

*Grappling with Culturally Responsive  
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**The Urban Review**

Issues and Ideas in Public Education

ISSN 0042-0972

Urban Rev

DOI 10.1007/s11256-016-0369-6

VOLUME 48, NUMBER 2

ONLINE  
FIRST

**The  
Urban  
Review**

Issues and Ideas in Public Education

 Springer

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# Grappling with Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Study of Elementary-Level Teacher Candidates' Learning across Practicum and Diversity Coursework Experiences

Shannon M. Daniel<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** This investigation of teacher candidates' (TCs) learning in their pre-service elementary education program demonstrates how TCs grappled with enacting culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) in their practicum sites. Interviews with TCs, analyzed with Lucas and Villegas's (2002) tenets of CRP, reveal how TCs thought about equitable instruction in elementary schools. TCs and the teacher educator of the diversity course report on how such coursework supports TCs as they strive to educate multilingual, multicultural elementary school students. This examination, which focuses on TCs' learning rather than teacher education program design, provides implications for how teacher educators can support TCs in ways that are responsive to their personalized questions, experiences, strengths, and overall development as teacher learners. Implications for foundational diversity-oriented coursework that connects more directly with TCs' practicum experiences are discussed.

**Keywords** Culturally responsive pedagogy · Diversity coursework · Multicultural foundations · Practicum · Field experiences · Elementary · Teacher education · Pre-service teacher candidates

## Purpose

This paper begins to respond to the “lack of focus on what pre-service teachers actually learn from [clinical] experiences and how” (Anderson and Stillman 2013) by examining teacher candidates' (henceforth TCs) reports of how they perceived culturally responsive pedagogy in their practicum placements and diversity-related coursework. The demographic imperative in the United States demands that

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prospective elementary teachers learn to educate culturally and linguistically diverse students effectively, but more research is needed on how TCs develop knowledge and abilities to do so. An example of these shifting demographics: between 1999 and 2009, the overall K-5 school population grew 7.2 % while the population of students learning English as an additional language grew by up to 200 % in some states (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition 2011). Despite these shifts, most teachers feel inadequately prepared to educate culturally and linguistically diverse students effectively (de Jong et al. 2013; Lucas and Villegas 2013).

Prior research shows that TCs view university-based social justice coursework as theoretically but not practically helpful in their enactment of instruction with diverse students (McDonald 2005), which may be partly due to the two-worlds problem of teacher education. This two-worlds problem in which TCs learn certain values, such as constructivist and culturally responsive pedagogy, in university-based coursework but experience more conservative, transmission-based pedagogies in school sites is well documented (Thompson et al. 2013; Zeichner 2010) in teacher education in the United States (Anderson and Stillman 2013; McDonald 2005; Zeichner 2012), Norway (Elstad 2010), the Republic of Ireland (Sugrue 2014), Australia (Allen et al. 2013), and elsewhere. This separation between components of teacher education can cause TCs to view social justice as impractical (Williams et al. 2003) and continue inequitable practices they see and experience in practicum placements (Cochran-Smith 1991; Daniel 2014), particularly when they associate closely with the community of practice in the practicum school sites (Thompson et al. 2013).

More research is needed that delves into TCs' learning to become ambitious, culturally responsive teachers across their programmatic experiences (Hollins and Guzman 2005), with particular attention to what they learn and do in K-12 schools (Anderson and Stillman 2013; Sleeter 2001). Some prior research has focused on how a specific course or assignment has given TCs opportunities to learn about supporting diverse learners or how coursework changed TCs' perceptions of working with diverse learners (e.g. Capella-Santana 2003, Souto-Manning 2011). A growing body of academic articles about culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) or multicultural teacher preparation for a primarily homogenous group of white, female, monolingual teachers to become culturally responsive in supporting diverse learners has emerged (Banks et al. 2005; Gay 2010; Hollins and Guzman 2005; Nieto 2000; Sleeter 2001, 2012). Much of the extant literature defines, describes, outlines principles of, or advocates for CRP (e.g. Ladson-Billings 1995; Nieto 1999, 2000; Sleeter and Grant 1994; Zeichner et al. 1998) rather than providing empirical research for what does, does not, and could work in K-12 classrooms or teacher education processes (Lowenstein 2009; Zeichner 1999).

As Hollins and Guzman (2005) suggested, "We need research that examines the links among teacher preparation for diversity, what teacher candidates learn from this preparation," and "how this affects their professional practices in schools" (p. 512). In this paper, I begin to fill this gap by reporting findings from my study of TCs' learning to become culturally responsive during their pre-service masters in elementary education program, particularly in their internship schools and diversity-

focused coursework. I use Villegas and Lucas's (2002) outline of CRP as a frame of analysis for teacher candidates' reflections about the instruction of culturally and linguistically diverse students in their elementary school practicum placements.

I examine TCs' perspectives on inequities in elementary schools, their instructional choices, and their perceptions of diversity-related coursework as they learned throughout their thirteen-month teacher education program. The research questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. How do TCs talk about their questions related to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students during their pre-service practicum?
2. How do TCs perceive their pre-service preparation, particularly the diversity-related coursework, to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students in elementary schools?

## Conceptual Framework

Two theoretical strands undergird this investigation: sociocultural views of teacher learning and tenets of CRP. The first strand guided data collection in this study, whereas CRP was used in iterative data analysis.

### Sociocultural Perspective on Learning to Teach

A situated learning perspective in which teachers learn to teach through their participation in multiple activity systems (Lave and Wenger 1991; Putnam and Borko 2000; Borko 2004) guided data collection and analysis. Prospective teachers are newcomers who apprentice to join and become "oldtimers" (i.e. elementary teachers) through "broad exposure to ongoing practice," which is facilitated by "a demonstration of the goals toward which newcomers expect, and are expected, to move" (Lave 1993, p. 71). Prospective teachers typically become, or construct their new identities as teachers through interactions with peers and experts in three activity systems: internship schools with students and a mentor teacher, university coursework with peers and professors, and overall programmatic structures (e.g. recruitment of TCs) of teacher education (Grossman et al. 1999).

These multiple activity systems often hold seemingly disconnected, divergent, or contrary goals (Grossman et al. 1999; Zeichner 2010), such as the opposing views of constructivist versus transmission approaches to learning, which TCs must negotiate and navigate. As Thompson et al. (2013) suggest, the community of practice with whom the TCs most identify can affect their learning trajectory. Within this sociocultural view of teacher learning then, systemic factors and influences ranging from the culture of each elementary school to national and statewide mandates influence TCs' orientations toward teaching and learning and their descriptions of teaching, learning, and participants in K-12 schools. Given a sociocultural, situated perspective, the assumption is that TCs' knowledge, dispositions, and practices have continued and will continue to shift and evolve, and that this fluidity depends upon

such contextual influences, teacher education practices, and their ongoing identity formation.

A second underlying assumption in my research and teaching is that all TCs, teacher educators, and teachers make choices with the best intentions for their students. In this paper, I describe how TCs struggled to enact CRP with an understanding that all participants worked hard to be the best teacher they could be. My purpose in identifying missed opportunities for TCs to think more deeply about and act upon questions about the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students is to help readers reframe and improve teacher education coursework within a responsive paradigm. Because “teacher educators need to work to genuinely understand teacher education candidates in order to facilitate their growth toward critical, justice-oriented teaching” (Conklin 2008, p. 664), I include data that show TCs diverging from CRP in their instruction and descriptions of their learning experiences. Understanding TCs’ perspectives and learning experiences is the only way teacher educators can responsively improve designs of lessons, courses, and programs. I appreciate Conklin’s (2008) reference to Hanh’s (1993) analogy, as it highlights the complexities of teacher socialization and learning:

If I had been born in the social conditions of a sea pirate and raised as a sea pirate, I would be a pirate now. A variety of interdependent causes has created the existence of the pirate. The responsibility is not solely his or his family’s, but it is also society’s...Each of us shares some responsibility for the presence of pirates. (p. 31)

In a situated perspective, a TC becomes a teacher similarly to how a person becomes a pirate in Hanh’s (1993) description: through joining a community with actors, tools, and contexts that emanate implicit norms, which influence TCs’ growth.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Although definitions of CRP vary, this work draws upon Villegas and Lucas’s (2002) conceptualization to frame key findings, because this framework is written for teacher education. The authors identified six strands of a framework to guide culturally responsive teacher education.

1. Gain sociocultural consciousness, or understand that life stories vary between individuals, and these stories are shaped by larger sociopolitical influences.
2. Develop affirming attitudes, validating, and respecting diverse children and students’ varied ways of interacting in and out of the classroom.
3. Develop skills and commitment to act as agents of change by not only observing inequitable practice but also interrupting and refining it.
4. Embrace constructivist views of knowledge and learning, in which teaching and learning is viewed as co-constructed among students and teachers.
5. Seek out ways to develop deep relationships with students and learn about the multiple facets of children’s lives.
6. Cultivate the practice of culturally responsive teaching.

When TCs gain sociocultural consciousness, they reflect on how personal backgrounds impact their perspectives and they recognize that school systems inequitably distribute power and access. TCs who are developing affirming attitudes “inspect their own beliefs about students from nondominant groups and confront negative attitudes they might have toward these students” (Villegas and Lucas 2002, p. 38). TCs who are becoming agents of change “assume responsibility for identifying and interrupting inequitable school practices” (p. 54) and recognize that their actions are never neutral. Teachers who strive for this third strand reject the notion that a teacher’s only role is to impart knowledge from the curriculum without questioning it.

Constructivist teachers view learning as occurring through active participation, in which learners build upon their prior experiences to make sense of new concepts and skills. Fifth, teachers recognize that caring relationships with students not only helps to make students comfortable with taking risks and participating actively, but also helps teachers to design instruction specific to individuals. Additionally, teachers who cultivate CRP “help students interrogate the curriculum critically by having them address inaccuracies, omissions, and distortions” (p. 102) and consider multiple perspectives. To avoid redundancy, findings focus on analysis of TC learning related to the first five strands, because cultivating CRP (strand 6) primarily involves embracing a constructivist view of learning (4) and building upon what teachers know about students’ lives (tenet 5).

## Methods

I conducted this case study (Yin 2006) of TCs’ learning about and enacting CRP during their internships and diversity-related coursework within a 13-month, alternative Masters with Certification in Elementary Education (MCEE) program in a large, Mid-Atlantic, research-intensive College of Education. The location of the program in a region with diverse elementary school populations, the program’s mission and structure, and the demographics of the cohort made this case “typical” (Creswell 2007).

## Program Design

TCs took four summer classes on the topics of developmental psychology, diversity in schools, and the first two reading-focused courses in the four-course literacy sequence. TCs took four classes regarding materials for motivating readers, diversity in schools, mathematics methods, and science methods in fall. In spring, TCs took only two 3-credit courses—reading in elementary schools and teaching social studies—while they shifted to spending more time in their student teaching internships. Throughout the academic year, the TCs participated in student teaching, which was accompanied by two 1-credit courses: action research and internship seminar. In fall, TCs spent 3 days a week with their mentor and students at the internship site and they attended courses on the other 2 days each week. In spring,

TCs fully entered their student teaching internships for 5 days a week, but they left the school sites early 1 day each week to attend the social studies and reading courses. Finally, TCs completed the program by attending a summer course about teaching as a lifelong profession. Upon successful completion, TCs earned a master's degree with elementary certification. See Table 1 for a layout of the 13-month MCEE program.

I include the mission here to provide further programmatic context and show that the faculty intended to emphasize CRP and attention to individual students. While policies can make groups and goals visible (Lipman 2002), how educators interpret and implement policies impact teaching and learning. The mission follows:

The MCEE program conceives of teaching as listening and responding to individual students, their context and the curriculum in ways that facilitate student thinking, foster and honor classroom community, and promote understanding of disciplines. Our program aims to develop teachers who can navigate the dilemmas and complexities of teaching and learning and are able to develop and exercise professional judgment and cultural proficiency in the pursuit of furthering student learning. We seek to prepare teachers for successful careers in public schools with culturally, linguistically, or economically diverse school populations.

### **Diversity Course Goals and Design**

The guiding question for the second, fall-semester diversity course was “How can knowledge of self, schooling, and society influence pedagogical decision-making?” (Diversity 2 Syllabus)<sup>1</sup>. The supporting goals were for TCs to “gain a greater ability to articulate their personal beliefs and explore how these influence...equity in their classrooms,” and “gain the ability to create greater equity within their specific teaching contexts.” Four learning processes and assignments were required for TCs to achieve these goals. First, TCs had to write a 3-page introduction to their school that included descriptions of the demographics served, an overview of a program for special needs, advanced placement, or English language support, and their opinions of the program. Second, in groups, TCs had to lead a 60-min discussion of readings during one class session. Third, TCs had to submit a final paper on the last day of class in which they described a dilemma of equity that they observed or experienced in their school site. During my observations of in-class processes, I observed that most time in class was devoted to the teacher educator or group presenters lecturing and asking discussion questions about the assigned readings, which included seminal pieces from Labaree (1997), Oakes (1994), Lee (2006), and Moll et al. (1992).

During the summer prior to their student teaching, TCs took the first diversity-related course, which had the goals of getting TCs to “reflect on important dimensions of difference, personal experiences with privilege and marginalization, roles that schools can and should play in the promotion of an egalitarian society, and

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<sup>1</sup> Details of the course names and syllabi have been removed to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.



**Table 1** MCEE structure

Summer	Fall	Spring	Summer
Four 3-credit courses: Psychology, Reading 1, Reading 2, Diversity 1	Four 3-credit courses: Science Methods, Mathematics Methods, Reading 3, Diversity 2	Two 3-credit courses: Social Studies Methods, Reading 4	Two final classes: Lifelong Teaching; Final Project
No practicum	Practicum: 3 days/week; Two 1-credit courses: Action Research, Practicum Seminar	Practicum: 4.5 days/week; Two 1-credit courses: Action Research, Practicum Seminar	No practicum

consider how these understandings may impact one’s approach to teaching” (Diversity 1 Syllabus). TCs were to achieve these goals by writing a paper on their identity, responding to course readings and related documentary films, facilitating discussion of assigned readings with a partner, composing a teaching philosophy, and writing a literature review on a topic related to a diversity issue.

### Participants

The cohort of 16 TCs, 15 of whom were white and 14 of whom were monolingual English speakers, included 14 women and 2 men. The demographics of this cohort generally mirrored overall statistics of the teaching force in the United States, which is roughly 83 % white and 76 % female (National Center for Education Statistics 2008). All of the TCs were native English speakers; one of the TCs was raised bilingually, and another cohort member had become bilingual through studying Spanish in college. The focal participants for this study, all of whom were between 22 and 32 years old, are Robert, Kat, Kara, and Rachel. Robert was one of two males in the program, and Robert, Kat, and Kara are all white, English-speaking teachers. Rachel grew up speaking Bengali and English. Additionally, Henry, the tenure-line professor of the diversity course, is a participant in this study. Henry is an African American, monolingual English-speaking male who was teaching the course for the third time during this study.

### Data Collection

To explore multiple participants’ perspectives throughout the 13 months, I observed and participated in over 100 h of six university-based courses, held three focus group interviews with TCs, interviewed four TCs and observed their practicum instruction three-four times each, collected written artifacts from the TCs and the program, administered two surveys with the cohort, and interviewed eight teacher educators. The primary data for the present study is individual and focus group interviews with the candidates and an interview with the teacher educator of the second diversity course, for which I conducted member checks (Marshall and

Rossmann (2011) to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. Supplemental data in this study, used for triangulation, include programmatic artifacts and my field notes from course and practicum observations.

## Data Analysis

I analyzed observational field notes and interview transcripts through open coding (Corbin and Strauss 2008), searching for in vivo codes (Marshall and Rossmann 2011; Creswell 2007). I used constant comparative methods (Corbin and Strauss 2008; Creswell 2007) to determine major themes regarding TCs' discussion of learning experiences they reported as having impacted their understandings of CRP and their abilities to enact CRP in their internships. Data was triangulated. When a TC referred to a course, for instance, I reviewed my field notes, the syllabus and any artifacts from the course, and other participants' reports of the same experience. After flagging excerpts of interviews with TCs that were broadly related to CRP, I recursively analyzed these data points to focus on TCs' sense-making about learning and instruction for diverse elementary school students. I re-coded the data again using Villegas and Lucas's (2002) tenets.

## Findings

TCs had awareness of, and questioned, issues related to the instruction and learning opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse students, yet their enactment of CRP was more complex. This finding is consistent with McDonald's (2005) report that TCs learn conceptual but not practical tools in learning to become socially just educators and extends upon Goodwin's (1997) survey findings that TCs do have a plethora of questions regarding teaching and learning among diverse groups. My study continues this line of research by giving instantiations of TCs' struggles in their practicum sites as well as TCs' perceptions that the diversity coursework was largely unhelpful in facilitating their abilities to make sense of and become intentional about the practices that sometimes diverge with CRP.

### Tenet 1: Developing Sociocultural Consciousness

Findings from interviews and observations of Robert (names of people and places are pseudonyms) demonstrate the fluidity of TCs' sociocultural consciousness. Robert was a male, native English-speaking, white TC who had grown up in the same state as the MCEE. The following excerpts come from an interview from mid-fall, during which Robert was taking the second diversity course, the science and mathematics methods courses, and participating in his internship for 3 days each week. The following interview excerpt gives insight into Robert's developing sociocultural consciousness:

*Shannon:* How would you describe your intercultural experiences, in teaching or in general?

*Robert:* Coming in, it's not like I've been chosen to go to Fox Elementary and I don't know what I'm in for, I'm in a totally different universe, a fish out of water. It wasn't like that at all. And it never was an issue, never presented itself as an issue. I'm at the school, and the way I interact with students and staff is not based on race or anything like that, or different culture. It's based on the culture of education. (Interview #1)

In these comments, Robert seemed to take for granted that his worldview was universally shared with others who have different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Without prompting, he alluded to the fact that the majority of the school population had a different racial background than his own. At the same time, Robert viewed the diversity coursework as interesting but “superfluous” because he was already “tolerant” of diversity. Robert was still developing his sociocultural consciousness and affirming attitudes toward diverse communities; as Sonia Nieto (1994) wrote, “to tolerate differences means that they are endured, not necessarily embraced” (p. 11). As a white man teaching in a school with a predominantly African American student and teacher population, Robert had good intentions of coming together with teachers and learners around the culture of education. Yet, he seemed to disregard the differences in racial background and socio-economic status among the learners and teachers at Fox Elementary. Robert still had opportunities to shift from being dysconscious (King 1991), in which he “fail[ed] to see [himself] as racial, cultural, and gendered being” (Villegas and Lucas 2002, p. 32) toward gaining sociocultural consciousness.

In April, Robert was considering alternative careers, perhaps with the “federal government” because he was feeling that teaching was stressful and “coming in wasn't fun.” While student teaching can be stressful for all TCs, Robert seemed to gain sociocultural consciousness from this student teaching at Fox Elementary, as he developed an understanding of how systemic issues can lead to inequitable learning opportunities and environments. He shared:

I was actually talking to another friend of mine, and he's like, “You know, you're a little white Jewish kid from an upper-middle class area. And you come here, and it's just totally – it's just not the world you're used to. And it's not. I'm not used to this type of world. And this school isn't even representative of what goes on in this community. This school is like a green zone for the community – a lot of good things that happen in this school, thanks to the principal. (Interview #3)

By commenting that Fox Elementary was “a very difficult school” that was “a green zone for the community,” he also began to recognize that school systems, communities, and factors other than meritocracy impact students' academic trajectories. In November, Robert seemed to hold a meritocratic framework of teaching and learning, in which the members of the school community came together around the culture of education. By April, his comments showed his realization that while the community in Fox Elementary did come together around education, disparities in opportunity that are shaped by personal backgrounds also strongly impact students' and teachers' educational experiences.

## Tenets 2 and 3: Developing Affirming Attitudes and Committing to Become Change Agents

When TCs do not hold affirming attitudes toward students, they focus on what students are “lacking” and on how children and families who behave differently from the “dominant culture are deficient” (Villegas and Lucas 2002, p. 36). During an interview with Kat and Kara, I asked the participants how their diversity coursework supported them in achieving the mission of the MCEE (seen above in context of the study) and in supporting diverse learners through CRP. Kat’s description of what she learned in the diversity courses shows that she gained awareness of building community in her classroom but garnered few implications for instruction:

*Kat:* I feel like it has been a lot of, “How can you make students who are different feel included in the community?” which is definitely important. But they’re not only there to be part of the community; they’re there to learn...It’s been very focused on the socialization of bringing in these kids. Of course you want to accomplish that, but if they’re at school and they’re not learning, because they can’t understand or they need different things or different instructional strategies, I feel like that’s where [the diversity classes] drop off, and that’s a big concern.

Kat stated that the diversity coursework helped her gain awareness but not practical suggestions for supporting culturally and linguistically diverse learners in progressing academically. Kat’s description of what she learned in the diversity coursework leads to questions about how diversity-related coursework can be designed to help TCs better recognize and leverage culturally and linguistically diverse students’ resources during instruction.

Additional comments from Kat during the April focus group showed that she was noticing inequitable practices and was still in the process of developing skills and commitment to become a change agent. Kat noticed that her internship school’s tracking system for second graders seemed inequitable, which showed sociocultural consciousness through her recognition that the educational system can produce inequalities. The following excerpts from a focus group interview demonstrate how Kat and Calista, another TC interning in the same grade level in the same school, tried to make sense of and question the school’s tracking practices.

*Shannon:* How are the students separated?

*Kat:* Based on reading level for homeroom, and I have lower-level reading kids than Calista does.

*Shannon:* What do you guys think about that?

*Kat:* I don’t think it works for my class. Mine are all in a row, but they’re K, L, M, and N reading levels...I don’t know that I think that it works out that it’s so racially segregated that that’s an appropriate choice, just because I feel like it’s hard not to walk through and see we’re pretty much the only class who has that composition. I feel like it’s very strange, like when [our cohort] toured the school, they saw Calista’s kids and they saw my students, and they asked me,

“Why are all your students African American and none of Calista’s are?” I think it’s hard not to notice. Before I knew they were tracked by reading level, I was very confused about it and was trying to think about how to ask my mentor in a politically correct way why that would be. You have [students who are reading at] M, right?

*Calista:* Mhmm, M and N.

*Kat:* So I don’t know why it worked out that way, especially because my African American students tend to be my higher readers. I just don’t know why it worked out that way...I feel like it can give off the wrong idea, and I feel like, if I’m noticing, the students are probably also noticing.

Here, Kat identified and critiqued a school-wide practice that she perceived as diverging from CRP given that she saw students segregated based on racial background. Her comments demonstrate that she was gaining sociocultural consciousness and noticing that school practices can further societal inequities. According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), agents of change “assume responsibility for identifying and interrupting inequitable school practices” (p. 54). By the end of the program, Kat never did talk with her mentor or other members of the practicum school community about her question. This is not surprising, particularly for a pre-service teacher, given that “naming and directly challenging systemic racism through pedagogy clashes with institutionalized structures and processes teachers are expected to adhere to” (Sleeter 2012, p. 572). Herein lies potential for diversity-related teacher education coursework to afford TCs opportunities to bring what they notice into class sessions for collaborative problem-solving.

#### **Tenets 4 and 5: Embracing Constructivist Views of Teaching and Learning; Developing Deep Relationships with Students and Learn About Their Lives**

After observing TCs teach lessons in their internships, I interviewed them to learn about how they made their instructional choices. Most of the 16-member cohort viewed direct instruction as an imperative, which emerged from mandated curriculum sets, the pressures of standardized tests, and how they accounted for students’ abilities and actions in class. This focus on direct instruction left little space for teachers to learn about and from their students. Rachel shared:

I feel like at a school like here, all the teachers, they have said that direct instruction, although it’s not recommended, that’s really one of the best methods to use here because a lot of students don’t have the background knowledge to really build up concept attainment, so you can’t really drive them to come to an answer on their own without really telling them, teaching it to them...I feel like I can’t really expect my students to find it on their own, unless there’s a *lot* of scaffolding, which we try to provide, but the easiest thing to do is direct instruction...It’s pretty much the teacher’s the one doing most of the talking. You’re introducing the topic to students, with the mindset that it’s completely foreign to them or that they have very little knowledge.

Robert also primarily used direct instruction and reasoned about his students' abilities and actions in literacy classes.

*Shannon:* So when you were planning the lesson today, how did you decide to go about it?

*Robert:* This school uses a toolkit. Toolkit is all direct instruction, so that's why I was up there trying to do pretty much direct instruction. It's a lot more explicit with my morning class...In my morning class... I need to work with them with that. When I did the text features with them, I didn't include the main idea, because I knew that would throw them off, trying to form a main idea...All we did was photographs and captions, rather than the three text features... Toolkit is designed for high-stakes testing, so I know these kids are going to learn the stuff we're doing...I think it went okay...I always feel weird about doing direct instruction, because I always feel like, it's direct instruction – they *should* get it, because I modeled it for them, they did it together, and then they did it on their own...

In Rachel and Robert's comments, we can see how TCs' perspectives on pedagogy and students are intertwined. The TCs were forming habits of instruction, namely, to use set curriculum guides and explicit, direct instruction to inform their practice. These forming habits and orientations of teaching are not surprising, given that the TCs are socialized within a community of practice wherein these pedagogical choices were the norm. These norms of direct instruction with curricular tools that assume children have no to limited background knowledge impacted the TCs' still-developing instructional practice. Transmission-oriented pedagogies in which students are viewed as having limited abilities for "concept attainment" necessarily eliminate opportunities for TCs to "teach *to and through* strengths of students" by "validating and affirming" them (Gay 2000, p. 31). Rachel and Robert practiced transmission models of instruction more than they implemented constructivist approaches. This emphasis on transmission models, which the TCs describe as the teacher being at the center of instruction, limits opportunities for teachers to learn about students (the fifth tenet of CRP). Furthermore, these accounts show that the pedagogy of poverty (Haberman 1991) wherein drills of text features somehow overcome the purpose of reading (figuring out the main idea of the text) is still being reified in schools.

Contrasting Robert's approach to instruction with how he perceived the diversity coursework in preparing him to support culturally and linguistically diverse children illuminates his learning processes across program experiences. Regarding his learning experiences in the diversity courses, Robert described, "you know, classes like [the diversity courses], those were more exposing us to issues, where we didn't really learn...ways to implement things in your classes." Robert further explained, "I can tell what I'm doing in every one of my classes. I can tell you what the purpose of me being in math is...the same with science, and reading, and practicum, but I can't tell you what the purpose of the diversity is."

Rachel and Robert's description of the mandated curriculum materials seemed to contradict foundational strands of CRP, yet Robert's perspectives of the diversity courses seems to shed light on Christine Sleeter's (2001) question of whether and to

what extent “stand-alone multicultural education courses” impact white TCs (p. 98), particularly given the diverging values of multiple communities of practice that TCs join (Grossman et al. 1999; Thompson et al. 2013). Another question raised by these findings is how an instructor of a multicultural teacher education course can “balance, rather than avoid, [TCs’] practical concerns” (Whittaker et al. 2005, p. 131).

### Multiple Perspectives on the Diversity Course

Kat’s and Robert’s perspectives (presented above) on the diversity course were not only corroborated by other comments among TCs but also problematized by Henry, the professor of the course. Several participants in the study seemed to wish that the diversity course connected more with their practice. Furthermore, Henry, the professor of the diversity course, recognized the sociocultural dysconsciousness that Robert experienced and the ongoing development of CRP among the TCs was a somewhat common struggle among TCs in his classes. In our interview, Henry explained:

There’s this guise of there being a lot more “diversity” as far as ethnicity and class than there actually is...To have the type of meaningful and frequent and intense experiences that one would need in order to have cultural competence...where you can both understand your individual and systemic biases, most people wouldn’t have had those experiences, and they don’t know it, because it feels like they have...

Henry recognized a need to guide TCs in deeply reflecting upon their experiences and gaining a “critical lens,” but he was simultaneously very aware of the TCs’ perceptions of the diversity coursework in the MCEE. Following is part of our conversation around these confluent issues:

*Henry:* We could do a better job of conveying to the students what exactly are going to be the goals...why it’s important to have a two-course [diversity] series. Because for many of them, it starts there: “We don’t need two diversity/equity courses because it gets in the way of what we’re learning in schools.”

*Shannon:* Who said that?

*Henry:* This is what comes out in the evaluations and in conversations with students at the end of the semester.

*Shannon:* So, can I ask, a few minutes ago, you said it’s very important for the candidates to think about what they *don’t* know about diversity –

*Henry:* But I don’t know how to do that.

*Shannon:* Hmmm, yea.

*Henry:* I mean, I wouldn’t – I can’t – It’s not like math methods, science methods, statistics, qualitative research methods. People come into the course saying, “You know what? I know I don’t know about this. That’s why I’m taking the class, and I’d like you to teach me it.” Diversity – I know about that

already...We need to change [the diversity class] to make it equity/diversity *methods*.

This excerpt of the conversational interview with Henry indicates that he was seeking out an approach to helping TCs in reflecting more deeply about inequities and learning to enact CRP in schools. Yet, we both recognized that the task is extremely difficult, complex, and sometimes seemingly elusive. In what follows, I discuss implications for practice that emerge from these findings.

## Discussion and Implications

As has been argued before, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions TCs need to educate culturally and linguistically diverse students should not simply be relegated to the margins of teacher education or compartmentalized into one or two courses (Goodwin 1997; Sleeter 2001; Zeichner et al. 1998) of a program. Instead, teacher education programs need to make coherent efforts to help TCs learn to enact CRP across all coursework and field-based practicum experiences (Athanases and de Oliveira 2011; Daniel 2014). In addition to questioning how cohesive the programmatic efforts are in supporting TCs in learning to educate diverse students, though, teacher educators can reconsider the curricular design of foundations courses that focus on social justice, diversity, and multicultural education.

### Incorporating *Noticing* in Social Justice and Diversity Coursework

Many curricular goals for diversity-related coursework focuses on helping TCs to gain sociocultural competence through reflecting on their identities, their own experiences with racism and other biases throughout their lives, and the prevalence of cultural, linguistic, and racist biases in society overall (see, for instance, Howard 2003; Lowenstein 2009). Certainly, before TCs can enact CRP in the moment-to-moment classroom interactions with diverse students, they need to become aware of, and deeply consider, the education debt (Ladson-Billings 2006). Nevertheless, in taking a view of TCs as learners (Lowenstein 2009), teacher educators must design pedagogies that go beyond generalities, theories, and principles that can seem platitudinous and instead guide teachers toward grappling with the specifics of how they can enact—not just conceptualize—culturally responsive pedagogy.

In reviewing findings from this study and considering trends toward practice-based teacher education (Ball and Forzani 2009) with a focus on rehearsals and noticing in methods-related coursework (Lampert et al. 2013; Sherin and van Es 2009), I suggest that diversity-related coursework also engage TCs in cultivating the discipline of noticing (Mason 2002). To help TCs develop the discipline of noticing in order to enact CRP, teacher educators can consider how to incorporate structures, assignments, and in-class activities that *give TCs time and space to discuss what and how they notice in their daily practicum experiences*. This shift from a readings-focused to an experience-focused curriculum in multicultural coursework would work in tandem with methods-focused courses and practicum placements, in turn



helping TCs to bridge their learning between practicum and university-based courses.

Noticing can be a helpful approach to encourage TCs to think about specific interactions in classrooms (Sherin et al. 2011) and move beyond generalities that often involve assumptions. Noticing includes not only selecting which actions deserve attention, but also building associations between similar instances and broader concepts. Noticing can then trigger people to use new knowledge to consider potential, responsive actions to what they noticed (Jacobs et al. 2010; Sherin et al. 2011; Talanquer et al. 2013). More specifically, when teacher learners examine records of practice to notice student thinking, they expand their understandings of what counts as valid and productive disciplinary thinking. For example, noticing can help teachers shift their views of students' background knowledge from being incorrect or limited toward viewing a wide variety of student ideas as productive mathematical thinking (Singer-Gabella et al. 2016). When teacher learners have opportunities and are encouraged to attend to student thinking, they can learn to listen and respond to student ideas (Levin et al. 2009), which is certainly at the core of culturally responsive pedagogy (Daniel 2015). Greater evidence for the benefits of noticing, such as helping TCs to recognize and leverage students' rich linguistic, cultural, and conceptual knowledge, through analysis of videotaped instruction is growing (Baecher et al. 2013; Hand 2012; Sherin and van Es 2009).

To maximize these benefits for teacher learning, teacher educators must carefully facilitate TCs' noticing in videos or other records of practice by working with TCs to select video clips and discuss the video using an inquiry stance (van Es et al. 2014). For example, teacher educators can begin the analysis of videotaped lessons by asking TCs, "What did you notice?" and helping TCs begin with descriptions rather than evaluations of the instructional interaction (van Es et al. 2014, p. 346). In analyzing videos or artifacts of instructional interactions, teachers can take an inquiry stance when they "shift from evaluating student work to identifying and interpreting it for evidence of students' [] reasoning and teachers' decision-making" (p. 342).

Mason (2002) describes an inquiry stance similarly, by suggesting that teacher learners should practice noticing by first giving *accounts of* what happened prior to attempting to *account for* what happened. To give an *account of* an event is to detail what happened without evaluating, interpreting, or emoting within your description. Giving *accounts of* an event opens opportunities to examine the event from multiple perspectives, identify similar events, and eventually extrapolate commonalities and develop potential theories for the events. Purposefully *accounting for* events can only happen after individuals share *accounts of* events, build associations between multiple accounts, and question why aspects of the events occurred how they did. To *account for* an event prior to giving an *account of* is to offer value-laden interpretations of the event.

For instance, Mason (2002) suggests that labeling a student as a "disruptive pupil" can hinder teachers' abilities to recognize the multiple interpretations of what they noticed, which in turn limits teachers' abilities to identify responsive actions they can take to improve instruction. Giving *accounts of* what happened

enables teachers to ask why and consider multiple participants' perspectives. Once TCs become more adept at questioning their approaches of *accounting for* students' actions, they can then have "greater sensitivity in the future, both in recognizing similar incidents, and in appreciating the impulses which lead people to act in this way" (Mason 2002, p. 66). Developing *accounts of* events can help TCs consider how to respond when they see or participate in schooling that diverges from CRP.

### **Imagined Possibilities: How Noticing Might have Impacted These TCs**

Robert's understandings developed over time, but he did not have the support to use his insights to notice *intentionally*. He seemed to *account for* his stress in coming to the internship site, but he did not give specific *accounts of* his experiences. De Bono (1977) and Mason (2002) might argue that Robert's broad generalizations of the school being "difficult" and "a different world" limited his abilities to continue noticing carefully, specifically, and *intentionally*. Robert could have been encouraged to go beyond describing the school as difficult and instead to give *accounts of* his experiences with detailed interactions between individuals, which could then lead to considering instructional possibilities. Pushing Robert to give *accounts of* specific events might have opened up opportunities for him to probe further and continually question why.

This potential why-sensing/wisening (Mason 2002) could then help Robert to "use disturbance to locate the ideals ...and probe those situations more fully in order to find alternative ways of acting, which contribute to the ideals and desires" (Mason 2002, p. 248) that Robert identifies in the first interview excerpt. Pushing Robert to give specific *accounts of* how this knowledge affected interactions between students and him could have prompted other TCs to share their experiences, question why, and brainstorm instructional responses, such as opportunities for critical literacy lessons (Freire and Macedo 1987). Noticing *intentionally* might have helped him identify productive responses to what he noticed, continually question his observations, and develop skills to improve his practice. By sharing her accounts of the demographic makeup of the classes in her internship school in a diversity course setting, Kat could engage her cohort in a discussion about what to do if they see similar situations in the schools where they teach in the future.

Finally, the habit-formation or seemingly automatic turn toward direct instruction among these TCs shows that they might have benefitted from opportunities to notice intentionally and "alter oneself in the future so as to act freshly rather than automatically out of habit" and to "notice an opportunity to act differently (to respond rather than to react)" (Mason 2011, p. 37). Rachel could have been supported and pushed toward shifting her disposition of students as having *no* background knowledge to recognizing that they had rich background knowledge that differs from academic norms. With such an opportunity, Rachel and Robert could then shift to noticing *intentionally* to bridge and leverage students' backgrounds as resources that can enrich students' literacy development. Being a change agent in the position of student teacher is difficult, but discussing what they

notice in internships could lead TCs to question assumptions and determine possible actions for becoming agents of change in their future instruction.

### Possible Structures for Noticing in Diversity Coursework

In the diversity coursework reported in this study, the sessions emphasized TC engagement and critical thinking around the readings *over* their critical *application* of these readings in *daily practice*. A possibility emerging from prioritizing TCs' noticing in diversity and equity-related coursework would be to start each class session with TCs' *accounts of* what they noticed in their internships that they perceive as highly relevant to topics scholars discuss in assigned readings. Starting each class session with TCs' *accounts of* their internship experiences would focus discussions around their practice and the practices they observe among mentors, teachers, administrators, and students in their internship sites. Foregrounding their weekly *accounts of* interactions would give TCs the time and space to share and build upon one another's experiences to question *why* and *notice intentionally* together. Simply tweaking the discussion leader assignment is one possibility for giving TCs opportunities to develop the discipline of noticing to help them purposefully integrate their developing day-to-day practice with knowledge and dispositions that they learn from renowned scholars in the field.

Such a class structure would require teacher educators to shift from preparing lectures and activities designed to engage TCs in discussing theories and content from readings to *starting* with TCs' noticing around questions of CRP. This shift necessitates teacher educators to become responsive (Levin et al. 2009) to TCs' sense-making and gain comfort with a partially "emergent curriculum" (Hammer 1997) driven by TCs' contributions. While cases or "practical examples" that teacher educators develop can help TCs apply theories and knowledge hypothetically (Merseth 1991; Milner 2010, p. 125), I am suggesting that TCs' authentic, daily experiences drive diversity and equity-related coursework. This suggestion of starting diversity course meetings with what TCs notice in their practicum aligns with Milner's (2006) argument that "spaces are needed to help pre-service teachers think through and connect conceptual learning and knowledge to practice" (p. 371).

One approach to bringing TCs' practicum experiences into the center of diversity-related coursework is the use of videos. Much research on the use of videos in teacher education is focused on helping teacher learners to attend and respond to student thinking (Sherin and van Es 2009; Singer-Gabella et al. 2016, and others). This work is foundational for culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the need for teachers to validate students' background knowledge and help students to bridge their prior knowledge with new disciplinary skills and concepts. I suggest that multicultural and diversity-focused coursework could also take up video-based pedagogies to engage TCs in noticing how culturally and linguistically diverse students interact with peers and the TC with the lens of culturally responsive pedagogy.

In addition to thinking about students' disciplinary sense-making, questions guiding such video analyses could include: How are students accessing and bridging their linguistic, cultural, conceptual, and experiential knowledge with new content?

How do we know that students are helping one another make sense of content? How are multiple ways of interacting validated in the classroom? How equitable are participation patterns? In one example of teachers learning about equitable instruction through video analysis, Hand (2012) identifies an opportunity for teacher learning that Mason (2002) might label *giving accounts of* rather than *giving accounts for*. An initial reaction when a student is off-task might be for a teacher to scold the child and tell her to get back to work, thus *accounting for* the student's behavior as being caused by her lack of motivation or interest. Alternatively, the teacher could notice the child's off-task behavior and question all of the possible causes, for example, by asking "whether the task makes sense" to the student, thus repositioning the child as sharing ownership of the classroom discourse and providing the teacher with opportunities to refine her practice to align with CRP (Hand 2012, p. 239). While attending and responding to students through noticing during video analyses can help TCs improve instruction, specifically taking a lens of equity can help TCs think about how "predominant discursive systems and categories" may squander opportunities for *all* students to engage fully in the classroom dialogue (Hand 2012, p. 244).

## Limitations

This study is bound by the timescale of the TCs' participation in the teacher education program. A full picture of their learning trajectories, including their knowledge, skills, and dispositions prior to joining the program and after graduating from the program, leaves unanswered questions. More longitudinal studies would benefit the research field. Implications of developing TCs' skills in noticing are limited as well. While I suggest noticing as a *method* of cultivating critical consciousness and helping TCs to become agents of change, giving *accounts of* what they see in schools is only a first step.

## Conclusion

Findings from this study show that TCs' learning experiences differ greatly across university-based coursework and practicum settings and that TCs struggle to enact CRP in their practicum placements. By teaching responsively and asking TCs to bring in examples of what they notice in their practicum experiences regarding CRP-oriented topics, teacher educators could guide TCs in transferring conceptual tools (McDonald 2005) into practical tools. TCs' noticing of school-wide and classroom practices that diverge or align with CRP—and teacher educators' responsiveness and dialogue around TCs' noticing—could help TCs to integrate and negotiate the values they see and hear and live in the practicum *and* at the university. Applying their growing knowledge base from multicultural coursework to specific instructional interactions can help TCs to connect theories and principles of CRP with their actual practice. In turn, TCs could develop a stronger base of

knowledge, skills, and dispositions to integrate expertise from both the university and school-based communities toward the aim of *enacting* CRP in daily instruction.

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