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CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND THE BEGINNING TEACHER: AN  
INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS IN TEACHER PREPAREDNESS

By  
Lisa D. McCullough

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb University School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Gardner-Webb University  
2020

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Lisa D. McCullough under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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## Acknowledgements

Let me begin by giving all honor and praise to my personal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. I am so thankful for Your presence in my life. Through YOU, and only through YOU, are all things possible. This journey in my life is a testament to Your unconditional love and purpose for my life.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee: Dr. Sydney Brown; Dr. Steve Stone; and my chair, Dr. Jennifer Putnam. Thank you for your guidance and support throughout this process.

Although my parents, James and Lula McCullough, were not here physically for this journey in my life, I am always assured that both of you are continuously with me. I hope I have made both of you proud.

To my son and grandson, Sayvon and Jream, everything I have done has been to show you the way. Create your own journey, allow God to be your guiding light, and always know that I am your biggest fan.

Finally, I want to recognize that a part of my purpose for writing this dissertation is my young cousin, Printess. I lost you at the beginning of this journey and have often thought about our conversations regarding school. You always shared that you “didn’t like school because it was boring.” We both were products of small rural schools in West Virginia with very little diversity. I have often wondered if your educational experience had been *culturally relevant*, would you still be here? Rest easy, Printess ... with love.

## **Abstract**

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND THE BEGINNING TEACHER: AN INVESTIGATION OF THE ROLE OF NORTH CAROLINA TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN TEACHER PREPAREDNESS. McCullough, Lisa D., 2020:

Dissertation, Gardner-Webb University.

With the changing faces of America's public school classrooms, colleges and universities that are responsible for the preparation of quality teachers will need to ensure that these future educators are equipped with the knowledge and ability to address the learning needs of students of color. This study was designed to examine how North Carolina teacher education programs prepare preservice teachers and beginning teachers with knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Using a sequential explanatory mixed-methods approach, beginning teacher (n=25) perceptual data were collected and analyzed utilizing a predeveloped survey instrument followed by a focus group in order to further describe the perceptual data. The findings from this research showed that in order to develop culturally relevant pedagogues from within, North Carolina teacher education programs must (a) develop cohesive collegiate curricula that is built upon the components of CRP, (b) provide continuous support with CRP throughout the critical years of the teaching profession, and (c) develop teaching candidate community immersion programs to promote the deeper understanding of the impact of cultural funds on the education of students of color. Teacher education programs that are willing to work collaboratively with other universities across the state of North Carolina have the opportunity to support the development of culturally relevant pedagogues. Through carefully crafted programs, teacher education programs can ensure the development of

teachers who are prepared to meet the needs of all children, including students of color.

*Keywords:* culturally relevant pedagogy, teacher education program, multicultural education, preservice teacher, beginning teacher, diversity

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

As beginning teachers enter America's public school classrooms today, they should come prepared to effectively engage with the diverse cultural landscape that covers each and every classroom. A decade ago, Smith (2009) shared this statement: "Today's startling classroom diversity reflects a major United States demographic shift. According to the U.S. Census Bureau by the year 2040, White non-Hispanics will make up less than half of the school-aged population" (p. 45). Just 6 years after making this statement, this phenomenon began to take hold in America's public school system. The most recent statistical data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2019) stated,

Between fall 2000 and fall 2015, the percentage of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools who were White decreased from 61 to 49 percent. The percentage of Black students also decreased during this period from 17 to 15 percent. In contrast, there was an increase in the percentage of students enrolled in public schools who were Hispanic (from 16 to 26 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander (4 to 5 percent) during this time period. (Indicator 6: Elementary and Secondary Enrollment, para. 1).

In sharp contrast, the number of teachers of color has slowly diminished when compared with earlier decades. More recently, a report from the U.S. Department of Education (2016a) noted that for the school year 2011-2012, only 18% of P-12 teachers were people of color. This same report shared that about 82% of all public school teachers were non-Hispanic White, 7% were non-Hispanic Black, 8% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian, and 1% were Native American. In addition, female teachers far outnumbered

the males, and the number of Black male teachers was even lower. Ladson-Billings (2009) reported the following statistics regarding children of color and teachers of color and their representation in public education:

In the twenty largest school districts, they make up over 70 percent of total school enrollment. Conversely, the number of teachers of color, particularly African American, is dwindling. African American teachers make up less than 5 percent of the total public school teaching population. (p. xvi)

These startling statistics have led to huge concerns and a growing body of research regarding the inequalities in education and the need for teachers who can meet the educational needs of children of color. For this reason, in the last 3 decades, much research has been conducted surrounding the educational needs of children of color and the teachers who serve them (Brown 2014; Gay, 2002; Grant 2008; Haddix, 2017; Jackson, 2015; Sleeter, 2001). A common thread in this research has been the divergence between the diversity of the student populations and the underrepresented diversity of the teaching population. More recently, research by the federal government has also come to conclude that this mismatch in racial or ethnic identity can have an effect on the ability to meet the educational needs of children of color (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a). The underlying question that continued to manifest itself in current research was, “How are we preparing teacher candidates and preservice teachers to address the educational needs of a diverse student population?”

The remainder of Chapter 1 provides a brief summary of the historical context of this study, introduces and defines the problem, and provides a concise statement that served as the connection between the issue being addressed and the focus of the research.

The research questions that guided this study are included. Chapter 1 also briefly highlights the theoretical framework guiding this investigation, along with a rationale for its selection and usage. Additionally, key terminology is defined for the reader, while assumptions, delimitations, and limitations are discussed thoroughly in relation to the study. The significance of this research is addressed as it relates to the current field of study on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) as well. Finally, the key points are extrapolated and presented as a synopsis of the chapter in a conclusive summary.

## **Background**

During the 1960s and 1970s, a new movement evolved into what came to be known as multicultural education. This movement looked at the educational resources of classroom teachers and how these resources and teaching practices embraced the cultural differences of students in the classroom. Introduced during several decades of social upheaval in the U.S., the definition of multicultural education has been as diverse as the children it sought to serve. The need to address the educational demands of children of color during the 1960s was highlighted even more during the Civil Rights Movement and the desegregation of public schools across the South. In the several decades that followed, multitudes of definitions were developed from research; however, many of those studies focused solely on restructuring the curriculum. It was the work of Banks (1993) that led to the development of the five dimensions of multicultural education that, when working collectively, address the educational needs of children of color. It was Banks's (1993) belief that when the dimensions of (a) content integration, (b) knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) equity pedagogy, and (e) empowering school culture and social structure were working in an interrelationship fashion,

educational institutions could begin the task of providing an educational experience that was multicultural. Consequently, two primary goals from the beginning of the movement towards multicultural education continued to plague the educational system: (a) equality in education for students of diverse backgrounds and (b) symmetry in educational success and mobility between males and females (Banks, 1993). Both of these elements represent major social justice movements in society during the 1960s and 1970s that continued to linger in the educational deficits column of today's public education system.

As public education continued to evolve, new research began to emerge that demonstrated a much-needed change in how educators approach the teaching and learning of minority students. This need became significant as the field of education continued to experience the ever-increasing achievement gap between minority children and their White peers in public school classrooms across America. According to a report by Stanford CEPA (n.d.), which used the results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP),

In fact, some of the achievement gaps grew larger in the late 1980s and the 1990s. Since the 1990s, however, achievement gaps in every grade and subject have been declining. As of 2012, the White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps were 30-40% smaller than they were in the 1970s. Nonetheless, the gaps are still very large, ranging from 0.5 to 0.9 standard deviations. (Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gaps, para. 2).

These results demonstrate that for several decades, the achievement gap between minority children and their White peers has been in existence. However, these scores have appeared to be diminishing even though they continue to lag far behind for Black

and Hispanic students when compared with their White counterparts.

Representative of strands taken from the foundation of multicultural education, the practice of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and the theory of CRP sought to provide a more embedded approach to cultural inclusion in public education. These two closely related strands of multicultural education were derived from research influenced and guided by several prominent researchers but heavily influenced by the research and writing of Geneva Gay in the 1990s. Through her studies, educators came to understand the relevance of culture in the classroom. Gay (2002) defined CRT in this manner:

Culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experience and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly. (p. 106)

At the same time, Ladson-Billings (1995a) was focused on a pedagogical approach that focused on providing a model for teaching that she labeled as CRP. This pedagogical approach to teaching went beyond the surface level aspects of culture in education and placed emphasis on the importance of the role of the teacher as a culturally active and informed agent of change in the classroom. It also explored aspects of social justice which, in turn, enhanced the critical-thinking skills of students and built on the relationship to their own cultural identities and those of others in the classroom as well. Ladson-Billings (1995a) proposed,

Teachers with culturally relevant practices see themselves positively and find

value in others, see themselves as part of the community in which they teach and value the idea of giving back to the community. They also encourage their students to give back as well. Teachers with culturally relevant practices view teaching as an “art” and not a skill. These teachers create engaging and relevant lesson for their students. They believe that all students can succeed and come to school with a wealth of knowledge that they can use to embed the learning that needs to happen in the classroom. These culturally relevant practicing teachers help students make connections between their community, national, and global identities. (p. 28)

Ladson-Billings’s (1995a) research suggested a shift in the mindset of teachers who served in culturally diverse settings with underserved children. Both Ladson-Billings and Gay had the underpinning of social justice and social change as the foundation for their educational frameworks.

With the continual movement towards a more diverse society in the U.S., it was imperative that educational reforms were inclusive of addressing the educational needs of all students. To continue the quest to provide equity of educational experiences, policymakers must consider the importance of addressing the educational needs of students of varying racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. One of the critical components required to resolve the issue was the need to prepare teachers who are not only knowledgeable of the content they teach but also knowledgeable of the varying backgrounds, values, traditions, and life experiences their children bring into the classroom every day, along with an understanding of their own identity (Ozturgut, 2011). Equity in education has always been a necessity to produce future societies that can

effectively function in a globally competitive and diverse society, and it begins with knowledgeable educators who have learned to effectively facilitate learning experiences that support cultural and ethnic inclusion.

### **Problem Statement**

As the public school classrooms across America became more diverse, the level of diversity among educators continued to lag behind (NCES, 2010). The lack of diversity among educators has been of particular significance when considering the apparent cultural and ethnic mismatch between students of color and the teachers who educate them. How to effectively approach the teaching and learning of students of color continued to be of importance primarily due to the achievement gap that existed among minority children and their White counterparts. While efforts have been underway to recruit and retain teachers of color, the reality of the situation supports the need to provide teachers of all racial and ethnic backgrounds with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms. Emdin (2016) argued,

While some may use these statistics to push for more minority teachers, I argue that there must also be a concerted effort to improve the teaching of White teachers who are already teaching in these schools, as well as those who aspire to teach there. (p. xi)

By including the perceptions of beginning teachers, it was the hope that not only would North Carolina teacher education programs (TEPs) benefit from the insight gained from this study but also school districts in the state of North Carolina as they consider the development of professional learning opportunities for new teachers and their work with diverse populations.

Research into the effectiveness of TEPs or teacher preparation programs (TPPs) has been in existence for decades (Haddix, 2017; Loewenberg Ball & Foran, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2016c). Questions continued to surface as to whether the curriculum of TEPs and the related field experiences were reflective of the experiences new teachers face in the classroom today (Sleeter, 2011). This has been of particular concern when considering the rapidly changing levels of diversity in school populations across America. With this in mind, this study asked beginning teachers to consider those practices, experiences, and coursework during their undergraduate years that supported their ability to work with students from diverse backgrounds.

Although the concept of teacher preparedness has been of great concern, researchers have continued to work to identify those culturally responsive practices that show a direct impact on student achievement (Haddix, 2017; Hammond, 2015). Researchers continued to call for more research in the area of CRP and its effect on student achievement. Some researchers have noted that the aspects of motivation and interest, which are identified elements of CRP, can indirectly impact student achievement (Jett, 2012). This study also hoped to shed light on those specific practices and approaches that have been successful with students of color.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this explanatory sequential mixed methods study of CRP and perceptions of beginning teachers regarding implementation within a diverse school setting.

1. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional 4-year TEP in North Carolina rate their perceptions of their level of preparedness with the



tenets of CRP?

2. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina further describe their perceptions of level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP after completion of a TEP and full-time classroom teaching experience?

The research questions that guided this study augmented current related research in the field, while providing a very fixated view on the work of TEPs in North Carolina.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In an effort to bring a pedagogical approach of teaching to the forefront of education as it pertains to children of color, Ladson-Billings (2009) described CRP as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 20). This theoretical perspective on teaching and learning is rooted in the understanding that all children, specifically children of color and other groups in society who have been traditionally marginalized, can benefit and thrive in a culturally inclusive educational setting. This theoretical approach became more prevalent as the world of education began to take notice of the rapidly changing demographics in America and the achievement gap between non-White students and their counterparts. In this study, CRP is clearly and concisely explained through providing a historical foundation for the development of this pedagogy as well as its ramifications for the future of educational endeavors that affected the needs of children of color.

Used as the theoretical lens for this study, CRP assisted in explaining the transformative/social justice framework of this mixed methods study that served as the

underpinning for this research. The transformative framework viewed through a culturally relevant theoretical lens was the foundation of the study and assisted in developing an understanding of the results. This study sought to assist in the development of recommendations related to CRP and the level of preparedness of preservice teachers by colleges and universities in North Carolina as well as the professional learning needs of beginning teachers in school districts across the state of North Carolina. In order to accurately determine if preservice teachers believed they were properly trained in the implementation of a CRP to address the needs of diverse student populations, preservice and beginning teachers must first acknowledge their own understanding and level of proficiency with implementation. Through this examination, the researcher hoped to gain insight into the impact of CRP on these preservice and beginning teachers. This study sought to provide TEPs with information as it related to the training of preservice teachers and their impact on student achievement of diverse groups. The effect of these results could possibly change the trajectory of children of color and their educational endeavors.

### **Definitions**

**Beginning teacher.** In the state of North Carolina, beginning teachers are those individuals who are currently working full-time as a certified teacher. A beginning teacher in North Carolina will have between 1-3 years of classroom experience. Most beginning teachers are assigned a mentor who provides support and guidance during this developmental period. For the purpose of this study, the beginning teacher has graduated from a traditional 4-year TEP from within the state.

**CRP.** Ladson-Billings (1995a) coined the phrase CRP during the 1990s. She

defined this teaching theory as “a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). Over the years, this definition has been redefined and built upon by other prominent researchers in the field.

**CRT.** Concerned for the educational experiences of marginalized students of color, Gay, an expert in the field of multicultural education, gave birth to the concept of CRT. According to Gay (2002), “culturally responsive teaching is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). More recently, Hammond (2015) coupled CRT with neuroscience to promote more authentic and rigorous academic engagement that seemed lacking for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**Diversity.** According to the National Education Association’s (2002) Diversity Toolkit, diversity can be characterized “as the sum of the ways that people are both alike and different. The dimensions of diversity include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status” (Introduction, para. 1). As it relates to this study, diversity can also be described in this way: “The term is a colloquial category understood as ‘non-traditional/non-White’ which encompasses ethnic minorities, immigrants and – in the case of teacher education – males” (Smith, 2014). This study will define diversity as it relates to race and ethnicity.

**Multicultural education.** According to prominent researchers in the field of multicultural education McGee Banks and Banks (1995), multicultural education was defined as “a field of study designed to increase education equity for all students” (p. xi).

In earlier research by Banks (1993), he identified five major dimensions of the field as “content integration, the knowledge of construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure” (p. 5).

Subsequently, McGee Banks and Banks came to theorize that the basis of multicultural education could only be entirely accepted through full educational reform and a very detailed process of implementation. These concepts and theories by McGee Banks and Banks along with the development of the dimensions of the concept would come to define what had been known as *multicultural education*.

**Preservice teacher.** Preservice teachers are those individuals who are currently engaged in the education and training associated with the teaching profession. These students/candidates are enrolled in an accredited TEP. These student teachers partake in a period of guided teaching experience under the direction of a college supervisor and a cooperating teacher. This practicum experience is normally the culminating event to the teaching degree program.

**TEP/TPP.** Early teacher education or preparation programs focused on three core areas including elements of teaching methods, subject area content, and education foundations. These same areas of focus continue to be the basis for most TEPs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Helton, 2008). For the purpose of this study, TEPs/TPPs will be defined as any 4- or 5-year accredited program that provides the required training through coursework and experiences for preservice teaching candidates.

### **Audience**

As colleges and universities sought to continue to build upon evolving TEPs, this study aimed to provide those decision makers on policy and curriculum at the collegiate

level with information that would hopefully impact decisions made about reforms in coursework and experiences in TEPs. In addition, public education professionals concerned with the professional learning of beginning teachers would also benefit from the insight gained from this study.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study sought to provide additional information that would impact the preparation of beginning teachers by TEPs. In order to acknowledge the role of culture in the classroom, TEPs needed to begin to carefully examine how teachers were prepared to implement educational practices that promoted the inclusion of backgrounds and/or ethnicities of children in the classroom. Specifically focusing on the implementation of CRP in schools with diverse racial and ethnic student populations by beginning teachers, this investigation hoped to provide perceptual information on the beginning teachers' ability to effectively utilize an instructional approach that was based on CRP.

### **Assumptions**

In order to support the use of a transformative social justice worldview in this study, it was essential to point out the cultural assumptions made by many higher education professionals involved in the preparation of teachers as it relates to cultural relevance in education. In fact, preservice teachers of color are often the victims of a preconceived belief that exists in some college/university TEPs that these student teachers were inherently prepared to meet the educational needs of students of color. Sheets (2001) argued, "Teachers of color should not be used as cultural carriers or perceived as experts in instructional strategies or curricular content for diverse students while at a novice stage" (p. 28). Counterparts in TEPs as well as some professionals in

the field often shared this presumed notion. This was important to this study because it highlighted the mindset of some professors and college instructors as it related to the preparation of teacher candidates for work with a diverse population.

### **Limitations**

Within this study, it was important for the researcher to note a variety of constraints that defined the boundaries of this study. Unlike the realms of public education, the complexities of colleges and universities do not support the use of a set of common standards that worked to connect the educational threads from specific content areas and/or academic levels from state to state. The lack of a consistent approach by TEPs can affect the educational experience of preservice teachers from state to state or even regionally. Thus, beginning teachers enter the profession with various levels of training as it relates to diversity.

Another limitation of this study that led to bias in the research was the reflexivity level of the researcher as it related to race. This social theory concept connects one's own background with the context of an event or situation. African American students have historically been underserved by the U.S. public education system for decades. Districts and states that have high diversity in student populations continuously conducted research around the most effective way to address the achievement gap of minority children and their White counterparts. As a member of this traditionally marginalized group, this researcher attempted to conduct this study through an objective lens.

Another limitation of this study to consider was the possible lack of racial and/or ethnic diversity of the student populations for beginning teachers in their assigned

schools. This possible lack of diversity could affect the perceptual data gathered from the beginning teachers, as it would not allow them to gage their level of understanding of implementation on a racial and/or ethnicity level.

Due to the large amount of research that has occurred over the last few decades as it relates to diversity and its impact on education, the consistency of the terminology used to define various aspects of this work has changed. With this in mind, the consistent use of various terms related to this study could be a limitation. Depending on the geographic region and the level at which diversity was included in the university curriculum, terminology may have been different or even excluded.

A final possible limitation of this study would be the limited access to beginning teacher populations across the state. The researcher found it challenging to connect with beginning teachers across the state; therefore, developing an appropriate sample size was difficult to manage.

### **Delimitations**

This study also includes those boundaries developed by the researcher. One constraint of the study was the inclusion of beginning teachers who only graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina. This delimitation narrowed the scope of the research and effected the ability to generalize the findings across other regions of the U.S.

### **Significance of the Study**

In order to better prepare novice teachers for work with diverse populations, TEPs need to be made aware of how teachers perceive their ability to work with these varying populations. Ladson-Billings (2009) stated, “Further, many teachers – White and Black alike – feel ill-prepared for or incapable of meeting the educational need of African

American students” (p. xvi). This study has the potential to provide valuable information for policymakers in higher education in regard to the curriculum framework of TEPs.

The immediate concern for meeting the educational needs of diverse learners was documented in several federal and state government studies that highlighted the urgency of this phenomenon. As America continues to formulate changes in education that promote the growth of traditionally marginalized groups, this work will dissolve the educational inequalities that have plagued the U.S. educational system since its inception.

### **Summary**

This study seeks to provide additional scholarly research to the field of education as it relates to meeting the needs of diverse student populations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As the U.S. population continues to grow, so do the demands for educating students who come from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Meeting the needs of this growing population continues should be a top priority for the federal government, state and local school districts, and school administrators and teachers who serve these students directly.

Chapter 2 provides the historical background that guided this study in relationship to the development of CRP and the development of TEPs in the U.S. Chapter 2 provides a chronological mapping of teacher education in the U.S. and the development of multiculturalism in public education.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **History of TPPs in U.S. Colleges and Universities**

According to the U.S. Constitution and its basis in federalism, the federal government has no authority over local public education, which is an exclusive state government right (National Archives, 2016). This article of the constitution allowed individual towns and cities, historically, to provide the educational needs of its citizens. This ability to control the education of groups of its citizens led to the development of educational demands that were specific to particular states but also created inequalities in education of the past and some of those that still plagued the current educational system. This failed system of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries became the life work of a Massachusetts statesman named Horace Mann, who used its undeveloped framework to work towards the betterment of a public educational system for the U.S.

Known as the Common School Era of the 1830s, Horace Mann's plan for a uniform and systematic public education led to taxation for school funding, adoption of state boards of education, attempts to provide equality in education for all children, and the development of teacher training institutes (Public Broadcasting Station, 2005). In 1839, in Lexington, Massachusetts, the first teacher training school was started under the direction of Horace Mann. This teacher institute sought to provide the necessary training for teachers to provide a more standardized state of education to children. Working against the view of the Progressives who sought to continue the work of individualized and local groups to provide the educational needs of their specific towns and regions of the country, Mann continued his journey towards developing state boards of education that enacted educational policies and demands for teacher quality standards (Public

Broadcasting Station, 2005).

The need to ensure a quality preparation program for the teaching profession led to several new concepts that would impact the standardization of the teaching profession during the 1800s. The act of licensure of the teaching profession was first enacted through a plan from a teaching preparation program in Pennsylvania.

In 1834, Pennsylvania became the first state to require future teachers to pass a test of reading, writing, and arithmetic. By 1867, most states required teachers to pass a locally administered test to get a state certificate, which usually included not only the basic skills, but also U.S. history, geography, spelling, and grammar. (Ravitch, 2005, para. 6)

From these endeavors came the initial board of professionals who began the task of developing national standards for TPPs in 1926 in the U.S. (Roames, 1987). By 1954, through a joint effort of practitioners, education professionals, and state boards of education who worked closely to form the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) came an accountable body that assumed the role of accrediting TEPs in America.

**Eurocentrism in TEPs.** At various points in American history, the demands of society dictated the educational needs of its citizens. One such demand came in the form of a perceived need for educating newly arrived immigrants and the indigenous people of America about the newly formed American norms developed by White settlers. After the Indian Wars, the need to educate the indigenous people became vital, as did the need to educate the freed slaves during Reconstruction. This need to educate the indigenous people of America led many teachers to seek employment opportunities at the first school

developed to educate the Indian. This may have provided the first opportunity in the new America to formally educate children of color. In 1879 under the guidance and supervision of Richard Henry Pratt, a former military leader, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was founded. The Carlisle School was a federal boarding school for Native American children in Pennsylvania. Pratt sought White male teachers to implement the goal of the school which was to “make students better” based on the understanding that they were socially and intellectually inadequate (Emdin, 2016, p. 5). It was through this lens that Nationalistic or Eurocentric views started to take shape in the American public school curriculum. The ideology of the school supported the assimilation to Eurocentric views and norms. The Indian children’s educational experiences at Carlisle were void of their own native traditions, beliefs, and education of their own heritage. Its militaristic approach to educating Indian children forced the development of European beliefs in these children, while silencing and providing misguided information about the development and challenges of the indigenous people of the U.S. and other traditionally marginalized groups that were brought to America (Emdin, 2016). This Eurocentric educational approach devalued any other accomplishments or struggles of racially and/or ethnically diverse groups that contributed to the development of the U.S., while seeking to strengthen the views of European descents, specifically males, and their contributions to the overall development of mankind in general.

Likewise, the freed slave faced the same educational experience after the Civil War and during the Reconstruction period. Northerners believed that education of the freed slave would only serve to create better U.S. citizens. With this in mind, several individuals and organizations were willing to provide education to Southern freed slaves.

As the research surrounding TEPs and the preparation of preservice teachers moved into the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, more attention was given to diversity and multicultural education by researchers. Researchers were finding that very little had been done to address the needs of a public education setting that was beginning to see classrooms that included various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Sleeter (1985) looked at various teacher education programs during the 1970s and found very little infusion of diversity in the curriculum that preservice teachers were taught. Sleeter's (1985) review of teacher education for components of multicultural education found only a small number of programs that infused any multicultural components in their programs. Swartz, as cited in Ladson-Billings (1998), described the dominant public school curriculum approach that preservice teachers were taught that continued to mirror curriculums of the past in this way: "primarily legitimizes White, upper-class males voicing as the 'standard' knowledge students need to know" (Swartz, 1992, p. 341). These pervading views on education that continued to sidestep the inclusion of multiculturalism in TEPs demonstrated the need to effectively train and develop teachers in TEPs for decades.

Although research continues to focus on the professional learning needs of teachers who can impact the academic development of children of color in public education, discourse around the systematic needs of TEPs in this area of focus continue to be just discourse without any real change effects.

### **Introduction to Multicultural Education**

Multicultural education, as termed during the 1960s, was birthed from several different movements that occurred in the U.S. that sought to deal with issues of social

justice, educational equality, and human rights. In fact, Grant (2008), a prominent researcher on the evolution of multicultural education in America, described the historical development and evolution of multicultural education as,

a chain of events that included social movements, court decisions, legislations, publications, and constitutional mandates that brought awareness to the plight of those individuals who were the victims of social injustices that promoted poverty, racism, classism, bigotry and sexism in the United States. (p. 2)

Although the 1960s brought about a global awareness of the need for multicultural education, early ethnic movements in Black studies date back as far as the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when prominent Black scholars such as Carter G. Woodson and W.E.B. DuBois created a curriculum about African Americans that could be infused into both school and college-level instruction (Banks, 1993). The work of these Black scholars and others was coupled with educational movements that sought to provide people new to this country with an understanding of the American Creed and the value system that guided their new homeland. Known as the Intercultural Education Movement and Intergroup Education Movement, these movements were developed to promote an understanding of ethnicity and immigration in America. These movements would benefit newcomers from European countries concerning assimilation, social mobility, and prejudice as it relates to their awareness and acceptance of others (Banks, 1993). However, these movements were never intended to address the issues of race in relationship to African Americans in the U.S. Consequently, these movements spawned the Black educators' pursuit for inclusiveness in equity and equality, while also leading to the development of minority based educational movements.

## Changing Demographics in American Public Education Systems

The demographic makeup of American society had been one composed of immigrants from other countries since inception. However, the rate of change in the U.S. population has rapidly evolved over the last 2 decades. Minority population groups have grown exponentially and are expected to eventually surpass the current majority population. According to U.S. Census Bureau projections, by 2060, the U.S. population in general will be 54% minority (Colby & Ortman, 2017). Figure 1 shows the projections for all U.S. groups from 2014 through 2060.

### Population by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2014 and 2060

(Population in thousands)

Race and Hispanic origin <sup>1</sup>	2014		2060		Change, 2014 to 2060	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<b>Total population</b> .....	<b>318,748</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>416,795</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>98,047</b>	<b>30.8</b>
One Race .....	310,753	97.5	390,772	93.8	80,020	25.8
White .....	246,940	77.5	285,314	68.5	38,374	15.5
Non-Hispanic White .....	198,103	62.2	181,930	43.6	-16,174	-8.2
Black or African American .....	42,039	13.2	59,693	14.3	17,654	42.0
American Indian and Alaska Native .....	3,957	1.2	5,607	1.3	1,650	41.7
Asian .....	17,083	5.4	38,965	9.3	21,882	128.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander .....	734	0.2	1,194	0.3	460	62.6
Two or More Races .....	7,995	2.5	26,022	6.2	18,027	225.5
<b>Race Alone or in Combination<sup>2</sup></b>						
White .....	254,009	79.7	309,567	74.3	55,558	21.9
Black or African American .....	45,562	14.3	74,530	17.9	28,968	63.6
American Indian and Alaska Native .....	6,528	2.0	10,169	2.4	3,640	55.8
Asian .....	19,983	6.3	48,575	11.7	28,592	143.1
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander .....	1,458	0.5	2,929	0.7	1,470	100.8
<b>Hispanic or Latino Origin</b>						
Hispanic .....	55,410	17.4	119,044	28.6	63,635	114.8
Not Hispanic .....	263,338	82.6	297,750	71.4	34,412	13.1

<sup>1</sup> Hispanic origin is considered an ethnicity, not a race. Hispanics may be of any race. Responses of "Some Other Race" from the 2010 Census are modified. For more information, see <[www.census.gov/popest/data/historical/files/MRSF-01-US1.pdf](http://www.census.gov/popest/data/historical/files/MRSF-01-US1.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> "In combination" means in combination with one or more other races. The sum of the five race groups adds to more than the total population, and 100 percent, because individuals may report more than one race.

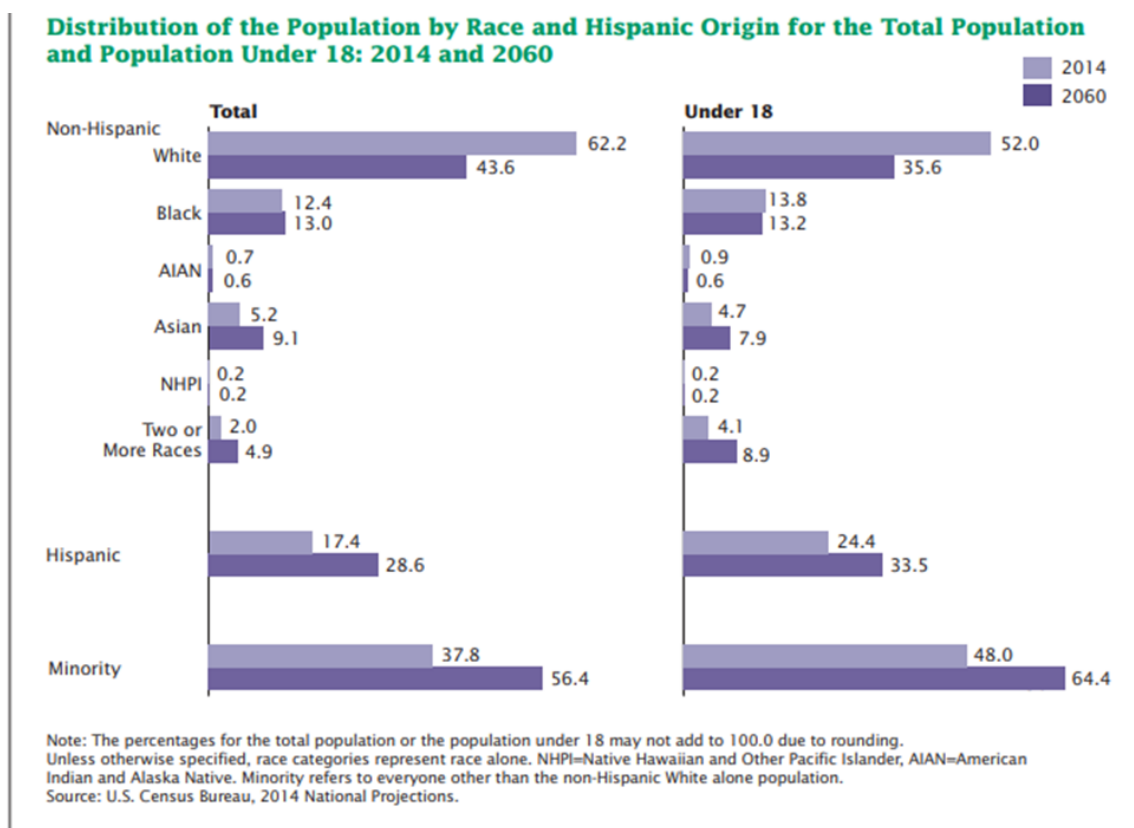
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014 National Projections.

*Figure 1. Projected U.S. Population by Race and Hispanic Origin. Determined by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2014.*

According to these projections, the non-Hispanic White only population will become the minority. In 2060, this group is projected to make up 44% of the U.S. population. According to projections, its population will fall from 198 million in 2014 to

182 million in 2060 (Colby & Ortman, 2017).. Concurrently, the fastest growing segment of the population will be the populations that are described as having two or more racial backgrounds. This group will increase from 8 million to 26 million from 2014 to 2060. The second fastest growing group will be the Asian population, which will account for 9.3% of total population in 2060. Hispanics are expected to account for 29% in 2060, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders will represent less than 1% by 2060, and Black and Native Americans will represent 14% of the population by 2060 respectively (Colby & Ortman, 2017).

These current and future trends in the U.S. population will also affect the demographics of classrooms across the U.S. public education system. Therefore, over half of America's future elementary and secondary school student populations will be comprised of minorities (U.S. Department of Education, 2016a). In fact, the U.S. Census Bureau established the following projections in regard to the number of children 18 and below in the U.S. population by 2060.



*Figure 2. Projected U.S. Population Under 18 by Race and Hispanic Origin. Determined by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2014.*

The changes in total population are also comparative of the changes from 2014 to 2060 in children below the age of 18. With this in mind, education stakeholders will need to make serious adjustments in understanding how to meet the educational needs of students of color.

The state of North Carolina posed its own challenges in meeting the needs of diverse student populations. According to data gathered by Public School Review (n.d.), in school year 2018-2019, North Carolina ranked the ninth largest district in the U.S. This site created a diversity score and North Carolina's public schools' diversity score was 0.46, which is higher than the national average of 0.32. According to the Public



School Review data, the closer a state moves towards 1.00, the more diverse the student population. In the state of North Carolina, minority enrollment makes up 50% of total enrollment of students in the state public school systems (Public School Review, n.d.). North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2016) reports show a level of consistency with the most current data from the Public School Review, with the percentage of diversity in the student population at 50.1%. The changing demographics in state and national levels support the need for an ever-evolving approach to teaching and learning for future generations.

Despite the rapidly changing demographics of the student population across America, preservice teaching candidates and beginning teachers continued to be dominated by Caucasian, non-Hispanic females (Loewus, 2017; Sleeter, 2001). This statistic is supported by the fact that predominantly White institutions of higher education continued to generate the larger number of preservice teachers who go on to become beginning teachers across the country. This cultural mismatch continued to influence the educational success of students. It also highlighted the need to develop a plan to prepare preservice teachers for the cultural and educational needs of children of color (Milner, 2010b).

### **Culture and Education**

Capturing a conceptual definition of culture has been the work of several researchers in various fields of the social sciences. In the field of psychology, Matsumoto (2009) spoke of culture in this way: “culture is a meaning and information system, shared by a group and transmitted across generations that allows for human survival, the coordination and transmission of social behaviors, and the pursuit of happiness, health

and a meaningful life” (p. 5). In the field of psychology, most research related to the understanding of culture focused on the connections that exist between individuals in the group and how those connections and understandings assist in how they exist in the world around them. Among anthropologists, there exists a cohesion among members of groups due to “learned behaviors.” According to anthropologists Wanda and Warms (2011), culture is best defined as a “system of learned behaviors, and explores the ways that humans use it to organize and give meaning to the world around them” (p. 74). The approach to understanding culture in this way characterizes culture as adaptive in nature, as it changes to the changes that naturally occur in the world around people and groups. Experts in the field of sociology believe that culture is a way to express, share, and produce meaning among a group (Hall, 1997; Rogoff, 2003). Sociologists see culture as a way to process and understand the world. The different ways and reasons for processing meaning are specific to the culture to which an individual claims membership. As America began to grow, so did the need to understand culture and its impact on various aspects of American society. The idea of culture still creates great levels of debate around the world today, as we try to understand how cultures develop, identify, and exist among the varying differences that characterize humankind.

The need to define culture in relation to the field of education has become of utmost importance as educators around the globe seek to understand the learning styles of all people and develop an understanding in human learning. When it became apparent that an inevitable intersection existed between culture and education, lines became blurry as the fight for equality in America had an influence on every institution that governed and served the people. This intersection of culture and education was not without battle.

Nieto (2017) described this battle in this way:

In order to do so, it had to challenge the deficit discourses that rendered communities of color – especially African American, Latina/o, American Indian, and some Asian American groups – as lacking in culture, devaluing education, and as completely responsible for the educational failure of its children. What was missing in this discourse was a recognition of the institutional policies and practices – including vastly unequal resources, a Eurocentric curriculum, teachers who were poorly prepared to teach students of diverse backgrounds and, of course, racism and other biases – that made educational inequality a natural outcome for large segments of the population. (p. 2)

This fight for equality in education over the decades for culturally and racially diverse students yielded both positive and negative outcomes. Although the U.S. continued to struggle to prepare teachers to work with diverse student populations, one of the more positive outcomes has been the amount of discourse and research that has occurred and continues to occur on how to provide a quality educational experience for students of color, immigrants, and students with backgrounds and characteristics that separate them into various groups.

The concern for the education of immigrant children has intensified over several decades. The rapidly changing demographics in the U.S. has led to an increased concern for meeting the educational needs of this population. This heavy influx of different cultural groups had reignited the discourse around the tenets of multicultural education, CRP, and CRT practices. Although these newcomers offered the opportunity to educate bilingual and multilingual students who come with a level of determination and resilience

that add to their level of commitment to education, many U.S. teachers see a problematic or unchanging scenario (Nieto, 2017). In order to change the mindset of some educators, researchers are building conceptual frameworks, teaching practices, and theoretical stances that seek to address the teaching and learning demands of immigrant children. Gorski (2016) suggested a shift from a focus on culture and a move towards a vision of equity. His suggested “cultural literacy” framework promotes an understanding that Latinos do not share a common culture in the same way that they do not learn from a shared set of learning strategies. In other words, within the Latino title, there exist several different groups with set of beliefs and ways of learning and understanding. Gorski also suggested that educators need to understand the social barriers that create the inequities in education for Latino students and work to help eliminate those barriers to promote educational equity for all students. Gorski stated, “in the end, what we call our work—cultural proficiency, multicultural education, educational equity—is less important than what we advocate through our work” (p. 224). The research surrounding culture and education continue to be a significant part of how we will define the American education system for centuries to come.

### **CRP**

Ladson-Billings (1995a) first coined the phrase CRP. This paradigm shift in educational beliefs and practices was the result of a mindset that refrained from questioning student ability to learn to questioning what was happening in the classroom that influenced the learning experience for children of color. Through her work, Ladson-Billings (1995a) was able to extract three major domains where teachers of these African American students found success in teaching and providing learning experiences.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) identified the domains of academic success, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. The first of these propositions refers to the “intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction and learning experience” (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p. 75). CRP stresses the importance of preparing students through academically challenging learning experiences. This component suggests that although building self-esteem in students of color is necessary, the importance of academic competence far outweighs the latter. Ladson-Billings (1995a) also suggested that in order to develop active participants in a democratic society, students must demonstrate literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills at a level that can be effective. Culturally relevant teachers who can recognize the values and skills students of color bring into the classroom and then begin to challenge them academically utilizing these skills can have an effect on the academic success of students.

Developing cultural competence involves helping students acknowledge and appreciate their own culture, while gaining knowledge and cultural understanding of others. Developing cultural competence in today’s society can be difficult as the interest between cultures and generations creates vast differences in experiences, values, and cultural norms. A teacher who is able to support and nurture cultural competence is able to utilize culture as a vehicle to teaching and learning. Helping students to understand the practice and importance of “code-switching” is a vital part of building cultural competence. Sociopolitical or critical consciousness is the final tenet of CRP. This concept involves the extension of learning skills acquired in the classroom to identifying, analyzing, and solving real world problems and societal issues. Traditionally marginalized groups are often the victims of policies and practices that affect their ability

to normally progress throughout various stages of their lives. Through creating learning experiences that challenge students to question and suggest opportunities to change the status quo, CRP offers students an educational experience that requires an ability to evaluate and synthesize information in a way that can enact change in the lives of people. A pedagogical approach that is culturally relevant ensures that students are academically challenged using the educational and cultural funds they bring to classroom, while developing citizens who are socially aware.

Likewise, Dr. Geneva Gay was also studying how educators who build the academic knowledge and skills of children of color could utilize the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students. Using the phrase CRT, Gay (2000) provided support to Ladson-Billings's (1995a) claim regarding the need to provide children of color with educational experiences that were intertwined with their cultural funds. These two experts in the field were fully supported by others who sought to provide insight into the use of cultural and experiential filters as a way to promote the academic achievement and educational success of ethnically and racially diverse students. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) outlined the progression of research and its development over time in this manner:

Examining this match or more often the mismatch, between teaching styles and the home-community culture of students originated in the anthropology of education literature and has been given many designations. Early works that advocated connections between home-community and school cultures in developing viable teaching and learning environments described this phenomenon in a variety of ways:

(a) culturally appropriate (Au & Jordan, 1981); (b) culturally congruent (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981); (c) mitigating cultural discontinuity (Macias, 1987); (d) culturally responsive (Cazden & Legget, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982); and (e) culturally compatible (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp, 1987). For our purposes, we use the term culturally relevant pedagogy (coined by Ladson-Billings in 1995), which places emphasis on the needs of students from various cultures. (p. 67)

Regardless of the terminology used, experts continued to focus on the inclusion of culture in the academic success of students of color. This continuous movement towards providing equity in educational experiences for children of color continuously changed how we approach the educational practices in the classroom as well as the preparation of preservice teachers who would move into classrooms as beginning teachers across the country.

In an effort to move towards the more current discussions surrounding the need to address the cultural funds of students of color, researchers began to focus on the teaching practices and brain-related research that would ensure academic success for students of diverse backgrounds. Through the work of Hammond (2015) and the continued commitment of Ladson-Billings and Gay, the responsive approach to addressing the needs of students of color became more coherent and inclusive in the pedagogical approach of teaching. Colleges and universities began a push to move preservice teacher practicum experiences toward engagements with students from various cultural backgrounds and coursework that would assist in understanding how to meet the academic needs of these students. Hammond (2015) expounded on the CRT approach by

linking it with current research in neuroscience. Previous research discussed the need to address social-emotional, relational, and cognitive aspects of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students; however, Hammond (2015) “sets out to explicitly highlight the natural intersection between so called ‘brain-based learning’ and culturally responsive teaching” (p. 4). Through her research, Hammond (2015) established what she considered the building blocks of cultural responsive teaching: humanizing relationships, balancing cultural orientation, cultivating academic mindset, and improving information-processing skills. This brain-based teaching and learning addition to CRT not only supports the needs of culturally diverse learners but also feeds the aspect of “best practice” in teaching for all students. The approach outlined by Hammond (2015) sought to produce competent and confident learners through productive engagement in the learning process. This type of learner is engaged in “productive struggle” (Hammond, 2015, p. 12) that enhances complex thinking that grows in the brain. Hammond (2015) believed “for culturally and linguistically diverse students, their opportunities to develop habits of mind and cognitive capacities are limited or non-existent because of educational inequity” (p. 13). The movement towards developing CRT by colleges, universities, and school districts has led to more opportunities through professional learning experiences and changes to practicum experiences for teacher education candidates.

In order to further develop this pedagogical approach, researchers in the field of education and culture continue to search for ways to enhance the educational experiences of students of color. Ensuring that the ideologies of Ladson-Billings continued to evolve with the changing demographics of public education and concerned with the maintenance



and valuing of our multiethnic and multilingual society, Paris (2012) introduced the term culturally sustaining pedagogy. Paris suggested that while Ladson-Billings's theoretical approach to teaching and learning affirms the aspects of relevance and responsiveness in the educational practices of teachers of students of color, these terms may not work to preserve the languages and cultures of the various ethnic and cultural backgrounds that compose our current classroom population. Paris also suggested, "Relevance and responsiveness do not guarantee instances or meaning that one goal of an educational program is to maintain heritage ways and to value cultural and linguistic sharing across difference, to sustain and support bi-and multilingualism and bi-and multiculturalism" (p. 95). With this in mind, in-service teachers and preservice teachers should be appropriately prepared to value and maintain the cultural practices of their students, while building their skills and practices to include dominant language and varying literacies.

As educators continued to work under the future prediction of demographical changes in U.S. public education system, the need to address and sustain the cultural funds of students of different backgrounds continued to fuel the preparation of teachers in order to ensure that they are able to support diverse student populations as beginning teachers. This educational demand continued to be at the forefront of educational reforms for TEPs.

### **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

As the research of the 1970s and 1980s helped to shape a theoretical stance that was inclusive of the students who were changing the cultural landscape of the U.S. classroom, it also inspired the work of researchers who were to come. Understanding that culture would continue to be a dominating factor in educational reform, Paris (2012)

sought to further develop the previous work around culture and education by introducing a pedagogical approach termed *culturally sustaining pedagogy*. Paris's concept was derived from his own questioning of the terms "relevant" and "responsive" and their ability to maintain all aspects of the cultures of students that influence their education. Ladson-Billings (2014) noted that many practitioners and others in the field had seemingly become stagnant in the understanding of how dynamic the concept of culture really was, thus limiting its use and ability to engage students in meaningful discourse and educational experiences. In an attempt to move beyond the mere acknowledgment of the culture, Paris wanted to "ensure the valuing and maintenance of our multiethnic and multilingual society" (p. 9). In order to move away from the deficit approaches that were being used under the umbrella of culturally relevant and/or culturally responsive, culturally sustaining pedagogy sought a more inclusive or "pluralistic" society that would "perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). In preparing the preservice teacher and working to support the beginning teacher, culturally sustaining pedagogy sought to help them understand the importance of inclusion of the cultural and language-related practices of students, while preparing them for academic success in the American school system. The ability to create an inclusive educational experience for all students was a necessity for equity in learning and preparing students to confront the social justice needs of society.

### **Improving Teacher Quality and Embedding CRP**

Teacher quality has been identified as the single most important factor affecting student achievement (National Research Council, 2010, p. vii). Over the decades, teacher

education reform and teacher quality became the basis for much research in order to validate the field and its important task of developing highly qualified teacher candidates. Through studies conducted by the Holmes Group (1986) and the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy Task Force on Teaching as Profession (1986) and others, subject matter and pedagogical preparation of teachers strengthened. These initiatives brought together theory and practice in a way that began the much-needed changes that later helped to bring a level of professionalism and deeper understanding of how students learn and the impact of teaching on individual learning styles. Regardless of the research, studies supported the need to strengthen teacher preparation (Cherng & Davis, 2017; Sleeter, 2017). However, little had been done to change the structure of teacher education and preparation programs in the U.S. as it related to the learning and teaching of students of color and multicultural education. The evaluative processes found in the Holmes Group and Carnegie Forum, though useful and informative, continued to support the long legacy of TEPs that worked without any type of professional standards that guided the foundations of TEPs in colleges and universities across the U.S.

Presently, the U.S. Department of Education and the Office of Postsecondary Education has been at work defining and qualifying the work of TEPs. In 2008, after several amendments to the Higher Education Act of 1965, the federal government demanded more information regarding the quality of TEPs to be included in Title II reports (U.S. Department of Education, 2016c). States were required to establish and report on the criteria deemed necessary for the development of quality preservice teachers during annual program evaluations. In 2013, seven assurances were also implemented by states to ensure compliance by TEPs across states regarding several aspects of teacher

preparation as it relates to meeting the needs of state and local school systems. These seven assurances included (a) training provided to prospective teachers responds to the identified needs of the local education agencies or states where the institution's graduates are likely to teach, based on past hiring and recruitment trends; (b) training provided to prospective teachers is closely linked with the needs of schools and the instructional decisions new teachers face in the classroom; (c) prospective special education teachers receive coursework in core academic subjects and receive training in providing instruction in core academic subjects; (d) general education teachers receive training in providing instruction to children with disabilities; (e) general education teachers receive training in providing instruction to limited English proficient students; (f) general education teachers receive training in providing instruction to children from low-income families; and (g) prospective teachers receive training on how to effectively teach in urban and rural schools, as applicable (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). Through this set of assurances, TEPs began the development of coursework and experiences for preservice teachers who require a level of knowledge and understanding to enhance the educational opportunities for children.

Preparing America's teachers for today's diverse classrooms has been a focus since the educational reform acts of the 1980s. Interestingly, the critical need for this educational demand dates back to the landmark civil rights case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), which gave the first inclination that race and education would be forever intertwined. One of the unintended consequences of this court case and social movements of the time period was the major impact on TEPs. Historically, this "change" was addressed through curriculum development in the public school systems,

which resulted in the addition of multicultural literature in the language arts/English classroom and a multicultural seminar class added much later to the TEP course load (King & Butler, 2015).

Consequently, it was the research tied to multiculturalism and the public school educator of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that highlighted the importance of effectively developing teachers who were able to respectfully and knowledgeably teach all students regardless of race and/or ethnic background. This paradigm shift stressed the importance of teachers developing the attitude, knowledge, and skills to work effectively with diverse students (Smith, 2009). Likewise, Milner (2017) stressed the interconnectedness of how teacher knowledge shapes decision-making and practices with students. Milner (2017) stated, “Teachers’ beliefs, knowledge, histories, worldviews, and talk seem to influence their actions and practices whether consciously or unconsciously. Knowledge, beliefs, and discourse inform teachers’ practices” (p. 77). With this understanding, how to effectively prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse student populations throughout the TEP experience has been the focus of numerous researchers (Freire, 1998; Milner, 2010a, 2010b).

However, Sleeter (2001) argued that although this is an important aspect of preparing preservice teachers that needs to be addressed, it is also important to consider how to populate the teaching profession with properly trained culturally responsive teachers who understand the critical need for a culturally relevant pedagogical approach to teaching. This is of utmost importance today because of the obvious mismatch between the diversity of the student population and the “White, monolingual, middle class female” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 230) in most TPPs. According to Smith (2009),

“The primarily White and middle class teachers in our nation’s schools are ill prepared in knowledge, skills, and attitudes to teach for equity and excellence in multicultural classrooms” (p. 47). This proposed idea of unpreparedness of novice teachers with implications on the equity and quality of education for children of color is the underpinning for research and professional learning opportunities within the field of education.

As TEPs look at preparing teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond classrooms, the inclusion of diversity in the higher education curriculum is vital. Milner (2010b) stated,

Thus, I believe that an academic degree alone, whether undergraduate or advanced, in a particular discipline such as mathematics, history, or English is insufficient for the complex work of teaching because teaching requires more than learning or knowing a particular content or subject matter. (p. 118)

More recently, some researchers have looked at a more standardized approach to the curriculum of TEPs as a way to address diversity studies with preservice teaching candidates (Loewenberg Ball & Forzani, 2009). The current attempt to prepare preservice teachers for diversity, equity, and social justice teaching and learning in the classroom is one of the most challenging facets of teacher preparation. Researchers continue to discuss and question how to address the multilayered needs of teachers. According to Carrol (2019), across the state of North Carolina in the college and university system, a universal approach to diversity studies in TEPs is nonexistent. Carrol suggested that even a nationally unified approach to diversity in TEPs would be a “challenge” for colleges and universities. This concept of a universal curriculum

approach in TEPs had been studied and analyzed by other researchers as well. Similarly, Milner (2017) was developing his own idea around the discussions related to TEPs curriculum design. Milner (2017) framed his thoughts around the standardization of the TEP curriculum in this way:

While I do not necessarily agree with the idea of standardization of teacher education curriculum because of the variance among programs and because of the social context that shapes the learning needs of teacher education students and those of P-12 students, I do believe there is value in attempting to capture some of the most promising curriculum elements in preparing teachers for diversity. (p. 119)

However, Milner's (2017) research offered that universities and colleges when preparing preservice teaching candidates for work with diverse students, should consider several specific "conceptual repertoires of diversity" (p. 118). Focusing on the concepts of color-blindness, cultural conflict, meritocracy, deficit conceptions, and expectations, Milner (2017) suggested that teaching candidates need the opportunity to consider their mindset, thinking, belief systems, attitudes, and overall understand of the teaching and learning exchange in order to promote an awareness of how these thought processes affect the curricula and instructional practices they use with students. Regardless, most researchers would agree that teacher education is essential to the preparation of teachers.

Turning the corner to look at the future of how TEPs prepare preservice teachers to work with diverse populations is essential for the field of education, the intellectual and social well-being of students of color, and American society in general. Darling-Hammond (2006) stated, "Education is increasingly important to the success of both

individuals and nations, and growing evidence demonstrates that—among all educational resources—teachers’ abilities are especially crucial contributors to students’ learning” (p. 1). Additionally, the work of Gay and Kirkland (2003) suggested a critical change in the preparation of preservice teachers that includes the necessity of self-reflection and cultural and critical consciousness. These scholars along with other prominent researchers in the field of equity and excellence in education and teaching suggest that teachers who are aware of who they are as people, questioning their own knowledge and assumptions, and have a true understanding of the context in which they teach are just as important as those who have mastery of teaching skills and effective instructional practices and techniques (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2005). These much-needed diversity facets of teacher preparation would greatly improve the education opportunities and outcomes of students of color. It is through a process of thorough analysis and careful monitoring of one’s own personal beliefs that beginning teachers would be able to see the impact of personal belief systems on their own instructional practices and relationships within the classroom. By providing preservice and beginning teachers with the ability and knowledge gained from the self-analysis process, TPPs could begin the work of developing more self-aware teachers who are also equipped with the knowledge to change the teaching and learning that occurs in the classroom for students of color. Through the consistent acts of self-reflection and cultural consciousness, beginning teachers would be able to develop more positive and engaging experiences for their students. TEPs that help preservice teachers develop culture and critical consciousness and the ability to engage in high-quality self-reflection of themselves and situations also help these students to translate these skills into effective



teaching practices.

Another necessary component of teacher education that would help to bolster the level of knowledge and understanding that is needed to work with diverse populations is the setting or context in which teacher training occurs. This will require the development of close-knit relationships between colleges and universities and the public they serve. The new approach in TEPs that are to provide the necessary changes needed, require these departments of education to serve as guides in showing how to self-reflect on race and culture as it relates to cultural understanding and experiences. Instructors in the college classroom must create an environment that fosters high-quality self-reflection through the use of inquiry teaching techniques. According to Gay and Kirkland (2003), this approach will provide the much-needed modeling that preservice teachers need to experience in order to facilitate those same much-needed experiences in their own classrooms for the success of students of color.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### Introduction

This study sought to address the preparation of preservice teachers by college/university TEPs in North Carolina and its relationship to beginning teacher use of CRP in the classroom. The investigation focused on beginning teacher perceptions of their understanding and confidence level with a culturally relevant pedagogical approach in schools with diverse student populations. According to Darling-Hammond (2006),

In the classrooms most beginning teachers will enter, at least 25% of students live in poverty and many of them lack basic food, shelter, and health care; from 10% to 20% have identified learning differences; 15% speak a language other than English as their primary language (many more in urban settings); and about 40% are members of racial/ethnic “minority” groups, many of them recent immigrants from countries with different educational systems and cultural traditions. (p. 2)

The objective of the study was to provide support to TEPs through the information gained from beginning teachers who have matriculated from higher education institutions throughout North Carolina’s college and university accredited programs and highlight the importance of CRP in teacher preparation.

This chapter explains the rationale for the use of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design, and it explores the connection between the research questions and the use of the theoretical framework of CRP. The following research questions guided this mixed methods study of CRP and the perceptions of beginning teachers regarding implementation within a diverse school setting:

1. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional 4-year TEP

in North Carolina rate their perceptions of their level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP?

2. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina further describe their perceptions of level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP after completion of a TEP and full-time classroom teaching experience?

In this chapter, an overview of the methodology is provided, along with a full description of instrumentation in both the qualitative and quantitative components, and a clear connection is made between the components of the instruments and the research questions that guided this investigation. Additionally, the plan for data collection and analysis is included, along with an explanation of any possible threats to validity. Finally, the researcher discusses issues dealing with ethics and fully explains the researcher's role in this process.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

The mixed methods research design had its beginnings in the early philosophical debates of Plato and Socrates. These debates on how to view the world in the realm of its relative truths and the impact of mankind continued to lend themselves to the ever-evolving world of research design (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). It was through the early research of Campbell and Fiske (1959) that the idea of triangulation or “multiple operationalism” was formally introduced to the world of research. These researchers suggested that the combination of two research methods provided more validation to the results. As research and use of mixed methods continued to evolve, this design slowly gained more support and became a viable tenant of the research methods

paradigm. In more current work, Johnson et al. (2007) positioned themselves on the beginnings of mixed research “between the extremes Plato (quantitative research) and the Sophists (qualitative research), with mixed research attempting to respect fully the wisdom of both of these viewpoints while also seeking a workable middle solution for many (research) problems of interest” (p. 113). This perspective on mixed methods further promoted the use and validity of the mixed methods approach. Likewise, Creswell (2014) provided support to this claim by clarifying that the ultimate assumption of mixed methods research is that the combination of both methods provides a more encompassing view of the research problem than either approach could provide on its own. As mixed methods continued to prove itself more beneficial in the realm of social sciences and its research, the more this design approach has evolved and gained momentum in the field of research.

**Quantitative components.** The use of the survey in quantitative research was designed to provide statistical data about a targeted population. “The purpose is to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristic, attitude, or behavior of this population” (Creswell, 2014, p. 157). The use of the survey as a data collection tool has several advantages including the ease of design and its ease with online administration to target populations. In phase one of this study, a Likert-type scale was used for data collection. The Likert scale was developed in 1932 by Rensis Likert as a way to assess attitudes (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). An ordinal scale typically has a range of 5 to 7 points. It is used to determine the degree to which a person agrees or disagrees with a statement. Likert scales have had some issues regarding validity of results due to its qualitative nature and its inability to show the range between

words such as “never” and “rarely.” However, research on the Likert scale over the years has proven it reliable and valid (Al Baghal, 2014).

In order to provide statistical data that provided insight into the perceptions of preservice teachers and their understanding and ability to implement CRP, the author was granted permission to use a predeveloped instrument known as the Culturally Responsive Teaching Preparedness Scale (CRTPS). Along with this data collection tool, Gilmore-Skepple (2011) created several instruments to assess perceptual data from preservice teachers including a demographic questionnaire and a set of focus group questions. In order to gain use of these tools, the author contacted Dr. Gilmore-Skepple to request permission to utilize her data collection instruments within this study (Appendix A).

In this examination of beginning teacher perceptions, beginning teachers took the survey via SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey provided survey development and delivery services through an online, cloud-based platform. This online program allows users to create web-based survey tools that can be used to gather descriptive data from a target population (SurveyMonkey, n.d.). In the *Instrumentation* section of this chapter, a detailed description of the CRTPS, along with the other data collection tools is provided.

**Qualitative components.** In order to gather more personally descriptive and detailed information regarding beginning teacher perceptions, an online focus group was utilized. A focus group offers participants who share a common interest or experience to share their feelings and thoughts through a set of focused questions provided by the author. According to Dilshad and Latif (2013), “As compared to other techniques of data collection, e.g., questionnaire, observation, etc., interview styles may serve as a rich source for exploring people’s inner feelings and attitudes” (p. 191). Used as a

supplementary source of data, the focus group in this study followed the collection of quantitative data in order to further explain the experiences and feelings of the beginning teachers. According to Stancanelli (2010), “The purpose of a focus group is to gain information about the participants’ view of a phenomenon of interest” (p. 763). The use of a focus group can be beneficial in that it provides a wealth of rich data through elaborative responses, a diversified collection of participants, and an opportunity for expression of thoughts and ideas that may not be as easily presented in a traditional face-to-face interview (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Stancanelli, 2010).

Aspects of a descriptive phenomenological method approach were used for the collection and analysis of the focus group data (Groenewald, 2004). This qualitative data analysis approach focused on capturing the inner feelings of the participants as it related to aspects of their coursework, field experiences, and student-teaching experiences. Englander (2012) stated, “Phenomenological, human scientific researchers tend to choose the interview due to their interest in the meaning of a phenomenon as it is lived by other subjects” (p. 14). This particular approach to the collection and analysis of interview data has proven itself valuable in explaining and understanding a phenomenon as its relationship to the larger community (Englander, 2012).

In order to facilitate the focus group process across the state of North Carolina, the meeting was conducted using Zoom, an online conferencing program. The online conferencing platform known as Zoom provided users with the ability to participate in real-time conferencing and messaging. This online program supported focus group data with its role-based user security features, recording device, and ability to access transcripts from meetings or interviews (Zoom Video Communications, n.d.).

## **Overview of Methodology**

According to the work of Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007), mixed method studies that advocate for the improvement in human interests with a goal of social justice had been somewhat absent from the mixed methods research field. With the changing demographics in American society today, addressing the human conditions and the marginalization of underrepresented groups became of concern for social researchers. Examining the issues that continue to plague society and lead to injustices for varying sectors of the population needs to be addressed through social research (Mertens, 2003, 2009). While providing a much needed advocacy stance that had slowly gained momentum in the mixed methods field of studies, this study sought to bring mixed methods studies into the social justice realm by providing both quantitative and qualitative data results that may likely bring consideration for changes in the current pedagogical approaches that are utilized and studied in TEPs across the state of North Carolina. By highlighting CRP and its level of development in preservice teachers and future beginning teachers, this inquiry may assist in meeting the needs of traditionally marginalized groups in public education classrooms across the state.

Using a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach, this research design first collected quantitative data via a survey. In the initial quantitative phase of the study, Likert scale data were collected from beginning teachers via SurveyMonkey. These data were used to determine their perceived level of understanding of CRP and to assess whether they believed the coursework and experiences in TEPs resulted in complete understanding of CRP and its impact in the classroom. During the qualitative data collection phase of this research, the final step involved an online focus group that was

utilized for the collection of supplementary qualitative data. This online focus group was conducted as a follow-up to the quantitative results in order to further describe the results from the survey. In this explanatory pursuit, the tentative plan was to fully describe the understanding and level of preparedness with CRP through perceptual data provided by beginning teachers. The overall intent of the study was to provide colleges and universities with insight on the levels of perceived preparedness with understanding the elements of CRP by beginning teachers with a limited level of classroom experience. Through this study, the researcher hopes to provide information that will assist in continuing the process of developing TEPs that are more thoroughly prepared to address the educational and social needs of a diverse student population.

### **Target Population**

The defined population for this inquiry was beginning teachers who had matriculated from a traditional North Carolina college/university TEP. The initial target population was preservice teachers. However, the researcher found it difficult to gain access to preservice teachers at colleges and universities across the state due to the time of the study. The collection of data for this study initially occurred in August, which is a busy time for preservice teachers as they prepare to go into student teaching assignments and complete the other requirements of the edTPA process. Therefore, the target population had to change to beginning teachers in order to have more opportunities to gain access to novice teachers.

According to a recently released report by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2017), beginning teachers were defined as teachers with 1-3 years of classroom experience in a North Carolina public school classroom (p. 6). Between



March 2016 and March 2017, the number of beginning teachers in the state of North Carolina was 21,276 (Public Schools of North Carolina, North Carolina State Board of Education, & North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018). Using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, the sample population needed to validate the quantitative portion of this study would be approximately 378 participants ( $n=378$ ).

**Sampling.** In order to generalize the results from the qualitative data to the population, a representative sampling approach was used in hopes of ensuring that participants from North Carolina TEPs were represented in the qualitative data collection and analysis process. Regardless of the type of research, generalizability of the results is the goal. Englander (2012) suggested, “Now, if one can achieve the goal of representativeness and generalizability from a small number of research participants, then a qualitative method such as phenomenology can meet this general scientific criterion as well as a statistically-based approach” (p. 20). Focus groups usually engage six to eight interviewees in a group (Creswell, 2014). The estimated number of members of the focus group for this study was a minimum of four but no more than eight. The researcher was able to gather a representative sample of six beginning teachers from across the state for this portion of the study. The researcher attempted to ensure that participants represented various regions of the state for this part of the investigation.

It is important to note that a focus group is not without its negative effects. The author of this study needed to ensure that all participants had equal opportunity for participation and a domination of “group think” did not occur during the process. The author of this research attempted to deal with this negative aspect through the

development of group norms at the outset of the focus group. One of the norms that was a part of the facilitation process was through a show for the support of healthy conflict and personal expression of viewpoints from all focus group members. A certain level of control over the dynamics of the focus group was necessary to allow for open conversation and expression of thoughts and ideas. The author of this research attempted to provide a welcoming and supportive environment that fostered honest dialogue among all participants (O. Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018).

In order to provide an overview of the current diversity-related coursework that most beginning teachers who have graduated from North Carolina TEPs encountered during their collegiate studies, the following section describes the related components of the teacher education curriculums found from three selected universities across the state. This portion of the study highlights coursework offerings and requirements with a focus on diversity studies for preservice teachers.

**Setting.** Most North Carolina colleges and universities offer students an opportunity to major or minor in the field of education. Those students wishing to earn a bachelor's degree in the field of education from a traditional 4-year TEP in the state of North Carolina are required to complete specific courses as well as field experiences during the semesters following acceptance into the TEP. In a review of required coursework from three college/university TEPs obtained from their associated website for each institution, most curriculums required teacher candidates to participate in at least 24 hours of professional education coursework that includes between 6-9 hours of courses that were related to exploring diverse backgrounds, ability levels, aspects of poverty in education, and/or culture. In addition, most curriculums require one field experience that

includes observations and experiences with children considered “at risk.” The researcher noted that of the three universities analyzed for this study, only one required a course specific to diversity. For purposes of anonymity, the university coursework and curriculums reviewed for this study were identified as University X, University Y, and University Z. In 1907, University X was chartered in Greenville, North Carolina. In 1972, it became a part of the UNC system and currently holds the position as the fourth largest university in North Carolina. University X is a public research university and has a tradition of developing teaching candidates in the state. Working collaboratively with 13 different school districts in the state of North Carolina, University X also works closely with one of the largest public school districts in the state. This public school district had an average enrollment of 160,471 students during the 2018-2019 school year. Its ethnic and racial demographics during the school year consisted of 73,668 White students, 36,545 Black students, 29,031 Hispanic students, 15,001 Asian students, 194 Pacific Islanders, and 6,122 students who identified with two or more races. A review of the TEP coursework for University X found that the number of required diversity coursework is limited. Most freshmen who plan to apply to the TEP are guided to take a course that focuses on global diversity. Several courses gave students a wide variety of options to fulfill this requirement. A mandatory course during the sophomore year introduced diversity in the field of education at the professional studies level. The required 120-hour degree program offered additional courses that, according to the title, could possibly offer students exposure to elements of diversity within the classroom; however, required coursework and field experiences were limited to those courses during the freshman and sophomore years and one field experience.

University Y provides an inner-city experience. Founded in 1946, this college serves as the fourth campus of the statewide university system for the state of North Carolina. University Y graduated 876 novice teachers in school year 2014-2015. The TEP within University Y had a large percentage of student-teacher placements with a local public school district that had a total student enrollment of 147,359 for school year 2018-2019. The enrollment numbers by racial/ethnic background included 56,204 Black students, 41,315 White students, 35,534 Hispanic students, 9,761 Asian students, 3,751 Multi-Racial students, 585 American Indians, and 209 Pacific Islanders. University Y offers teaching candidates 12 hours of required diversity-related courses, along with opportunities to gain more insight into diversity-related topics through electives.

The third TEP curriculum that was analyzed for this study was identified as University Z. Founded as a teacher's college in 1899, this university is located in the Blue Ridge Mountain area of North Carolina. As a part of the UNC college system, university Z boasts a 2019 enrollment of 19,000 students from several states and countries across the globe. The 120-hour bachelor's degree program in elementary education requires students to complete 44 hours of general education courses, 24 hours of professional education required courses, and a list of directed electives as well as major required courses and field experiences. Within the professional education courses, only one course exists that explores diverse backgrounds, ability levels, and cultures. The 3-hour directed elective offerings contain several offerings that could be considered diversity-related courses. In addition, Block I of the TEP requires students to take a course that explores the educational needs of diverse learners; and within the second academic concentration, students have the opportunity to continue to focus on issues of

diversity and global understanding through related coursework.

University Z offers student teachers an opportunity to work with diverse student populations during enrollment in the TEP through a partnership with over 40 school districts throughout the state. The county in which University Z resides only had an enrollment of 4,530 students during the 2017-2018 school year. The demographic background of the small school system consisted of 3,850 White non-Hispanic students, 55 Black non-Hispanic students, 417 Hispanic students, 14 Native American students, and 123 students identified with two or more races. This obvious lack of diversity required the university to seek out field experience and student-teaching placements that would provide students with the opportunity to work with diverse students as well as low-performing populations. Thus, the development of 40 partnerships across the state was developed to fulfill this much-needed aspect of the TEP. University Z continues to seek additional opportunities for its students to work with diverse populations. Table 1 was developed using the information found from the TEP guides for undergraduate elementary education bachelor's degrees at each university. This information is public information from the respective websites of each university. Using this public information, the researcher was able to compile general information related to course offerings and requirements for teaching candidates throughout the bachelor's degree programs.

Table 1

*Diversity Related Coursework Overview of North Carolina TEPs*

Components of Education Program	University X	University Y	University Z
Required General Education Hours	40	31-33	44
Professional Education Studies Hours (required diversity related courses)	EDCU 3002 or PSYC 2777 or SOCI 1010; plus additional 18 hours of electives.	EDUC 2100 or EDCU 1100; + 9 additional hours required throughout coursework	FDN 2400 and PSY 3010; plus major requirement options directed elective choices that include courses related to culture in the classroom.
Student Teaching	Yearlong placement with 15-week teaching requirement.	Yearlong placement with 15-week teaching requirement.	Yearlong placement with 15-week teaching requirement.

TEPs require students in the program to complete a series of courses that enhance the development of their teaching experience. Diversity coursework in most programs across the state requires at least one course related to understanding the impact of diversity in the classroom and on instruction. Additional opportunities to take diversity-related courses exist within the electives requirements or major requirements that are based on self-selection and interest and through field experiences.

### **Instrumentation**

Three data collection instruments were utilized through this mixed methods sequential study. The use of a predeveloped data collection instrument required the permission of the developer. These three data collection instruments were created by Gilmore-Skepple (2011) and used in her study conducted in eastern Kentucky. Permission was granted, and only a slight modification was made to the original interview protocol questions from her study. In phase one of this study, the participant demographic background questionnaire provided the researcher with personal

information that was used to ensure only beginning teachers from North Carolina colleges and universities were able to participate and gave information that could be used to help the researcher make generalizations about the study group as whole. Consisting of 10 questions, this tool provided information related to participants, ethnicity/cultural background, personal educational experience related to diversity, and home/community composition during public school years.

The quantitative components of this research involved the use of the CRTPS developed by Gilmore-Skepple (2011). Gilmore-Skepple designed this tool to measure the perceptions of preservice teaching candidates during her own research around CRP. Gilmore-Skepple described her work in developing the CRTPS in this manner:

The creation of this scale was guided by the work of Thompson and Cuseo (2009), Villegas and Lucas (2002) and ongoing dialogues with preservice teachers and teacher educators who advocate culturally responsive teaching. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Preparedness Scale identifies characteristics that define culturally responsive teachers: (a) sociocultural consciousness, (b) design culturally relevant curricula, (c) build effective cross- cultural communications, and (d) willing to engage in critical dialogue about diversity. These subscales were derived from the theoretical discussions, quantitative and qualitative studies in the following areas of research: culturally responsive pedagogy. (Foster, 2001; Gay, 2010; Herrera, 2010; Ladson- Billings, 1994, 1995b; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), differentiated instructions (Gregory, 2003; Sprenger, 2003; Tomlinson, 1999), and effective teaching (Foster, 1994; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). (pp. 52-53)

This 21-item scale is similar to the basic construction of most Likert scales and consists of a 10-point system with a range of 0 which represents “Not at all” to 10 which represents “Exemplary.” The developer of the scale determined construct validity through the close analysis of the scale during development by using the professional knowledge and expertise of 10 current and former professors. These professors were held in high esteem in regard to their work with and understanding of cultural competence and the teaching and learning demands of working with diverse learners. During the development of the scale, these individuals provided constructive feedback in terms of clarity, design preference, and face validity, which led to several revisions and eventually the development of the final version of the CRTPS. However, this study modified the tool and utilized a 5-point Likert scale with 0 representing “Not at all” and 4 representing “Distinguished.” This scale was familiar to this group of North Carolina beginning teachers, as they were knowledgeable regarding the clear expectations of each numerical representation used on the scale. This scale is a part of the North Carolina teacher evaluation tool and was regularly referenced throughout most North Carolina TEPs. For the purposes of this current study, a level 2 which demonstrates proficiency was an acceptable rating, as it is considered the foundational level or “adequate” rating for a teacher.

In addition to the scale, Gilmore-Skepple (2011) developed a preservice teacher interview protocol with eight questions that supplemented the quantitative portion of the study; however, this study took a focus group approach to the data collection mode for the qualitative data. These questions asked beginning teachers to examine and describe their feelings about level of preparedness, effectiveness of coursework and field



experiences, and possible recommendations for future program modifications. For this particular study, the author of this research felt it necessary to make a slight modification to the questions. Due to the focus on TEPs in North Carolina, the author of this research determined it was important to specify within the questions the focus on the state requirements of North Carolina TEPs as it relates to program coursework, field experiences, and practicum experiences.

**Data collection.** This data collection process involved a comprehensive systematic approach to gathering information that was utilized to answer the guiding research questions. Due to the design of the data collection process that involved both an online survey and an online focus group, the data collection process was sequential. The collection process began in October 2019 and concluded by the middle of November. The following steps were used to collect the necessary data to conduct an analysis.

1. *Informed Consent Form.* The author of this research provided all members of the target population with an Informed Consent Form. This form provided a full explanation of the study and all requirements. Participants were informed that their responses could be used in this study as well as future research. Candidates who wished to participate read the Informed Consent document and then agreed to participate by clicking “yes” via SurveyMonkey.
2. *Demographic Background Questionnaire (Appendix A).* Each member of the target population who agreed to participate was directed to this questionnaire. This step in the data collection process took approximately 5-7 minutes to complete.
3. *Administration of CRTPS.* The next step of this study included the collection

of data from the CRTPS also found in SurveyMonkey (Appendix B). The scale created by Gilmore-Skepple (2011) was designed to gather perceptual data of preservice teachers; however, this study utilized beginning teachers. The survey completion date was set for the beginning of November 2019. This tool provided the beginning teachers' perceptual data regarding their understanding of and ability to implement CRP. This survey asked beginning teachers to consider the significance of their completed coursework and any field experiences and their impact on their classroom experiences during years 1-3 of their teaching careers. The expected completion time of the survey based on SurveyMonkey calculations was a little over 7 minutes.

4. *Online focus group.* As a conclusion to the data collection process, the author of this research conducted an online focus group using the protocol (Appendix C) modified for this specific study. This occurred in mid-November. This process took approximately 30 minutes.

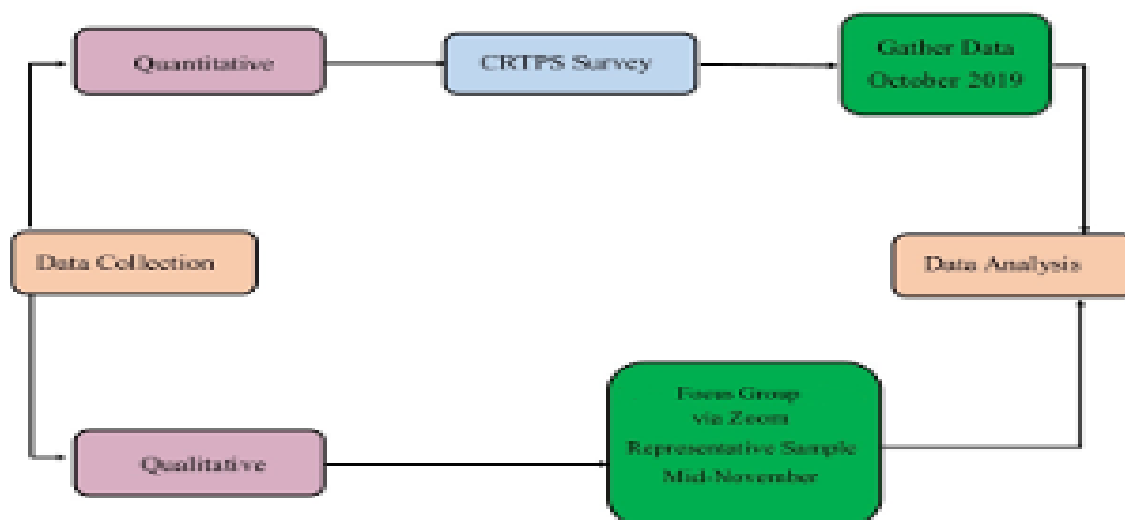
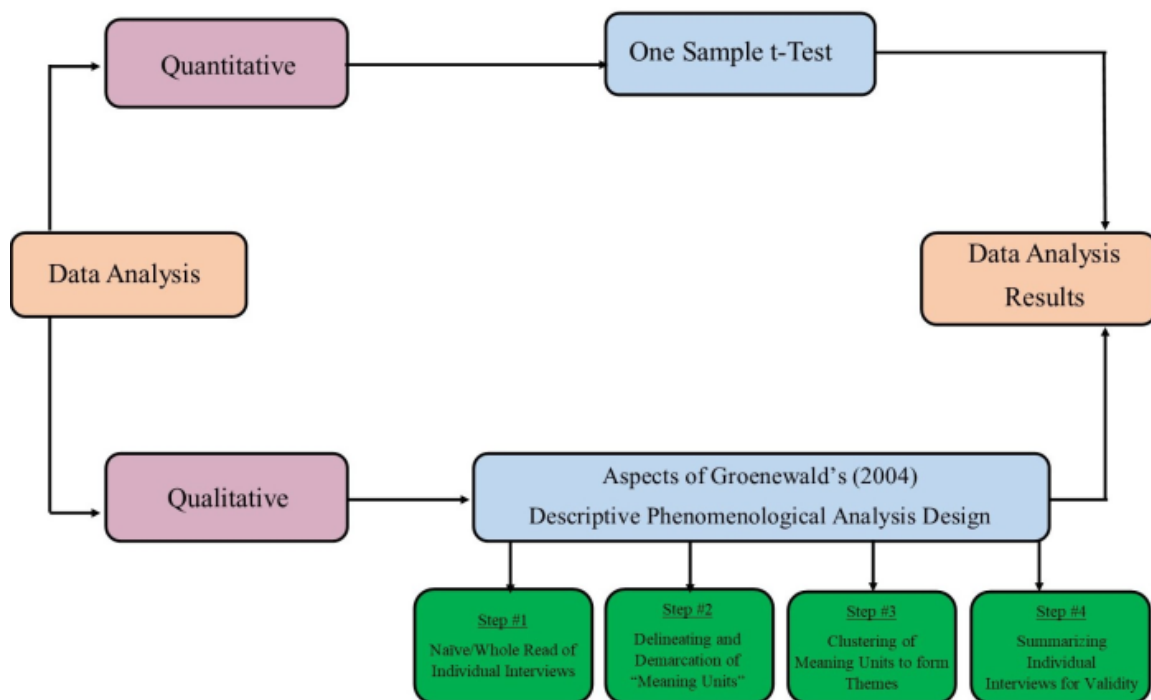


Figure 3. Data Collection Framework. Visual representation of the data collection process of this study.

This figure represents an overview of the data collection process. In order to ensure validity of the study, sequential completion of the collection steps following the dates provided was a vital part of this process. The next section details the analysis process that occurred at various points during data collection. The analysis process and results provided the answers to the research questions that guided this inquiry.

**Data analysis.** Analysis of data involved the thorough inspection, distinct extraction, and mindful linking of information that pertained to a particular experience or theme. The data analysis plan was sequentially followed in order to obtain the most reliable and valid results possible. The visual framework in Figure 4 shows the sequential analysis procedures that were used for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis.



*Figure 4.* Data Analysis Framework. This figure details the data analysis processes of this study.

The analysis procedures utilized during this inquiry involved the sequential collection of data. It also required that the analysis process occurred in sequential order as well. The variable that had an impact on the survey results was the amount time spent professionally in the classroom.

This examination of the perceptual data of beginning teachers included both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Table 2 shows the correlation between the research questions guiding this study and an overview of the collection and analysis tools that were used to answer those questions.

Table 2

*Research Question Correlation with Data Collection and Analysis Tools*

Questions	Instrument	Data Type	Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional 4-year TEP in North Carolina rate their perceptions of their level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP?	Survey	Quantitative	Numerical responses	Descriptive statistical analysis via one sample <i>t</i> test
2. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina further describe their perceptions of level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP after completion of a TEP and full-time classroom teaching experience?	Focus Group Questions	Qualitative	Beginning Teacher reflections via focus group using Zoom. (recorded)	Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis Method

The initial collection of data involved the Informed Consent form and Demographic Questionnaire. The Demographic Questionnaire supported the study by providing background information about the beginning teachers who were part of this examination.

The researcher considered using both the one sample  $t$  test and the Mann-Whitney test. Both tests provided the opportunity to compare mean scores; the Mann-Whitney is usually used when scores are not normally distributed. After a review of the distribution of the scores and the development of a small sample size, the researcher determined that the one sample was the better option. The one sample  $t$  test was used as the analysis tool for the data gathered from the CRTPS. This test provided the opportunity to compare the means from a related group (beginning teachers) on a dependent variable (acceptable level of proficiency with CRP by a North Carolina TEP). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) concluded that  $t$  test refers to an inferential statistical procedure for determining the probability level of rejecting the null hypothesis that two means are the same. The  $t$  test assumes that the population from which the sample is drawn is normal and sample observations are independent. A  $t$  test can only be applied if the sample size is small ( $n \geq 30$ ; Banda, 2018). This study attempted to determine if the survey result means of beginning teachers in this study were different than the hypothesized mean of a beginning teacher who graduated from a North Carolina TEP. The researcher ensured that the instruments in Table 3 provided a connection between the theoretical framework, the research questions, and the data collection tools.

Table 3

*Correlation Between Research Questions and Theoretical Framework*

1. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional 4-year TEP in North Carolina rate their perceptions of their level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP?		2. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina further describe their perceptions of level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP?
Tenets of CRP	Survey Questions	Focus Group Questions
An ability to develop students academically.	3, 8, 17, 18	2, 3, 4, 5, 6,
A willingness to nurture and support cultural competence.	4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20	1
The development of a sociopolitical consciousness.	1, 2, 10, 14, 21	7

Using this lens, the researcher utilized the results from SurveyMonkey to develop a comprehensive view of the perceptual data of beginning teachers. Participant responses to the CRTPS in this study provided a descriptive statistical analysis of the perceptual data of beginning teachers.

**Pilot study.** The initial pilot study for the instrument in this study was conducted by Gilmore-Skepple (2011) during her study conducted in eastern Kentucky. According to Gilmore-Skepple, “Checks on validity and reliability were limited to the responses from the expert panel and feedback from the pilot study sample” (p. 53). Using national scholars in the field of CRT, an expert panel was selected for the survey and asked for feedback. In addition, seniors enrolled in the elementary methods class were given the survey to complete and asked to provide feedback to the developer. Based on the feedback from both sources, additional changes were made to the Likert scales and questions.

### Threats to Validity

Within the context of conducting any research study, in general, various issues

and concerns can impact the validity of results and cause questions to arise regarding the overall reliability of the study. With this in mind, the researcher considered issues that might affect this particular study. Although current trends in education support the importance of providing students with an educational experience that is culturally inclusive and academically rigorous, the level of coursework and experiences with diverse populations can vary from university to university. The current mandates of TPPs offer only suggestions for standards for coursework and/or experiences that apply specifically to diverse student populations (U.S. Department of Education, 2016b). However, the level to which colleges and universities implemented and/or provided diversity education for their students is still somewhat vague. Another aspect of research validity specific to this study was the possible number of participants and the ability to produce an adequate representative sample group for focus groups. However, the researcher was able to obtain a clearer picture of the possible number of participants after reviewing data gathered by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Finally, this study was conducted at a time when issues of race in America are at a level of heightened awareness. This study could be impacted by this awareness and show itself in terms of the honesty of responses. The researcher made every attempt to assure participants of the high level of confidentiality that would be used with this study.

In addition, the ability to apply the findings from this study to other universities across the country will be limited due to confining the elements of the study to the state of North Carolina. However, the purpose of this study was to provide the state of North Carolina with valuable information regarding its implementation of CRP in TEPs across the state.

In order to establish validity of the results of the data, the researcher attempted to triangulate the data by analyzing the coursework of three different universities across the state of North Carolina. The researcher intentionally chose universities that offered placements in districts that had some level of diversity in the public school population they served and encompassed both rural and large and small urban settings. These universities have the ability to provide preservice teachers with placements and/or classroom educational experiences throughout the program that provide opportunities to work with diverse student populations.

**Role of the researcher.** When considering differences between quantitative and qualitative research, the researcher played very different roles in the two processes. The quantitative data involved surveys that provided statistical data regarding a phenomenon; in contrast, the qualitative data involved open-ended responses that are normally gathered by a researcher from willing participants. However, the phenomenological analysis design used assisted in minimizing the researcher's role.

In order to address concerns of possible researcher bias during the collection and analysis of qualitative data during the preservice teachers' participation in focus groups, a phenomenological analysis design was chosen that began the analysis process by focusing on the researcher and guided the process with an analytical approach that was free of personal assumptions, cultural biases, educational theories, and other ideologies that may influence the process (Broome, 2011). This allowed for a level of objectivity to be maintained that may not have existed if analyzed by the researcher without intentional guiding factors, as the researcher is also a member of a traditionally marginalized group.



## **Ethics**

In order to ensure fair and just interactions and reporting in this study, the researcher considered the ethical concerns of various issues throughout the data collection process and personal interactions of adults who were a part of this process. The initial interaction that began this study involved the use of an email and social media posts to individuals and websites identified as pertinent to beginning teachers in North Carolina. The email outlined the general guidelines of the research process and addressed possible concerns with anonymity and confidentiality.

This research study provided no additional incentives to individual participants for participation in the study. This was outlined in the email request for participation, postings on websites, and in the beginning teacher Informed Consent Form. However, the researcher shared with all possible participants the significance of the study and how their honest participation could be viewed as an agent of change for the concepts of diversity and meeting the educational needs of students of color.

## **Summary**

Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the research methods used in this study. This section highlighted the use of a mixed methods research approach as it pertained to this study that provided perceptual data (quantitative) in phase one and then followed up with supplementary descriptive data (qualitative) that supported the statistical data collected. A detailed collection and analysis section was provided for allowing the study to be replicated at any point in the future. Ethical concerns and issues related to threats of the validity of this study were discussed, along with possible considerations that could help eliminate these concerns within the study. Finally, the

researcher provided information regarding her background and how it might impact the study.

Chapter 4 provides the results from the analysis of the data. This chapter is divided into four sections. First, the background questionnaire data are analyzed using descriptive statistics. Next, the survey results are analyzed using a one sample  $t$  test. This test provided the quantitative analysis of beginning teacher perceptual data. Finally, this study looks at the descriptive data that were gathered from the focus group and completes that analysis using a phenomenological analysis design. This provided the qualitative follow-up data that provided a more detailed explanation of the statistical data. Finally, section four of this study provides a synopsis of the correlation between the tenets of CRP and perceptual data of beginning teachers from this study.

## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the results from the quantitative and qualitative data collections discussed in the previous chapter. The goal of the data collection process was to utilize the CRTPS developed by Gilmore-Skepple (2011) and try to determine:

1. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional 4-year TEP in North Carolina rate their perceptions of their level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP?

*Ho:* Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do not rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient. *Ho:*  $\mu \neq 2$

*Ha:* Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient. *Ha:*  $\mu = 2$

Additionally, the study attempted to determine if the data are supported by information gained from the online focus group. The focus group provided further descriptive evidence of the perceptual data of beginning teachers and answered the following research question:

2. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina further describe their perceptions of level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP after completion of a TEP and full-time classroom teaching experience?

The remainder of the chapter provides a synopsis of the findings from the demographic background questionnaire, followed by a listing of the mean, standard deviation, and *p* value for each survey item. Finally, the chapter will link the survey items with the tenets of CRP and offer details on information that emerged from the data during the analysis

process.

### **Demographic Results of Participants**

As a part of this study, personal demographics were obtained to gain insight into participant backgrounds. Of the total participants in this study, 18 participants, or 42%, were not recent graduates of a North Carolina TEP, while 25 participants, or 58%, were recent graduates of a North Carolina TEP. The remainder of the data presented focuses solely on the participants who were recent graduates of a North Carolina TEP (n=25). Table 4 provides a synopsis of the demographic questionnaire data gathered from all participants who qualified for this study as recent North Carolina TEP graduates.

Table 4

*Demographic Questionnaire Results (N=25)*

Identified Characteristic from Questionnaire	Beginning Teachers/Graduates of North Carolina TEP (n=25)
Gender	
Male	4%
Female	96%
Other	0%
Ethnic or Cultural Background	
White, non-Hispanic	92%
Black, non-Hispanic	4%
Hispanic	0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%
American Indian/Native Alaskan	0%
Biracial/Multi-racial	0%
Other	0%
Type of childhood community	
Rural	68%
Urban	8%
Suburbs	24%
Diverse community?	
Yes	68%
No	32%
Diverse neighborhood?	
Yes	28%
No	72%
Diverse high school?	
Yes	68%
No	32%
Diverse teaching staff in high school?	
Yes	16%
No	84%
Did you receive free or reduced lunch?	
Yes	36%
No	64%
Family income status?	
Lower/Working Poor	20%
Middle Class/Working Class	60%
Upper Middle Class	20%
Upper Class/Wealthy	0%

(continued)

Identified Characteristic from Questionnaire	Beginning Teachers/Graduates of North Carolina TEP (n=25)
Type of household that you grew up in?	
Both Parents	80%
Single Parent	4%
Widowed Parent	4%
Divorced	4%
Other	4%

When the data were filtered for just those participants who qualified as recent graduates of a North Carolina TEP, 96% were females (n=24) and 4% were males (n=1). When asked about the cultural or ethnic background of these participants, 92% (n=23) were White non-Hispanic, 4% (n=1) were Black non-Hispanic, and 4% (n=1) were Asian/Pacific Islander. Very few of the participants in this study had inner-city experience (n=8%), while most grew up in rural areas (n=68%). When asked to define the community at large where they were a part of during childhood, 68% of participants (n=17) considered their community ethnically and culturally diverse, but when asked about the neighborhood or street where they grew up, only 28% of participants (n=7) considered this environment diverse. When asked about diversity during their high school years, 68% of participants (n=17) considered their high school student population diverse. However, 84% (n=21) reported that the teaching staff at their high schools lacked diversity. The demographic survey asked beginning teachers to share findings from their households. Of the beginning teachers who attended a TEP in North Carolina, 60% (n=15) reportedly came from middle working class families, 20% (n=5) came from upper middle class families, while 20% (n=5) came from lower class/working poor families. Additionally, 80% of all participants (n=20) came from families that had both parents in the household.

**Quantitative Results: CRTPS**

In order to ascertain the perceptions of beginning teachers as they relate to their level of preparedness to implement CRP, each of the participants took the CRTPS. According to the SurveyMonkey data, the average time for completion of the survey was 3 minutes and 51 seconds. During the analysis process, all measures of central tendency were established and most data sets were within one standard deviation of the means which supported a normal distribution. Participant mean scores ranged from  $M=2.2$  through  $M=2.6$ . Cronbach's alpha estimated an internal reliability score of .97. Table 5 illustrates a compilation of the scores for the average means, standard deviations, and  $p$  values for each tested survey item.

Table 5

*CRTPS Results (N=25)*

Item	Mean	SD	<i>p</i> value
<b>I believe my TEP has...</b>			
1. prepared me to take a stand against prejudice by constructively disagreeing with those who makes stereotypical statements.	2.44	0.71	0.005
2. prepared me to take a stand for social justice, human rights and equal opportunity for all human beings.	2.52	0.82	0.004
3. addressed racial, ethnic, socioeconomic class, gender, special education, and sexual orientation pedagogical skills as it relates to student achievement.	2.56	0.87	0.004
4. raised my awareness for the need to attend professional development activities or events regarding teaching and learning about diversity.	2.6	0.71	0.0003
5. provided opportunities (i.e., classroom discussions, events, trainings/ workshops) to discuss my personal diverse field experiences.	2.6	0.87	0.002
6. prepared me to demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of cultural awareness.	2.6	0.71	0.0003
7. prepared me to utilize a student's social and cultural heritage as it relates to student learning.	2.48	0.82	0.008
8. intentionally created opportunities to teach individuals from diverse groups.	2.48	0.87	0.011
9. encouraged me to engage in volunteer experiences that allow me to work in diverse settings.	2.2	0.91	*0.3
10. provided me with opportunities to observe students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.	2.52	0.87	0.006
11. enhanced my interpersonal communication skills when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.44	0.92	0.02
12. given me the opportunity to participate in-group discussions about race, class and gender.	2.6	0.76	0.0006
13. inspired me to take a leadership role with respect to diversity in my professional field.	2.4	0.91	0.04
14. stressed the need to avoid categorizing individuals based on their race.	2.44	0.96	0.031
15. prepared me to collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds despite our racial or cultural differences.	2.32	0.95	*0.103

(continued)



Item	Mean	SD	<i>p</i> value
16. prepared me to teach a diverse group of students, particularly those of color.	2.56	0.96	0.008
17. emphasized that all students 'learning styles are different within the same racial or ethnic group.	2.56	0.92	0.005
18. prepared me to incorporate multicultural education practices into the curriculum.	2.44	0.77	0.009
19. stressed the importance of effectively communicating with parents from backgrounds different than my own.	2.48	0.96	0.02
20. prepared me to appreciate and understand how global educational issues are relevant to my education.	2.48	0.77	0.005

\*denotes *p* values ( $p \leq .05$ ) that show no statistical significance.

Due to the small sample size and the normal distribution of scores, a one sample *t* test was conducted using an Excel spreadsheet. The one sample *t* test allowed for the comparison of the sample means with the predetermined mean ( $\mu=2$ ) in order to determine if the sample mean was less than, equal to, or greater than the value. The researcher chose the proficiency score from the Likert scale because of its association with the North Carolina teacher evaluation tool. This score represents a level of acceptability within the teacher evaluation tool, and beginning teachers would be familiar with the interpreted meaning given to this number as well as the other numbers on the scale. *P* values were determined in order to support or reject the null hypothesis. Researchers stated that “the *p* value is the probability to obtain an effect equal to or more extreme than the one observed presuming the null hypothesis of no effect is true; it gives researchers a measure of the strength of evidence against the null hypothesis” (Biau, Jolles, & Porcher, 2009, para. 1). When observing the results, *p* values for each of the 21 items ranged from 0.0003 through 0.3. Applied researcher and the developer of *p* value testing, Sir Ronald Fisher (1926) believed that a value equal to or lower than 0.05 ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) was acceptable evidence against the null hypothesis. In the case of this study,

Table 6 displays the only two items on the survey that tested greater than the acceptable level identified by Fisher (1926).

Table 6

*Survey Items Accepting Null Hypothesis*

Survey Item	Mean	SD	<i>p</i> value
10. I believe my TEP has encouraged me to engage in volunteer experiences that allow me to work in diverse settings.	2.2	0.91	0.3
16. I believe my TEP has prepared me to collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds despite our racial or cultural differences.	2.32	0.95	0.103

Survey item 10 had a *p* value of 0.3, while survey item 16 had a *p* value of 0.103. Consequently, Fisher (1926) suggested that although 0.05 was acceptable evidence against the null hypothesis, he also believed that *p* values between 0.1 and 0.9 were not “suspect” in hypothesis testing (Fisher, 1926). For 19 of 21 items, the researcher was able to reject the null hypothesis with strong evidence. The null hypothesis stated, “Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do not rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient.” Thus, for these items, the researcher was able to accept the alternative hypothesis which states, “Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient.” For those 19 items from the survey, study participants felt their university TEP provided a proficient or basic level of understanding of those diversity-related statements.

Two survey statements provided weak evidence against the rejection of the null hypothesis. Those two items supported the null hypothesis that stated, “Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do not rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient.” Study participants did not feel a proficient or basic level of understanding as

it relates to these survey statements.

The descriptive data analysis results that follow show the results of disaggregated data in relation to the tenets of CRP, which serves as the theoretical framework that guided the study.

### **CRTPS Results and CRP Theoretical Framework**

**Developing students academically.** One of the tenets of CRP as defined by Ladson-Billings (1995a) noted that teachers who are culturally relevant in their approach to teaching and learning have a willingness to develop all students academically. This element of CRP means that teachers understand the importance of offering a challenging educational experience to all children. Ladson-Billings (1995b) said, “Thus, culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers attend to students’ academic needs, not merely make them feel good” (p. 160). Table 6 illustrates the findings from this study as it relates to this tenet of CRP. This researcher identified those elements of the survey that supported the ability to develop students academically.

Table 7

*Tenet 1 of CRP (N=25)*

CRP Tenet: An ability to develop students academically.					
<i>I believe my TEP has...</i>	0= Not at all	1= Developing	2= Proficient	3= Accomplished	4= Distinguished
3. addressed racial, ethnic, socioeconomic class, gender, special education, and sexual orientation pedagogical skills as it relates to student achievement.	0%	12%	32%	44%	12%
8. prepared me to utilize a student's social and cultural heritage as it relates to student learning.	0%	12%	36%	44%	8%
17. prepared me to teach a diverse group of students, particularly those of color.	0%	16%	28%	40%	16%
18. emphasized that all students' learning styles are different within the same racial or ethnic group.	0%	8%	48%	24%	20%

The survey items that related to “developing students academically” were items 3, 8, 17, and 18. The survey items showed that 84% of beginning teachers felt a proficient or an above level of preparedness in teaching diverse groups of students, and 88% of these teachers felt capable of using racial and cultural assets in the classroom. However, they did not feel that their TEPs stressed that all individual learning styles differ within a given racial or cultural group. This finding is evident in the results from survey item 18. Fifty-six percent of respondents rated North Carolina TEPs with basic proficiency or below in emphasizing that all student learning styles are different within the same racial or ethnic group. Overall, these results from this group of related statements showed that TEPs are preparing preservice and beginning teachers with skills to integrate race and culture into the classroom; however when teachers focus on meeting the needs of individual students from different racial and cultural groups, the perception of

preparedness drops.

**A willingness to nurture and support cultural competence.** The second CRP tenet defined by Ladson-Billings (1995b) requires a teacher to demonstrate a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence. This concept included not only being aware of the cultural characteristics and negative stereotypes of their own culture, but a willingness to learn about those same characteristics and inherent biases associated with cultures other than their own. This teacher comes to the classroom having broken down those stereotypes and understanding how they were developed over time, while having a willingness to embrace those characteristics that make student culture unique. This teacher is willing to push and stretch the students personally and academically towards success, while embracing what makes them who they are as individuals. Table 8 presents the survey items and perceptual results related to this tenet of CRP.

Table 8

*Tenet 2 of CRP (N=25)*

CRP Tenet: A willingness to nurture and support cultural competence.					
I believe my TEP has...	0= Not at all	1= Developing	2= Proficient	3= Accomplished	4= Distinguished
4. raised my awareness for the need to attend professional development activities or events regarding teaching and learning about diversity.	0%	0%	52%	36%	12%
5. allowed me to experience both educational and ethical cultural diversity values other than my own.	0%	8%	44%	32%	16%
6. provided opportunities (i.e., classroom discussions, events, trainings/ workshops) to discuss my personal diverse field experiences.	0%	12%	28%	48%	12%
7. prepared me to demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of cultural awareness.	0%	4%	40%	48%	8%
9. intentionally created opportunities to teach individuals from diverse groups.	0%	12%	40%	36%	12%
11. provided me with opportunities to observe students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.	0%	12%	36%	40%	12%
12. enhanced my interpersonal communication skills when interacting with people from different cultures.	0%	12%	48%	24%	16%
13. given me the opportunity to participate in group discussions about race, class and gender.	0%	8%	32%	52%	8%
15. stressed the need to avoid categorizing individuals based on their race.	4%	8%	40%	36%	12%

(continued)

CRP Tenet: A willingness to nurture and support cultural competence.					
16. prepared me to collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds despite our racial or cultural differences.	4%	12%	40%	36%	8%
19. prepared me to incorporate multicultural education practices into the curriculum.	0%	8%	48%	36%	8%
20. stressed the importance of effectively communicating with parents from backgrounds different than my own.	0%	12%	48%	20%	20%

The survey items related to supporting cultural competence showed two positive outcomes. First, TEPs across North Carolina have provided preservice teachers and teaching candidates proficient or above level preparedness when providing opportunities for discussion of diversity-related topics and secondly provided a basic understanding of cultural competency. Study results showed that 92% of participants believed their TEPs provided opportunities to discuss experiences and topics related to race, class, and gender. This opportunity for discussion supports cultural competency, as future teachers are able to share thoughts and ideas and clarify misunderstanding in a forum that would support authentic conversations around topics related to diversity and student achievement. Secondly, in order to support cultural competence, 100% of study participants rated TEPs proficient and above at promoting cultural awareness through encouraging participation in professional development opportunities related to diversity. Additionally, when asked how their TEPs supported their level of cultural awareness, 96% of study participants felt they had been prepared with at least a basic knowledge and understanding of cultural awareness. This finding showed that through TEPs, the foundational knowledge for cultural awareness was supported and recognized as an important part of developing quality teachers who are aware of the impact of diversity in

the classroom.

Although these survey items demonstrated the strengths of TEPs with regard to building cultural competency skills, other survey item results displayed areas that needed to be addressed within this area of CRP. For example, 60% of study participants rated TEPs basic or below level at building their interpersonal communication skills with people from different cultures. Likewise, 56% of study participants felt the TEPs provided a basic or below level of preparedness when collaborating with colleagues from diverse background despite racial or cultural differences. However, 88% of study participants rated TEPs proficient or above level in stressing the importance of communicating with others of different cultures. This showed that although TEPs found effective communication to be a vital part of interacting with people from diverse backgrounds, when these beginning teachers found themselves in some situations, they did not feel that same level preparedness to engage or communicate in an effective manner.

Under this tenet of CRP, “not at all” was selected with two survey items. This was also where one of two survey items that accepted the null hypothesis exists. Item 15 showed 4% of study participants believed that their TEP did not “stress the need to avoid categorizing individuals based on their race,” while another 4% showed that they believed TEPs had not “prepared me to collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds despite our racial or cultural differences.” In the case of the latter survey item, results showed that it failed to reject the null hypothesis and so it accepted the hypothesis that “Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do not rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient.” This means that with this survey item,



there was weak evidence in the result to reject this statement. Therefore, the researcher accepts this statement as it relates to the specific claim in item 16.

**Development of a sociopolitical consciousness.** Table 9 demonstrates the level of preparedness beginning teachers felt about their training in North Carolina TEPs in relation to developing their own awareness with issues of equity, oppression, and understanding multiple perspectives. The sociopolitical aware teacher engages students in critically thinking about the world around them and its impact for the betterment of all people. Table 9 displays survey items related to tenet 3 of CRP and the results of beginning teacher perceptions of their level of preparedness with these related survey items.

Table 9

*Tenet 3 of CRP (N=25)*

The development of a sociopolitical consciousness.					
I believe my TEP has...	0= Not at all	1= Developing	2= Proficient	3= Accomplished	4= Distinguished
1. prepared me to take a stand against prejudice by constructively disagreeing with those who makes stereotypical statements.	0%	8%	44%	44%	4%
2. prepared me to take a stand for social justice, human rights and equal opportunity for all human beings.	0%	8%	44%	36%	12%
10. encouraged me to engage in volunteer experiences that allow me to work in diverse settings.	4%	12%	52%	24%	8%
14. inspired me to take a leadership role with respect to diversity in my professional field.	0%	16%	40%	32%	12%
21. prepared me to appreciate and understand how global educational issues are relevant to my education.	0%	8%	44%	40%	8%

Highlights from the statements associated with this tenet showed that 68% of study participants believed they were not motivated to engage in volunteerism in diverse settings. Research shows how essential this experience is for the preservice teacher as it helps to increase their level of understanding of the students they serve, while also providing insight into those elements of their culture and home life that may affect their learning styles and interactions with others and provide information regarding how their viewpoints are shaped. Additionally, 56% of participants reported that their TEPs provided a basic or below level of support in motivating them to take leadership roles that would promote diversity-related issues in their professional field. However, 48% of

participants rated their TEPs above average at helping them to develop an appreciation of global education issues and in preparing them to take a stand on social justice issues and human rights. When comparing these responses, it would appear that North Carolina TEPs are better prepared to support preservice teachers in developing empathy for traditionally marginalized groups but are inept at developing opportunities that would allow them to engage in diverse community experiences and district level professional learning experiences that would showcase diversity-related leadership roles.

Overall, the statements from this tenet displayed a more basic level of preparedness based on the perceptions of beginning teachers in this study. Feeling that they had been more than adequately prepared to take a stand against prejudice and respond to stereotypical statements, participants rated these elements high. This tenet also contained one of the two statements that accepted the null hypothesis, “Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do not rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient.” This finding would explain why the data showed that study participants did not show strong support for most of the statements. The following section provides the analysis of the qualitative data captured during the online focus group.

### **Qualitative Results: Online Focus Group**

The analysis of qualitative data should be an objective undertaking that can result in a deeper understanding of a given phenomenon. Every aspect of the process from collection to analysis to determining findings requires the researcher to carefully approach each task in this process with a neutral mindset and outlook. The ultimate goal of any qualitative research is to gain a realistic view of an existing problem. Maxwell (2013) suggested that qualitative research provided a focus on understanding meanings,

attitudes, aspirations, and beliefs. The goal of the qualitative research collected during this study was to gain insight into the attitudes and beliefs of beginning teachers in the state of North Carolina. Using steps from Groenewald's (2004) phenomenological research design, the data provided a deeper level of understanding about the beginning teachers in this study and their perceptions. The focus of this qualitative data centered on answering the following question:

2. How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina further describe their perceptions of level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP after completion of a TEP and full-time classroom teaching experience?

The following seven questions were developed by Gilmore-Skepple (2011) and used in a study conducted in eastern Kentucky. For this study, slight modifications were made, with the approval of Dr. Gilmore-Skepple, in order to target beginning teachers and North Carolina TEPs. Table 10 was developed to show alignment among the tenets of CRP that served as the theoretical framework, research-based descriptors of a teacher profile grounded in CRP, and the focus group questions that were related to each specific tenet. In considering the possible answers participants would provide, the researcher took into account research-based descriptors that defined the characteristics of a teacher who was grounded in the tenets of CRP.

Table 10

*Qualitative Data Results*

CRP Tenets	Research Based Descriptor	Focus Group Questions	Units of Meaning	Conceptual Understanding
Ability to develop students academically.	“Culturally relevant teaching provides strong supports by approaching effective instruction through a cultural lens. In helping learners make sense of new concepts and ideas, culturally relevant teachers create learning opportunities in which students’ voices emerge and knowledge and meaning are constructed from students’ perspectives” (Irvine, 2010).	2. Prior to your coursework and experiences in your TEP, how prepared did you feel in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?	“didn’t know much” “did not prepare me for that” “I don’t know” “definitely didn’t know much about it”	1) Cultural relevancy is a process
		3. After your coursework and experiences in your TEP, how prepared did you feel in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?	“amazing” “exposure to great teachers”	
		4. Were there any aspects of your college level teacher training program that positively impacted your confidence in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students? If so, explain.	“field experiences” “courses after entering TEP” “student-teaching assignment”	
		5. Were there any aspects of your college level teacher training program that negatively impacted your confidence in your ability to use CRP	*No response.	

(continued)

CRP Tenets	Research Based Descriptor	Focus Group Questions	Units of Meaning	Conceptual Understanding
		to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students? If so, explain.		
		6. At this point in your professional career, how confident are you in your ability to use CRP to guide inform your work with culturally diverse students?	“fairly confident” “confident” “I do feel confident” “growth” “room for improvement” “opportunity to learn more”	
Willingness to nurture and support cultural competence.	Use of culture, experiences and perspectives of various cultural and ethnic groups as filter to engage students in learning while building academic knowledge and skills (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).	1. As a novice teacher, what do you think of when I use the phrase “culturally diverse students”?	“all races in one classroom” “race” “different background” “backgrounds” “relation to race”	1) Diversity embraces differences.
	Teachers who have a self-awareness, openness to understanding the environment they teach in, and are willing to question their own knowledge and assumptions (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Danielewicz, 2001)	What about “CRP”?	<b>Part 2 of question:</b> “what they are learning” “their learning is relevant” “that they feel represented” “subjects that they are learning” “that they’re learning is relevant to them and what they feel” “connected to their backgrounds”	2) Relevancy promotes connectedness
Development of a sociopolitical consciousness.	The sociopolitical context in which a teachers’ work is influenced by their personal beliefs and practices. It is important that teachers can effectively engage in conversations	7. Is there any advice that you’d like to provide the state of North Carolina in its pursuit to continuously develop an	“diverse perspectives” “diverse group of people” “Fair and relevant” “diversity among the	1) Systematic Diversity 2) Inclusion
(continued)				

CRP Tenets	Research Based Descriptor	Focus Group Questions	Units of Meaning	Conceptual Understanding
	around race, inequity, and stereotypes in a way that will challenge students to develop tools that can change the status quo (Milner, 2017).	effective TEP that prepares preservice teachers to effectively teach culturally diverse students?	teaching staff on campus” “Lack of diversity in the staff” “universities commitment to diversity” “providing feedback to student-teacher specific to CRP”	

Units of meaning are a part of phenomenological research design proposed by Groenewald (2004). These units of meaning represent the extracted terms and phrases that were somewhat repetitive or held distinct meaning for the researcher from the given responses. By removing these terms and phrases, the researcher was able to analyze and identify “significant units,” as described by Groenewald that may assist in determining possible themes. Groenewald described this process in this way: “Often there is overlap in the clusters, which can be expected, considering the nature of human phenomena. By interrogating the meaning of the various clusters, central themes are determined” (p. 50). This process allowed the researcher to begin the process of clustering words and phrases in order to develop themes for each tenet.

The six participants involved in the focus group process included five females and one male. Six participants were White, while one participant was African American. The criteria for participation in the focus group was completion of a North Carolina TEP and completion of the survey used for this study. Of the six focus group participants, only one participant was in the third year of teaching experience, while three other participants were in the beginning of year two. Two participants had only been in the classroom since

the beginning of the current school year. The researcher was unable to determine the current location of the teachers across the state. However, the researcher worked to ensure that all participants were teachers who graduated from a North Carolina TEP. All participants volunteered their time and agreed to the recording of the focus group session. The following questions have been grouped and analyzed according to CRP tenets developed by Ladson-Billings (1995a).

**Tenet 1: Teachers Demonstrate a Willingness to Develop Students Academically**

**Focus Group Question 2: Prior to your coursework and experiences in your TEP, how prepared did you feel in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?** Initially, all participants noted feeling ill prepared to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds, even though they were pursuing a degree in education. Participant C reported that his experience with the terminology was “new” to him until he entered the TEP at his university. Terminology seemed to be a factor in how participants interpreted questions and formulated their responses. In fact, Participant F stated,

I think that ... it wasn't until I got well into my teacher education program that I even heard the phrase culturally relevant pedagogy. And I think they called it ... culturally responsive teaching, I guess. I assume they are the same. I don't know. But I definitely didn't know much about it until well into my teaching courses.

This seemed to be a relatable conclusion for most participants because the phrasing was seemingly inconsistent from TEP to TEP. Most participants agreed, however, that they only became more and more aware of CRP once they were accepted into their university TEP and then it was presented in various forms.



**Focus Group Question 3: After your coursework and experiences in your TEP, how prepared did you feel in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?** Most participants felt as though the college or university they attended made an attempt to prepare them to “work with diverse population.” Participant A reported that additionally, her first year of teaching had a program that supported her growth as a beginning teacher and “it was an amazing experience” using the book study approach with *Teach Like a Champion* (Lemov, 2010). In addition, this participant stated, “they (professional development team) walked into our class and they demonstrated this is how it’s supposed to be done.” Participant C reported that his experience after coursework was still a feeling of being somewhat ill prepared. He felt that “as a Black man,” he was able to use his TEP experience and “figure out” how to work with diverse students, but his socioeconomic upbringing was different than the students he taught. He felt he was not prepared for that aspect of diversity. This statement brought to light another aspect of diversity in terms of social class. Other participants reported feeling more prepared after coursework and field experiences.

**Focus Group Question 4: Were there any aspects of your college level teacher training program that positively impacted your confidence in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students? If so, explain.** Participant B spoke about an inclusion course that provided additional support in working with students with different “learning styles.” She stated, “That class was really helpful in teaching me strategies and ways I can ... best teach those students.” Other participants spoke of field experiences throughout the years in the TEP and student-teaching

experiences that positively impacted their ability to use CRP. Participant F stated, “My first year was spent in a charter school. If it were not for some of the classes that I had in college and work in my student-teaching assignment, I would have been completely lost.” Additionally, Participant A spoke about the opportunity to participate in a small group seminar. Participant A felt the seminar provided an opportunity to share ideas and experiences with other student teachers while in student-teaching placement. Participant A stated, “Having the opportunity to talk with my other student-teacher colleagues helped me tremendously.”

**Focus Group Question 5: Were there any aspects of your college level teacher training program that negatively impacted your confidence in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work culturally diverse students? If so, explain.** No participant responded to this question. The researcher gave appropriate response time and reiterated the understanding that their participation was anonymous and did not reflect on them as educators. The researcher also discussed the expected outcome of providing TEPs with information that would support the development of program components that enhance the educational experiences of children of color. The researcher chose to eliminate the camera for anonymity purposes, which also eliminated the opportunity to view nonverbal clues that may have assisted in making inferences regarding the lack of response to this question.

**Focus Group Question 6: At this point in your professional career, how confident are you in your ability to use CRP to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?** Most participants reported feeling somewhat confident at this point. Participant B spoke about the impact of implicit bias on her confidence level

in that she is aware of her inability to connect with her students on certain things and how that impacted her reflections on interactions with them. Participant D stated, “no one was perfect, so there’s always room to improve.” Participant A also reported feeling “fairly confident,” but having room for “so much growth.” Participant B also stated, “a really big aspect of being culturally relevant is like owning yourself and your own identities.” Participant B shared that she has grown more confident in understanding who she is as a White woman and how that impacts her interactions with her students: “I can’t relate to most of them on race and that’s okay. I shouldn’t try to relate to them in areas that I can’t just simply relate to them.” Participant B still felt confident in her understanding of CRP. Participant F noted,

I feel like it’s an area of growth for me as well. I can say that the PDs that I have encountered since being in the classroom have also had an impact on my understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy. I’m getting better and better at making this a part of what I do in the classroom for my students.

## **Tenet 2: Teachers Nurture and Support Cultural Competency**

**Focus Group Question 1: As a novice teacher, what do you think of when I use the phrase “culturally diverse students?” What about “CRP?”** Participant A stated, “basically different races in one classroom.” Most participants who responded to this question supported this idea. Participant E included “also religious backgrounds ... and other things that make students unique,” in her response which provided another layer to diversity. Participant F was the last to respond with the following statement: “Yeah, but most of the time we define diversity in the classroom in relation to race so.” This statement seemed to bring closure to the varying ways culturally diverse students are

defined with a realistic and accepted level of understanding that seemingly impacts the classroom in the U.S.

When posed with the second part of this question, participants spoke about the importance of learning that is relevant to the students they work with during several of their comments relating to this question. Participant B spoke about the importance of making sure students felt “represented in the subjects that they were learning about,” as she referenced her science classroom. Participant B also noted, “Science has largely been a very White dominated field, but there are some incredible scientists that are scientists of color that have contributed so much.” Participant F shared understanding in this way: “My understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy is the equity piece that is missing from most educational experiences for children of color.” Interestingly, some participants directly related this question to race.

### **Tenet 3: Teachers Develop Sociopolitical Consciousness**

**Focus Group Question 7: Is there any advice that you’d like to provide the state of North Carolina in its pursuit to continuously develop an effective TEP that prepares preservice teachers to effectively teach culturally diverse students?** Focus Group Participant F spoke about CRP and how it is consistently discussed in TEPs. Participant F stated, “I guess I would ask for more practice based work in the college teacher education program, I mean, versus talking about the theory behind CRP.” Other participants echoed similar ideas that supported more practice with less theoretical emphasis. In relation to instructional planning, Participant D stated,

A lot of people approach it as it’s something where you create the lesson, and then try and make it culturally relevant. And, I think the approach needs to be, instead

of taking a lesson and then trying to make it culturally relevant, the cultural relevancy needs to be at the core of the lesson.

Participant D also spoke of understanding CRP at the public school level and how the approach needs to be school specific: “CRP needs to be different between schools.”

Participant D also spoke about the need to prepare teachers in terms of assessment development and shared that testing bias is huge as she sees it. Participant D felt that “CRP really needs to be treated as the basis of creating lessons, creating content, and standardized testing so that we’re not putting students behind before they even start.”

Participant D discussed how a diverse group of teachers and diverse perspectives would help to ensure all student backgrounds are included in the educational process. Once this participant finished her response, another participant responded, “Well said.” Others supported and chimed in agreement.

Another area that was discussed dealt with diversity among the teaching staff at colleges and universities across the state. Some participants shared their views on how this lack of cultural diversity in the staff sends a message to students about how the university feels about diversity. Participant C stated, “I would also like to see North Carolina teacher education programs have more diversity among the teaching staff on campus.” Other participants agreed with this statement as well.

As a result of the data analysis process as it relates to the questions posed above and the results of the quantitative portion of the study, the information presented is used in Chapter 5 to support the study’s findings and conclusions, develop implications for practice, provide recommendations for North Carolina TEP stakeholders, and make recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### Introduction

America's classrooms continue to see a more diverse student population. According to prominent researchers, future projections suggest that by 2040, one of every three children entering a classroom in America will be immigrants or the child of an immigrant (Suárez-Orozco, Quin, & Amthor, 2008). Even with this vastly changing face of America's classroom, its teaching workforce remains somewhat void of diversity. The most recent research supports the development of programs that support the hiring and retention of teachers of color in order to address the learning needs of students of color (Carver-Thomas, 2018). In an April 19, 2018 Learning Policy Institute Press Release (2018), Darling-Hammond acknowledged,

Increasing teacher diversity is a very important strategy for improving learning for students of color and for closing achievement gaps. While White students also benefit by learning from teachers of color, the impact is especially significant for students of color, who have higher test scores, are more likely to graduate high school, and more likely to succeed in college when they have had teachers of color who serve as role models and support their attachment to school and learning. Students with racially diverse teachers also have fewer unexcused absences and are less likely to be chronically absent. (p. 1)

However, students of color who currently sit in classrooms across America cannot wait for the change of demographics in the teaching profession that are so desperately needed right now. In order to attempt to address the shortcomings of diversity in the teaching profession, TEPs must provide their current population of preservice teachers with a

quality preparation program that embodies the key elements of CRP.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to provide support to the research surrounding the preparation of preservice and beginning teachers who teach in diverse settings. With the continued movement towards a more diverse classroom than ever before, this study hoped to support North Carolina TPPs and school districts with perceptual data related to CRP from the teachers they have produced. The results of these data might be used in the continuous pursuit of research-based practices and college-level curriculum development that promote the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students, along with developing a sociopolitical awareness in individuals. Using CRP as the framework for this study, the researcher also hoped to provide support for the use of this pedagogical approach in higher education classrooms across North Carolina, thus providing a trickle-down effect into the public schools, in order to enhance the teaching, learning, and building of positive student-teacher relationships in the classroom.

### **Research Question 1: Interpretation of Findings**

Research Question 1 asked, “How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional 4-year TEP in North Carolina rate their perceptions of their level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP?” This question was measured using a predeveloped quantitative tool. The study findings demonstrated that on 19 of 21 surveyed items, there was strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis that stated, “Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do not rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient.” Two survey items demonstrated no statistical significance, therefore showing weak evidence against the rejection of the null hypothesis. This statistical result revealed

that most beginning teachers felt slightly unequipped with these elements related to the CRP tenets of nurturing and supporting cultural competence and developing a sociopolitical consciousness. Both elements focused on volunteering and engagement with adults in the community and within the school setting. Despite these two items accepting the null hypothesis, 19 other survey items demonstrated strong rejection. The CRP tenet of developing students revealed that four of four survey items related to this tenet supported the alternative hypothesis. Likewise, with the CRP tenet of cultural competence, 11 of 12 survey items related to this tenet showed acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. The third CRP tenet associated with developing sociopolitical consciousness reported four of five survey items provided strong evidence for the alternative hypothesis which stated, “Graduates of a traditional North Carolina 4-year TEP do rate their level of preparedness with CRP as proficient.”

The survey used a 4-point Likert scale with 0 indicating that beginning teachers did not receive training or support from their college/university as it related to a survey statement. Only three survey items received a 0/Not at All rating. One or more of the participants in the study rated statements 10, 15, and 16 with a score of 0. Two of the survey items that fell into this category were also the two items that were unable to reject the null hypothesis.

Questions 6, 11, and 13 provided the strongest evidence towards rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of alternative hypothesis through ratings that gave these statements scores of 50% or higher in the accomplished and/or distinguished columns. These three statements provided evidence of the North Carolina TEP investment in opportunities for preservice to engage in discussions around personal experiences with



diverse populations and general discussions related to race, class, and gender. According to the data, TEPs are also successfully providing opportunities to observe in diverse settings. Survey question 7 asked about preservice/novice teacher basic knowledge of cultural awareness. The results showed that 96% of study participants felt their TEP was “proficient,” “accomplished,” and even “distinguished” at building their basic knowledge of culture. Although the quantitative data related to knowledge of diversity was strong, some of the responses shared in the qualitative data did not support such a strong level of basic knowledge.

### **Research Question 2: Interpretation of Findings**

Research Question 2 asked, “How do beginning teachers who have graduated from a traditional TEP in North Carolina further describe their perceptions of level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP after completion of a TEP and full-time classroom teaching experience?” This question was answered through a series of questions via an online focus group using the online conferencing platform known as Zoom. Responses to these questions were somewhat limited due to the use of beginning teachers with very little teaching experience and having been several months or even years removed from the college coursework and field experiences. It was perhaps this fact that made complex responses seemingly difficult. However, the researcher was able to formulate several themes from the responses. Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were asked during the focus group process and were related to tenet 1 of CRP, which dealt with the ability to develop students academically. Most respondents indicated that they felt unprepared until they spent time in courses, observations, and student teaching during the teacher education block. The beginning teachers expressed a need for opportunities for continued growth

with implementation of CRP in the classroom. Therefore, although these participants felt prepared by their TEPs to develop students academically, it may not have been enough to support them once in a diverse classroom on a full-time basis. Interestingly, the only African American focus group participant in the study had a different perspective. His response regarding the need to prepare teachers of color was compelling. This participant pointed out that his TEP experience, not the fact that he was a Black man, had prepared him to address the socioeconomic differences among children of color. This response gave weight to the research that already exists regarding the need to prepare teachers of color and not assume that they inherently understand all aspects of the relationships that exist between diversity and education (Jackson, 2015).

Question 1 of the focus group obtained beginning teacher insights on tenet 2 of CRP, which focused on nurturing and supporting cultural competence. This question asked participants to share their understanding of the term culturally diverse students and the phrase CRP. Although most responses focused on the background of students, it seemed difficult for participants to develop a concise definition or express a comprehensive understanding of CRP, other than its relationship to students of varying backgrounds. Although participants were able to relate these phrases to students, no one seemed to be able to move beyond race. This seemingly lack of knowledge of how culture describes differences among groups of people who share values, characteristics, or beliefs that are different from the dominant culture, seemed nearly absent from the responses. The lack of consistency in TEPs would support novice teacher inability to express a cohesive understanding of diversity-related terminology and ideas.

The final question of the focus group process was related to tenet 3 of CRP. This

question asked participants to provide advice as it related to CRP with policymakers and stakeholders from colleges and universities across North Carolina. Tenet 3 of CRP considers the development of sociopolitical awareness. Most participants were willing to share responses to this question. Most participants expressed a need for more practice-based learning opportunities with diverse populations. Survey item 5 asked participants how their TEP worked to provide intentional teaching opportunities with diverse students. Fifty-two percent of participants felt their universities were adequate or rated as “developing” in this area. The data results for this statement showed support for the responses that asked for more opportunities to work and/or teach students from diverse backgrounds. Other respondents also discussed the need to diversify the college and university teacher education faculty as well.

### **Triangulation of Qualitative and Quantitative Data**

Through the analysis of results of both the qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher was able to determine that collectively, most participants felt a basic level of preparedness with the tenets of CRP provided by their college/university TPP. However, the qualitative data coding revealed themes of “fairly confident” and “room for improvement,” which were not as strong as the quantitative results. The coded statements taken from the qualitative data results offered another level of understanding of how beginning teachers felt about their understanding of CRP. Despite quantitative data results that demonstrated a level of proficiency by TEPs in North Carolina in 19 of 21 culturally relevant related items in the CRTPS, beginning teachers in the classroom still express a need for continued support with understanding of CRP.

Triangulation and mixed methods researcher Hesse-Biber emphasized the

importance of being aware of “relevant dimensions of diversity in the communities in which we conduct our research” (Mertens & Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 78). This idea was relevant to the study in which 92% of participants in the quantitative data results were White non-Hispanic, while 8% were of African American and Asian descent. Thus, the quantitative data results were dominated by the larger culturally/ethnic group represented in the study. However, it was through the qualitative data that the voice for a representative of a traditionally marginalized group was heard. Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012) stated, “In this way, subjugated knowledge can be made visible and used to interpret the data collected by other means with the goal of promoting social justice” (p. 78). Although CRP represents the dominate framework for this study, Chapter 1 mentioned the underpinnings of a transformative/social justice framework as well. Through the results of the quantitative data and the further explanation offered by the qualitative data, the implications for practice section of this research was able to function as a call to action plan for North Carolina college and university TEPs as it relates to CRP.

### **Implication for Practice**

Through the research results in this study, three major points emerged as essential to the development of culturally relevant pedagogues for today’s diverse classroom. Emdin (2016) and Sleeter (2008) suggested that America’s classrooms must be willing to prepare preservice and current in-service teachers with the tools to positively increase the learning of the linguistically and racially diverse students they serve. Acknowledging that the vast majority of American classroom teachers are monolingual White females, it is important that an investment be made in TEPs and educational resources, in order to

prepare preservice teachers with an educational experience that sends them into the classroom ready to meet the needs of all students.

From the beginning of their TEPs, North Carolina TEPs will need to ensure that the preservice teachers they help to develop into qualified and competent teachers have been prepared with a comprehensive and transparent understanding of CRP. Although the quantitative data regarding basic knowledge of diversity was rated high, the responses through qualitative data from this study demonstrated that beginning teachers were somewhat unclear about the boundaries of CRP. An investment in the design of the TEP curriculum that would allow for diversity-related courses and experiences as a requirement, along with experiences in the program that modeled and allowed for authentic practice with CRP, would support a more comprehensive understanding of this theoretical approach to teaching and student learning. Villegas and Lucas (2002a, 2002b) proposed that preservice and beginning educators must be exposed to both a curriculum that illustrates CRP and instructional practices that model CRP. This would require that colleges and universities adopt this pedagogical approach to teaching and allow it to guide the teaching that occurs in the college classroom.

The importance of this CRP-embedded approach in higher education is vital for developing teaching candidates who can identify and demonstrate the use of CRP as they seek to develop their own teaching craft. Merryfield (2000) argued that one of the main reasons preservice teachers leave their programs underprepared to teach in diverse contexts is the lack of knowledge, experience, expertise, commitment, and understanding of the collegiate faculty who teach them. When colleges and universities provide a classroom experience that can be modified and then utilized in the public school

classroom, teaching candidates are able to gain insight into CRT from both sides of the teaching podium.

Another structural approach to the teacher education curriculum and teaching of diversity coursework would involve helping teaching candidates to observe through field experiences and then connect those experiences to diversity coursework. Daniel (2016) stated, “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” (p. 19). This would ensure that teaching candidates are involved in the observation and reflection on authentic practice, while making the connections to the theoretical knowledge on CRP gained from coursework. This idea coincides with Milner’s (2017) work that suggested that although content knowledge is essential in teacher education, conceptual development should be the logical place of focus, because teacher conceptions shape their curriculum practices and pedagogical decision-making. Preservice teachers need opportunities to connect theory with practice and discuss those connections in an environment that will foster understanding.

Second, North Carolina TEPs and public school districts will need to work together to provide continuous professional support to the preservice teachers who will eventually become beginning teachers. According to the data results found in question 4 on the survey, participants expressed a heightened awareness of the need for professional development as it relates to diversity. The qualitative data results supported this finding as focus group participants suggested that ongoing support would help them to grow as teachers who serve diverse student populations. Prominent researchers agree that

providing preservice and in-service teachers with professional development for educators to develop their cultural and linguistic awareness is a vital and urgent task (Bower-Phipps, Tate, Mehta, & Sature, 2013; Irvine, 2003; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Hammond (2018) suggested that developing a culturally responsive teacher involves developing a culturally responsive school district. This top-down approach will need to be successfully embedded in the district's approach to developing all aspects of teaching and learning goals. This process involves years of intense professional development for policymakers and stakeholders in the district as well as administrators and teachers. Through the top-down approach, teachers will then develop content from a district's educational infrastructure that has been developed on a foundation of CRP. North Carolina TEPs and school districts can provide this much-needed support through providing those research-based practices related to CRP and CRT professional development opportunities that support the understanding of diversity and equity pedagogy.

Finally, North Carolina TEPs will need to provide more opportunities that will support preservice teachers with opportunities to engage with the diverse communities and adults of these communities in a way to ensure they have a level of comfort and understanding of the people, cultural norms, and values held by these adults, their children, and the community. In this study, the survey statements that accepted the null hypothesis asked participants about how they perceived their TEP's level of preparation with providing opportunities to work with diverse adults and opportunities to volunteer in diverse communities. Through analyzing various immersion case studies over more than a decade, including the American Indian Reservation Project in the Navajo Nation, the

Hispanic Community Project in the lower Rio Grande Valley, the Urban Project in Indianapolis, and the Overseas Project, Sleeter (2008) was able to identify an effective immersion program offered at Indiana University that utilized a research-based practice of providing preservice teachers with cross-cultural community-based learning experiences. Sleeter (2008) explained the benefits of the experience in this way:

Effective teachers of students who are racially, ethnically, culturally different from themselves have learned how to recognize and build on assets students bring, interpret students' classroom behavior accurately, contextualize problems students bring within a sociopolitical rather than a cultural deficiency analysis, and communicate constructively with adults in students' lives. (p. 563)

When White preservice or in-service teachers are given the opportunity to immerse themselves in the communities of the students they serve, over time they are able to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and the lives of the students they encounter in the classroom. The short period of experiences currently offered in TEPs provide very little in-depth reflection and opportunity for changes in attitude. These experiences, at best, offer a period of enlightenment.

In order to develop the culturally relevant pedagogues needed in today's classrooms, appropriate diversity coursework, modeling of best practice with CRP, and school-based fieldwork embedded in cross-cultural learning experiences would offer North Carolina preservice and in-service teachers with experiences and interactions that would support their personal and professional growth with the tenets of CRP.

### **Limitations**

One of the most beneficial aspects of professional development is the ability to



self-reflect on best practices in teaching and student learning. According to the research of Wiggins, Follo, and Eberly (2007), “students need opportunities for self-reflection if they are to change their dispositions toward teaching in culturally diverse classrooms” (p. 654). This distinct undertaking can lead to professional growth as well as impact student achievement. As beginning teachers, this skill is vital to continued movement towards becoming a highly qualified teacher with students of diverse backgrounds. However, the practice of self-reflection can only be developed through continuous practice in an environment that promotes and supports open communication, critical dialogue, risk taking, and collaboration. The inability to effectively self-reflect and engage in critical thinking around those ideas is one of the limitations of this study. Beginning teachers are still new to the practice and process of self-reflection. Within this study, the average time to take the survey was 2 minutes and 36 seconds. The survey design asked beginning teachers to consider coursework, observations, and field experiences and their impact on how they are developing as culturally relevant educators. This mismatch between survey completion time and level of critical thinking required to reflect on those statements specific to personal experiences showed that participants were not fully engaged in self-reflection during the survey. This inability to critically self-reflect may have had an impact on the data gathered.

Another limitation of this study was the small participant size when collecting both the quantitative data and the qualitative data. The concern with a small sample is that it can reduce the power of the study. The appropriate sample size for this study was 378 participants; however, with a study participant size of 25 in the survey administration and six in the focus group, the ability to generalize the results to the overall population is

difficult.

Another limitation of this study was the inability to access preservice teachers as the target population. Initially, the research attempted to use preservice teachers as the target population. However, after several attempts and speaking with a university student-teaching coordinator, the researcher decided to change populations due to the heavy workload student teachers have at the beginning of the student teaching block. With the experiences of college coursework and student teaching immediately at hand, preservice teachers would have offered a very definitive response to the impact of those experiences in the TEPs and their knowledge of CRP. This study had to take a different course and rely on beginning teacher perceptual data. Although beginning teacher data was effective in their own right, the data of preservice teachers could have provided a more powerful look at the work of TEPs and the level of preparedness of their preservice teachers in the state.

### **Recommendations and Further Studies**

In order to continue the essential work centered on the education of children of color, research has to continue to focus on those elements that will ensure high academic achievement for students and personal and professional growth for teachers. Specific to the state of North Carolina, further studies should be conducted that focus on how districts and colleges recruit and develop teachers of color. Often, the research focus is on the dominant culture of the teaching profession. However, if the research shows that teachers of color have a significant impact on the learning and lives of children of color as well as White children, research needs to be conducted in a way to ensure that these teachers are also fully capable of meeting the needs of diverse student populations

(Haddix, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). It is not realistic to assume that teachers of color are automatically inherent to the training needed to address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds; therefore, teacher preparation that is geared to assist these teachers must be a part of the equation.

Another area of research that would benefit the state of North Carolina in terms of further studies would be a close review of how universities across the state implement diversity training through the TPP. Sharing this information statewide would allow stakeholders and policymakers at the state level to enact changes that would benefit the outcomes in higher education as it relates to diversity studies. In turn, students of color in public schools across the state would benefit from the possibility of a more cohesive training model that would exist from institution to institution. In order to ensure that teaching candidates and preservice teachers are challenged and supported in the development of their own understanding of CRP, institutions of higher education must provide a strong theoretical foundation in diversity studies. This would involve educational opportunities to explore their own identities, while understanding how to develop cultural competencies and critical consciousness in the students they serve.

If the inequalities in education are to dissipate, the U.S. will have to ensure that every student and the communities they live in have access to equal resources, appropriately equipped facilities, and most importantly, quality teachers. The work of TEPs across America is essential to the development of teachers who can provide education equality for all students. With a drastically changing student demographic, the preparation of teachers must include the ability to academically challenge students of color, while understanding the role that their communities and cultures have in shaping

their understanding of education and the world around them.

North Carolina TEPs can support this quest through developing a teacher education curriculum that embeds the tenets of CRP through coursework, daily college classroom interactions, and field experiences that provide in-depth opportunities to work in these communities and with the adults from diverse backgrounds. In addition, school districts across North Carolina and the TEPs that collaborate with them can extend diversity-related professional learning opportunities for teachers well into the first few years of professional teaching, so teachers are fully supported in understanding and implementing CRP. Through a well-planned commitment to enhancing teacher quality, all students and teachers in North Carolina can gain from an educational experience that is culturally relevant.

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## Appendix A

### Preservice Teacher Candidate Demographic Background Questionnaire

### Preservice Teacher Demographic Questionnaire

**Directions:** This demographic questionnaire provides background of the preservice teaching candidates participating in this study. This information will assist the researcher in understanding connections between the candidate and possible responses to questions. Please answer the following question with complete honesty. Remember that all responses are anonymous and can only be viewed by the researcher.

1. Identify your gender by selecting one of the choice below.
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Other
2. Select from one of the choice below that best describes your ethnic or cultural background.
  - ☐ Asian/ Pacific Islander
  - ☐ Black, non- Hispanic
  - ☐ Hispanic/ Latino American
  - ☐ American Indian/ Native Alaskan
  - ☐ White, non- Hispanic
  - ☐ Biracial/ Multi-racial (Belonging to more than one racial group)
  - ☐ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Describe the type of community that you grew up in during childhood. You may choose more than one if you moved.
  - ☐ Rural (population less than 25,000 with farmland; ex: Salisbury)
  - ☐ Urban (population more than 500,000 people; large city, ex: Charlotte)
  - ☐ Suburban (larger than a rural area, smaller than urban; ex: Huntersville)
4. In your opinion, would you describe your community (at large) as ethnically and/or culturally diverse?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
5. In your opinion, would you describe your neighborhood (street or immediate surrounding area) as ethnically and/or culturally diverse?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
6. In your opinion, was the high school you attended considered ethnically and/or culturally diverse?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

7. In your opinion, was the teaching staff at your high school ethnically and/or culturally diverse?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
8. Did you receive free or reduced lunch at any time during your public school experience?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ I prefer not to answer.
9. Which statement best describes your family's income status?
  - ☐ Lower Class/Working Poor
  - ☐ Middle Class / Working Class
  - ☐ Upper Middle Class
  - ☐ Upper Class/Wealthy
  - ☐ I prefer not to answer.
10. What statement best describe the type of household that you grew up in?
  - ☐ Both Parents
  - ☐ Single Parent
  - ☐ Widowed Parent
  - ☐ Divorced
  - ☐ Other

## Appendix B

### Culturally Responsive Teaching Preparedness Scale

**Directions:** Consider the preparation that your teacher education program has provided during your collegiate career. Rate your perception of level of preparedness to utilize culturally relevant pedagogy to guide and inform your work with diverse student populations. using a 5-point Likert type scale with a range of 0 (Not at all/Not Demonstrated) to 4 (Distinguished). This is not a test, so there is no right or wrong answers to the questions. All responses are anonymous and confidential.

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Not at all/Not Demonstrated	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished

**I believe my teacher education program has....**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. prepared me to take a stand against prejudice by constructively disagreeing with those who makes stereotypical statements.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. prepared me to take a stand for social justice, human rights and equal opportunity for all human beings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. addressed racial, ethnic, socioeconomic class, gender, special education, and sexual orientation pedagogical skills as it relates to student achievement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. raised my awareness for the need to attend professional development activities or events regarding teaching and learning about diversity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. allowed me to experience both educational and ethical cultural diversity values other than my own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. provided opportunities (i.e., classroom discussions, events, trainings/ workshops) to discuss my personal diverse field experiences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. prepared me to demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of cultural awareness.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. prepared me to utilize a student's social and cultural heritage as it relates to student learning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. intentionally created opportunities to teach individuals from diverse groups.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. encouraged me to engage in volunteer experiences that allow me to work in diverse settings.

<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Not at all/Not Demonstrated	Developing	Proficient	Accomplished	Distinguished

**I believe my teacher education program has ....**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. provided me with opportunities to observe students from diverse backgrounds and cultures.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. enhanced my interpersonal communication skills when interacting with people from different cultures.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. given me the opportunity to participate in group discussions about race, class and gender.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. inspired me to take a leadership role with respect to diversity in my professional field.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. stressed the need to avoid categorizing individuals based on their race.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. prepared me to collaborate with colleagues from diverse backgrounds despite our racial or cultural differences.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. prepared me to teach a diverse group of students, particularly those of color.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. emphasized that all students' learning styles are different within the same racial or ethnic group.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. prepared me to incorporate multicultural education practices into the curriculum.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. stressed the importance of effectively communicating with parents from backgrounds different than my own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. prepared me to appreciate and understand how global educational issues are relevant to my education.

In the comment box below: Please include additional comments about your college diversity learning experiences (if you need more space use the back)

## Appendix C

### Preservice Teachers Focus Group Protocol



### Preservice Teachers Focus Group Protocol

The purpose of this online focus group is to examine pre-service teacher candidate's perspective regarding their level of professional preparedness via a North Carolina college or university teacher education program. This online focus group session will specifically look at the pre-service teachers' understanding and ability to implement culturally relevant teaching practices in an educational setting.

#### Focus Group Protocol

1. Welcome participants to the session.
2. Remind participants of the anonymity aspects of their participation in the online focus group. Also inform participants that this research is focused on the teacher education program and not on their student teaching performance.
3. Ask permission to record the audio of the online focus group session.

#### Focus Group Questions:

1. As a novice teacher, what do you think of when I use the phrase “culturally diverse students”? What about “culturally relevant pedagogy”?
2. Prior to your coursework and experiences in your teacher education program, how prepared did you feel in your ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?
3. After your coursework and experiences in your teacher education program, how prepared did you feel in your ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?
4. Were there any aspects of your college level teacher training program that positively impacted your confidence in your ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students? If so, explain.
5. Were there any aspects of your college level teacher training program that negatively impacted your confidence in your ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students? If so, explain.
6. At this point in your professional career, how confident are you in your ability to use culturally relevant pedagogy to guide and inform your work with culturally diverse students?
7. Is there any advice that you'd like to provide the state of North Carolina in its pursuit to continuously develop an effective teacher education program that prepares preservice teachers to effectively teach culturally diverse students?