was neat and organized. The classroom had three sets of desks with eight desks grouped together. The entrance to the room was organized with a display of books from

Russia sitting in a basket on a table with a black tablecloth. The table was also decorated with a Russian doll in the middle. The class library was well organized and easy to access with baskets of books with reading levels and other labels such as non-fiction, biographies, fiction, poems and cultural books. Specifically, cultural books included fiction and nonfiction books from Asian countries. Fiction titles such as *Yeh Shen* and *Lon Po Po* were in the fairy tales basket and nonfiction books describing daily life in Russia and China were in the nonfiction basket. The library had four bookshelves with baskets of leveled book baskets on each one. The approximate number of books in the library was close to 450. There were eight different types of ELA anchor charts hanging in the room with notations such as “how to choose the right book,” “ways to find the main idea,” “walking in a character’s shoes,” and decorative posters, which hung on the wall to make the classroom inviting.

The teacher started the lesson by reviewing what character traits are and then she asked a student to read a few of the traits that were listed from a previous lesson. She asked students to think about a character they are reading about in their books currently and think about trait words that would apply to their character. Questions such as “Why do you think..?” “Can you explain? ?” and “Can you add reasons to support your traits?” were used to guide the discussion. After students had a quick minute to think quietly, she asked them to turn to their partner and describe that character using a trait word and also to tell why they chose that trait. Students practiced this by turning and sharing with a partner. After students shared responses, the teacher asked three different students to tell a trait they shared or one they heard a partner share. The first student called on used the word generosity to describe a trait that Charlotte had in *Charlotte’s Web*. She said she

was “generous in how she shared advice and shared her knowledge about friendship and words from the web with other characters.” The second student shared the trait of humor for Templeton as he thought Templeton was funny because he “always wanted to eat everything.” The third student used the word kindness as a trait for Wilbur in *Charlotte’s Web*. She said Wilbur was “always kind and helping other friends in his barn.”

One group of five students working on completing a poster about how to be a good citizen. This group used a nonfiction text, Citizens in my community, about citizenship as their resource to help with writing their poster. The teacher said this culminating project followed a study of the history of local government. Another group of students worked on chrome books practicing reading comprehension skills. The students were engaged and focused on their individual lessons. The third group of students, a group of five, read independently on the carpet choosing books from leveled book baskets. Some of the selections included Asian fairy tales, mysteries, and nonfiction topics such as the solar system and weather books. The last group of six students was seated at the teacher’s table, which is located in the back right corner of the room. The teacher was calling students one at a time to complete a reading assessment of comprehension. This assessment was one-on-one so as students waited their turn to read with the teacher they read quietly on a carpeted section near her table. The lessons ended without a re-cap of any skills taught but the teacher told students they would go to new rotations on the next day and the students lined up to switch back to their homeroom. This lesson met my expectations as I did see students freely choosing texts, and I was able to note the selections chosen. I also observed collaborative work with students discussing and asking questions when they created posters.

During my second observation, I expected to see a small group guided reading lesson with chapter books. This was mentioned at my previous observation so I made a note of what to look forward to upon arriving. I immediately noticed the class seemed accustomed to working in groups as they were in their stations when I arrived and seemed comfortable with directions. The teacher did not have to stop to restate where students should be or the expectation in their groups.

The students were already in small groups when I arrived. One group was in the library reading various books such as *Flat Stanley*, *The Real Cinderella: The Russian Cinderella*, and nonfiction texts with topics of government. These titles included *Being a Good Citizen and Local Government*. Another group worked at their desks using the I-Ready® Diagnostic & Instruction program to practice pre-assigned comprehension skills. The i-Ready® program is an online resource students use to practice various reading skills from basic phonics to comprehension and vocabulary development. The site also offers formal assessments, which the school uses throughout the school year to track students' progress and needs. This group seemed excited to be on the computers and engaged in their lessons. I could not see their progression of lessons but noted they were enthusiastic about practicing skills in i-Ready®. The teacher had assigned lessons on finding the main idea and the themes in short passages. A third group worked independently on researching endangered animals in Asia. The students were using chrome books for this research and notebooks for taking notes in journals. They were reading on a blend space created by the teacher with titles such as *Asian Animals*, *Giant Pandas*, *Gazelles in Asia*, and *Asian Tigers*. They were reading and writing facts in their notebooks as they read on the computer. They worked with partners and were seated at desks near the middle of the

room. They were very excited to start researching animals. The teacher started her small group lesson at a table with five students by reviewing the anchor chart from the board. The chart had various adjectives listed of character traits such as courageous, brave, sad, excited, energetic, mysterious, and proud. The teacher started by reviewing the traits that were listed. She asked students to think about a character they are currently reading about in their books and think about trait words that would apply to their character. The teacher facilitated a discussion using questions such as “Why do you think?” “How do you know?” and “Can you tell me more?” The students responded to each other by turning and talking, which is a strategy the teacher uses often. She said this gets them comfortable with sharing and articulating what they think to their classmates.

The groups seemed very comfortable with directions. The teacher told me each group had specific details about what was expected at stations. This was apparent as the transition was smooth like “clockwork.” The observation met my expectations as students were working with partners making their posters, working in small groups while reading and freely choosing texts. As well, I was able to observe students selecting the Russian fairy tale books and reading independently without assistance from the teacher. Aside from telling students when to switch groups, the teacher was able to facilitate her own group with minimal interruptions.

The third observation in Andrea’s classroom was a literacy lesson with Social studies content. My expectation for the observation was that student’s would be working in small groups. The students today were seated as a whole group accessing technology during an integrated Social Studies lesson. My first impression of the class today was students seemed a little off task. A few students were talking while the teacher was

explaining directions. This was in part due to some students were sharing computers and working in pairs. There not enough chrome books for everyone to work independently. I was greeted with a warm hello from students and the teacher waved to me to come on in and make myself comfortable. As usual, I felt comfortable in the setting. Social studies was integrated in the ELA block and the lesson today focused on reading, writing, and sharing facts about NC government. The objective was to use chrome books to research NC government and use notebooks to write down facts. The teacher started the lesson by going over how students could access websites. She created a blend space using sites that were targeted for elementary students. These sites included topics covering NC Government, NC General Assembly, courtroom seating of justice, NC laws of 2016 and a “Place the States” game. Students worked with a partner to research NC government as they read across websites first and then wrote important facts down in their journals. Students were able to sit at their desks and work with a partner for this lesson. Students worked with a partner to read and discuss facts as they searched the sites on the blend space. As a teacher, I understand that lessons are often integrated, and the teacher did a good job of pulling together technology and seating placements so all students could access the blend space provided. Even students who were paired up worked together well as they took turns using the chrome book and writing facts in their notebook. These observations suggest there has been a rapport established within the classroom enabling students to work together successfully with minimal distractions.

During my fourth observation in Andrea’s classroom, I observed a lesson on Asian animals. In our interview, she referenced the PD behind the lesson so I was excited to see it. The teacher told me prior to the observation that she would be starting

research on Asian animals so I was interested to see how the lesson would be delivered. The teacher started by reviewing background information. The class is studying the continent of Asia this year so they had a rich class discussion led by the teacher about things they already knew about Asia such as different countries, location, food, and traditions. Students raised their hands to add to the discussion or to respond to the questions asked by the teacher. The teacher then gave students a purpose for reading as they read scholastic magazines that featured endangered animals of Asia. The teacher told students to be thinking about an endangered animal they would like to research. This was a whole group lesson with students having about 25 minutes of uninterrupted reading time of the scholastic magazine and using Google Chromebooks. The lesson ended with students sharing with one another. While this was an introductory lesson, it did meet my expectations because I have done research with students on my own but we all deliver curriculum in a different manner. It was refreshing to see the teacher's energy and excitement of learning flow over into the students desire to learn and read for information.

During my fifth visit to Andrea's classroom, my expectation upon entering this classroom for the observation was that students would be on task and engaged while using Chromebooks to start their research process of Asian animals. This was a sequel to my previous class visit so I was prepared to see research in action. When I arrived, the teacher was giving students directions for accessing the blend space they would be using for their research on endangered animals. The resources, as she explained, were from the Earth's Endangered Creatures website, and links were provided for facts on tigers, giant pandas, spotted linsangs, stellar sea lions, Asian gold cats, gazelles, and Ryukyu rabbits.

Students were told to choose their site based upon animals they picked for their research. This lesson consisted of researching animals, writing information in journals, and organizing the information that would be typed during the next lesson. Students were given a chart to follow that would guide them. The chart had criteria that included where the animal is found, physical features, diet, why it is endangered, and how people and communities can help. The teacher walked around to assist students and answer questions about the project. Students seemed comfortable using the blend space to access their information. They were very excited to get to do their research. I could hear students saying remarks such as “I love tigers.” and “That site is going to be so cool because it has tigers.” and one female said that she loves pandas and cannot wait to see them because they are so cute. The teacher walked around and monitored students to make sure they could easily access the blend space and answered questions such as “What do I need to include with the art about diet? Is it just their food or how they get their food?” Another student was interested in tigers but could not find out why this tiger was endangered. The teacher showed him how to navigate the site and find information. She was very responsive and patient as she helped students find facts. This lesson met my expectations. The blend space of websites that students were able to access was engaging for the class and allowed students to use technology to explore cultural resources online. The selection of Asian animal resources was plentiful and appealed to all students. They enjoyed working with a partner as they explored the blend space to find facts for their chosen animal.

During my last observation of Andrea, my expectation upon entering the classroom was that I would likely see a conclusion of the previous lesson. As the teacher

asked about progress of students I was surprised to see the variation of completion of research guides they had been given. The teacher was able to assist those who had questions regarding how to find specific information and those who were ready to move along did not waste time. Students worked with a partner to complete their research questions. They had access to chrome books and answered questions including: what are the physical features of the animal's habitat? What does this animal's diet consist of? What is the main reason this animal is endangered? Students were engaged and busy finding answers to their questions. I was pleased with a successful lesson and I was able to see students accessing technology independently, and in pairs. The use of partner work was present along with peer discussion and technology. The topic was a global; concept and was the continuation of previous lessons. The blend space was easily accessible and full of choices for students to gather needed facts for their Asian Animals.

Summary of documents

Documents collected from Andrea consisted of lesson plans and SMARTboard links. I collected four hard copies of lesson plans and documented two electronic lessons, which were visible on the SMARTboard. I recorded those details in my notes. The first lesson plan on characters correlated with the first lesson I saw when the teacher worked with a small group to identify character traits in texts. The lesson plan consisted of directions for the teacher, student objectives, materials needed such as the chapter books and independent reading books to use upon completion. The standard addressed on this lesson plan was to determine the meaning of words and phrases that are used in a text. The plan was written as a mini lesson and was used to guide the group. The next lesson plan collected included a list of research criteria to guide students for their endangered

animal research project. This document includes three questions and a link to the blend space, which accompanied the unit of study. The three questions students used to start their research included: (1) “In what part of the world is this animal found?” (2) “What day and year did this animal become enlisted as endangered?” (3) “What kind of habitat does this animal prefer?” The next lesson plan collected was a continuation of the endangered animal project and included questions for students to answer with a partner using Chromebooks and included: “What does this animal’s diet consist of?” “What is the main reason this animal is endangered?” “What could humans do to help this animal and prevent further threats to the species?” and the directions: “List websites and articles used to answer questions.” The next document collected was a lesson plan for the citizenship posters. I saw students working on these posters during my first observation. The objective was to understand how events and individual have influenced history of local government. The remaining two lessons that were visible on the SMARTboard were the objectives for the endangered animal project and the blend space directions, which gave details for giant pandas, National Geographic Kids articles, and Tiger Facts.

Final summary

Andrea’s classroom was consistently buzzing with active students on task and ready to receive instruction. Regardless of the lesson, Andrea was always focused on students’ learning providing feedback, answering questions, and monitoring student behavior. The rapport in the classroom was positive as students seemed comfortable sharing with partners and listening as members of their groups shared writing or read out loud. This type of behavior is reflective of an established class community that fosters a love of reading and provides a variety of resources for all learners. Students were often

seen reading multicultural texts and global nonfiction books during lessons. Lesson plans reflected the use of partner work and collaboration during literacy as well. Reflective teaching qualities were also present as Andrea shared PD experiences she has had and ways she tries new strategies with her students. Andrea mentioned the need to have additional CRT resources and PD with readily available lessons. However, her room with displays of Russian literature and decor suggest several of the qualities sought in a CRT classroom. Andrea's understanding of CRT was evident through the literature she used during literacy instruction. She was mindful and purposeful in her choices for reading to her students and made a variety of cultural texts easily accessible. This unique quality is representative of a culturally responsive teacher as she was diligent in planning lessons that met all students' needs and was cognitive of their culture and interests.

Participant #2: Sherry

Summary of interviews

Sherry is a Caucasian teacher with a degree in elementary education and master's degree in reading. She currently teaches 4th grade ELA. This is Sherry's 12th year of teaching, and she describes reading as her passion. She has taught a variety of grade levels including 5th grade for six years, 2nd grade for one year, and the remainder in 4th grade. Our first interview was arranged before school hours in her classroom. At the beginning of the conversation, Andrea stated that she was "happy to be part of the study" and appeared at ease and excited throughout the interview. After describing her years of experience as a teacher, she explained her philosophy of teaching. She claimed she "loves reading and has a great passion for it." She described her student population as having a combination of two Read to Achieve [a state legislated program to ensure that

students read at or above grade level] groups who did not pass 3rd grade End of Grade (EOG) tests in reading and other groups of mid- high reading levels. Sherry described her class as a diverse group of “Indian students, African, Japanese, and the rest are white or African American.” When asked about being prepared to teach, Sherry claimed that she has challenges due to her student population this year.

The biggest thing is I have to get them to know that they can read--like boosting confidence levels. They need to be motivated because I have Read to achieve students and ELL; they need a lot of extra support.

Even with many students below grade level in her class, Sherry said she feel feels prepared based on prior experiences and resources she has received, “I have taught populations similarly in the past. I have tons of resources like lesson plans and a variety of leveled [grade level specific] library books.” We discussed strategies she uses during literacy such as guided reading, partners, and small group instruction. She also described the value of “teaching vocabulary and building background knowledge.” The next part of our interview focused on her definition of CRT and how experiences that have informed her beliefs. She claimed that CRT “involves more than just knowing about a culture. It means just being aware and thinking of how things affect students” and also “being mindful of varying backgrounds of students.” She added, “You can’t just teach one way. There are lots of pieces such as language and cultural differences to consider when teaching in a CRT way.” She accredits her teaching experiences and PD experiences over the years as instrumental in her thinking. “My teaching experiences naturally play into how I define CRT because of the populations I have taught over the years.” She explained that she has been to several trainings adding “and we have had CRT training

here this year and also at the end of last year. I have also had VIF, Visiting International Faculty training, online where I use resources on line to help me plan global lessons.”

The PD, she claimed, often assists with how she plans instruction. She gave specific examples such as “I have used some of the strategies from the school based CRT training in ELA blocks like with texts we use and research strategies we learned about.”

Specifically, with literacy planning, she claimed more resources are needed. “I think we could use more resources. Like more books and tools and someone to give tips on how it all kind of weaves together.” She also mentioned the need for more readily available lessons like “more global lessons and strategies that we can easily weave into what we are already doing.” When asked about specific literacy strategies she has received in PD that impact her teaching, Sherry referenced a PD session on Deep Equity that shared ways to use stories with students. This session, per Sherry, offered ways to elicit discussion from teacher led questioning. She often uses read-alouds with questioning as a strategy. “Reading a variety of cultural books and using questions to help with prior knowledge comes to mind and classroom rapport building activities like interviews and class meetings to help with rapport.” While she gained some ideas to use from PD sessions she has attended, she stated she still has a need for follow up in teachers’ classrooms. She claimed that this could be beneficial. “To affirm this is good or to say like ‘maybe you should try this or that.’ I would welcome feedback.” She seemed receptive to having additional follow up as a means for support. This interview session ended with a discussion about when to schedule the classroom observations.

During my second interview with Sherry, she was once again receptive to being interviewed and taking part in this study. We started this interview with questions

regarding PD specific to literacy instruction. She claimed she has not attended PD that was explicitly focused on literacy but she has made adjustments to fit lessons into her instruction claiming, “I have adapted culturally responsive training to work in my literacy classroom.” She gave specific examples such as “I attended a recent PD where the presenter was discussing visual literacy. After the training, I tried it in my classroom and had a great discussion with my students about how we see others.” She explained that the PD presented visual literacy as a strategy to use to engage students in seeing others’ perceptions by viewing pictures or images. She explained the value behind the lesson as the PD explored stereotypes and how students can be directly and indirectly affected. She shared examples of visual literacy that she has used such as “images of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s speech.” After viewing images on the SMARTboard, students worked with a partner to talk about what they each saw. She thought the lesson was meaningful stating, “They were thinking through and about what they saw in the pictures. It was fun to watch them interact.” While PD sessions attended were not solely focused on literacy, she attested that read-alouds have been infused within the sessions and she uses these regularly. She discussed topics of books she chooses sharing “I usually use stories that connect with topics or skills I am teaching. We are studying Australia this year so I will use fiction stories and nonfiction books from Australia.”

When we talked about ideas for using read-alouds in a global way, she referenced her PD session on Deep Equity and discussed the cultures represented in her class “African, Asian, Chinese, and Indian and Hispanic too.” From this PD, she said she was reminded of the value of using stories to connect with students of all cultures, and also the collaborative work that adds value to lessons. This led into questions pertaining to

resources such as her classroom library, chrome books, and leveled texts for guided reading. She also mentioned journals are valuable for students as they respond to texts they have read. Useful resources that Sherry uses when planning instruction includes books that focus on “a wide variety of events and their influences on different places.” She claimed she already has an assortment of books in her classroom such as “*Number the Stars*, which takes place in Denmark and *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, which takes place in Japan,” but she often uses the Scholastic Leveled Bookroom to check out resources.

Further questions focused on specific “takeaways” from PD involving CRT and literacy, which led into a discussion of students exploring their own culture. Sherry said the idea of researching one’s personal culture came from the Deep Equity PD session where she received an idea of writing poems about one’s culture. During the PD, participants were encouraged to write a short poems starting with “I am” and then describing their life, family, and culture. Next, they were asked to share with a partner if they felt comfortable doing so. She enjoyed the activity during the PD so she tried it with her class stating the outcomes were positive, “this was a neat way to learn about other people, so my students listed characteristics of their family and culture and then made it into a poem.”

She says she encourages partner sharing and tries “as much as possible to choose books that expose students to different characters they can relate to in order to expose them to various cultures, genres, and issues.” When asked about other PD sessions that focused on CRT and literacy, she again stated integration is important and PD sessions she has been to were not solely based upon literacy. She discussed her experiences with

online PD she did with her grade level called Visiting International Faculty. This PD gave a detailed lesson plan for a PBL (project based learning) where students learned about the lack of basic needs in other countries. She said, “The project involved making a water filter for clean drinking.” She said the students “watched a video and learned how to make a water filter and discussed how other countries often have problems with accessing clean water” (Appendix F).

The next part of our interview focused on aspects of instruction that reflect culturally responsive teaching in literacy. Sherry was specific in her philosophy of teaching claiming,

When I think of CRT, I really think of global education. I guess I don’t really separate the two. I would say just incorporating a variety of texts that bring in various cultures and projects that allow students to research and share findings about other countries or cultures.

She claimed the value is in the student interaction “making students more aware of their surroundings and classmates. We do a lot of turn and talk and small group discussion so this helps add to those conversations.” She continued by describing collaborative work as beneficial but needing to be purposeful.

Collaborating with each other and building trust in the classroom is huge. I think we learn from each other. Sometimes it happens naturally but opportunities for working together and talking together often is important for acceptance and building classroom community.

This naturally led into a discussion of the ways that she actively engages her students.

“We do a lot of asking questions in class. And by allowing students to share by doing turn- and-talk is great for engaging all of my learners.”

Again, she mentioned the value of books claiming that she uses “lots of different multicultural texts and stories that connect to topics we are working on in class.” Sherry firmly believes that students make connections with characters they see in books stating, “I think it helps add to the discussion when they can ask questions to deepen the understanding or see people in a different way. It makes them more aware of their surroundings and classmates.” When asked about future PD on CRT that she would be interested in, Sherry has an open mind for learning new ideas claiming, “I am always open to learning new ways to engage my students and get them out of their comfort zone with content, peers, and learning.” She also shared her feelings of uncertainty regarding the schools’ expectation of CRT. She added that clarity would be helpful stating,

We hear a lot about it but I think many of us are still not always sure if we doing what is expected. I think it makes us all a little nervous because we feel like we sometimes aren’t doing what they would like to see.

She affirmed getting great ideas from PD but revealed “We get ideas and then not a lot of follow-up, which makes us wonder, like ‘Is this important for now?’ and ‘What parts should I focus on?’” The interview ended as the bell started to ring for classes. I thanked her again for her time and involvement in my study.

Summary of observations

My first observation of Sherry’s class took place in her 4th-grade classroom during the literacy block. The student demographics consisted of six African American

males, six African American females, two bi-racial (Caucasian/African American) females, four Indian males, one Chinese male, one Japanese male, four Indian females, and one African (Liberian) male. The class library was on the back wall of the room with a large window and it was well organized and easy to access. The library had labeled baskets of books identifying the genre and level. A big bulletin board with a globe noted different story titles that the class had read, and a piece of yarn connected each book title to the country that it was about. There were many different posters decorating the room including one class rules chart, a group poster with names, one titled “Finding the just right book,” one poster with a definition of a reader’s workshop, and two world maps posters were hanging in the room. There was also a bulletin board with a map of Australia.

My expectation for this lesson was that I would see groups of varying levels in this classroom based on a conversation I had with Sherry the morning prior. She teacher mentioned that the classroom consisted of two groups of students who did not pass the EOG test in reading in 3rd grade so I expected that there would be direct instruction occurring and many levels of books available in the library. The classroom had three long tables with six students seated at each one and the last table had seven students seated. The entrance to the room was very organized with a display of Australian artwork and a map of the Australian territories. My first impression was that students appeared on task and ready to start the lesson. They were chatting with each other and laughing as they made their way to their groups. Students were on task when the teacher gave directions and moved quickly to their group locations. Seven students were logged on to i-Ready® to practice vocabulary skills that were assigned by the teacher, six

students were reading from leveled book tubs including titles such as *The Lemonade Wars*, *Becoming Naomi Leon*, *Kirsten's Surprise*, and *Facts about the Civil War*. The remainder of the students were reading passages from the Civil War and answering written questions independently. The passage was titled *A Soldier's Story*. The seven students who sat with the teacher at her table were told they would be practicing comprehension skills involving oral reading, viewing a picture and then responding to the picture in writing and silent reading. They were taking turns orally reading a passage called "the Civil War." The teacher paused after the first three students read and asked students to turn and talk to their partners and share what they were thinking about the text. One student said it made him "sad to think of how soldiers lived back then." The last four students each read a short paragraph, and the teacher asked students to stop and jot their thoughts in their notebooks. A student from Africa made a connection when the teacher had students view a picture of a soldier near a campsite. He described his experiences with camping and gave vivid details of the campsite in Africa with a tent, sleeping bags, grills for cooking, and poles for fishing. He seemed happy and proud while sharing his connection. The students wrote responses to the picture in journals and shared with each other as they finished. The teacher was able to monitor her groups around the room giving positive praise and answering questions as needed. This lesson met my expectation and I was pleased to hear students actively engaged with text and sharing connections. What was most interesting was the way the students responded and made connections to the soldier's scene. The teaching strategy was unexpected and well-delivered, engaging students with visual literacy and having students speak and write

about the image. The teacher's rapport with her students was very obvious as well including demeanor, class procedures and responding to questions.

During my second observation of Sherry, my expectation upon entering was that I would see a variety of groups working today and independent reading taking place as the teacher had prompted me the morning of the observation. The lesson of independent reading had just started when I walked in. I saw six students reading from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* at their seats, and the group of five in the library all had different books such as *Freedom Quilt*, *The Great Cake Mystery* and *All about Australia*. The SMARTboard had a list of directions for group assignments, and the students seemed aware of where to go and the routine appeared "practiced." Two groups sat down at two tables in the middle of the room and started working on a civil war timeline sheet. The teacher had already given directions for this lesson prior to my arrival. They were labeling dates of major events surrounding the civil war and they were working in pairs. The next group of five was in the library reading independently. Some of these titles included *The Lemonade War*, and *Flat Stanley*, and three students were reading *December Dog*. They were able to choose freely from a variety of books from leveled book tubs. The fourth group was seated at the teacher's reading table, which is where I sat, as I was just close enough to hear and write notes. This lesson started with a quick review of where the group had left off from a previous lesson. The book being used for the lesson was *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. The objective of the lesson was to respond in writing to the text. The teacher started by asking, "Who wants to share thoughts about chapter 16?" One student raised his hand and the teacher called on him to respond. He told about how he thought Augustus "was funny and strange" and that he

was excited to finish the book. Next, Sherry asked the students to make a prediction for the upcoming chapter and write it down in their journal. The students could share their predictions with a partner when they finished writing if they wanted to. Sherry described what the students could write that day such as important words, thoughts they had while reading, questions for the author or a character or just in general about the text. She told them to “stop and jot” meaning that their thoughts did not have to be in a paragraph but that lists or short sentences would be fine. She modeled an example of writing words that might be important in the chapter. She asked, “What do you think about the descriptive words?” “How do you know?” Then she directed the students to “use examples from the text.” One student said, “Augustus was greedy, and he wanted to eat all of the candy.” The group laughed; a female student raised her hand, and the teacher called on her to respond. She said she thought that Augustus was foul because of how he talked in the story “like not being nice to other kids.” The teacher told students to begin reading and “stop and jot” in their journals while reading the next couple of chapters. She allowed time for students to read and write while she called on two students to read out loud with her. The teacher told me ahead of time that these students needed decoding and oral reading practice. Next, the teacher allowed students who wanted to share their writing out loud to take turns reading their written responses. This was informal and student-led. The teacher acknowledged their comments with positive feedback such as “Nice job!” “Good work!” “I like the words you picked.” and “These are good character trait words.” She concluded the lesson by telling the students that they would be reading and writing more during the next lesson and would be focusing on making connections and writing more questions. She told students to switch groups, and students started to rotate to their

next station. I walked around the room to see other groups working on their timelines and reading in the library. The students in the library were browsing through the Australian book tub and the nonfiction book tub as I walked by.

This lesson met my expectation. The guided reading lesson was well-paced, and the students seemed to enjoy the story. Partner work and teacher-led and student-led talks took place within this small group lesson. There were a variety of books for students to read during independent reading time and students seemed aware of class procedures and what was expected. What I found most interesting was the pacing of the literacy block. It was apparent that this teacher had good classroom management and students had respect for her and one another.

During my third visit to Sherry's classroom, the teacher was giving group directions as I walked in and students started moving to their respective stations that were noted on the SMARTboard with directions. One group was at a table researching Hanukkah traditions and writing a comparison of Christmas and Hanukkah. These students were working with a partner. The second group was finishing a civil war timeline skill sheet while working independently at their seats, the third group worked independently in the library reading free choice of texts such as *December Dog*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Holidays around the World*, and *A Chair for my Mother*. The last group of students was with the teacher at the reading table. I pulled a chair close by again to listen and write notes. This lesson started with a quick review of where the group had left off during the prior lesson in the chapter book, *December Dog*.

The objective of the lesson was to identify vocabulary words that suggest the various settings in the book (i.e., Pennsylvania, December, snow). She asked the students

how these words are related. One student responded by saying it snows in December, another said it snows in Pennsylvania and the students laughed. One student whispered, “I wish it would snow here.” The teacher gave quick praise for making connections and asked the students to read out loud one at a time. The students read short parts out loud, then a short paragraph all-together, and, lastly, they read silently on their own. Next, the teacher asked them to find words that suggest the setting for that chapter they were reading and jot the words in their notebook. Next, the teacher called students over to the table and added some of the words students shared out loud, such as frigid, excited, exhausted, epic, illusion, and admirable, to a vocabulary chart. As with the prior observations, the teacher spent time reading one-on-one with students that needed oral reading practice. She checked in with the other groups at end of her lesson and asked students to turn in their notebooks and writing. This lesson met my expectations and involved independent work, small group, and partner talk. What I found most interesting was the way time went so quickly. It reminded me of how much can be accomplished in a short while.

On my fourth visit to the class, I was excited because the (PBL), project based learning, for constructing a water filter was starting. My expectation was that I would see many elements of a CRT lesson. Based on a lesson plan the teacher shared with me. The teacher informed me that they were starting their lesson on helping others around the globe. The grouping was the whole group, and the lesson started with a review of the Helping Haiti school-wide project where students participated in food packing for Haiti. My first impression was that students held a sense of pride as they talked about their ideas of helping, recalling the food-packing day, and, overall, they seemed proud and

excited to help others. While talking in the group they had good responses to share as the teacher reviewed helping Haiti and food-packing: “That was so cool!” “We got to help feed hungry people.” and “I loved working in my team and packing.”

The teacher generated a short class discussion and asked students to think about what it would be like to live without basic necessities such as food and water. She explained that many countries do not have clean water. She explained that today’s lesson would involve listening, viewing, taking notes, and discussing vocabulary words such as filtration and water well. For this lesson, students used journals and viewed a video on the SMARTboard the video’s title was “My Water: A Clean Water Video.” The video started and the teacher paused at various points to explain and ask probing questions such as how many people do you think are affected from drinking unclean water? How do you think other countries can assist? How can one person make a difference? During these pauses, she called on one or two students per question, and kept the video going. At the conclusion of the video, the teacher gave students a couple of minutes to review their notes and add to their notes. She explained that their task for an upcoming lesson was going to be to create an actual water filter that will clean water for drinking. Students were given time to independently sketch ideas they had for creating a filter and were encouraged to share their thoughts of a plan with partner and then in small groups. This PBL lesson met my expectation as it involved technology, global literature, whole group, small group, responsive questioning and partner work of sharing ideas. What I found most interesting was how the task seemed challenging, but the students were eager to ask questions and problem solve ways to make a filter.

During my fifth class visit, the lesson I observed was a continuation of the previous lesson on making a water filter. I arrived when the teacher was giving directions. My expectation was that today's lesson would be active with a lot of student movement and discussion. I also expected there would be review of directions and background of the purpose for making water filters. Today's objective was to work with a partner to figure out a plan for construction for their water filter. My first impression was that students were eager to get with their partners to talk and quickly get materials. A few students raised their hands eagerly asking, "Can I help pass out water bottles?" "I want to pass out filters." "When can we start?" The teacher did not respond to the questions right away. Instead, she raised her hand to get their attention, and then told students to sit quietly and listen for directions. She reminded all of the students that today was a planning day.

Their guiding question for the lesson was "How am I going to impact a global community and create a way to make clean water?" This lesson involved discussion, collaboration, reading notes, and creating a plan. The teacher's role for the day's lesson was to facilitate partner work. She walked around to each table and asked students how they were coming along. She reviewed their plans of construction and asked questions such as "Can you tell me how your filter will work?" "Do you see any possible problems that might affect how your filter works?" and "Can you describe your plan in words?" Students were actively involved. The students had access to their notebooks and Chromebooks. For students who needed extra assistance, the teacher gave some simple ideas to get them started. The teacher was busy checking in and responding to questions and students who wanted to share their ideas with her. As she walked around the class,

she gave examples to students as needed by sketching on the board ideas of how to place the filter. For those who did not need any help she stopped and asked why (or why not) their plan could work. Students were on task and busy assembling their parts.

The lesson concluded with a recap of the lesson's purpose. She reminded students that some countries have limited availability of clean water that has caused illness and even death. Students were quietly listening, and the looks on their faces depicted concern and sadness. She told them at their next lesson they would be actually constructing their filters, and she had all materials assembled on shelves. This lesson met my expectation as students had ample time to listen, review directions, and plan with partners. The lesson was engaging, and all students were on task. It was interesting to me that students had access to the video and discussion but I thought there would be more literary resources such as books, articles, and stories with built in time for reading about the topic of the lesson.

My final observation of Sherry ended with the conclusion of the students' water filter PBL project. My expectation was that today's lesson would be active with a lot of student movement and discussion. My first impression was similar to the prior lesson as students had been planning and talking about making the water filter and they were anxious to get their materials. This PBL project took three class periods. The teacher started by asking students to share some of their notes from the video out loud asking questions such as why was his part important? How is water critical to all people? How can communities help one another? Explain your thinking. She asked students to turn to the pages in notebooks with sketches of designs and then get with their partners. Students sat in various parts of the room at tables or on the carpet. She passed out the

materials of scissors, water bottles, coffee filters, sand, gravel, and cotton. Students used the block of time to talk their plan through, assemble materials, and work on their designs with their partner or on their own. They collaborated with the teacher to explain how their filter would work. The teacher was a facilitator assisting as needed. The students collaborated, discussed, planned and created together. The lesson ended with directions of sharing and displaying filters before the holiday break. The only expectation that was not met during the three-day span of this lesson was the lack of text and literacy resources. Students have built in reading time daily and access to articles, books and online text, which may have offered additional support with the objective of the lesson.

Summary of documents

Three hard copies of lesson plans were collected from Sherry and three electronic lessons displayed on the SMARTboard were recorded in my notes. The first lesson plan correlated with Sherry's small group lesson during my first classroom observation. This lesson plan was a mini-guided reading plan. The objective for the lesson was for the group to make connections with the text and with the pictures. The text used was *A Soldier's Story*. The second lesson plan collected was a guided reading lesson for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. The objective was to respond to the text in writing by writing details and predictions. This lesson plan was used during my second observation of the class. The third document collected was retrieved from the SMARTboard and included a list of adjectives and an anchor chart of words that was used during Sherry's small group lesson on my third visit to her class. The fourth document collected was the lesson plan for the water filter PBL. The objective stated students would understand the effects of environmental changes, adaptations, and

behaviors that enable humans to survive in changing habitats. This lesson plan was used over the course of three lessons. The remaining two documents were retrieved from the SMARTboard and included a link to the video shown to accompany the PBL entitled “A clean water video” and a fifth document had directions for assembling the water filter, which was observed and collected during my last observation. These directions included plans for sketching a design, assembling the filter and completing the reflection at the end on a Google document.

Final summary

Sherry is an experienced teacher with many attributes. Her background as a reading specialist shined through her interactions with students and her curricular delivery. During observations, students had access to a variety of multicultural texts and resources during literacy lessons. Likewise, during each classroom observation, the teacher used a variety of questions to accompany her lessons in whole group and in small group instruction. This was noted in her lesson plans, from interview comments, and also seen during observations. The bulletin boards and classroom decorations also reflected the engaging work that her students have accomplished. Consistent with positive feedback to students and ongoing engaging discussion, Sherry facilitated lessons with varying levels of questions and was diligent in responding to her student’s needs. Additionally, she incorporated strategies gained from PD sessions in her classroom instruction such as a lesson obtained through VIF, the water filter project, and visual literacy strategies obtained from a recent PD session. These aforementioned strategies were noted in interviews and seen in observations. She claimed that she could use additional PD and supportive follow up afterwards regarding how to teach in a culturally responsive

manner, particularly with literacy. Her classroom, however, denoted many of the attributes indicative of a CRT classroom from resources books, displays, and rapport witnessed amongst the students. Sherry taught in a culturally responsive manner by varying her instructional delivery. She claimed that students need to be taught in multiple ways as CRT is more than just knowing about cultures. She exemplified these thoughts in her teaching as she employed a variety of teaching methods including whole group, small group, and partner work while using questions and discussion to guide engagement and learning.

Participant #3: Tracy

Summary of interviews

Tracy is an African American female with twelve years of teaching experience. We started by talking about our day and had a couple of laughs before the interview started. This is my first year of meeting her, so I really have not had much time talking with her since we work in different grade levels. We started by discussing her student population. She describes her student population as “varying reading levels and cultures consisting of Black, White, Indian, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Biracial.” When asked about how she feels prepared to meet her students’ needs, she shared her years of experience along with some PD has prepared her by stating, “My years of teaching and some PD I have had helps but there’s always more to learn.” She described a variety of PD she has had over the years including “guided reading, technology tools like i-Ready® and Dream box and the CRT training here that covered read-alouds, cooperative work and building classroom community.” She offered to share handouts of the recent PD she attended on CRT. When asked how she would describe CRT she noted: “It’s being

mindful of all cultures and don't dwell on stereotypes." Probing questions gave more description such as "It's accepting everyone and making all students feel welcome but also encouraging students to treat each other with respect too." Tracy gives credit to her former school where she gained experiences that inform her definition of CRT. Tracy taught a "very diverse population not only of levels and cultures but high minority and poverty." She mentioned her experiences with PD including "global readiness training and the Deep Equity training and VIF," which has helped prepare her to meet students' varying needs. Specifically she talked about working with students of poverty. She served on a panel in a leadership role at her previous school where she was chosen as a "star teacher of poverty." When asked about weaving PD into instruction she claims it is a natural process. "I think it comes naturally. We respond to students based on what they need and how we can best meet their needs." We talked about the need for resources and she described a need for more books "and maybe more strategies that we can use." These responses led into questions of PD impacting literacy instruction. She claims she has not really seen that connection stating, "I wouldn't say PD really has impacted instruction for me necessarily." She described specific resources she would like to have more of including "more leveled texts for lower level 4th graders and also more cultural books for read-aloud and our class library would be nice." Tracy noted specific strategies, from her professional development experiences. "Reader's workshop training [. . .] was helpful for me and having students work in groups." She claimed that follow-up after this PD was provided by literacy facilitators, which the school she is in now does not have. "We had literacy facilitators follow up and provide additional training for our team, and that was helpful." She was adamant in claiming more follow up with teachers would be helpful

saying “I do have a lot of good resources and strategies that I use, but the PD is sometimes [a] one shot deal; like we don’t hear much about it in between meetings.”

This interview ended with the scheduling of classroom observations that would fit both of our schedules.

Due to Tracy’s schedule, she asked if we could do our second interview before the final scheduled observations. Between holidays and her personal schedule, the best time was during the fifth week of observations. This suited us both fine as I had a chance to see more than half of the scheduled lessons before we met again. Our second interview started off with questions pertaining to PD for CRT specific to literacy instruction. She told me she had not had this type of PD but she has taken bits and pieces from different PDs to help with her teaching such as “research and read-aloud ideas.” She also described online PD, specifically VIF training, which “had a lot of ideas for doing the research of different cultures and also the projects we will do coming up like Haiti food packing and making water filters.” I asked about other PD she has had with CRT that assisted with literacy in some capacity and she explained “ones we have had at school also gave neat ideas for read-aloud like sharing personal culture in the class and reading books about different countries so all students could share something personal or make connections.” These ideas stemmed from PD sessions she attended during the fall of 2016 at the beginning of the school year.

She explained how students enjoy learning about each other’s culture, so she has done interviews in her class where students talk with each other. “They got to ask each other questions about celebrations and family traditions too.” She also explained the her VIF training has provided CRT opportunities that she has integrated into literacy such as

the water filter project, which combines social studies and literacy. When asked to describe any resources or texts which are useful when planning for literacy instruction, Tracy talked about her class library and technology. “I have a lot of personal books.” In addition, she also found that technology was useful too. “Well, I use technology when I can like the SMARTboard for video clips or lessons and games. I like using Discovery education because they have readymade lessons and a lot of videos too.” She also mentioned a need for more resources. “I definitely think we could use more books in the book room to check out for various levels we have in reading blocks.” The next part of our interview focused on how or if PD has been woven into instruction and Tracy mentioned global reading. “That’s an idea I got from a PD last year where students read books from around the globe and then record the titles.”

She also talked about using technology, specifically, CultureGrams for students to research other countries. “It’s easy for kids to use and they can learn a lot. Student’s research and share about other cultures.” In conjunction with CRT and technology, Tracy also mentioned students Skyping. “We do a global read-aloud and Skype with another class in Chicago. It’s a lot of fun.”

The next set of questions focused on CRT in literacy and she mentioned the use of class interviews again claiming that, “this has been a good strategy to help build class rapport. These are ideas we shared at our last PD when we got to plan lessons for upcoming classes.” When asked what aspects of teaching reflect culturally responsive teaching in literacy, Tracy talked about the importance of classroom rapport.

I think for me personally it’s the classroom rapport. We do class community meetings where students take turns each sharing out about whatever they feel is

important and asking other friend if they have questions. It is a nice way to build community.

She also discussed how purposeful planning of read-alouds is beneficial. “I also recognize all cultures by bringing in different books for read-aloud time. This helps with awareness of other cultures.”

Next, we talked about strategies Tracy uses during literacy that address CRT and she reaffirmed the use of multi-cultural books and having students conduct research. Tracy also believes in the value of cooperative work as it contributes to class rapport “working with partners and just having respect and accountability and getting to know each other.” She also employs other grouping in teaching such as whole, peers, or partner work. “I usually do small groups for guided reading and then other groups are rotating through stations.” The interview ended with ideas or needs for future PD that addresses CRT in literacy. Tracy described how she has ideas of her own and those that she has heard from others, but she still would like to know more about CRT. “I would say ‘I would like to know what CRT looks like with ELA.’ Like specifically, and ‘What is the expectation of teachers?’ Like ‘What should we do in ELA that is really culturally responsive?’” We ended the interview by reconfirming my final two class observations of her class, and I thanked her for her time.

Summary of observations

Tracy is a dedicated 4th grade teacher with a “passion for teaching reading.” She has only been teaching reading at this school site for one school year but thoroughly enjoys her class and her colleagues. During my first observation, my expectation was that I would see group work and a variety of multicultural books being accessed during

reading. Tracy had talked with me during our interview about what the lesson she would be teaching. When I walked in the room, the students were seated at five tables in the middle area of the room. Upon entering the classroom, on the left wall there were four large anchor charts hanging above the SMARTboard. There was one anchor chart for literacy with “how to find the main idea” tips, another chart showed the importance of asking questions, which included question stems, and there were two maps of Australia. The bulletin board, near the library, had titles of books that the students have read, from countries around the world. There were strings attached connecting the titles to the countries of origin. The library had three colorful beanbag-style chairs and cushions on the floor for students to use while reading. The library had five bookshelves with baskets of leveled book baskets on each one. The approximate number of books in the library is close to 500. My first impression was that the room was neat and organized.

The lesson started with the teacher calling students to the carpet, in front of the room, to sit for directions. She told students they would be explaining historical events by using a timeline. The text for reading was displayed on the SMARTboard. It was a short passage called *Lincoln's Assassination*, which was a review lesson so students were familiar with the story. The teacher read part of the story to the students out loud and then she asked specific questions such as “How do historians know what they know?” One student said, “They sometimes write about things they have seen in person or things they have read in books.” The teacher nodded and asked, “How do pictures and documents make a story more interesting?” She told students to turn and talk to a partner to explain their thoughts. After students had a chance to talk to partners, she asked students to use their journals to respond to the next questions, “How did people respond

to Lincoln's speech?" and "Based on the story, what does Booth have in common with others who wanted to assassinate Lincoln?" Students took their journals to their seats to write for the next portion of the lesson while the teacher started passing out timelines and changing slides on the SMARTboard. After she had her materials ready, she called on a few students to share their journal responses. One student said, "People liked his speech because they said there was a lot of clapping." Another student said, "Not everyone liked his speech because the story said some newspapers did not give a true story, and I think that's because they didn't like him."

Students worked with a partner to complete a timeline of historical events using the SMARTboard story, chrome books to look up facts and their journals that had notes from a previous lesson as references. They worked in pairs labeling their timelines until the end of the lesson. Five students were in the class library reading books from the leveled book baskets. The seven students who still worked on their timelines worked independently during this part of the lesson and sat at their seats. There were eight students, at their seats, logged onto i-Ready® to work on pre-assigned comprehension skills. Five students walked over to the teacher's table where she told them would be completing a short comprehension quiz based on skills they had practiced on main idea and inferencing. This lesson met my expectation, as I was able to hear and see students discussing their work and working with a partner. It was interesting to see how students connected to the story of Lincoln by listening to the teacher's responses and also to each other during their partner work. The lesson also allowed students to support their reasons through writing and talking. I saw groups working together and was able to observe the teacher facilitate a whole group discussion.

During my next observation of Tracy, my first impression was that students were already engaged and busy as I entered the room. The objective for the lesson was to identify and describe first hand and second hand points of view. The teacher asked students if they had heard of these terms and what they meant. A few students raised their hand and offered suggestions of definitions. The teacher clarified what the terms meant and showed definitions on the board.

She asked students how these different accounts could impact historical events, books, and texts. Students talked with a partner to share responses and I heard one student say, "Sometimes information is not always the real truth." I heard another student say "It gets a little confusing, and if a book is nonfiction, you already start thinking it is true with facts." Next, the students were asked to get with their partners to identify first hand and second hand accounts. The teacher had a variety of books, pictures, and texts, for students to read and sort through. Tracy walked around and asked students to share what they had found and to explain how the resource could be valuable in historical events. This lesson met my expectation as I was planning to see small group instruction and was able to see the lesson and easily hear responses of students while walking around the room during the lesson.

My third observation in Tracy's classroom was a little shorter than prior visits due to a change in class schedule. My expectation was that I would get to see the classroom community-sharing meeting at the start of the literacy lesson. I was excited to see and hear what students shared after hearing the teacher describe how students learn from one another. The students had started a class meeting when I entered and my first impression was that the process seemed well rehearsed. It was apparent that students knew how to

listen and respond to their peers. The teacher explained to me that “students are assigned days to tell a short story, share a photo, or anything they want. They tell why it’s important to them and they call on a couple of people to ask questions.” I was able to hear two students share stories about personal photographs they brought in of their family and one student who had a collector’s baseball card that an uncle had given to him as a gift. Students moved into their groups for the next part of the lesson where the teacher reviewed definitions of primary and secondary sources showing definitions on the SMARTboard. The lesson involved peer work where students got with a partner to complete a graphic organizer called “My thinking and my partner’s thinking.” The students completed these charts while viewing scenes from civil war displayed on the SMARTboard and they also had access to texts about slavery, the Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln. The teacher gave prompts for students to consider while completing the chart together such as

Share how you felt as you read, what you saw in your head, and questions you have. Share what you already know that can help you understand the reading, share what connections you can make to the reading, and share how your thinking has changed.

This lesson did not meet my expectations completely as I thought there would be time allotted for groups. As I was leaving, the teacher met me at the door and said that their schedule was off today and that their group schedule would be on schedule the following day.

During my next visit to Tracy’s room, my expectation was that I would see independent reading time and small group guided reading. As I entered the class, the

teacher was talking with students about a global reading lesson they had completed. She was referencing books they had read that were available in the library to share so students could choose new titles to read during independent reading time. They were discussing the lesson called “sharing of global reading around the world.” This discussion was based on a lesson that the students completed prior in their characters unit. A variety of books were on display of titles from different countries both fiction and nonfiction. She explained to me in person, while students were independently reading, that during the characters unit, students completed an analysis of characters from books that took place around the world. Students worked with partners and were assigned a book from another country. They read it with their partner and completed a character analysis activity that was on display in the hallway. Those books, along with other books that the teacher reads aloud from about other countries, were added to the bulletin boards. She stated that they would continue to add more books as they read them throughout the year. The goal was 40 different books from around the world. Also after reading, students had to complete a “Reading to Become Globally Aware” reflections sheet where they write what they learned about that country and why it is important to learn from other countries here in the United States. She also explained that her class and a class from Chicago connected through Google Hangouts (similar to Skype) to discuss the book and learn about each other's state. They also wrote letters to each other. She said that the students would participate in Global Read Aloud again in the spring. As students read books, the teacher walked around and conferenced asking what they were reading, what the book was mostly about and why they chose it. During this reading time, I was able to see how the teacher facilitates the learning that is based upon rapport building in the

classroom. She closed the lesson by reminding students they will be able to participate in global reading in the spring where they will be able to pen pal and Skype another class of students. This lesson met my expectation and exceeded it because this was the first lesson I have seen that involved global reading and it was very informative.

During my fifth observation, I saw the beginning of the PBL for the water filter project. This was the start of their project of making a water filter so I knew the content would be similar to the other 4th grade class I had visited earlier in the week. Nonetheless, I was excited to see Tracy's delivery for this lesson. My first impression was that the students were pretty excited because they had been given details about today's lesson prior. They knew they would be starting something "new and different," so the feel in the room was high energy. The teacher started the lesson by telling students that they were going to have a chance to use their own imagination and design something very important that many people need. She asked students to get out notebooks for note taking and she played a video. The lesson started as whole group with a review of the Helping Haiti school wide project where students participated in food packing for Haiti. The teacher directed a class discussion and asked students to think about what it would be like to live without basic necessities such as food and water. She referenced prior texts such as *Life in Another Place*, *Friends around the World*, and *Helping Haiti* (a SMARTboard passage) that they had read prior and asked students to empathize what life would be like without such a major necessity such as water. She explained that many countries do not have clean water. She explained that today's lesson would involve listening, viewing a video and taking notes.

She gave students a chance to “turn and talk,” and tell why clean water is so important for all people. For this lesson, students used journals and watched a video. The video’s title was “My Water: A Clean Water Video.” During the video, the teacher paused at various points to address vocabulary words such as contamination, filtering system, and reservoir. The students were told to jot the words in their journals and to write down definitions based on the images from the video. After the video, the teacher told students to write down notes they wanted to add in journals and also the words filtration and water well. She showed images of these and called on students to give definitions out loud. Next students wrote their own definition in their journals. At the end of the lessons, she explained they would assemble and create their water filters during the next class. This lesson met my expectation and it was good to see a variation of a similar lesson.

During my last visit to Tracy’s classroom, my expectation was that I would see group work today and a variety of multicultural books being accessed during reading. The lesson started with the teacher calling students to the carpet. She told them they would be reviewing historical events on their timeline. The text for reading was displayed on the SMARTboard. It was a short passage of Lincoln’s assassination and this was a review lesson so students were familiar with the story. The teacher read part of the story to the students out loud and she asked specific questions such as how do historians know what they know? One male said, “They sometimes write about things they have seen in person or things they have read in books.” The teacher nodded and asked, “How do pictures and documents make a story more interesting?” She told students to turn and talk to a partner to explain their thoughts. After students had a

chance to talk to their partners, she asked the students to use their journals to respond to the next question “How did people respond to Lincoln’s speech?” and “Based on the story, what does Booth have in common with others who wanted to assassinate Lincoln?” She called on a few students to share their journal responses. One female student said, “People liked his speech because they said there was a lot of clapping.” Another student (a male) said, “Not everyone liked his speech because the story said some newspapers did not give a true story. I think that’s because they didn’t like him.” Many students wanted to add to the discussion and share so the teacher gave everyone a chance to talk at their tables and share their journal responses. After this part of the lesson, the students moved into small group works that consisted of two groups in independent reading with culture books, i-Ready®, and the remainder worked on completion of their timelines. The students reading independently were choosing from nonfiction books about different countries. Students had a book review to complete after reading that asked where the story takes place, new facts learned about the country and why is important that we know this information. This lesson met my expectation because student’s discussion and partner work allowed them to connect to the story of Lincoln by giving their opinion and supporting their reasons through writing and talking. I was also able to see students reading multicultural nonfiction text with an accountability sheet.

Summary of documents

The first document collected was electronic copy of SMARTboard notes displaying the text of Lincoln’s Assassination with a copy of a timeline. Directions were oral and noted on the SMARTboard. Students were asked to read the text on the board and use the timeline provided in their journal to complete events listed in the text. The

second document collected was also from the SMARTboard and listed vocabulary words of first and second hand account. The SMARTboard also displayed images and pictures as students were told to label first and second hand accounts in their journals. The third document collected was a copy of a blank graphic organizer used to guide the lesson of “Organize my thinking.” The students completed these charts while viewing scenes from civil war displayed on the SMARTboard, and they also had access to texts of slavery, Civil War, and Abraham Lincoln. The organizer was broken into four parts of thinking, schema, connections, and synthesizing. The directions stated “Share how you felt as you read, what you felt, and questions you have.” “Share what you already know that can help you understand the reading.” “Share what connections you can make to the reading.” and “Share how your thinking has changed.”

The fourth and fifth documents collected were the lesson plans for the water filter PBL. The objective stated students would understand the effects of environmental changes, adaptations, and behaviors that enable humans to survive in changing habitats. This lesson plan was used for three lessons as the PBL was a three-day project, and I was able to observe two of these lessons. The last document collected was an accountability sheet that accompanied a small group lesson. The sheet had four questions for students to answer after reading a nonfiction book about another culture. These questions asked for the title and author, the country where the story takes place, three new facts that the students learned, and why it was important that we, in the United States, learn about this country and other countries.

Final summary

Across data collection, Tracy consistently emitted characteristics of a culturally responsive teacher. The physical setting of her room, student work displayed and lesson plans depicted regular use of multicultural texts and global nonfiction resources. Likewise, her observations were indicative of a classroom community that fostered discussion with varying levels of questioning seen and heard throughout lessons. Her vibrant personality and rapport with students were strong qualities in her classroom. During our first interview, Sherry attested that “All students can be successful.” This quote sums up Sherry’s overall demeanor, as she was consistent with those positive feelings regarding teaching literacy. Interviews with Sherry suggested a sense of pride and confidence in teaching. I noticed this through the lessons that I observed, the lesson plans that I collected, and while I watched her “in action” with students; she seemed prepared and “at ease.” Always smiling and positive with remarks, Sherry exhibited this same rapport in her classroom setting with students. Ideas obtained from PD sessions were discussed in interviews, seen in lessons and noted in student work samples in the classroom. This was particularly notable through the PBL lesson using water filters, which was lesson derived from online PD that Sherry completed with her grade level. Comments concerning the need for additional training in CRT are substantiated as she claimed additional follow up from PDs would be helpful and resources to support the teaching of CRT are needed. She also admitted to a sense of uncertainty as she thought feedback from those observing could be meaningful to either affirm or make suggestions regarding how to teach in a CRT manner. However, Tracy’s teaching was reflective of many of the characteristics of CRT in her delivery of literacy instruction, specifically in

the way she interacted with her students, resources used and how she conducted regular classroom community meetings. Tracy's definition of CRT extended beyond her classroom and included a comprehensive global sense of learning. By connecting with schools around the world, Tracy's students were able to share books and engage with a variety of students. This unique engagement offers a multitude of benefits for all involved.

Summary of PD Agendas for Participants

The following PD agendas were collected from the school: Personal Growth Experience, Deep Equity, and Visual Literacy. The PD conducted in the spring 2016, however, was reviewed for all staff at the start of the school year as PD objectives for the school year were presented. The agenda for the Personal growth PD from spring 2016 had a challenge as the objective of the PD. The challenge was stated to "Create your own personal growth experience." Pictures were included in the handouts of staff attending local Indian festivals such as Holi Festival and Festival of India. The discussion was focused on stereotypes and how teachers feel about their stereotypes and how this can translate into beliefs held toward other staff, families or students. The group activity consisted of grade levels grouping together to list typical stereotypes of various cultures. Then participants walked around to label their thoughts on large chart paper. The reflection question was "In what ways were authentic relationships or cultural competence either missing or present in the challenges you discussed with your groups?" The challenge was restated at the end to encourage staff to try an authentic meal from another culture or attend a local cultural festival and then share experiences with other staff. This session was held during a half day of planning and lasted about two hours

with a small break in the middle. A review of the spring 2016 PD was done at the start of this school year. An invitation was extended once again for all staff to experience another culture by attending a festival or trying a new food from another culture. Different administrators and staff shared ideas to encourage everyone to experience another culture.

The Deep Equity PD agenda included defining deep equity, describing the difference between race and culture and view a list of differences and describe which one has been the greatest challenge in your life. All discussions started out in small groups seated at tables, then individuals shared out loud and leaders recorded responses. The lenses of differences included: age, religion, disability, values, appearance, personality, learning styles, gender, economics, culture, role, education level, sexual orientation, family background, race, language, accent, status, body size, politics, and other. After small group discussions and a few people sharing their responses out loud, the leaders of the session offered a short break. The last part of the PD session was a read-aloud of the book *Only One You*. The leader read the book and then discussed how we as adults can relate to the story and so can students. The idea was that we are alike and unique. The activity involved painting a rock and the leaders invited teachers to do the lesson with students.

The third PD agenda collected was a Visual Literacy PD consisting of a one-hour session held after school. This agenda included a link to a Ted Talk video, which all participants viewed that focused on how perceptions vary and listening is key. The next part was a reading from novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice. The activity was a visual literacy lesson where

images were shown of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. All participants had viewed the pictures and then shared their perceptions with a partner. The PD session was brief but provided all participants a tool to use with visual literacy. Small groups shared how this lesson could be used in all grade levels.

Analysis

Ezzy (2002) describes thematic analysis as an inductive method of finding patterns in text. The first step in this process is open coding where the researcher creates categories based upon patterns presented in the text. The text, therefore, guides the analysis. For this study, texts such as lesson plans for literacy instruction and professional development handouts were analyzed for patterns. During data collection, the following themes emerged multicultural literature, acceptance of others, cooperative learning, technology, and lack of resources. Each theme related to one or more of the research questions. Transcripts of the interviews were coded for context and meaning, noting themes, patterns, and differences. After transcribing, I read all interviews highlighting noteworthy points. Specifically, I used the open coding method to note the three teacher participants' responses. Line-by-line coding was employed next, which allowed for additional insight. Observation protocols, documents, and field notes were reviewed concurrently and analyzed to provide the necessary details, which supported the analysis. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) describe field notes as both data and analysis explaining, observations are not data unless they are recorded in field notes (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Lesson plans, professional development agendas, and handouts were the primary documents for the study. Content analysis was used to tie these documents to research questions. Documents were examined noting connections, themes, and patterns

as related to the research questions. Organization of data collection was significant to the study, therefore, a crosswalk was used to stay organized and efficient during analysis. To that end, inter-rater reliability was employed with a colleague to ensure accuracy and validity in identified codes and themes. We agreed on all themes precisely.

Each participant was interviewed two times, classroom observations occurred between interviews, and documents were collected throughout the study allowing for triangulation. Maxwell (2013) claims triangulation reduces the risk of chance associations and biases. Triangulation was used to ensure the analysis was comprehensive and well-developed. Data retrieved from interviews, observations and documents allowed for rich interpretation of data.

Each theme related to one or more of the research questions. The theme of lack of resources related to each teachers' experiences with PD and CRT. The themes of multicultural literature and cooperative learning links to teachers' instructional practices in literacy and the theme of acceptance of others corresponds to how teachers defined CRT as well as how teachers described their implementation of CRT in literacy instruction.

Multicultural Literature

Multicultural literature was the second theme, which emerged through interviews, observations, lesson plans, and PD sessions. In all three of the participants' classrooms, a variety of multicultural and global texts was seen in the libraries, on display, in book tubs, and in small group instruction. Andrea shared the value of using multicultural texts with students. "I read books with setting of other countries; it's good for students to see themselves in stories through characters so we can all relate." Sherry echoed the

response with “I include different books in my library and for read-aloud so we can learn about other cultures in literature.” Sherry claimed that, “bringing other cultures to lessons like with multicultural books benefits all students.” She mentioned a lesson where a student from Kenya made personal connection,

We read a book from Kenya, and one of my students got excited because she’s from Kenya, and she was able to relate to a part when they talked about chocolate; it made her feel good to relate and share this with other students.

Additionally, all participants acknowledged the importance of using multicultural texts with research. Andrea mentioned this important resource in research topics. “I have used books that teach about Asian endangered animals and also articles.” Moreover, Sherry talked about texts that she used in a recent PBL. “I use lots of multicultural books that connect to topics we are working on like the VIF water filter lesson plan where we used nonfiction books and articles from other countries.” As seen in observations of all three participants’ classrooms, students read multicultural texts online through Discovery Education and CultureGrams™s. They also had access to a variety of texts in their class libraries. Andrea’s class is studying Asia so she uses a variety of books in class and multicultural text online. She related, “I use books that have different pictures of Asia, and we use these as read-alouds,” and “Students also read on CultureGrams and in Discovery Education about students from around the world.” When discussing fairy tales, Andrea claimed, “During our fairy tales unit we are comparing *The Russian Cinderella* to *Yeh Shen*.”

PD sessions also included multicultural texts. The Deep Equity PD session used the story *Only One You*, which was read and shared as a lesson to use for students

describing acceptance and uniqueness. In the Personal Growth Experience PD, “The Danger of a Single Story” was read and discussed with staff to promote thinking about authentic relationships and cultural competence. Andrea and Sherry referenced the PD stating, “I have used the book *Only One You* with my students.” Neither had done the rock painting activity that was shared in the PD, but both said that they adapted the activity to include talks with peers about ways we are unique. Andrea claims multicultural reading is part of her students’ day “We read books from Russia and other Asian books during independent reading time,” and “I use books from other cultures during my read-aloud time.” During observations of Andrea’s classroom students were seen reading nonfiction books from Asia, and leveled book tubs had a variety of multicultural books such as Asian fairy tales and nonfiction texts about different continents. Sherry describes the value of these books “I read a lot of cultural books to access prior knowledge,” and “We read books from countries represented in our class.” Andrea specified books her students enjoyed recently such as *One Thousand Paper Cranes*, which takes place in Japan as well as several African folk tales. Interviews and observations suggest Tracy takes pride in her bulletin board with titles read of books from Australia and admits to needed more books for students to access. In an observation, Tracy talked about sharing global stories from around the world by Skyping with a class in Chicago. She said, “My students love this and enjoy reading books from around the world that they can share with other students.”

In classroom observations, I saw students from all three classrooms reading books from around the globe such as *Yeh Shen*, *Egyptian Cinderella*, *Panda Short*, *Tikki Tikki Tembo*, *Down Under*, *Five Chinese Brothers*, and *Oma*. Andrea uses multi-cultural text

to teach character analysis claiming, “It helps when students can see themselves in characters from other places.” In Sherry and Tracy’s classrooms, student wrote reflections after reading books from other countries to share with members in their small group. Tracy calls it “reading to become globally aware about life in another place.” All three participants also recognized the value of reading stories out loud to students so they can “see and hear” about people from other places. The multicultural books seemed plentiful although some teachers claimed more books are needed.

Acceptance of Others

The next theme, acceptance of others, was revealed across data collected. Andrea talked about why acceptance is important. “We have a diverse group, but we bring culture into our lessons to help with acceptance.” Sherry shared the value of acceptance claiming, “We have learned the value of building background knowledge and filling in missing parts like with picture walks and vocabulary that supports and the power of collaboration within the students.” Andrea also mentions collaboration including rapport, “I like to build rapport in my class so we can understand how we are unique and different.” Sherry claims that activities help with acceptance amongst class members. “We shared findings on research we did on our own names. Students shared their findings in small groups and felt proud.”

Andrea agrees stating, “It’s good for students to hear about each other and to build respect for each other; CRT covers more than culture but being kind of responsive to students’ needs.” Andrea and Sherry both talked about how students connect when they have acceptance of one another. Andrea responded that, “students share something special when they connect to characters through stories and share that with each other.”

Sherry shared similar feelings. “Students need the chance to hear books and see videos of what life is like in other places as this can build acceptance.” Observations in Sherry and Tracy’s classrooms confirmed the teachers’ role in building acceptance amongst students. Sherry validated students’ feelings by asking questions in small group discussions such as “What do you think and why do you think [that]?” and Tracy asked “Can you tell me more?” and “Why do you think [that]?” when facilitating a book talk in a small group. She said that this gets them “comfortable sharing with classmates and learning to accept each other’s thoughts and work together.”

Sherry discussed the value of building acceptance in groupwork: “You can’t just teach one way because we all come from different places; I do a lot of class building rapport like interviews.” To that end, Tracy described how PD impacts acceptance of others. She reflected on a past PD session, “In PD we learned about writing poems called ‘I am;’ students did this in my class and shared with others and it was a meaningful way to learn about one another.” The theme of acceptance emerged again as Andrea talked about acceptance and doing research saying, “Students can deepen their understanding and see others in a different way when they research and share findings about different cultures by talking with a partner or in their small groups.” Sherry echoed these feelings stating that “conversations with questions deepens their understanding to see people in a different way. And that builds acceptance.” As well, Tracy stated that, “it’s important to not dwell on stereotypes and to be mindful of all students.” Tracy claims, “This builds respect and students can share personal culture and make personal connections.” In the Deep Equity PD, staff listened to poems and wrote their own short poems to share with partners. Andrea reflected on this activity explaining, “We shared personal stories to

build acceptance of each other, and build personal rapport with each other.” Tracy said that the PD connects with something she already does.” I think classroom community meetings builds rapport and acceptance; we also do classroom interviews with each other.”

Andrea and Sherry attended the PD session Personal Growth Experience, which focused on the theme of acceptance of others. As noted in PD agendas, this theme was explored as staff were encouraged to try a new ethnic food or attend a cultural festival with a family from school. Invitations were extended from school families to join in religious Indian festivals and Chinese New Year celebrations, and these invitations were shared by the teachers. Staff collaborated to decide how they would experience another culture. Some ideas shared included visiting an authentic restaurant, having parents from different cultures share recipes for teachers to try with their colleagues, attend local festivals, and read new multicultural books that can be shared with students.

The theme of acceptance emerged in the Deep Equity PD also. All participants attended the Deep Equity PD, which explored culture versus race. Members talked about their personal culture with small groups and discussed ideas of how to add equity into teaching practices. Poetry was used as a way to teach others about personal culture. The book *Only One You* was read out loud by a teacher and then she instructed staff to do an activity of painting rocks to demonstrate unique qualities we have. The agenda suggested this as a lesson to take back to the classroom for all grade levels.

Cooperative Learning

The theme of cooperative learning emerged through data collection in several ways. In interview conversations Andrea described ways her students work together,

“We bring culture into our class like when we do class interviews in small groups” and referenced a past PD session stating, “CRT training helped me understand the topic better and gives good ideas for student learning in projects.” Tracy also referenced a particular PD session in regard to the theme of cooperative learning. “The PD Personal Growth Experience gave ideas about using partners and group work not just for assignments but for building classroom community.” Tracy mentioned literacy lessons in regard to cooperative learning. “Grouping my students and working with partners is part of how I teach literacy in CRT manner,” and “Students work a lot in pairs doing research on computers; they love working in partners and we do group work every day.” Andrea shared a lesson plan for endangered animals and explained “Students worked with a partner to look up facts and create reports together.” In Andrea’s class, students also worked together in small groups to make posters of good citizenship. Andrea claimed that “students often work in partners and share in small groups; they also enjoy when they can do research.”

Cooperative work was observed often in Andrea’s room when students worked with partners to read about pandas, tigers, and gazelles from Asia and during partner work when students responded to literature and had “turn and talk” opportunities to explain their thinking. Sherry uses this strategy often as well “We have a lot of practice working with groups and in partners; they share with partners to see what is alike and different in their written responses.” Themes of cooperative work emerged through examples shared from PD. Sherry also noted a previous PD session when she said, “We do a lot of partner work with writing, which they talked about in our last PD,” and “we do a lot of turn and talk and work in small groups, which helps to add to conversations we

have in class; I use small groups to help build trust within the classroom.” Sherry and Tracy both claimed that small group work gets students talking to each other. Both teachers mentioned this in reference to their VIF PD where they got the lesson for water projects that required their students to work together to design and make clean drinking water filters. In The Personal Growth Experience PD, cooperative learning was employed as grade levels defined and discussed acceptance and stereotypes. This was an informal conversation, but all members of the group shared oral and written responses in small groups.

Technology

The next theme of technology surfaced across the data in interviews, observations, lessons, and PDs. Naturally, cooperative learning, integration, and technology appeared together as well. Sherry and Tracy both integrate social studies into literacy and “use partner work daily.” In class observations, I noted how students in all three classrooms worked in partners to do historical timelines, graphic organizers, and blend space reading sharing computers. Andrea “We use technology to research topics like our PBL endangered animals of Asia; students made PowerPoints and Prezis of their endangered Asian animal research.” Tracy referenced PD, “I learned about different PBLs in VIF online training, and we used Chromebooks to research our own names.” Andrea and Sherry shared how their students love CultureGrams. Sherry stated, “We use CultureGrams to research other kids from around the globe, listen to them speak, and watch interviews to learn more about other cultures.” Sherry uses Discovery Education for various lessons. “I use Discovery Education video clips to learn about other cultures.” She also said that “students can make posters and power points to share their research on

topics we are studying.” Data confirmed that all classrooms use Chromebooks often. Andrea uses technology so students can “do research like when they studied endangered animals and then typed their reports.” Additionally, data in lesson plans showed students work on i-Ready® daily and use Chromebooks to conduct research in social studies lessons. Observations confirmed this as I noticed students using computers to access Blend spaces for NC government information, games for a review of skills, comprehension practice, vocabulary building, and word processing for final products such as typed reports.

Themes of technology used in PDs were described also. Sherry explained that, “in our VIF training online this year, we learned new ideas for PBLs.” Tracy talked about visual literacy PD, “I used my SMARTboard to show images of Dr. Martin Luther King and got ideas from the visual literacy we learned in PD this year.” Other examples of technology were seen across the data such as the water filter video, social studies projects on citizenship, Asian animals in Blendspace links, VIF PD online, and Discovery Education for literacy and Social Studies.

The technology theme was also noted in the PD agenda of the “personal growth experience” when technology was used to share an online story called “The Danger of a Single Story.” The question groups answered after the viewing was, “How were authentic relationships missing or present in discussion with group members?” was recorded on chart paper and then shared with the whole group. Similarly, all participants attended a PD session on visual literacy, which utilized technology as well. Two black and white images of Dr. Martin Luther King were displayed on a SMARTboard for staff to compare and discuss the perceptions and differences between the two photos with a

partner. Per the agenda, the message shared was, “If we hear a single story, we risk a critical misunderstanding.” Technology was one of the themes present in this PD, and all participants reported trying the visual literacy strategy in literacy.

Lack of Resources

The final theme that emerged from data was the theme of resources, specifically, a lack of resources. With all three participants, this theme was revealed through interview comments such as “more books and resources such as lessons are needed” and “I think we need more cultural resources like books.” Andrea and Sherry emphasized the need for more lessons and texts in the school bookroom stating that, “we need more books in our book room, and we need ready-made lesson plans for CRT that are accessible and don’t cost a lot.” Sherry and Tracy mentioned the need for global books stating that “we also need more books and resources for CRT lessons,” and “we need more global lessons to use.” In addition to requesting books and lessons, all three participants shared a need for strategies to use. Andrea expressed a need for strategies. “We need more resources and strategies to weave into our lessons.” While observations suggested classroom libraries were extensive and full of a variety of genres and texts, all participants stated a need for more books and variety of texts for classroom use. Tracy expressed a need for more CRT materials to use with lessons and small group books such as leveled guided reading texts. Lastly, all three teachers stated a need for books to support CRT and more resources in the classroom to support what has been suggested in PD s sessions attended.

Data Linked to Research Questions

Q1: How do Teachers Define CRT?

Gay (2000) defines CRT as combining cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles of diverse students to make learning more effective for them. One component of CRT includes the use of multicultural literature in classroom.

Multicultural literature refers to narrative stories, folktales, or poetry that includes themes, images, characters and dialogues from various cultures. By including multicultural literature, students can meaningfully connect familiar sociocultural themes found in the text with their own life experiences. This practice is a good way to activate students' background knowledge and increase motivation (McCollin & O' Shea, 2005; Vacca, R., Vacca, J., & Mraz, 2016). CRT also encompasses the use a variety of texts for read-alouds, independent reading, and collaborative work. In the classroom to promote culturally responsive teaching, teachers employ the use of multicultural texts that have characters of various backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1995; McCollin & O' Shea, 2005).

In response to question one, each participant revealed varying definitions of CRT. Andrea described CRT as “a way of showing respect to students by bringing in other cultures to lessons” and by “reading books from other cultures that represent students in my class.” Sherry defined CRT as “being aware and thinking of how things affect students. There are lots of pieces to consider when teaching in a CRT manner; CRT has to do with how you teach to all populations.” Tracy explained CRT as “being mindful of all cultures and not dwelling on stereotypes; it’s about accepting everyone and encouraging students to treat others with respect, and using books to bring culture into lessons too.” While definitions between participants varied, each shared the idea that

CRT involves acceptance and being respectful when teaching all students. Acceptance and respectfulness were denoted through classroom observations as the use of multicultural literature and cooperative learning were employed. As noted in classroom observations of Andrea, Sherry, and Tracy, all classrooms displayed books representative of various countries. Specifically books from the continents of Asia and Australia were present along with various titles globally. In Andrea's classroom, books describing the daily life of Russia and China were in a nonfiction book basket being used by a small group during a classroom observation. Asian fairy tales such as *Yeh Shen* and *The Russian Cinderella* were being compared and contrasted along with *The Egyptian Cinderella*. In Tracy's definition of CRT, she mentioned being mindful of all cultures. Andrea used a global reading initiative with students who read stories from around the world and Skyped with another classroom in Chicago to talk about the books. Additionally, as noted in lesson plans and during class observations, Tracy used book reviews as accountability sheets for students to record the importance of learning about other countries. This supports her thoughts, shared in the interview, of her definition of CRT, which include bringing cultures into lessons. Sherry's classroom also exhibited a wide use of global literature, as she is mindful of the influence of culture in the classroom. Observations and lessons denote a variety of texts available in her class such as independent book choices, small group guided reading and as supplemental resources for lessons such as Civil War research and clean water filter projects.

Extending the definition of CRT, another element is cooperative learning (Callins, 2004). Rather than encouraging a sense of competitiveness among students, collaborative learning strategies inspire teamwork with various assignments (Callins,

2004; Reyes & Molner, 1999); Diaz, 2001). Andrea also mentioned the “value of recognizing how we are unique and different, which can be taught through groups or partner work.” Sherry shared similar beliefs explaining that, “I use partner work daily, and I love teaching in small groups; students gain a lot by the conversations they have with each other, which promotes cultural awareness.” Tracy is aware of ways to encourage a community of learners. “Building rapport with students can be encouraged from working with partners and in small groups and also through classroom community building.” She does class community meetings daily where students can stand and share a picture or short story prior to the literacy lesson starting. Tracy also employs daily partner and small group work as students respond in writing to text and share ideas as prompted by the teacher during literacy lessons. Recognizing cultural differences and fostering positive rapport with students can reap positive outcomes with instruction. Supportive of this concept, Bui and Fagon (2013) found culturally responsive teachers negotiate classroom cultures by embracing sociocultural realities and histories of students through chosen curriculum and purposefully planned delivery.

Q 2: What are Teachers’ Professional Development Experiences with CRT?

The knowledge that teachers need to have about cultural diversity goes beyond awareness and respect for ethnic groups’ different values. In developing a knowledge base for CRT, acquiring comprehensive factual information about different ethnic groups is vital. CRT helps to bridge different ways of knowing and engages students from dissimilar cultures in demonstrating their abilities of language and communication to navigate their everyday lives (Kozleski, 2005). All participants have participated in different CRT PD sessions at their current school. In response to Q2, Andrea and Sherry

both attended the PD session on Personal growth experience in spring of 2016. In this session, staff listened to an online story called “The Danger of a Single Story.” This session was held during a half day of planning and lasted about two hours with a small break in the middle. The challenge stated was to “create your own personal growth experience.” The discussion focused on stereotypes and how teachers feel about their stereotypes and how this can translate into beliefs held toward other staff, families or students.

All participants reported attending the Deep Equity training held in the fall of 2016. This agenda included defining deep equity, describing the difference between race and culture and discussing a list of differences such as age, religion, culture, race, status, body size, and language to name a few. Participants described, in small groups, which one has been the greatest challenge in their lives. All discussions started out in small groups seated at tables, then individuals shared out loud and leaders recorded responses. Andrea and Sherry said this PD was helpful in learning about one another. Tracy said that it was “awkward at first,” but she enjoyed the group talks she shared at her table. All participants stated that they recognized differences and similarities with other staff during this session of PD. Andrea, Sherry, and Tracy also attended the winter 2017 PD session on Visual literacy. This agenda included a link to a Ted Talk video, which all participants viewed that focused on how perceptions vary and how listening is key to understanding others. The next part of the PD was a reading from novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who told the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice. The activity was a visual literacy lesson where images were shown and partners talked about perceptions and differences.

Q3: How does Professional Development Impact Teachers' Implementation of CRT in Literacy Instruction?

Professional development can help teachers build their knowledge of CRT. Aujla-Bhullar (2011) claims discourse of diversity and globalization are becoming progressively significant to address the ever-changing demographics of classrooms and schools and teachers require training to meet student's needs. There can be positive student gains as teachers become aware of the role of culture through instruction. Supportive of this notion, Rogoff (2003) suggests professional learning for CRT is grounded in research on teacher learning that is aware of the role culture plays in the knowledge that educators bring to their profession.

In regard to Q3, Sherry referenced the Deep Equity PD stating, "I have used the book *Only One You* with my students." Tracy has used similar lessons as well. While neither has done the rock painting activity that was shared in the PD, both said they adapted the activity to include talks with peers about ways we are unique. Andrea said she enjoyed the book and will try the painting activity in the spring when the weather is better for outdoor painting.

Tracy expressed getting new ideas to use as research projects based on a recent PD CRT (Deep Equity) training helped me understand the topic better and gave good ideas for student learning in projects. Sherry also noted a PD session in regard to the theme of cooperative learning, "the PD Personal Growth Experience gave ideas about using partners and group work not just for assignments but for building classroom community." Q3 was also addressed when Sherry spoke of reading to her class, Sherry When we talked about ideas for using read-alouds in a global way, she referenced her PD

session on Deep Equity and discussed the cultures represented in her class “African, Asian, Chinese and Indian and Hispanic too.” Tracy also reconfirmed PD as helpful, “global readiness training and the Deep Equity training and VIF has helped prepare me to meet students’ varying needs.” Lastly, in response to the visual literacy PD session, all participants shared that they have used the lesson in literacy following the PD. Andrea retrieved her own images of a Chinese girl on a bridge, while Sherry and Tracy used photos of Dr. Martin Luther King as shared from the PD session.

Q4: How do Teachers Implement CRT in Literacy Instruction?

Research suggests that providing literacy instruction that is culturally responsive fosters high achievement among culturally and linguistically diverse students and teachers who embrace CRT can promote reading achievement among students who are culturally diverse (Hale, 2001; Padron et al., 2012). CRT helps to link varied ways of knowing and engages students from different cultures through language and communication in everyday lives (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Cooperative learning- Rather than encouraging a sense of competitiveness among students, collaborative learning strategies inspire teamwork with various assignments (Callins, 2004; Reyes & Molner, 1999; Diaz, 2001).

All participants were noted in observations and through lesson plans as using journals during literacy lessons. Observations indicated written response to text, sharing journal writing with a partner and taking notes while viewing video clips. Research suggests this as an element of CRT and suggests having students respond in writing to make connections to characters, story plots, free writing, reflections of experiences, and answer questions about texts. (Bui & Fagan 2013). Another aspect of CRT in literacy

includes interviews, (Bui & Fagon, 2013; Hale, 2001). Andrea and Sherry discussed how their class is accustomed to interviewing each other, and this strategy was employed during their literacy blocks. Observations and interviews confirm this practice. Andrea shared that her “students enjoy learning about each other cultures in interviews “and Tracy stated that “class interviews help build rapport and classroom community.” Research also suggests that poetry is a valuable component in a CRT classroom. By reading a variety of poems, students have a chance to explore different ways of expressing themselves. Poems can be written individually or with a partner and read aloud to the class. This collaboration promotes rapport within class culture, which supports CRT practices (Rasinski, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2005). Andrea, Sherry, and Tracy all reported using poems with students following a PD session that introduced “I am” poetry. Andrea stated that, “this was a good way for students to learn about each other.” Andrea said, “My kids like reading poems our loud. This was fun because it was their own writing.” Other validation responses included “the best part was sharing,” and “my class enjoyed reading their poems with a friend.” As well, Sherry referenced the Deep Equity PD session where she received the idea of writing poems about one’s culture. She enjoyed this activity during the PD so she tried it with her class stating that the outcome was positive. “This was a neat way to learn about other people so my students listed characteristics of their family/culture and then made it into a poem.” She said that her students like reading poems, and writing them can be challenging, but personal poetry was meaningful and not as difficult.

Summary

Chapter 4 describes the setting of this study and the background of the selected teacher participants. Detailed descriptions of each case study are presented including a summary of interviews, observations, and documents collected for analysis. Research questions are used to guide the analysis as themes are linked to results. During data collection, the following themes emerged: lack of resources, multicultural literature, and acceptance of others, cooperative learning, and technology. Each theme related to one or more of the research questions. The theme of lack of resources related to each teachers' experiences with PD and CRT. The themes of multicultural literature and cooperative learning links to teachers' instructional practices in literacy and the theme of acceptance of others corresponds to how teachers defined CRT as well as how teachers described their implementation of CRT in literacy instruction. Teachers' experiences with CRT and the connection of professional development into literacy practices were noted in observations, interviews, PD agendas and lesson plans. Across data, all participants expressed a collective need for additional PD in CRT, follow up for support and affirmation, more resources including texts, books of various levels that can be used in literacy lessons, and readily available lessons. While all classrooms exhibited many characteristics of a CRT classroom, each teacher suggested a need for affirmation that levels of expectations regarding teaching were being met.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION and IMPLICATIONS

Overview

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the study on the impact of teachers' knowledge and professional development experiences on the culturally responsive teaching practices they implement in literacy education. This chapter delivers a discussion of the implications based on the data and recommendations for future research in the area of professional development for culturally responsive teaching in literacy instruction. Conclusions are based on the data presented in Chapter 4.

Culturally Responsive Teaching is not only a pedagogy but also a way of thinking, teaching, and reaching all students while recognizing the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRT helps connect different ways of knowing and engages students of all cultures in demonstrating proficiency in literacy skills. While CRT is noted as a necessary component in teaching today's diverse population of students, teachers often have different definitions and knowledge of how to teach in this manner. Many educators would agree that effective teaching requires mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills. However, as Gay (2000) suggests there seems to be some disconnect with regard to delivery of instruction when teachers are inadequately prepared to deliver CRT. This is where effective PD plays a vital role in disseminating the knowledge that teachers need in a manner that fosters ongoing support. Research suggests that teachers need metacognitive strategies to gain awareness, not only of their own knowledge and

skills in the classroom, but also of the efficacy of their activities on students' learning (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 2000). PD should include practical strategies for classroom teachers incorporating culturally responsive delivery of instruction, which focuses on literacy (Cardelle-Edwards, 1992; Gay, 2000; Gay, 2010; Nieto, 2000).

There exists a need for changes in PD that fosters CRT and includes a focus on literacy. As well, there is a need for follow-up support to ensure that teachers have the needed resources to be successful in teaching in a culturally responsive manner and employing the strategies that promote CRT in a literacy classroom.

This study was designed to examine teachers' knowledge and experiences with PD on CRT and how that translated into their literacy instruction. The following questions guided the study:

1. How do teachers define CRT?
2. What are teachers' professional development experiences with CRT?
3. How does professional development impact teachers' implementation of CRT in literacy instruction?
4. How do teachers describe their implementation of CRT in literacy instruction?

Chapter 4 discussed methodology used for this study. There were three participants who were interviewed at the start of the study and once again after observations were completed in their classrooms. The researcher observed each participant six times over the course of seven weeks. In addition to interviews and observations, documents such as lesson plans and professional development agendas were collected. Data were coded, and the following five major themes surfaced: cultural literature, acceptance, cooperative work, technology, and resources. Chapter 4 also

connected the guiding research questions. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the findings based on the data analysis in Chapter 4. This chapter begins with a summary of the findings followed by the impact of the results of this study. Possibilities for future research are discussed as well.

Findings

The primary focus of this study was to explore three elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT and examine how professional development impacted their implementation of CRT practices in their literacy instruction. These teachers were interviewed and observed teaching literacy in their classrooms. Documents were collected throughout the study including lesson plans and PD agendas. When analyzing the data for this study, five themes continued to emerge. Themes can be described as threads of underlying meaning implicitly discovered at the interpretive level (Braun & Clarke, 2016). Often referred to as meaningful units for the data, themes can be considered attributes, elements, or concepts (Rice & Ezzy, 1999). The themes that surfaced during data collection were multi-cultural literature, acceptance, cooperative work, technology, and resources.

Multicultural Literature

Multicultural literature encompasses all genres and has a focus on people of color (Louie, 2016). These texts provide opportunities for students to learn and connect with other cultures and people (Louie, 2016; Lee, 2007). These definitions reconfirm what was seen across the data in this study. Each teacher utilized multicultural texts from various parts of the world. Teachers were consistent with claiming that the literature helps student make connections through characters and offers a lens to other cultures

through read-alouds, independent reading, and research. Andrea's class is spotlighting Asia this year, so many of her books in the classroom have an Asian origin. As well, she brings in additional stories based upon the cultures of the students in her class. Tracy and Sherry are both studying Australia this year and have resources visible in the classroom. Tracy also participates in a global reading program with her students where they read titles from around the world and share reviews of the books with other classes through Skype.

Acceptance of Others

In simplistic terms, Durham (2017) describes that moving towards acceptance is as basic as treating others as we would like to be treated while embracing our differences. Garza (2009) relates this concept to the classroom level explaining that acceptance can be achieved when students have the chance to learn about one another through conversations, interviews, and asking questions about background, families, interests, and culture. Acceptance of others was a theme present across the data. According to Tracy, acceptance can be achieved by building a classroom community through daily meetings. Andrea and Sherry were consistent with promoting acceptance by fostering read-alouds of cultures represented in the class, using class interviews, and researching the lives of other children around the world through CultureGrams™. Andrea talked about why acceptance is important. "We have a diverse group, but we bring culture into our lessons to help with acceptance," and Sherry shared her opinion about the value of acceptance claiming that, "we have learned the value of building background knowledge and filling in missing parts like with picture walks and vocabulary that supports the power of collaboration within the students."

Cooperative Learning

Collaborative or “small group” work promotes development of language and social skills within classroom communities. This is of particular importance when teaching in a culturally responsive manner as each group member has accountability, low pressure and contributes to an optimal learning environment (Nieto, 2000). The theme of cooperative learning emerged through the data collection in several ways. Tracy noted a PD session as it related to the theme of cooperative learning. “The PD Personal Growth Experience gave ideas about using partners and group work not just for assignments but for building classroom community.” Tracy mentioned literacy lessons in regard to cooperative learning and stated that, “grouping my students and working with partners is part of how I teach literacy in a CRT manner,” and “students work a lot in pairs doing research on computers; they love working in partners and we do group work every day.” In her interview comments, Andrea described the ways in which her students work together cooperatively. “We do class interviews in small groups and partner work for writing time.” Andrea also referenced a PD session where the value of cooperative work was discussed. The PD, as described by Andrea, explored the benefits of students working together as accountability is a factor and students learn from one another in peer assignments. Tracy also noted a PD session in regard to the theme of cooperative learning. “The PD Personal Growth Experience gave ideas about using partners and group work not just for assignments but for building classroom community.” This theme was consistent across data from each participant in various ways.

Technology

Technology in the classrooms allows students to work at their own pace and learn according to their abilities and needs. In a recent study, students' revealed they learn and retain information better through technology (Moeller, & Reitzes (2011). Technology was a constant in all classes observed. Students regularly used i-Ready® for literacy skills, CultureGrams™s for research and reading about other cultures, and Discovery Education for assignments and research of other countries. Per each participant, PD sessions used technology to deliver the content and also provided strategies for teachers to use with students such as online images, as presented in the visual literacy PD, links to speeches and videos as seen in the Deep Equity PD and a variety of videos as mentioned in VIF PD. According to each teacher, the students "love using technology," "feel comfortable researching topics using different sources online," and "there are always lessons ready through i-Ready® and Discovery Education that can be used during literacy." Technology is a natural part of curriculum and was evident across data with each participant.

Lack of Resources

Classroom resources include, but are not limited to, books, technology, supplies, manipulatives and lesson plans. For the purposes of this theme, lesson plans and multicultural books were the focus of the lack of resources as presented by teachers in interview comments and in observations. Comments from teachers support the notion that resources are needed. "We need more books and resources for CRT lessons." (Sherry) and "We need more global lessons to use" (Andrea). Teachers also expressed the need for leveled multicultural texts to use during small group instruction claiming

that, “there are not enough levels and choices to use for all classes.” In addition to requesting books and lessons, all three participants shared a need for strategies to use. Andrea expressed that “we need more resources and strategies to weave into our lessons.” While this theme aligns with participants’ responses pertaining to a lack of books and lessons, each class appeared to have rich libraries and a variety of texts for students to use.

Themes Related to Research Questions

These aforementioned themes assist in establishing responses to the research questions guiding the study. All five of the themes were evident across data in each participant in answering the first research question: How do teachers define CRT? Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as combining cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and learning styles of diverse students to make learning more effective for them. Ladson-Billings extends this claiming that CRT is not only a pedagogy but also a way of thinking, teaching, and reaching all students while recognizing the importance of including each student’s cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The first finding was the theme of multicultural literature. Descriptive definitions of CRT were visible through the use of multicultural literature across all observations. Andrea stated that CRT is a way of “showing respect to students by bringing in other cultures to lessons.” A broad variety of books were evident in all classrooms. Specifically, Andrea’s class spotlighted Russia. Russian versions of fairy tales were on display and also accessible to students as they independently read during literacy. Sherry mentioned the value of multicultural literature in CRT describing students’ meaningful connections as seen through characters. She also mentioned how acceptance includes

“being mindful of all students.” Tracy, as well, took pride in her collection of multicultural texts describing a global read-aloud that her class is part of, sharing stories from around the world with other classes. Each participant specified the value of using multicultural texts as a resource for teaching in a CRT manner. The various texts were seen in classroom observations, noted on PD agendas, and included in lesson plans.

The importance of accepting others was referred to by the participants in their interviews when they described their definitions of CRT. Tracy and Sherry talked about building rapport within the class as a means of developing acceptance. When talking about CRT, all teachers spoke of the importance of having all students feel accepted. Andrea talked about how lessons centered on culture helps to bring the class together. She also described the connection between rapport and acceptance claiming her students have gained acceptance of one another through purposeful planning. Sherry claimed that acceptance of others has to be practiced, and students need opportunities to get to know one another.

This sense of belonging is also fostered through the next theme that emerged that helps answer Question 1, which is cooperative work. Cooperative work, also referred to as partner work and small groups, was seen in observations and noted in interview responses. Lesson plans denoted the use of cooperative work, and this strategy was present on all PD agendas collected. Andrea said, “Students enjoy working in partners because they get to talk to one each other.” Tracy’s class consistently had students working in small groups on projects, posters, or completing a written response to the text. She claimed that this was valuable in getting students involved and accountable. This cooperative work strategy is an element present in CRT and was seen across the data

collected. Technology was specified in response to CRT definitions through the use of CultureGrams™ and Discovery Education videos. Both were seen in classrooms observations as each teacher defined CRT as a way of bringing other cultures into lessons. Observations were indicative of this strategy as students were seen in each class regularly using CultureGrams™ and Discovery Education for the purposes of research and to listen or read about students from around the world. PD agendas reflected the use of technology in video links of novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and images of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in the visual literacy PD, which promoted acceptance of others by seeing various perspectives.

Lack of resources were not discussed in the definition of CRT as presented by participants yet surfaced in observations and was mentioned in response to what informs their definitions. A lack of lesson plans following PD and a need for more books to use to support their lessons were cited as problems encountered by all the participants. Therefore, in answering the first question, based on the data in this study, acceptance of others and cooperative work were strong factors reflective in data from all participants. Multicultural literature was also a constant amongst responses, observations and in documents collected. Technology was revealed as a supportive factor in each participants' definition of CRT and was seen in documents analyzed as well as in classroom observations. Participants' responses to Question 1 provided sufficient answers while supporting the literature.

Question 2 asks, "What are teachers' professional development experiences with CRT?" Gay (2010) believes schools have a responsibility to provide beginning and experienced teachers with rigorous ongoing PD to support their understanding and

implementation of CRT practices. Again, the five themes are evident through the observations, documents and responses from participants. Multicultural literature, acceptance of others, cooperative work, technology, and lack of resources were consistently seen in interview comments, observations and documents collected. Multicultural literature was present in the Deep Equity PD where a teacher used the book, *Only One You*, to demonstrate how students can recognize differences and unique qualities in themselves and others while showing acceptance. Each participant mentioned this text as a memorable strategy to bring back to the classroom. The themes of acceptance and cooperative work were visible across data as well. Sherry discussed the value of building acceptance in groupwork: “You can’t just teach one way because we all come from different places; I do a lot of class building rapport like interviews.” To that end, Tracy described how PD impacts acceptance of others. She reflected on a past PD session where the use of poetry was explored by writing personal poems. Each participant attended the PD session Personal Growth Experience, which focused on the theme of acceptance of others. The participants talked about their experiences following the PD including inviting parents from other countries to come into the classroom to talk with students about their culture, attending festivals with school families, and Andrea mentioned a parent who cooked an authentic Indian meal for her to share with colleagues. VIF was mentioned from each teacher as well. This online PD was discussed in regard to research, supplemental resources such as vides and tutorials, and with the project based learning (PBL) opportunities that are readily available.

Each teacher mentioned employing the strategy of visual literacy, as shared in the winter PD session. This PD agenda was reflective of how to use images to generate

discussion between partners or in small groups to see different points of view.

Technology was the main tool used in projecting images and cooperative work was suggested as the strategy to use to generate discussion about varying perspectives.

Consequently, in answering the Question 2, based on the data in this study, multicultural literature, acceptance of others, cooperative work, and technology were positive factors in teachers' descriptions of PD experiences. Lack of resources surfaced as well amongst each participant when teachers spoke of the need for readily made lessons to deliver to students after receiving PD. Each theme had an integral role in answering this research question.

The next question asks, "How does professional development impact teachers' implementation of CRT in literacy instruction?" Current literature recognizes the need for changes and improvements in how PD is delivered and the support teachers need in planning literacy that is culturally responsive. In their findings Heller and Greenleaf (2007) highlight one of the challenges of improving literacy skills is the lack of ongoing high quality PD for teachers. These authors also note that research has shown when teachers do receive ongoing intensive PD support of CRT in literacy, teachers increase various lessons with writing and reading in their classes (Greenleaf & Schoenbach, 2004; Lieberman & Wood, 2002).

Each theme presented itself across data from participants. Teachers noted multicultural literature as one of the strategies gained from PD sessions attended. Specifically, Andrea and Sherry claimed that the use of multicultural texts has been of the most common resources suggested in PDs pertaining to literacy. Tracy, mentioned PD sessions often suggest the use of read-alouds as a tool to bring culture into the classroom.

In VIF training, she claimed all lesson have suggestions for an accompanying text that supports the PD's lesson plans. Observations indicated teachers were accustomed to using written response to texts. This was also shared by each participant as a strategy often used in literacy lessons, which is supportive of CRT. Deep Equity training and VIF trainings online suggest this strategy as a reflective element in lessons. Acceptance of others was visible in data collected to support answers to this question as well. The Deep Equity PD offered a chance for participants to read and write poems. Each participant had positive feedback regarding classroom use. Interview responses such as "reading and writing poems promotes acceptance and encourages cooperative work as partners can share their writing and reading." The themes of acceptance of others, technology, and cooperative work were seen consistently across data collected from each participant. Lack of resources was mentioned in regard to PD materials and lessons, which were "lacking" as noted by each participant respectively. Hence, in answering the Question 3, based on the data in this study, lack of resources was a strong factor. Each teacher spoke of the need for readily available lessons following PD sessions and additional resources and books in the book room to use for literacy instruction. The remaining themes were present across data aiding in answering the research question.

The last question asks, "How do teachers their implement CRT in literacy instruction?" As with each question, this final question was answered through themes presented from each participant across data collected. Multicultural literature, technology, and cooperative work were the top themes most present in answering this question. Research suggests, when teachers receive CRT preparation, they are effective and confident in the instructional delivery (Cheesman & DePry, 2010). To that end, an

area of high importance in education today is CRT practices in literacy instruction (Hammer, Miccio, & Wagstaff, 2004). As noted by Hiebert (2014), educators face many challenges, specifically, an increasingly diverse student population and a society that requires a great deal of literacy instruction. Each participant described various ways of implementing CRT in their literacy instruction. The primary theme that emerged was the use of multicultural literature.

Sherry and Andrea mentioned doing class interviews, which support cooperative work and acceptance of others. Tracy discussed how her class enjoys daily classroom community meetings, where listening, speaking, and sharing is a primary foundation of building class rapport. Including all students, who often share memorabilia, photos, and stories of their personal culture is a key factor in making connections with other students. Using technology to conduct research was also mentioned by each teacher along with cooperative work assignments. Congruently, these themes were seen in observations, documents, and mentioned in comments from participants. Lastly, lack of resources, was reiterated through interview responses, and in classroom observations as a need for teachers. Specifically, the need for additional multicultural books was discussed by teachers along with requests for readily available lessons to use in literacy that employ CRT. While teachers considered this resource as a need, observations were suggestive of ongoing use of multicultural texts in literacy lessons. Thus, in answering the last research question, based on the data in this study, all themes were present and integral in answering this question.

While all themes related directly to the research questions, data from this study provides unique insight as to how this school defines CRT. While serving a diverse

population, representative of many countries, a staff who adheres to global teaching through multicultural literature and a strong sense of classroom community, this school certainly stands out. As noted by Ladson -Billings (1995) CRT helps to bridge different ways of knowing and engages students from dissimilar cultures in demonstrating their abilities in language and communication to navigate their everyday lives. To that end, data revealed that this school fosters a rich sense of culture with selective literature, engaging classroom lessons, and a variety of strategies which collectively suggests that this schools has many of the facets that align with CRT. Recognizing cultural differences and fostering rapport with students can reap positive outcomes with instruction. Notably, the literacy instruction observed for this study is indicative of teaching that is culturally responsive and respectful as a strong sense of classroom rapport was seen across data. Supportive of this concept, Bui and Fagon (2013) found that culturally responsive teachers negotiate classroom cultures by embracing sociocultural realities and histories of students through chosen curriculum and purposefully planned delivery. This rural school is unique in regard to the culturally diverse students and the teaching that is delivered in a culturally responsive manner.

Implications for Practice

This study presented data collected from three English Language Arts classroom teachers. The research explored the instructional practices teachers used, examined their familiarity and knowledge of CRT, specifically the impact of professional development, and how this jointly translated into their literacy instruction. Based on the data, there is evidence that professional development for CRT is occurring but literacy is not the primary focus of these sessions. In addition to the focus of literacy, there is a need for

supportive follow up from PD to ensure teachers have clear directive of what is expected in teaching literacy in a CRT manner and resources are needed to support these endeavors. While this study shows PD for CRT is ongoing, the data reveals a lack of follow-up, which is needed for clarity along with a focus on literacy instruction. Professional development that offers specific goals for teachers with sustained support is one way to strengthen teaching in the classroom. Studies suggest professional development is most influential when teacher needs are identified prior and follow up is scheduled to support the learning (Janelli, 2014; Pinkard, 1999). Teachers expressed a need for readily available lessons, which lends itself to PD with more hands on “take-aways” and strategies that can be easily implemented. Harwell (2003) explains professional development is positive when it is supported by staff and teachers that are engaged while receiving new knowledge.

The idea of culturally responsive education is grounded in the notion that culture is key to student learning. Studies propose diverse students have unique cultural differences varying in writing, oral language skills, and questioning styles (Fleishman & Osher, 2005; Pinkard, 1999). CRT in literacy is one way to address the diverse needs of classrooms today. This speaks to the importance of literacy instruction and how small changes can yield positive outcomes. Research suggests a key factor for every child’s reading success is a classroom teacher with the proficiency to support the teaching of reading to children with diverse backgrounds, abilities and needs (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005; Vogt, 2014). Literacy teachers are needed who can generate collaborative work that uses students’ backgrounds to foster literacy proficiency. PD is a vital tool in creating these opportunities.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore elementary school teachers' perceptions of CRT practices and to examine how professional development impacts teachers' implementation of CRT practices. Teachers shared their experiences of PD and stated ways they have incorporated strategies for classroom use. While each participant attested to learning a few literacy strategies, it was evident that the primary focus of the PD was not literacy. CRT is being explored in PD and teachers are expected to use the information that they have learned in classrooms but the caveat is the literacy focus, which is lacking.

The implication for administrators and school personnel responsible for PD planning is that there is a need for PD that focuses on CRT in literacy. Teachers may benefit from scheduled follow up after PD that offers suggestions, provides resources, and affirms practices that are being delivered. Comments from participants indicate that pieces of the PD they have attended focused on literacy strategies but there was an overall lacking of CRT specific to literacy instruction. Breakout sessions planned during PD that are specific to grade levels may be beneficial in allowing teachers to plan lessons and share ideas and resources to make the PD meaningful and successful for classroom application. Guskey (2000) describes a constant finding in the literature where prominent improvements in education almost never take place in the absence of professional development. In a more targeted fashion, school administrators could provide practicum based PD for teachers. One of the gaps existing in the culturally responsive teaching literature is that few empirical studies have been conducted that integrate research based reading strategies (Blair, 2003; Montgomery; 2000). With the current pressures teacher face in an era of accountability and assessment, teachers are expected to use research

based reading strategies to meet diverse needs of their students. Therefore, a viable plan for PD in schools could include specific CRT strategies to use in literacy such as reader's theater, poetry, and writing strategies. Through this experience, I have seen the value of PD in schools and the missing pieces that are needed to make this vital tool for teachers more successful. Specifically, PD must meet the needs of the teachers and the students they serve. PD is key to meeting the demands of the ever-changing populations that teachers serve and literacy is a vital tool that is needed and used across all subjects.

Implications for Research

This study examined teachers' perceptions of CRT and how PD impacted their implementations of CRT practices in literacy. The research focused on the experiences of each participant through interviews, classroom observations, and documents. There were only three participants at one setting and the focus was on the impact of PD on CRT practices in literacy. Future research may involve more participants at different school sites to compare PD offered across several schools and the impact as it affects literacy instruction. This would allow for a broader comparison of data. Additionally, the observations could include a broader range of grade levels and subjects as literacy is expected to be integrated across content areas. I would be interested in seeing results that have a broader number of participants, settings, and grade levels in a future study. Prior to future studies, additional research would be needed to select schools that qualify for this type of research confirming the school indeed offers PD on CRT to ensure the quality of data collection. Initial meetings and interviews would provide necessary information to select schools for the study.

Another opportunity for future research could entail an exploration of the connection between academic achievement and CRT in literacy. Some advocates of CRT argue that students' academic achievement improves when curriculum is relevant to students' lives. While these studies are instinctively interesting with exemplary implementation of CRT noted, there is no evidence of positive outcomes in academic achievement (Cheesman & DePry, 2010). Future research could provide statistical relevance to the benefits of employing CRT in literacy instruction while examining the connections to academic achievement. This type of study should include settings where teachers are identified as having training and expertise in CRT in literacy. Specific timelines of data collection would be critical and suitable assessments to measure literacy growth would need to be determined ahead of time. This type of research would lend itself well to grades 3rd through 5th where students have daily social studies and science. Content areas with literacy integration would be fitting in this type of study. To determine which factors of CRT are most effective in promoting achievement, the study would need control groups that lack the factors under investigation. This would provide the broad comparison of what works, how it works and in what context. The aforementioned suggestions for future research should apply rigorous and methodical procedures designed to gain valid knowledge relevant to CRT in literacy instruction.

Concluding Remarks

My experience as a teacher and reading specialist has afforded me opportunities over the years to teach reading and provide PD to teachers on various topics related to literacy. Over the past several years, I have seen an increase of PDs in schools that have a focus on CRT. Often lacking in the PDs has been clear concise expectations for

teachers to bring back to the classroom for practical application, specifically for literacy instruction. As literature suggests, CRT is a way of thinking, teaching and reaching all students. It is not naturally acquired or taught but PD can be beneficial in providing strategies and support for teachers. This experience has been enlightening to hear teachers identify the needs they have regarding CRT and PD support. The evidence, as shown in this study, suggests future research should include an exploration in PD that is offered for CRT. Specifically, the data indicated there was not a streamlined approach to the PD sessions in terms of the frequency of PD sessions, the timing of when they occurred, the audience that was targeted, and follow-up, which was lacking. These elements deserve further attention in future studies exploring PD in CRT. This type of study could provide insight to practitioners and school administrators on effective ways to meet teachers' needs.

In my previous roles in schools, I have been able to share knowledge on culturally responsive practices that can easily be embedded in classroom instruction. Teachers have been receptive to these ideas and often ask for resources and ideas to use in literacy. I realize there is more work to be done and a starting point begins with amendments in how PD is planned, delivered, and revisited. This ongoing endeavor needs to be purposefully planned with strategies and resources that teachers can easily embed in their instruction. I would like to see PD that has a focus on literacy strategies in CRT, offered to teachers. At the school level, this PD would include resources and materials to be used during the PD and provided for classroom use. Follow up support is critical in affirming what is working and with providing the necessary support many teachers after they leave the PD.

Preparing teachers who serve our most diverse populations of students is a critical need that deserves appropriate attention.

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APPENDIX A: FIRST INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Researcher's introduction: *Thank you for agreeing to meet with me to be talk about your experiences with culturally responsive teaching and your professional development experiences. This study is part of my dissertation with the Graduate School at UNC-Charlotte. I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences with culturally responsive teaching and your professional development experiences. There are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in finding our more about what you think. This interview will take about 30 minutes and I will be recording this interview, with your permission. No one will hear this recording except me and will delete this recording after I have transcribed our conversation. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. If at any point you would like to stop the recording, please tell me and we will stop. Do you have any questions before we begin?*

Rapport Building Questions/Prompts

- Please tell me a little about yourself.
- Tell me about your teaching background.
- What is your philosophy about reading instruction?

Questions/prompts to address the research questions

1. How long have you been teaching?
 - Please describe your current population of students.
 - What cultures are represented in your class?
2. Do you feel prepared to meet the needs of your students?
 - Why or why not?

- Please explain by describing strategies you use to meet the needs of your students.
3. How would you define CRT?
 - What background experiences do you have that inform your definition?
 4. Please explain any professional development or outside courses you have had related to CRT.
 - In what ways, if any have you woven PD into your instruction?
 - Did the PD you received help with planning your literacy instruction?
 - Describe how it helped with literacy planning or if not, what would assist you with your literacy planning.
 5. What specific strategies did you learn through your professional development experiences?
 - Was follow-up or support provided following the PD?
 - If so, please describe.
 - If not, what type of support do you feel is needed?
 6. Concluding question:

Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: SECOND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Researcher's introduction: *Thank you for agreeing to meet with me again to be talk about your experiences with culturally responsive teaching and your professional development experiences*

Second interview session-proposed questions

1. Have you received professional development for culturally responsive teaching specific to literacy instruction?
 - Please describe any resources or texts you feel are useful when planning for literacy instruction.
2. In what ways, if any have you woven PD into your instruction?
 - Literacy block?
 - Other content areas?
3. What aspects of your teaching reflect culturally responsive teaching in literacy?
 - Describe examples
4. Describe any strategies you use during literacy or during other blocks) that address CRT?
 - What are the benefits for your students?
5. How do you actively engage diverse students during literacy instruction?
 - What groups do you employ most often? Whole? Small? Guided? Peer?

Concluding questions:

- If you could attend a professional development session for culturally responsive teaching, what would you like to learn more about?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Participant name _____ Date _____

Lesson observed _____

Setting _____

Time _____ duration _____

Grouping of students:

whole _____ small _____ paired _____ Individual _____ Other _____

Objective- How does the teacher implement the lesson? _____

| |
|---------------------------------------|
| Resources |
| Texts |
| Technology |
| Cooperative learning |
| Multicultural literatures/other texts |
| Journals |
| Interviews |
| Reader's theater |
| Poems |

APPENDIX D: CROSSWALK

| Research Questions | Observations | Lesson Plans | Interviews | PD Agenda |
|---|--------------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| How do teachers define CRT? | | | | |
| What are teachers' professional development experiences with CRT? | | | | |
| How does professional development impact teachers' implementation of CRT in literacy instruction? | | | | |
| How do teachers implement CRT in literacy instruction? | | | | |

APPENDIX E: DATA TABLES

Interviews

| Teacher | 1 st interview # of minutes | 1 st interview word count | 1 st interview pages | 1 st interview # of lines | 2 nd interview# of minutes | 2 nd interview word count | 2 nd interview pages | 2 nd interview # of lines |
|---------------|---|---|------------------------------------|---|--|---|------------------------------------|---|
| # 1 Andrea | 33 | 1265 | 6 | 95 | 40 | 1793 | 6.5 | 127 |
| #2 Sherry | 25 | 1207 | 5 | 158 | 30 | 2196 | 8 | 159 |
| # 3 Tracy | 30 | 1011 | 4 | 78 | 33 | 1601 | 6.5 | 123 |

Observations (*length=minutes*)

| Teacher | Observation 1 length/pages | Observation 2 Length/ pages | Observation 3 Length/pages | Observation 4 Length/pages | Observation 5 Length/pages | Observation 6 Length/pages |
|-----------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| #1 Andrea | 40/5 | 35/ 3 | 40/2 | 40/2 | 35/2 | 40/2 |
| #2 Sherry | 40/4 | 40/5 | 35/2 | 40/2 | 45/2 | 45/2 |
| #3 Tracy | 35/3 | 45/2.5 | 40/2 | 45/2.5 | 40/2.5 | 40/3 |

Documents Collected

| Teacher | PD Agenda spring 2016 | PD Agenda fall 2016 | PD Agenda winter 2017 | # of Literacy Plans HC- Hard Copy | # of Literacy Plans SB- SMART- |
|-----------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|
| #1 Andrea | Yes | Yes | Yes | 4 | 2 |
| #2 Sherry | Yes | Yes | Yes | 3 | 3 |
| #3 Tracy | No | Yes | Yes | 4 | 2 |

APPENDIX F: WATER FILTER PBL

Title: To assessing students' global competence and spark student engagement and increase challenges focusing on the clean water challenge.

Standards: 4.L.1 Understand the effects of environmental changes, adaptations, and behaviors that enable animals (including humans) to survive in changing habitats. 1.1 Give examples of changes in an organism's environment that are beneficial to it and some that are harmful.

1.3 Explain how humans can adapt their behavior to live in changing habitats (e.g., recycling wastes, establishing rain gardens, planting trees and shrubs to prevent flooding and erosion). Materials: Computer, PBL, water bottle, dirty water, coffee filters, sand, rocks, gravel

Video: My Water: A Clean Water Video

Compelling Questions: How am I going to impact a global community and create a way to make clean water?

Learning Targets: SWBAT investigate ways to construct a water filter. They will create a water filter that will clean water for drinking.

Activate Prior Knowledge: Discuss how we have needs to survive, but other countries in the world do not have the resources we have. The availability of water may be limited for others and may lead to sickness and even death.

Investigating: Students will do a PBL and construct a water filter using specific materials.

Synthesizing/Creating: Students will create a water filter using specific materials. They will have to try to figure out a plan before the construction using specified materials.

pbskids.org/zoom/activities/sci/waterfilter.html