Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers: Linking Across Three Studies

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Preparing teachers to teach children from marginalized backgrounds remains to be one of the most persistent, urgent, and significant issues for teacher preparation programs to this day. There are multiple reasons why this is the case. One challenge is recruitment. Most teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs are predominately White, female, and monolingual while the U.S. student population is not (Riser-Kositsky, 2020; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). Another challenge is preparing teacher candidates to be culturally responsive. Culture is complex and encompasses many aspects such as traditions, values, languages, forms of communication, and many other characteristics which are shaped by intersecting identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.). Scholars have made it clear that teachers need cultural competence in order to effectively support student learning, but unfortunately many White teacher candidates have a superficial understanding of culture and diversity and how culture plays an integral role in a child's learning and development (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Philip & Benin, 2014; Sleeter, 2016). When White teacher candidates are learning about issues like systemic racism, White privilege, and/or other multicultural issues, they usually enact White fragility and struggle to learn these concepts (DiAngelo, 2011; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Pollock et al., 2010; Sleeter, 2008). Even when a program has a diverse teacher candidate pool, many of these programs fall short to prepare their teacher candidates for the skills needed to work in culturally and linguistically diverse schools (Milner & Sleeter, 2008). These challenges, and several others, are exacerbated due to the political landscape inside and outside teacher preparation programs (Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015). This last point recognizes the contentious debates regarding *who* has a say in teacher preparation and *how* it is structured

(Carter Andrews et al., 2017; Philip et al., 2019; Zeichner et al., 2016). This dissertation addresses this last point and solidifies an argument of how to prepare teachers to work effectively with all children through community-engaged efforts.

Many researchers over the years have developed different models and structures when it comes to preparing teachers to work with children from marginalized backgrounds (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Seidl & Friend, 2002; Zeichner, 2010; Zygmunt et al., 2018). Many programs early on in this work tried adding a multicultural course to their curricula where teacher candidates were given an opportunity to learn about diversity. While well-intentioned, such multicultural courses were often ephemeral and teacher candidates did not demonstrate significant learning, especially after the course ended (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Other efforts included having practicum and student teaching experiences where teacher candidates had opportunities to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. While this is a step further than an isolated multicultural course, these experiences were usually not well-mediated and often led to reinforcement of negative stereotypes and deficit views that many teacher candidates already had toward culturally and linguistically diverse students (Anderson & Stillman, 2011; Zygmunt et al., 2018). To further complicate matters; most teacher educators who prepare teacher candidates are also White, female, and monolingual themselves and have had limited experiences teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Goodwin and colleagues (2016) studied teacher educators and found that many did not feel adequately prepared to teach multicultural courses and prepare teachers candidates to teach children from marginalized backgrounds. Despite being ineffectual, and even possibly counterproductive, many teacher preparation programs to this day are still structured in these ways as they prepare their teachers for culturally responsive teaching (Zeichner, 2016).

Recognizing these shortcomings in teacher preparation programs, many scholars have called for a new form of teacher preparation that adequately prepares teacher candidates for culturally responsive instruction and makes teacher preparation a democratic endeavor (Haddix, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2017; Murrell, 2000; Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner et al., 2015; Zeichner, 2010; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). Some scholars use the term *community-based* or *community-engaged*; both of these terms converge on similar structures and goals in teacher preparation including working in solidarity with culturally and linguistically diverse communities in order to prepare teachers for diversity and culturally responsive teaching (Guillén & Zeichner, 2018; Zeichner et al., 2016; Zygmunt et al., 2018). These types of programs attempt to feature well-mediated experiences where teacher candidates are situated in culturally diverse communities and are assigned community mentors, liaisons, or ambassadors to help them navigate and learn about the culture of these communities and to develop the skills of how to navigate new culturally diverse spaces in the future. These mentors often help teacher candidates learn their students' and families' "funds of knowledge" and learn about community "cultural wealth" in order to become culturally responsive teachers (González et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). Further, these programs also try to provide opportunities for candidates to develop the skills, methods, and dispositions to enact culturally responsive teaching in their practice.

Prior studies have shown that these types of teacher preparation have appeared to effectively change many teacher candidates' conceptualizations of children from marginalized backgrounds. Further, some of these programs have reported that their teacher candidates develop culturally responsive teaching practices (McDonald et al., 2011; Zeichner et al., 2016; Zygmunt et al., 2018). Despite these promising results, the prior literature has yet to adequately address the impact of such preparation experiences. What types of instructional practices do

these early career teachers enact in their classrooms? Are their practices culturally responsive? And, if so, to what extent? How do these teachers interact with families and community members at their school sites? What challenges do they face after initial teacher preparation? These questions, and many more, have remained unanswered. Zygmunt and colleagues (2018) have made an urgent call for such research, particularly "studies that look at how individual teachers navigate new community spaces (outside a structured program such as ours) would significantly contribute to the field" (p. 136).

This gap in the literature has led me to the crux of my dissertation where I studied graduates from a community-engaged elementary teacher preparation program and wanted to understand how such preparation experiences impacted their pedagogical practice. In this linking document, I present a summary of each of the three manuscripts for my dissertation. I briefly share the nature of each study, my findings (or preliminary findings) and how each manuscript addresses the topic of preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching.

Manuscript 1: Opportunities to Learn, Program Coherence, and Elementary Teacher Candidates' Self-Efficacy with Regard to Culturally Responsive Teaching

In this first manuscript, my colleagues and I studied an elementary teacher preparation program located in the mid-Atlantic region and examined how teacher candidates' reported perceptions of their opportunities to learn and their program's coherence concerning diversity in their teacher preparation program were associated with their self-efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching. In this study, we drew from Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy to investigate how candidates perceived that their program provided opportunities to learn and how well their program articulated a mission and vision for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. In this study, we drew from survey data where

teacher candidates reported on the extent to which their program provided opportunities to learn about culturally and linguistically diverse students and how coherent their program was regarding this topic. We also used these candidates' self-ratings on the Culturally Responsive Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE; Siwatu, 2007).

Using structural equation modeling, we found that candidates who perceived their program to be coherent concerning preparation for multiculturalism, also felt they had more opportunities to learn which was associated with a higher CRTSE rating. This finding seems consistent theoretically in that when teacher candidates find their program to be coherent with its mission and vision, then this will raise their efficacy to enact the behaviors and pedagogies for which their program advocated. Another finding in this study was that there was variation in teacher candidate responses within this one teacher preparation program. Thus, is interesting but is consistent with other teacher preparation research that found that variation not only occurs *across* teacher preparation programs but also *within* them (Cohen & Berlin, 2020). Ultimately, this finding also makes both theoretical and practical sense in that when a preparation program is perceived to be highly coherent then individuals are likely to find they have more opportunities to learn which then raises one's efficacy.

Manuscript 2: Moving Beyond Teacher Preparation: Examining the Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices of Community-Engaged Elementary Graduates

This second manuscript is at the heart of this dissertation. As I identified the crucial gap above in the introduction, this study focused on studying elementary graduates who came from a community-engaged teacher preparation program. I wanted to examine the types of instructional practices that these teachers enacted in their classrooms; whether and the extent to which they

enacted culturally responsive teaching; and, whether their school context (i.e., principal, colleagues, district expectations, etc.) impacted their instruction, and if so, to what extent.

This study drew on sociocultural theory, specifically activity theory to understand how community-engaged teacher preparation may impact practice. Activity theory posits that individuals in culturally- and historically-shaped settings make use of tools (practical and conceptual) to solve problems and/or to achieve a specific goal(s) (Engeström, 2001; Roth & Lee, 2007; Zeichner et al., 2015). Activity theory is a theory of praxis that accounts for an individual's identity, the settings they are in, and the messages conveyed in those settings, and how they use tools, to understand outcomes associated with their practice (Thompson et al., 2013; Zeichner et al., 2015). Education researchers have called for more teacher preparation research to use activity theory in order to understand how preparation experiences impact teacher learning (Grossman et al., 1999).

Due to the nature of my research questions and use of activity theory, I used a qualitative multiple embedded case study design to study five graduates who completed a community-engaged teacher preparation program (Yin, 2018). I interviewed each teacher three times throughout the 2021-2022 school year to learn about their preparation experiences, their pedagogical beliefs and understanding of culturally responsive teaching, their school and district contexts, and their work with their principals and teaching colleagues. I also observed each teacher six times with three observations in mathematics and three in English Language Arts (ELA). I used the Culturally Responsive Instructional Observation Protocol (CRIOP, Powell et al., 2016) to examine the extent to which they enacted culturally responsive teaching. I video recorded each lesson to analyze and rate their practice. I also collected documents such as curricula materials, lesson plans, and newsletters when appropriate.

Through activity theory, I found that these five teachers fell into one of three groups concerning their understanding of culturally responsive instruction and the extent to which they enacted it. One teacher was able to enact culturally responsive practices at a higher level than compared to her peers. This teacher in particular had a strong critical consciousness and actively modified the curriculum and her instruction in order to be culturally responsive. From the CRIOP, this teacher enacted different types of discourse, instructional, and assessment practices that supported her students learning while beginning to build their cultural competence. Another teacher in this study also was beginning to enact culturally responsive practices but only in the areas of classroom relationships and family collaboration. This teacher however enacted instructional practices that were teacher-led, lecture-based, and involved many worksheets. These practices are not inherently ineffective, but as the sole modality of such repertories of practice we found this teacher's instruction to not be culturally responsive. It seemed this teacher felt challenged to enact other types of instructional practices with having to follow curricula and their district's pacing guide with fidelity. Lastly, the other three teachers in this study were not enacting culturally responsive practices and they lacked specific components in their understanding of the culturally responsive framework, especially the critical conscious component. These teachers also enacted practices that were not culturally responsive and were lecture-based and worksheet heavy. These specific teachers claimed their practices were culturally responsive when they were not. I share in this manuscript implications for schools and teacher preparation programs and suggest directions for future research in this area.

Manuscript 3: Saying the Right Things: Principals' Sensemaking Related to Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction

In this third manuscript, I used data that I gathered for manuscript two to examine more in-depth how these graduates' principals and their sense-making in regard to implementing curricula and district policies influenced these teachers' ability to enact culturally responsive teaching. Again, I used a qualitative multiple embedded case study design where each principal was bounded by leading a teacher(s) in their schools who graduated from a community-engaged teacher preparation program. This study had four principals (three principals and one vice principal) who worked across three different school districts in the Midwest. I interviewed each principal once to learn about their expectations for their teachers, how they defined culturally responsive teaching, and their views about district policies and curricular implementation.

In this study, I used sense-making theory as my theoretical framework. Similar to activity theory, sense-making theory accounts for one's beliefs/schemas and how they make meaning and interpret frameworks and policies tied to their professional practice. While activity theory focuses heavily on situated cognition, sense-making theory is a cognitive framework that examines meaning making and how schemas and beliefs shape interpretation of policy and frameworks. Sense-making theory has been used in other studies on principals and these studies point to how principal sense-making has a significant impact on their leadership and the messages they convey to their teachers (Coburn, 2001; 2005; Spillane et al., 2002).

Findings from this study showed that principals said the appropriate (or the right) things regarding culturally responsive teaching but did not seem to necessarily act in ways that were consistent with their statements. Similar to some of the graduates in manuscript two, most principals in this study could articulate what culturally responsive is to an extent, but they conveyed messages to their teachers to follow the curricula with fidelity when the given curricula was *not* culturally responsive. Further, these same principals believed that their teachers were

enacting culturally responsive practices when many of the graduates in manuscript two were not actually enacting culturally responsive pedagogy. One principal's sense-making in particular seemed to reflect the practices and behaviors of culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifia et al., 2016) than compared to the other school leaders. We share the similarities and differences between all the principals and provide implications for future research concerning culturally responsive school leadership.

Significance

While manuscript one is not as tightly connected as manuscripts two and three, the findings in manuscript one were consistent with some of the findings in manuscript two. It seemed clear that the semester-long community-engaged program was not enough to prepare culturally responsive teachers. Nonetheless, the community-engaged program was an excellent start, but these teacher candidates needed a highly coherent program where all parts of the preparation program provided a consistent message and a plethora of opportunities to learn how to become culturally responsive educators. Further, manuscript three provided evidence that once individuals graduate from such programs, they need to be supported in schools and school districts that recognize, know, and value the work learned in their preparation program in order for ongoing professional learning and development.

These three studies together address important gaps in the research literature, but there are many more questions and significant work to be done. First and foremost, it would be fruitful to identify a preparation program that utilized community-engaged efforts and was also highly coherent through all parts to examine how, and to what extent, their graduates enact culturally responsive teaching. Further, the same applies to principal and school leadership preparation. Khalifa and colleagues (2016) argue that preparing culturally responsive principals is "highly

underresearched and undertheorized" (p. 1297). More research is needed to understand how principal preparation experiences shape principals' conceptualization and enactment of culturally responsive school leadership. Lastly, future studies that use quantitative measures, mixed methods, and larger sample sizes are also highly needed to understand whether findings from previous smaller, qualitative studies apply at scale.

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Opportunities to Learn, Program Coherence, and Elementary Teacher Candidates' Self-Efficacy with Regard to Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Abstract

Structural equation model and latent variable path analysis was conducted to examine survey data of teacher candidates' (n = 102) perceptions of their program's coherence and opportunities to learn in regard to their self-efficacy toward culturally responsive teaching. The Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) was used as the dependent variable in this analysis to measure self-efficacy. Findings showed that teacher candidates' perception of their program's coherence was positively associated with their CRTSE. Further, perceptions of opportunities to learn was also positively associated with CRTSE through mediation of program coherence. The authors provide implications for research and practice.

The percentage of students in U.S. elementary and secondary schools from racially and linguistically minoritized backgrounds has continued to increase dramatically in recent decades. Racially minoritized students have made up the majority of K-12 students in U.S. public schools since 2015-16 (Riser-Kositsky, 2020); in many states, they currently make up 60 percent or more of public school students. In addition, language minority students comprise substantial percentages of K-12 students in public schools in many states (McFarland et al., 2019). Despite this continued growth in the diversity of the K-12 student populations in the U.S., most U.S. teachers continue to be White, female, and from middle-class and working-class socio-economic backgrounds and they often do not share the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds as their students (Riser-Kositsky, 2020; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016).

These disparities often lead teachers to teach content and enact instructional strategies that are oriented toward a White, monolingual, Eurocentric worldview with less attention toward minoritized and marginalized students' cultural backgrounds and experiences (Banks & McGee-Banks, 2006). Ladson-Billings (2006) makes it clear that U.S. schools often experience a "poverty of culture" in which classroom and learning experiences are not relevant to the cultures for all students within a pluralistic society. These disparities have led researchers to call for efforts to (a) build teachers' cultural competence and their sociopolitical consciousness, (b) recruit and prepare teachers to enact culturally responsive teaching or asset-based practices that address students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and (c) help them develop self-efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching and positive attitudes towards multicultural teaching (Paris, 2012; Siwatu, 2007). Advocates of culturally responsive teaching assert that students learn better when their background, culture, language, and identity are connected meaningfully to learning experiences (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Despite a growing recognition of the importance of preparing teachers to enact culturally responsive teaching practices, this pedagogy remains an elusive goal for many educational researchers/theorists, teacher educators, and teacher candidates when it comes to operationalizing a culturally relevant or responsive framework (Paris & Alim, 2014; Powell et al., 2016; Zeichner, 2016). There are multiple reasons for this. One is that many teacher preparation programs have found it challenging to create a clear and coherent program message that carries through all parts of teacher candidates' preparation (Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner, 2016). Another is that even when a program has a clear and coherent message about such pedagogy, clinical teaching placements and coursework may lack the experiences and opportunities for candidates to learn how to work with various student groups or to enact specific instructional practices that are well mediated (Anderson & Stillman, 2011; McDonald, 2005).

In addition, White teacher candidates may struggle to understand their Whiteness and their (lack of) cultural competence of various student groups (Philip & Benin, 2014; Sleeter, 2016) and understand how this affects their instruction. Also, teachers of Color, who often bring cultural wealth and a sociopolitical awareness, may feel alienated in their preparation programs since many programs are often oriented toward preparing White candidates for diversity. This attention towards White teacher candidates can limit opportunities for teacher candidates of Color to use their cultural wealth through their pedagogical practice (Sleeter & Milner, 2011). This means that programs need a well-articulated vision to prepare teachers for culturally responsive teaching and provide adequate opportunities to learn and enact such practices for all teacher candidates (Gay, 2002; Sleeter, 2001).

A growing body of research indicates that a well-articulated preparation program vision and opportunities to learn in courses and field experiences are associated with teacher

candidates' learning, appropriation, and enactment of program-supported instructional practices (Feiman-Nemser et al., 2014; Hammerness & Klette, 2015). Teacher education programs need to clearly articulate this vision for pedagogy and provide opportunities to learn about such practices throughout courses and clinical placements (Sleeter, 2001). At the same time, it is less clear how opportunities to learn and program coherence are associated with teacher candidates' self-efficacy to enact culturally responsive teaching. Teacher self-efficacy refers to a teacher's judgement of their ability to carry out various instructional responsibilities in the classroom (Bandura, 1997; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

In this study, we used structural equation modeling and latent variable path analysis to analyze survey data from 102 elementary candidates from one teacher education program at a large research university in a Mid-Atlantic state to examine how candidates' perceptions of opportunities to learn and perceptions of their preparation program coherence were associated with their self-efficacy related to culturally responsive teaching. We employed the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy survey (CRTSE; Siwatu, 2007; 2011) to measure this latter construct. In the first section of this paper, we review research on teacher self-efficacy and classroom practice, self-efficacy related to culturally responsive teaching, opportunities to learn in teacher preparation, and preparation program coherence. The second section presents our conceptual framework and hypotheses. In the third section, we describe our survey data, measures, and analytic strategies. The fourth section features our findings. Finally, we discuss our findings in relation to prior research, identify limitations of this analysis, and consider implications of this study for future research and practice.

Literature Review

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Classroom Practice

Self-efficacy has long been an important construct to examine in the field of teacher education and teacher development (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Bandura's (1997) seminal work in social cognitive theory focuses on one's perceived ability to execute a task, or their self-efficacy. Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory posits that one's beliefs about whether they can successfully execute a task play a significant role in one's future behavior/actions. Bandura identified four different sources of one's efficacy. These sources include enactive mastery experiences (i.e., opportunities to enact specific actions and determine success in a task), vicarious experiences (i.e., opportunities to see the task modeled and compare oneself to the model), verbal persuasion (i.e., verbal feedback and recognition), and physiological states (i.e., perceptions of one's emotional and physical state).

Several studies have provided evidence that self-efficacy is indeed an important construct to examine regarding teaching practice. For example, Cantrell and Hughes (2008) found that 6th- and 9th-grade teachers with higher levels of efficacy were more likely to implement new instructional strategies. Hamre and colleagues (2007) examined individual and classroom factors that were associated with teachers' ratings of conflict in the classroom. The authors found that teachers who reported more depression and lower self-efficacy also reported more conflict with students in their classroom than those with less depression and had higher self-efficacy.

Researchers have found that teachers who reported higher levels of self-efficacy had students with higher levels of achievement on standardized tests (Caprara et al., 2006; Mojavezi & Poodineh Tamiz, 2012). In addition, multiple scales have been developed to measure different domains of self-efficacy related to pedagogical practices such as literacy instruction or technology integration (for a review, see Zee & Koomen, 2016). One scale that has been widely

used is the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). The TSES measures self-efficacy related to the instructional domains of classroom management, instructional practice, and student engagement. While the TSES has been used in multiple studies and has been shown to have evidence of reliability and validity across different classrooms and countries (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Zee & Koomen, 2016), other self-efficacy scales that focus on more specific instructional tasks may be useful for other purposes (Siwatu, 2007; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Bandura (2006) maintains that self-efficacy scales need to be reflective of the construct of interest for the measure to be valid and reliable. In the study reported here, we examined teacher candidates' self-efficacy regarding culturally responsive teaching.

As Bandura's notion of self-efficacy became more influential in psychological research, it also gained traction in educational research (Zee & Koomen, 2016). Self-efficacy has become an important construct in examining the association between one's beliefs and one's ability to enact specific instructional practices and behaviors. To note, it is still unclear whether there is a causal link between efficacy and teaching practice since the majority of studies are cross-sectional, use self-reported data, and do not account for actual classroom teaching practice (Holzberger et al., 2013).

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive or relevant teaching is an important theory related to asset-based pedagogies, even though it has received little attention in the self-efficacy literature (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014; Siwatu, 2007). Culturally responsive teaching asserts that teaching and learning needs to be meaningfully grounded in and connected to students' cultural and linguistic heritages. When defining culture, Gay (2002) explains that

culture encompasses many things, but stresses that teachers need know specific elements that have direct implications for teaching and learning. Some of these include teachers knowing their students' traditions, learning styles, communication, and relational patterns. Other elements include knowing which ethnic groups prioritize communal living and cooperative problem solving; differences among ethnic groups in their views of appropriate ways for children to interact with adults; and differences with regard to gender role socialization. Knowing these elements and others, Gay (2002) maintains that teachers who are knowledgeable about these aspects of culture will likely to "us[e] the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them effectively" (p. 106).

Siwatu (2007) developed the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self Efficacy (CRTSE) scale drawing from frameworks associated with Gay, Ladson-Billings, and others and identifies four central components. The first is that teachers use students' prior knowledge, lived experiences, and learning preferences as conduits to facilitate teaching and learning. This first component focuses on curriculum and instruction. The second is teachers' efforts to design classroom environments that are compatible with students' cultural orientations – which concentrates on classroom management. The third component addresses teachers' student assessment practices and their design and use of assessments that provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. The final focuses on cultural enrichment and competence by providing "students with the knowledge and skills needed to function in mainstream culture while simultaneously helping students maintain their cultural identity, native language, and connection to their culture" (Siwatu, 2007, p. 1087). Going forward, when we refer to culturally responsive teaching, we refer to Siwatu and these four components.

The CRTSE was designed to measure preservice teacher candidates' confidence in their ability to execute the skills and components of culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2007). In one study, Siwatu (2011) used the CRTSE scale to measure 192 Midwest teacher candidates' sense of efficacy related to culturally responsive teaching skills and to determine what experiences these preservice teachers had that contributed to their self-efficacy beliefs. He found that candidates felt more effective about their ability to support students to feel like members of the classroom and develop positive, personal relationships with them, but were less efficacious regarding culturally responsive skills which included communicating with English language learners or obtaining information about students' home lives.

Siwatu's (2011) findings suggest that certain skills may be easier for teacher candidates to develop (and feel efficacious about) compared to other skills. Lastly, he found that many teacher candidates had limited opportunities to watch or enact culturally responsive instructional tasks during preparation. Many who had lower levels of efficacy regarding culturally responsive teaching reported that they had fewer opportunities to learn specific skills or enact culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms whereas those with higher efficacy reported more opportunities to learn about culturally responsive teaching through both coursework and clinical placements.

Fitchett et al. (2012) examined 20 social studies teacher candidates' CRTSE scores in relation to a model for implementing culturally responsive teaching. They found that candidates gained confidence, or self-efficacy, with regard to culturally responsive teaching. This study provides details of how a methods classroom could be organized to focus on culturally responsive teaching and could use a framework to promote teacher candidates' efficacy related to culturally responsive teaching (Fitchett et al., 2012). But it does not make it clear how well

this preparation program works across courses or in practicum and student teaching experiences to help candidates implement culturally responsive teaching. One course/experience may improve self-efficacy, but the authors acknowledge that teaching candidates learning culturally responsive teaching need to have multiple opportunities throughout their program to develop the knowledge and skills to enact such practices.

In another study, Cruz et al. (2020) examined 245 pre-service and in-service teachers' appraisals using the CRTSE. These researchers found that the CRTSE items with the highest mean scores pertained to nuanced understandings of student preferences, building personal relationships, and building trust with students. The lowest mean scores pertained to specific cultural knowledge and building home-to-school connections – a finding that has been consistent in the CRTSE literature (Siwatu, 2007; 2011). These researchers also found that most teacher characteristics (i.e., gender, race, and participants' first language being other than English) were not significantly associated with one's CRTSE. Exceptions to this were Latino teachers reporting higher CRTSE scores and teachers whose first language was not English having lower CRTSE scores. The type of teacher preparation that the teachers in this sample experienced such as university-based teacher preparation or alternate preparation routes such as Teach for America were not significantly associated with CRTSE. Furthermore, school program type (i.e., charter, public, etc.) and school geographic location (i.e., rural, urban, suburban) were not significantly associated with CRTSE scores.

At the same time, Cruz and colleagues (2020) found that teachers' years of experience was a statistically significant and meaningful predictor of CRTSE levels. This finding reflects other findings in the self-efficacy literature that years of teaching experience (especially in the middle of one's career) typically result in higher levels of self-efficacy in general (Klassen &

Chiu, 2010). This finding makes sense, because more experienced teachers may have more opportunities to work with students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, more opportunities for professional development about how to work with such students, and more opportunities for time to reflect on practice and make future instructional decisions. While these assertions make sense, it is still not clear what types of opportunities teacher candidates need in their preparation, how frequent these opportunities need to be, or how their preparation program should articulate the value of culturally responsive teaching to start teachers off in their careers with a stronger belief in their ability to enact culturally responsive pedagogies.

OTL in Teacher Preparation

Opportunities to learn (OTL) in teacher preparation are defined as the extent to which teacher candidates are exposed to teaching-related content in courses and fieldwork (Schmidt et al., 2011). Yet it is important to note that OTL has been measured and conceptualized in different ways (Floden, 2002). Several studies have used OTL to examine different pathways into teaching (Boyd et al., 2009), make cross-national comparisons (Schmidt et al., 2011), and explore learning opportunities both between and within teacher preparation programs (Cohen & Berlin, 2020).

McDonald (2005) examined teacher candidates' learning opportunities in two preparation programs that emphasized a social justice orientation. The author defined social justice teacher education as "addressing injustice [that] requires developing respect for group differences without reaffirming or reestablishing aspects of oppression." (McDonald, 2005, p. 422). She found that some teacher candidates had more opportunities to learn conceptual tools (i.e., principles, frameworks, and guidelines) than practical tools (i.e., instructional practices, strategies, and resources). Furthermore, she found that teacher candidates had opportunities to

learn about some student racial groups more than others. Student teaching placements also played a role in the opportunities these teacher candidates had to develop teaching skills to enact a social justice framework.

This finding is consistent with the literature regarding the challenges of enacting practice in student teaching placements (Anderson & Stillman, 2011). While a program may have a clear vision for teaching and learning and courses that reinforce that vision, it is also necessary for teacher candidates to have opportunities to learn from working with students in schools. This is important to emphasize since Bandura (1997) made it clear that while vicarious experiences are an essential component of self-efficacy (i.e., hearing and seeing concepts, skills, and strategies), so are mastery experiences where teacher candidates have opportunities to use and enact such concepts, skills, and strategies and are provided feedback and opportunities to reflect and solidify their understanding of them.

In the study presented here, we focus on OTLs that elementary teacher candidates have to work with and learn about students from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds (Sleeter, 2001; 2008). Teacher candidates, especially White teacher candidates, need a plethora of opportunities through both coursework and field experiences working together in tandem to build their knowledge of multiculturalism and multicultural education – or knowledge of students' backgrounds, cultures, language(s), and lived experiences within a pluralistic society (Sleeter, 2001). A single multicultural course is often not sufficient to prepare teachers for a multicultural society (though most programs offer only one course), especially when many White teacher candidates hold longstanding beliefs and stereotypes about culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Philip & Benin, 2014).

There have been few quantitative studies of teaching candidates' opportunities to learn to work with culturally diverse students. In one study, Akiba (2011) drew on data from 234 elementary and secondary teacher candidates at a large Midwestern university to explore how participants' experiences in courses and student teaching were associated with (a) their personal beliefs about equity and diversity and (b) their beliefs about education-related issues such as multicultural education and culturally responsive instruction. The author provided evidence that three aspects of preparation were associated with improvements in candidates' personal and professional beliefs about equity and diversity: (a) perceiving one's educational diversity course as a learning community; (b) having an instructor who modeled culturally responsive and constructivist teaching; and (c) having a field experience where they worked with diverse students and were supported by a cooperating teacher (Akiba, 2011).

In another study, Kuman and Lauermann (2018) examined beliefs about equity and diversity of 2,219 elementary and secondary teacher candidates at a large public university in the Midwest. The authors conducted a cross-sectional study, concentrating on candidates' beliefs at three time points: (a) during an introduction-to-teaching course at the beginning of the preparation program; (b) during a course on schools and society in the middle of the program; and (c) during a student teaching seminar towards the end of the program. In this study, mastery-focused teaching referred to instruction that emphasizes student effort, understanding, growth, and improvement while performance-focused teaching prioritizes comparison and competition. Kuman and Lauermann reported that the greater the number of multicultural education courses taken by teacher candidates, the more likely they were to endorse mastery-focused instruction and the less likely they were to support performance-focused instruction, express discomfort with student diversity, be reluctant to adjust their instruction, or endorse stereotypes.

Program Coherence in Teacher Preparation

Several scholars have argued that teacher preparation programs should be characterized by program coherence (Anderson & Stillman, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Feiman-Nemser et al., 2014; Hammerness & Klette, 2015). Program coherence refers to a clear vision of effective teaching that is (a) communicated across multiple courses, (b) addressed in consistent ways between courses and field experiences, and (c) reinforced by the criteria used to evaluate teacher candidates. Researchers have described consequences for candidates when their programs are characterized by high levels of coherence. For example, Hammerness and Klette (2015) examined the experiences of 412 secondary teaching candidates at preparation programs in the U.S., Norway, Cuba, and Chile. In all four sites, most candidates reported that their programs communicated clear messages about teaching, their courses helped them learn about their program's vision, and they had opportunities to practice instructional strategies that they learned in their courses. These researchers emphasized that preparation programs with a clear vision and a high degree of coherence indeed provided important OTL.

Similarly, Kennedy (1998) investigated how elementary candidates in six U.S. programs learned to teach writing. She found that when programs provided consistent messages about teaching writing across courses and clinical placements, they had a stronger impact on candidate learning and appropriation of strategies emphasized in the programs. Finally, Feiman-Nemser et al. (2014) explore three mission-oriented teacher education programs. They reported that the programs' visions of effective teaching were closely aligned with program structures; candidates' opportunities to learn, try out, and receive feedback on instructional strategies; and how candidates were assessed during clinical placements. In addition, a number of years after

graduation, program graduates' instructional practices reflected their programs' visions (Feiman-Nemser et al., 2014).

Researchers have examined different ways that specific preparation programs prepare teacher candidates to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students and communities. For example, Zygmunt and Clark (2016) documented the elementary preparation program at Ball State University and its explicit focus on developing candidates' cultural competence by drawing expertise from community cultural wealth and helping teaching candidates learn the central tenets of culturally relevant or responsive teaching through community-engaged experiences. The authors reported that teacher candidates had more self-efficacy to enact these skills than those who attended a preparation program that did not have an explicit focus. Matsko and Hammerness (2014) studied University of Chicago's Urban Teacher Preparation Program (which focused on preparing teachers to teach in Chicago schools); they reported that graduates of this program enacted culturally responsive practices that their program emphasized.

In summary, this literature review indicates that self-efficacy is an important construct to measure one's confidence to enact specific skills and practices and studies have shown that there are clear associations between efficacy and instructional practice. Further, studies have also found that program coherence and opportunities to learn are important constructs that affect one's pedagogical beliefs and frameworks and the skills and strategies that are required to enact specific instructional practices. This echo's Bandura's (1997) argument that different sources can enable stronger self-efficacy beliefs – particularly enactive mastery and vicarious experiences. These sources for self-efficacy seem strongly connected to the research literature pertaining to how teachers should be prepared to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Sleeter, 2001; 2008). However, what remains unclear is how OTL and program coherence may

be associated with teacher candidates' self-efficacy, especially their efficacy toward culturally responsive teaching (CRTSE). In the next section, we draw from this literature to explain our conceptual framework that we used to inform our study.

Conceptual Framework

Our conceptual framework posited that the nature of teacher candidates' opportunities to learn about instructional practices of culturally and linguistically diverse students within a multicultural society and their perceptions of overall program coherence were likely to be associated with higher levels of self-efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching (CRTSE). Specifically, teacher candidates need opportunities to learn that are well-mediated and frequent throughout their preparation. Further, these opportunities to learn need to be consistent across all parts of teacher candidates' preparation and aligned to courses and the overall program's mission and vision which make the program coherent. As mentioned above, Bandura (1997) has identified different sources that affect one's self-efficacy. Two of these sources include vicarious experiences and enactive mastery experiences. Vicarious experiences are opportunities for teacher candidates to see a task/skill modeled and to compare themselves to that model whereas mastery experiences allow them to practice enacting the task/skill. With regard to culturally responsive teaching, candidates need to both learn about the skills and tools of culturally responsive teaching and have opportunities to learn and enact such skills through classroom practice. In addition, our framework contends that having a strong disposition for multiculturalism and knowledge of many cultures in a pluralistic society are foundational elements of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002; Paris, 2012). Thus, measuring candidates' attitudes and beliefs (Ponterotito et al., 1998) toward diversity and multiculturalism is important.

Three initial hypotheses guided our study. Drawing from the literature stated above, we first hypothesized that having relatively more OTL by working with students from different cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds would be associated with higher levels of CRTSE. Second, we hypothesized that perceiving higher levels of overall preparation program coherence would be associated with higher levels of CRTSE. Finally, we hypothesized that perceived program coherence would mediate the association between OTL working with culturally and linguistically diverse students and CRTSE.

Data and Methods

Sample

This study was part of a larger project, the Elementary Teacher Preparation Project (ETPP; a pseudonym). For this analysis, we focused on elementary candidates (n = 102 candidates) from Oriole University (a pseudonym), who completed their preservice preparation and earned teaching certificates in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Originally, we had 103 candidates in our sample, but one teacher candidate was removed from the analysis due to missing data. Descriptive characteristics for our sample can be found in Table 1 (see Appendix) along with descriptive CRTSE data in Table 2 (see Appendix).

Oriole is a large research university located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. At the time of the study, the Oriole program had two pathways for elementary teacher candidates – a joint undergraduate Bachelor of Arts/Master of Teaching (BAMT) degree and a two year post graduate Master of Teaching (PGMT) degree. Both pathways had a similar structure in terms of courses taken and student teaching experiences. For clinical experiences, these teacher candidates had different experiences prior to student teaching. For two semesters, elementary candidates worked with a struggling reader – connecting to their reading

development and differentiated reading courses. The candidates then had two additional semesters of practicum experience in two distinct contexts. For example, elementary candidates may have been placed in a primary (K-2) classroom in a more diverse setting for one semester and then in an upper elementary (3-5) classroom in a more homogenous context for the second semester. In practicum placements, teacher candidates would visit their respective school sites once a week and observe and assist their cooperating teachers. During their practica, teacher candidates would be observed as they taught two to three lessons by their cooperating teachers and university clinical supervisors. After these practicum experiences and completing coursework, teacher candidates at the end of their program would then engage in a 15-week student teaching assignment where they would spend several weeks carrying out instruction as the head teacher.

In terms of coursework, the teacher candidates also took three content-specific methods courses for reading, and one each for mathematics, science, and social studies/history. The teacher candidates also took one course that focused on educational contexts and addressed past and contemporary educational issues. Also, the candidates took a course about exceptional learners. While other courses addressed some topics pertaining to social justice, culturally responsive teaching, and equity, a review of course syllabi indicated that these topics were scattered across different courses. The program director indicated that the focus and goal of this program was to prepare teachers to utilize research-based practices that had been identified as effective teaching practices.

We selected this program for two reasons that were of theoretical interest. The first is that most of the teacher candidates in each yearly group were White and female and, thus, representative of typical demographics of teacher preparation programs and the teacher

workforce (Riser-Kositsky, 2020; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). Second, this program emphasized preparing teachers to use research-based practices that were identified as effective teaching practices to meet all students' educational needs and help address past and current educational problems. This program provided opportunities for teacher candidates to learn about historical inequities and contemporary issues in U.S. education. One course in the program focused explicitly on this topic; in other cases, these topics were addressed in content-specific methods courses (e.g., mathematics methods, reading methods). In addition, the program also taught candidates about culturally responsive teaching.

In a year-long general methods course, teacher candidates in this program learned about lesson planning and assessment in the first semester. In this course, candidates learned about research on and the value of culturally responsive teaching. In the second semester, the general methods course focused on behavior management and building a classroom community – connections to culturally responsive teaching was also addressed. Finally, in the program's methods courses, teacher candidates learned how to connect content meaningfully to students' cultures and lives; this was especially emphasized in their mathematics methods course.

Alongside providing opportunities to learn about culturally responsive teaching for teacher candidates, instructors in this program also worked collaboratively to promote program coherence. Program faculty met once a month to discuss what they had worked on with candidates. They also fostered coherence by creating alignment across courses. For example, teacher candidates first learned how children learn how to read in their reading development course and later learned how to differentiate reading instruction in a subsequent course. The program studied here was suitable for this analysis because program faculty actively promoted program coherence and provided ample opportunities to learn to work in different classroom

settings. Given that some programs to provide adequate opportunities to learn and maintain program coherence, it was important in this study to examine how candidates' learning opportunities and perceptions of overall program coherence may have been associated with their CRTSE.

Measures

For our independent variables, we drew on the elementary teacher candidate survey from the ETPP to measure candidates' perceived opportunities to learn (OTL) about working with students from different cultural and/or linguistic backgrounds in courses and field experience and their perceptions of program coherence. The survey items were presented in a four-point Likert-scale format where candidates indicated "none," "touched on it briefly," "spent time discussing or doing it," or "extensive opportunity." We used five items from the ETPP survey that attended specifically to OTL about working with students from various backgrounds (e.g., "How much opportunity did you have to instruct racially/ethnically diverse students?" and "How much opportunity did you have to gain knowledge about the communities of the students you are likely to teach?"). In addition, we used five items focused on candidates' perceptions of the degree to which their program was coherent (e.g., "I hear similar views about teaching and learning across courses" and "What I learn in methods reflects what I observe in my field experiences or in my own classroom") – Figures 1 and 2 (see Appendix) provide the complete list of these survey items.

Scores were produced by taking the within-person mean of the item responses for each construct (one score for OTL and one for program coherence). Please note that we did not examine what *types* of OTL these candidates had and instead focused on their perceptions of the OTL they had in regard to learning about/from and working with culturally and linguistically

diverse students. To ensure these items were accurately measuring the constructs of interest in this study, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis and required items to have a standardized loading of 0.4 or greater to be included in the analyses (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988). All loadings were 0.5 or greater for both OTL items and program coherence with an average loading of 0.7 for OTL and 0.52 for program coherence items indicating acceptable loadings. Finally, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for (a) the five items pertaining to OTL was .81 and (b) the five items pertaining to program coherence was .73.

For our dependent variables, we used the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy (CRTSE) scale, which is a Likert-type scale, developed by Siwatu (2007). The CRTSE scale was used to capture elementary teacher candidates' self-efficacy with regard to CRT in four areas: curriculum and instruction, classroom management, student assessment, and cultural enrichment. Participants rated themselves from a scale of 0 to 100 where 0 represents no confidence and 100 represents complete confidence. Siwatu (2007) noted that a 0 to 100 format is psychometrically stronger and will lead to greater discrimination than traditional Likert scales that are typically narrower. This preparation program annually gathers CRTSE data for each group and uses 19 of the 41 CRTSE survey items to measure elementary teaching candidates' self-efficacy regarding culturally responsive teaching. This means items that focused on generalized teaching practices from the original scale were not included in this analysis. Moreover, through confirmatory factor analysis, we found the 19 items were sufficient to obtain a valid, reliable measure of candidates' CRTSE with a reported alpha reliability coefficient of .95.

In our main model, we also used multiple variables as covariates. One of these covariates was the Teacher Multicultural Attitudes Survey (TMAS), which measures teachers' multicultural awareness and sensitivity (Ponterotito et al., 1998). Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale

that ranged from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 5 “Strongly Agree.” Items were summed to create a composite score. However, while some items captured positive attitudes toward multiculturalism (e.g., “I find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding”), other items were reverse scored because they reflected adverse attitudes toward multiculturalism (e.g., “It is not the teacher’s responsibility to encourage pride in one’s culture”). Thus, a higher TMAS score indicates more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism. We also used undergraduate GPA as a measure of teaching candidates’ general academic performance because this was the most recent measure of such skills in our dataset.

Analytic Strategies

Given the exploratory nature of this study in elucidating associations among perceived opportunities to learn, perceived program coherence, and culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy, initial analysis began with generating an overall correlation table (see Table 3 in the Appendix) including the variables of interest: CRTSE, OTL, program coherence, attitudes towards multiculturalism (TMAS), undergraduate GPA, and teaching candidates’ race.

Path analysis from structural equation modeling further allowed us to examine the potential mediating role of program coherence between opportunities to learn and culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy. See Figure 3 in the Appendix for a diagram of the path model used in this analysis. STATA 17.0/SE was used to conduct a path analysis using program coherence as a mediating variable between OTL and CRTSE. Robustness checks with structural equation modeling, whereby a measurement model based on the initial confirmatory factor analyses was used for each construct and mediation was tested via the structural model, were employed to ensure results remained significant when not using sum scores, which have known limitations (McNeish & Wolf, 2020).

As shown in Figure 3 of the path diagram, CRTSE is the outcome variable for *self-efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching* for a given elementary teacher candidate. OTL represents the predictor variable *perceived opportunities to learn in courses and student teaching* for a given teacher candidate. Program Coherence represents the predictor variable for *perceived preparation program coherence* for a given teacher candidate. The covariates in our study included attitudes toward multiculturalism (TMAS) and undergraduate GPA; they were not included in the path diagram but were included in the overall structural equation model. The diagram in Figure 3 captures the direct and indirect association of OTL and CRTSE through program coherence and the direct associations OTL and CRTSE. All reported regression coefficients are in unstandardized form (b).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 indicates that this program is consistent with extant teacher education literature concerning the demographics of our sample which is predominately White (79.4%) and female (94.1%). When examining Table 2, in terms of the 19 items used to measure candidates' CRTSE, the 102 candidates had a mean of 76.5 with a standard deviation of 13.01. Siwatu (2007) states that a higher CRTSE score indicates more self-efficacy while a lower CRTSE score indicates less efficacy. Drawing from other studies above that have used the CRTSE with a scale ranging from 0 to 100, a score of 80 or higher would be considered high efficacy, a score of 60 to 79 would be a moderate level of efficacy, and a score of 59 or below would be a lower level of efficacy (Siwatu, 2007). The candidates in this study averaged a moderate to moderate-high level of self-efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching.

Initial Correlation Exploration

Exploration of correlations between our key variables of interest and other potential covariates yielded the results found in Table 3 in the Appendix. Program coherence was found to be significantly correlated with CRTSE ($r = .21$, $p < .05$), and OTL was found to be significantly correlated with program coherence ($r = .32$, $p < .001$). The TMAS had no significant correlations with CRTSE or any other variables of interest. While undergraduate GPA scores and teaching candidate race were not correlated with any variables of theoretical interest, undergraduate GPA and race were retained for the path analysis to include a recent measure of candidates' general academic skills while also accounting for their race.

Structural Equation Modeling and Path Diagram

Overall results from structural equation modeling revealed that OTL was not directly associated with CRTSE ($b = -1.9$, $p = .32$). This finding goes against our first hypothesis in which we hypothesized that increase perception of OTL would be associated with one's CRTSE. In addition, we did find a statistically significant association between program coherence and CRTSE ($b = 7.4$, $p = .01$); thus, we reject the null hypothesis for our second hypothesis. Regarding our covariates, as shown in Figure 4 (which shows findings from our structural equation model), there were no statistically significant associations between CRTSE and TMAS ($b = -.49$, $p = .74$), undergraduate GPA ($b = -5.9$, $p = .11$), or race ($b = .63$, $p = .42$). While OTL was not associated with CRTSE at a statistically significant level, OTL was associated with program coherence ($b = .31$, $p = .01$). These findings through structural equation modeling informed our latent variable path analysis of program coherence, OTL, and CRTSE.

Our path diagram (see Figure 3 in the Appendix) includes the direct association between program coherence and CRTSE, which increased by 6.8 units for every one-unit increase in perceived program coherence, after accounting for the association between OTL and program

coherence. In other words, when a teacher candidate perceives that their program articulates a clear and consistent vision and mission of teaching and learning, there is a significant and meaningful increase in their self-efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching. This finding is consistent with other research literature that stresses the importance for having a clear and consistent message about the work of teaching to influence teacher candidate learning (Feiman-Nemser et al., 2014; Hammerness & Klette, 2015).

Further examination of the path analysis revealed an indirect association of OTL and CRTSE. As mentioned, we did not find a direct association between OTL and CRTSE. Instead, we found an indirect association when program coherence mediated the association between OTL and CRTSE ($b = 2.1$, $p = .03$); thus, we rejected the null hypothesis for our third and final hypothesis in this study. The interpretation of these results means that the indirect association between OTL and CRTSE resulted in a 2.1-unit increase in CRTSE for every one-unit increase in OTL when mediated by program coherence. With regard to the total association in this path diagram, there was a .31-unit increase in CRTSE for every one-unit increase in OTL when mediated by program coherence. While this is a small increase in a teaching candidate's CRTSE when OTL was mediated by program coherence, it was statistically significant. It seems here that OTL reinforces program coherence and program coherence may also reinforce OTL. This finding makes sense because a program with a clear vision would possibly provide OTL for teaching candidates while OTL may reinforce one's perception of their program's vision and mission. If a program lacks adequate program coherence, then more opportunities to learn may not result in higher levels of CRTSE.

Model Fit

Several factors point to an acceptable model fit with the data and support the use of a path model to assess the mediating role of program coherence between OTL and CRTSE. First, we used the standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) with the criteria <.08 as a good fit, between .08 and .10 as an acceptable fit, and >.10 as a poor fit. Our SRMR was just slightly outside of the acceptable range at 0.101. Further, for the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) we used the criteria of between <.05 as good, between .05 and .08 as acceptable, and .08 and above as marginal. Our reported RMSEA was just slightly in the marginal category at .088. Lastly, our Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was reported at .7 in which .9 and above is a considered a good fit. Despite being on the margins for a good or acceptable fit, with only two observed variables in our model (race and undergraduate GPA) and a small sample size (n = 102), this can affect our fit indices. Shi et al. (2018) state that correctly specified models with a small sample can produce CFIs averaging between .611 to .972. In addition, these scholars also state that increasing the number of observed variables could also improve RMSEA – our study only had two variables. Thus, our model could see improvements in these statistics if we were to include more observed variables and increase our sample size (we discuss this last point further in our limitations section).

Discussion

Summary of Findings

Findings from this study indicate the importance of program coherence in teacher preparation, especially in terms of the preparation of teacher candidates for culturally responsive teaching. As defined here, program coherence includes having a clear vision and mission for teaching and learning that cuts across all sections of teacher preparation (Feiman-Nemser et al., 2014; Hammerness & Klette, 2015). Teacher candidates need programs that don't merely discuss

asset-based pedagogies in isolation, whether that be in a methods course or a practicum experience; instead, these experiences with culturally responsive teaching need to occur across teacher preparation and reinforce one another in order to meaningfully affect teacher learning (Sleeter, 2001; 2008).

We found in this study that program coherence was indeed a significant predictor of self-efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching (i.e., CRTSE). When teacher candidates perceived their program as having a clear vision and mission in general, then they reported higher levels of self-efficacy with regard to teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Our study indicates that the sources of vicarious experiences (e.g., watching one perform a behavior/task) and verbal persuasion (e.g., feedback on practice) may be at play in regard to CRTSE. Those who perceived higher levels of program coherence may have had experiences where models, practices, and the articulation of practices were consistent through many parts of their preparation experiences.

Perceived program coherence is identified here as an important predictor of CRTSE, but perceived opportunities to learn (OTL) is also an important variable for CRTSE. While OTL was not directly associated with CRTSE, through program coherence OTL had a significant association with candidates' perceived efficacy with regard to culturally responsive teaching practices. We hypothesized that OTL would be directly associated with CRTSE due to OTL's importance as a construct in teacher preparation (Schmidt et al., 2011). Further, Bandura (1997) has stressed the importance of not just watching or hearing a model or practice, but also having opportunities to enact the practice through mastery experiences. In this study, OTL was significantly associated with program coherence and program coherence was significantly associated with CRTSE. Our path analysis model (see Figure 3 in the Appendix) shows this

indirect association between OTL and CRTSE. While this finding was not consistent with our hypothesis, OTL could be understood here to reinforce one's perception of program coherence. This assertion makes sense because as one reports having more OTL to work with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, this may reinforce the consistent message a program may have and thus cut across multiple sectors of teacher preparation.

We note that OTL still may be significantly associated with CRTSE, but this is contingent upon the nature of the preparation program itself and where teacher candidates are placed in schools for their practicum and internship placements. In our study, teacher candidates were located in various schools that differed with regard to student demographics and curriculum, and they had different experiences within these schools. Some candidates may have likely taught in schools that focused on asset-based pedagogies and culturally responsive teaching, while other schools were likely less consistent in this work. This is important to recognize because the research literature has demonstrated the importance of instructional program coherence at the K-12 level (Newmann et al., 2001) and its effect on teacher learning and academic achievement for students. If a student teaching placement school's focus is not well-aligned with that of a given preparation program, then OTL may be limited for teacher candidates and may infringe upon teacher learning (Anderson & Stillman, 2011; McDonald, 2005; Siwatu, 2011). This is not to say that teacher candidates cannot learn in settings that don't reinforce messages from their teacher preparation. But extant research has clearly demonstrated the perennial challenge of this divide between preparation programs and schools and the urgent need to build coherence throughout preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, 2006). This is especially true if teacher preparation programs are truly serious about preparing socially just and culturally responsive teachers (Sleeter, 2001; 2008; Zeichner, 2016).

Implications

There are multiple implications from this study for teacher educators and researchers of teacher education. For teacher educators, this study reemphasizes the importance of both OTL and program coherence as important constructs for teacher preparation. While these are two separate constructs, it can be argued here that they are often two sides of the same coin and can reinforce one another. OTL across teacher preparation can reinforce a clear vision and mission within a preparation program and vice versa. With that said, there are certain actions that teacher preparation programs could take to provide a plethora of OTL and as well as a clear and consistent message of culturally responsive teaching. Here we outline these implications below.

Developing Coherence in Teacher Preparation

In this study, we found that elementary teacher candidates who perceived higher levels of program coherence also reported higher levels of CRTSE compared to those who perceived lower levels of program coherence. It's important to note that candidates in this study took many of the same courses together, but they were not part of a cohort model; as a result, they did not take all of the same courses together. It could be that some candidates experienced a common vision of effective teaching across courses and between courses and field experiences while others did not. This means that even if a program has a clear vision and it is clearly articulated to candidates, not every candidate will interpret this vision in the same manner (Cohen & Berlin, 2020). This could mean that programs need to find opportunities both within and across courses to assess whether their candidates are making connections to the larger framework/vision advocated by that program. Furthermore, preparation programs could explain why certain topics, assignments, and field experiences are utilized and how they fit within the program's framework for teaching and learning. More research is needed to understand how to build coherence, but it

is clear that when candidates understand their program's vision and messages about teaching and learning, it seems to impact their self-efficacy related to culturally responsive teaching in a positive manner.

Providing Opportunities to Learn to Build Self-Efficacy

While OTL was not directly associated with CRTSE in this study, it was directly associated with perceptions of program coherence and indirectly associated with CRTSE through the mediation of program coherence. Preparation programs may provide OTL for teacher candidates, but it may not be as fruitful for teacher learning when the OTL do not reinforce the vision and mission of the program. Candidates who felt the program was coherent also felt they had OTL pertaining to working with culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse students. As mentioned above, candidates in our study may have had similar courses but different perceptions of their experiences in these courses. Similar to the implication above, preparation programs could gauge which OTL seem to be the most fruitful for their candidates' learning and how these OTL reflect the program's vision and coherence. From our study, it seems that programs need to continuously check whether their candidates are engaged in learning and their self-efficacy is increasing with regard to certain instructional practices emphasized by the program. We don't intend these implications to be prescriptive, but as suggestions to help ensure all candidates in a program develop ideas and beliefs about teaching practices and have OTL that will build their self-efficacy.

Limitations

There are a few limitations in this study that need to be acknowledged along with new suggestions for lines of research that are needed in this area. One limitation is the small sample size. While we had just over 100 teacher candidates from two different years when they

completed their preparation, our analyses could be strengthened if we were to include a larger sample for more statistical power. Drawing from a larger sample would enable us to ensure the reliability of these findings on a larger scale. Further, we may see improvements in our fit statistics when we include a larger sample and possibly add more observed variables to our model. This could be achieved if these models were implemented across multiple teacher preparation programs to generate a larger sample size; this leads to our second limitation.

Another limitation from this study was not only our sample size, but the fact that our sample came from one teacher preparation program. Having multiple teacher preparation programs, as mentioned above, would increase the sample size but also would allow researchers to examine variation across different programs. This would enable comparisons between different programs that may have different *visions and missions* (i.e., program coherence) and different OTL based on practicum and internship structures. The program examined in our study emphasizes preparing teachers to support all learners and take on current challenges in education, but other programs are much more explicit in terms of addressing social justice, multiculturalism, and culturally responsive teaching (Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Zygmunt et al., 2018). Current debates in teacher education are examining the amount and kinds of field experiences, course work, and OTL that are needed for teacher candidates (Cohen & Berlin, 2020; Lampert et at., 2013; Philip et al., 2019; Zeichner, 2012). By having various programs with different programmatic structures situated in different settings (i.e., urban, suburban, rural), we may see differences in structures and settings that are associated with candidates' self-efficacy.

Lastly, a final limitation identified in this study is that our data draws solely from self-reporting from teaching candidates – this limitation is twofold. First, focusing on OTL, we saw

variation within one program, and this could reflect issues pertaining to self-reported OTL data. The variation could be an indication of candidate characteristics versus programmatic characteristics that could affect OTL data (Cohen & Berlin, 2020). Second, we want to emphasize that we do not use the term *culturally responsive* lightly. Studies have demonstrated discrepancies between what teachers say they do in practice versus how they actually teach (Thompson et al., 2013). Paris (2012) has argued that teachers often misappropriate theories of culturally relevant teaching and have a superficial understanding of culture and practices that are truly indeed not culturally relevant/responsive. Candidates in this study may have believed they know how to implement culturally responsive teaching when in actuality this may not have been the case.

Future research is needed to address this gap through a mixed methods approach. This approach could include gathering CRTSE data and then interviewing candidates to gauge their understanding of culture and culturally responsive teaching. In addition, interviews could help yield what specific aspects of teacher preparation may impact teacher learning, especially in relation to culturally responsive teaching. Our data does not tell us what experiences, courses, and structures may have been sources of candidates' self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Siwatu, 2011). Further, observations of teachers' instruction would be fruitful in assessing the extent to which teachers implement culturally responsive teaching and how it is associated with their self-efficacy. Such a study would be valuable for both self-efficacy research and research on implementing culturally responsive teaching.

Based on these limitations, there are some clear directions for future research. Analyzing multiple teacher preparation programs with different program structures and formats in the same study would address the first and second limitations. This would lead to a larger sample size and

provide opportunities to compare findings across different program structures and program settings, as mentioned above. Another important direction is to utilize mixed methods by incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews and observations. Observations of both classroom instruction and coursework in preparation programs would provide a more robust line of research to examine the relationship between self-efficacy and enactment of instructional practice. Furthermore, with a focus on culturally responsive teaching, such lines of research can continue to help identify structures, program coherence and articulation, and the amount and types of OTL that are needed to create culturally responsive and socially just teachers for U.S. schools.

Conclusion

This study addressed an important gap in the literature by examining how program coherence and OTL are associated with self-efficacy related to culturally responsive teaching (CRTSE). As the U.S. continues to become more culturally and linguistically diverse, it is imperative for teacher preparation programs to continue to strive for clear program objectives that cut across all parts of teacher preparation along with providing a plethora of OTL that are carefully mediated and situated in settings to promote teacher learning. Helping teacher candidates achieve high levels of self-efficacy continues to be an important goal for teacher preparation programs. Teachers with high self-efficacy may be more likely to enact specific instructional practices, may be more effective at promoting student achievement, and may be more equipped to enact culturally responsive teaching practices than those with lower self-efficacy. However, there needs to be more research that examines how CRTSE is associated with implementing culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. Preparing teachers to develop the dispositions and skills for culturally responsive teaching and building their self-efficacy may

make an important difference for racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students in U.S. schools.

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Appendix

Table 1.

Demographic and Descriptive Characteristics of the Analytic Sample

Characteristic		Sample	
		n	%
Gender			
	Female	96	94.1
	Male	5	4.9
	Other	1	0.9
Race			
	White	81	79.4
	Asian	16	14.7
	Black	4	3.9
	Hispanic	1	0.9

Table 2.
CRTSE Items and Average Score and Standard Deviation

I am able to:	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
5. identify ways that the school culture (e.g., values, norms, and practices) is different from my students' home culture.	79.42	13.88	40	100
6. implement strategies to minimize the effects of the mismatch between my students' home culture and the school culture.	71.78	16.60	20	99
12. develop a community of learners when my class consists of students from diverse backgrounds.	80.92	14.93	30	100
13. use my students' cultural background to help make learning meaningful.	78.7	15.81	20	100
15. identify ways how students communicate at home may differ from the school norms.	78.26	13.56	40	100
16. obtain information about my students' cultural background.	79.32	14.43	30	100
17. teach students about their cultures' contributions to science.	68.22	22.98	10	100
22. praise English Language Learners for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.	68.50	27.37	0	100
23. identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards linguistically diverse students.	79.82	17.18	20	100
24. communicate with parents regarding their child's educational progress.	80.00	15.86	25	100
25. structure parent-teacher conferences so that the meeting is not intimidating for parents.	77.54	18.27	0	100
27. revise instructional material to include a better representation of cultural groups.	76.02	16.49	30	100
28. critically examine the curriculum to determine whether it reinforces negative cultural stereotypes.	77.83	15.36	20	100
30. model classroom tasks to enhance English Language Learner's understanding.	77.85	16.90	10	100

31. communicate with the parents of English Language Learners regarding their child's achievement.	66.90	21.24	0	100
33. identify ways that standardized tests may be biased towards culturally diverse students.	79.10	15.18	30	100
35. use examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds.	72.91	18.71	9	100
36. explain new concepts using examples that are taken from my students' everyday lives.	83.82	11.03	50	100
41. teach students about their cultures' contributions to society.	76.61	18.78	10	100
Mean CRTSE Score	76.50	13.01	33.68	99

Note. Numbered items are from the original CRTSE

Table 3.
Correlation Coefficients Between Variables

	CRTSE	Prog Coh	OTL	TMAS	UG GPA	Race
CRTSE	1					
Prog Coh	0.21*	1				
OTL	0.04	0.32***	1			
TMAS	0.00	0.13	0.13	1		
UG GPA	-0.12	0.14	0.11	-0.08	1	
Race	0.02	-0.01	0.08	0.06	0.17	1

*p < .05
***p< .001

Figure 1.

Survey Items for OTL

How much opportunity did you have to do each of the following in your preparation program?

Darken one circle on each line	None	Touched on it briefly	Spent time discussing or doing it	Extensive opportunity
Instruction for Racially/Ethnically Diverse Students	○	○	○	○
Instruction for Linguistically Diverse Students	○	○	○	○
Instruction for Socio-Economically Diverse Students	○	○	○	○
Gain knowledge about the communities of the students you are	○	○	○	○
Consider the relationship between education and equity	○	○	○	○

Figure 2.

Survey Items for Program Coherence

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your preparation program?

Darken one circle on each line	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My program articulates a clear vision of teaching and learning	○	○	○	○
I hear similar views about teaching and learning across courses	○	○	○	○
What I learn in methods courses reflects what I observe in my field experiences or in my own classroom	○	○	○	○
I have gotten to know the other students in my program well	○	○	○	○
I feel part of a larger group of people who all share common values with respect to teaching	○	○	○	○

Figure 3.
Latent Variable Path Model Diagram Used in Analysis

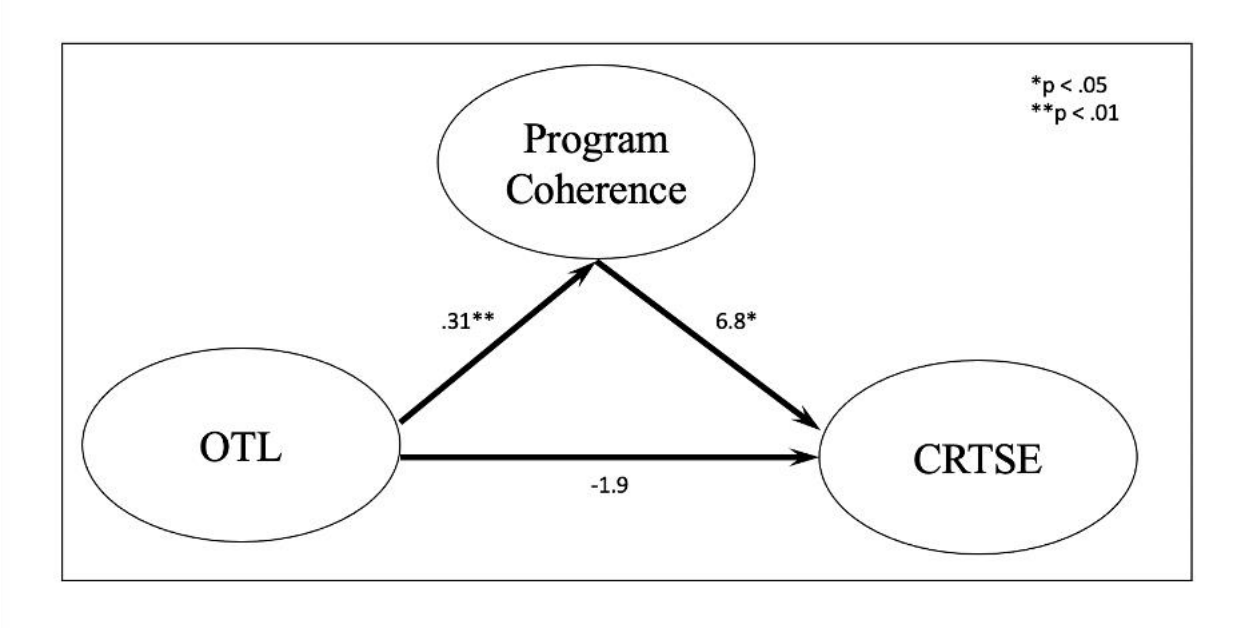
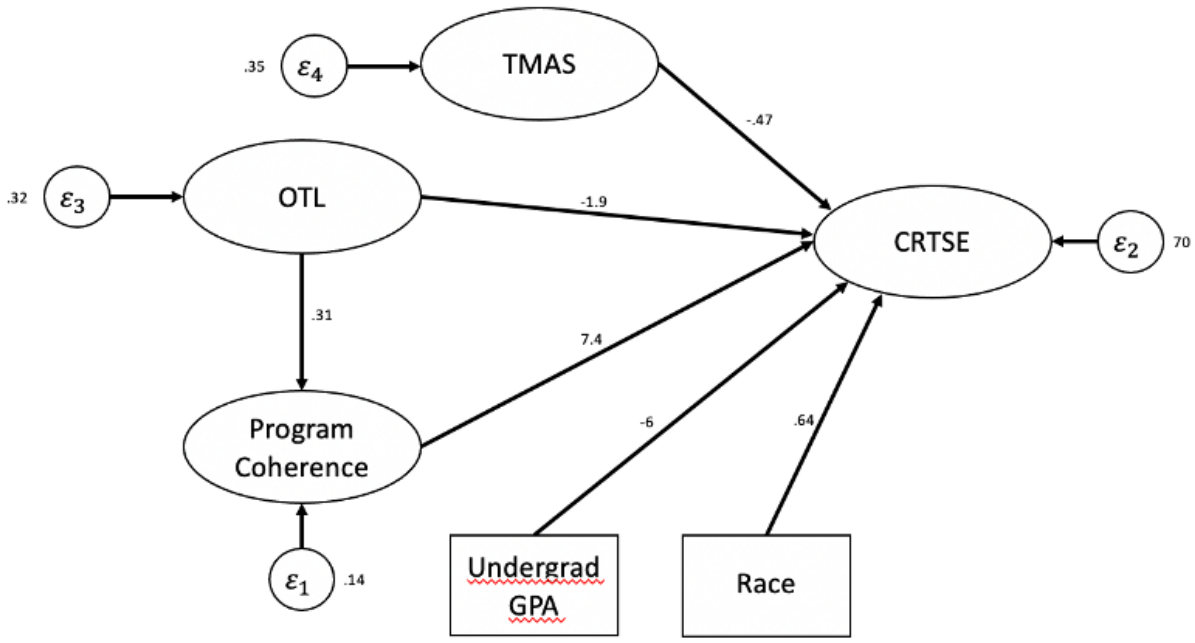


Figure 4.
Findings from Structural Equation Model*



*This figure illustrates statistical findings in the context of the latent variable path model diagram, demonstrating the association of OTL and CRTSE operating through program coherence

Moving Beyond Teacher Preparation: Examining the Pedagogical Beliefs and Practices of Community-Engaged Elementary Graduates

Jacob Elmore, Eva Zygmunt, Kristin Cipollone, and Victoria Kim

Abstract

Recent scholarship on community-engaged teacher preparation has shown the potential to prepare teacher candidates for the complexities of culturally responsive instruction. However, this scholarship has predominately focused on teacher candidates' learning and development during their preparation and not after when they graduate and become classroom teachers. Our qualitative study examined the pedagogical beliefs and instructional practices of five novice elementary teachers who were graduates from a community-engaged teacher preparation program in the Midwest. Using activity theory, we found that these community-engaged teachers varied in their instructional practices and appropriation of tool use based on the intersection of their identities/backgrounds and the messages and expectations they received in their school settings. We grouped teachers into one of three distinct cases to explain differences and used cross-case analysis to explain similarities for all five teachers. From this study, we provide implications for both teacher preparation programs and K-12 schools with the focus toward preparing and maintaining community-engaged, culturally responsive teachers.

Despite many researchers advocating for teachers to develop the knowledge and skills needed to learn about their students' backgrounds, cultures, and communities and to use such understandings to teach in culturally responsive ways, many teacher preparation programs lack the means to help their teacher candidates acquire such knowledge and skills (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Zeichner, 2016; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). There are multiple reasons for why this is the case. One is the pointed debate within and outside of teacher education about how to prepare teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Philip et al., 2019; Zeichner & Peña-Sandoval, 2015). Another is that it has been unclear what experiences and structures will help teacher candidates to develop such knowledge and skills (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). Recognizing these challenges, several programs have utilized community-engaged efforts where teacher candidates are situated in communities and third space settings and work alongside community mentors to learn about community cultural wealth and see children outside of school contexts in order to learn to teach in culturally responsive ways (McDonald et al., 2011; Zeichner et al., 2016; Zygmunt et al., 2018).

Recent studies of these programs report several favorable findings on their possible effects on teacher learning. These include findings that teacher candidates in such programs often begin to develop knowledge of community cultural wealth and learn about their students and families outside the school context (McDonald et al., 2011; 2013). Other studies have found that graduates of these programs adopted the dispositions advocated by their programs and incorporated what they have learned in their classroom practice (Zeichner et al., 2016; Zygmunt et al., 2018). While these studies share some favorable findings, these findings rely heavily on what these teachers *say* about their practice versus what they *do* in their practice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). Zygmunt and colleagues (2018) recognized this crucial gap in the field and

provided a clear statement for what is needed in future research: "studies that look at how individual teachers navigate new community spaces (outside a structured program such as ours) would significantly contribute to the field" (p. 136).

This study sought to fill this gap. Using a qualitative multiple-embedded case study design, this study followed five elementary graduates from a community-engaged teacher preparation program and examined how such preparation seemed to impact classroom practice. Specifically, we were interested in understanding these teachers' pedagogical beliefs and the sources of their beliefs; the types of instructional practices these teachers enacted in their own classrooms; and how their school settings, and the messages and expectations in those settings, seemed to impact their instructional practice.

Preparing Culturally Responsive and Community-Engaged Teachers

Culturally Responsive Instruction

Educational theorists have long advocated for teachers to adopt the dispositions and learn the skills to enact pedagogies that are asset-based, culturally affirming and sustaining, and grounded in students' languages and backgrounds within a pluralistic society. These theorists recognize that curriculum and instruction in the U.S. has been grounded in a dominant White, Eurocentric culture that has tended to neglect other cultures and perspectives (Banks & Banks, 2006; Muhammad, 2020; Paris, 2012; Sleeter, 2016). This is highly problematic since prior research has demonstrated that children learn academic content more meaningfully when it connected to their cultures, languages, and identities (Au, 1980; Gay, 2002; López, 2017; Rahman, 2021). In addition to connecting academic content to students' backgrounds, these theorists maintain that teachers also need to have a strong cultural critical consciousness where they're reflective of their own identities and experiences within social relationships and

understand how power and inequities perpetuate in societies and in schools (Freire, 1993; Gay & Kirkland, 2003) Further, these teachers utilize reflexivity to modify and adapt curriculum and instruction to support their students' cultural critical consciousness in order for their students to recognize inequities and societal problems, and to act on these issues as members of a democratic society (Dyches & Boyd, 2017; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Granted, there are several terms that theorists have used to conceptualize these types of pedagogies, and these terms are nuanced in particular ways. However, despite some minor differences, they converge on the primacy of integrating children's cultures, identities, and languages into teaching and learning while building their critical consciousness (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2016). In this study, we use the term culturally responsive instruction (CRI) to represent these practices. We draw from Powell and colleagues' (2017) Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) which is a framework for assessing culturally responsive teaching practices. The CRIOP is broken into six holistic elements that constitute culturally responsive instruction: (1) Classroom Relationships; (2) Family Collaboration; (3) Assessment Practices; (4) Instructional Practices; (5) Discourse; and (6) Critical Consciousness. These six holistic elements encompass and operationalize the broad range of effective practices and dimensions that are identified as culturally responsive. Powell and colleagues (2016) neatly summarize that culturally responsive teachers need to be

> using students' home languages, experiences, and frames of reference in instruction, engaging students in peer collaboration and instructional conversations, using strategies to enhance academic language acquisition, and encouraging students to be change agents within a larger socio/linguistic community (both within and outside the classroom) … It

is also essential that teachers learn from students and their families, hold high expectations for all students, and value their cultural and linguistic knowledge (p. 10).

Despite the wide recognition of CRI, it has remained a perennial issue to prepare teachers to develop the dispositions, skills, and to enact practices that are culturally responsive. In this next section, we review efforts that teacher preparation programs have taken to prepare their teachers for CRI.

Community-Engaged Teacher Preparation

Many scholars argue that teacher preparation programs need to be significantly restructured to adequately prepare teacher candidates to adopt the dispositions and to enact the complex practices of CRI (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Zeichner, 2016). These scholars recognize the shortcomings of past efforts from preparation programs that have tried to take on this complex work. For example, many programs early on tried adding a multicultural course to their curricula where teacher candidates were given an opportunity to learn about diversity and multiculturalism. While well-intentioned, these multicultural courses were often ephemeral and teacher candidates did not demonstrate significant learning, especially after the course ended (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Other efforts included having practicum and student teaching experiences where teacher candidates had opportunities to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. While this appears to be a step further than an isolated multicultural course, these experiences were usually not well-mediated and often led to reinforcement of negative stereotypes and deficit views that many teacher candidates already had toward culturally and linguistically diverse students (Anderson & Stillman, 2011; Gallego, 2001; Zygmunt et al., 2018). To further complicate matters; most teacher educators who prepare teacher candidates are also White, female, and monolingual themselves and have had limited experiences teaching

culturally and linguistically diverse students. Goodwin and colleagues (2016) studied teacher educators and found that many did not feel adequately prepared to teach multicultural courses and prepare teacher candidates to work in culturally diverse spaces. Despite being ineffectual, and even possibly counterproductive, many teacher preparation programs to this day are still structured in these ways as they prepare their teachers to work with culturally diverse children (Zeichner, 2016).

Recognizing these shortcomings in teacher preparation programs, many scholars have called for a new form of teacher preparation that adequately prepares teacher candidates for CRI and makes teacher preparation a democratic endeavor (Haddix, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2017; Murrell, 2000; Sleeter, 2001; Zeichner, 2010; Zeichner et al., 2015; Zygmunt & Clark, 2016). While scholars use different terms such as *community-based* or *community-engaged* or others, these constructs converge on similar structures and goals in teacher preparation including working in solidarity with culturally and linguistically diverse communities to prepare teachers for CRI (Guillén & Zeichner, 2018; Zeichner et al., 2016; Zygmunt et al., 2018). These types of programs attempt to feature well-mediated experiences where teacher candidates are situated in culturally diverse communities and are assigned community mentors, liaisons, or ambassadors to help them navigate and learn about the culture of these communities and to develop the skills of how to navigate new culturally diverse spaces in the future. These mentors often help teacher candidates learn their students and families' "funds of knowledge" and learn about community "cultural wealth" to become culturally responsive teachers (González et al., 2005; Yosso, 2005). Further, these programs also try to provide opportunities for candidates to develop the skills, methods, and dispositions to enact CRI in their practice. In this study, we interviewed and observed elementary graduates from a

community-engaged program and use this term to conceptualize programs that utilize the practices above to prepare their teacher candidates.

While community-engaged efforts have historically been conceptualized and recognized in teacher education research (Cuban, 1969; Flowers et al. 1948; Zeichner et al., 2016), we highlight some of the most recent studies and practices of preparing teachers through community-engaged efforts. In their study of a community-based program, McDonald and colleagues (2011) found that many teacher candidates' beliefs about culturally and linguistically diverse students became more asset-oriented when working with diverse youth for over a 10-week period for 60 hours total through a community-based organization. Courses in this program had assignments that required teacher candidates to connect to their community-based experiences through self-reflection while learning about specific pedagogical practices. In another study, Zeichner et al. (2016) found that engaging community mentors through equity-oriented discussions with teacher candidates, leading teacher candidates on neighborhood walks, and having faculty connect these experiences to coursework provided many teacher candidates ample opportunities to learn and develop skills to work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. In follow-up interviews with these graduates as classroom teachers, Zeichner and colleagues reported that several of these teachers claimed to have developed the dispositions and skills to effectively work with culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. More recently, Zygmunt and colleagues (2018) studied a similarly structured program in which teacher candidates worked alongside community mentors in community spaces (e.g., community centers and church services), discussed sociopolitical issues (e.g., racism, opportunity gaps, etc.), and completed courses with assignments that helped them connect these experiences to pedagogy. Zygmunt and colleagues also found some evidence that these teacher candidates

reported to engage in culturally responsive practices during their student teaching placements. To note, these studies did report challenges like varying opportunities to learn based on placement (McDonald et al., 2013), tensions between teacher candidates and educators and community mentors (Guillén & Zeichner, 2018), and creating coherence across a large teacher preparation program (Zygmunt & Clark, 2016).

While these studies point to positive directions in teachers' knowledge of culturally responsive instruction and utilizing community expertise, it remains unclear how these practices transfer over into classroom practice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Zygmunt et al., 2018). These studies have predominately focused on teacher candidates' experiences during their preparation and have largely drawn from interview and other self-reported data which is problematic. Cochran-Smith and colleagues (2015) have reviewed the landscape of teacher preparation and highlighted the importance of this gap that needs to be addressed in the literature:

> There were many studies that examined whether and how teacher preparation influenced teacher candidates' beliefs, attitudes, and understandings. There were far fewer studies that investigated how preparation influenced candidates' practice… It was not so clear in this research whether and how teacher candidates' beliefs and understandings enabled them to navigate the complex tasks of teaching increasingly diverse populations in the face of strong accountability pressures. We need more research that goes beyond assuming that changing teacher candidates' beliefs necessarily leads to different behaviors and actions in their classrooms. (p. 117)

In our study, we sought to address this gap by addressing and answering the following research questions:

1. What types of instructional practices do community-engaged graduates enact and to what extent are these practices culturally responsive?
2. How do personal experiences, teacher preparation experiences, and school-based factors seem to affect these community-engaged graduates' enactment of such instruction in their practice?

Theoretical Framework

We theoretically framed this study through sociocultural theory, specifically activity theory to inform our research design and data analysis. Activity theory considers one's identity and characteristics; the settings they are in and the messages and norms within those given settings; and what tools they use to achieve a specific object (goal) – these components together form an activity system (Engeström, 2004; Leont'ev, 1978; Roth & Lee, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). Activity theory has been used in many different fields and professions, like medicine and social work, to understand how individuals work and solve problems while negotiating through different spaces, interests, and tensions (Zeichner et al., 2015). Activity theory is a multidisciplinary approach that attempts to integrate the dichotomies often present in social science research: the individual vs. collective; micro vs. macro; mental vs. material (Engeström, 2004). Other teacher education researchers have used activity and sociocultural theories to understand and explain how teachers' background, preparation experiences, their school setting, and tool use seem to affect their learning and instructional practices (Grossman et al., 1999; Thompson et al., 2013).

The nature of our study was to understand what types of instructional practices elementary community-engaged graduates enacted in their classrooms. Specifically, we were interested in how they appropriated tools in their practice. Tools defined here can be broken into

conceptual and practical. Conceptual tools are ideas and frameworks (e.g., culturally responsive instruction) that are used as heuristics to inform teachers' instructional practice while practical tools are materials and strategies (e.g., textbook; attention-getters). Past research on teacher preparation has shown that often teachers appropriate tools based on their own background, preparation experiences, and expectations in their given setting. For example, Thompson and colleagues (2013) found in their study of beginning secondary science teachers that some misappropriated their practice to say it was ambitious when it was not. Instead, these teachers enacted traditional science teaching practices in response to curricular and collegial expectations in their schools.

We were also interested in how a teacher's identity (their background and beliefs) and the different settings they were in may have influenced their learning and instructional practice. The teachers in this study boundary crossed through different settings during their preparation program (community-engaged program, university classrooms, elementary schools) with each activity system potentially presenting different messages, norms, and expectations about teaching and learning. Settings that present different and competing goals on teaching and learning can be challenging for teachers as they decide how to appropriate culturally responsive instructional practices. However, not every teacher will come to the same decision on how they appropriate such practice which is impacted by their identity, background, and heuristics. Through activity theory, we examined the intersection of these five teachers' identities and backgrounds, their tool use, and the given settings they were in to understand what types of instructional practices they enacted.

Methods

Sampling and Data Collection

Qualitative methods were best suited for this study since we were interested in *what* types of instructional practices these teachers enacted and *how* they enacted them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In our study, we used purposive sampling to select and study five teachers who graduated from an elementary community-engaged program.[1] These five teachers were bounded together since they came from the same community-engaged preparation program and identified as novice teachers who were either their 2nd or 3rd year of full-time teaching (Yin, 2018). In addition, these five teachers were very representative of the teacher workforce: white, mostly female, and monolingual – see Table 1 for specific details. We also interviewed each teacher's principal; one to two families whose children were in the teacher's classroom during the study; and two teacher education faculty from their preparation program. We used this data to both better understand the context of where these teachers were prepared and the schools they taught in as sub-units for analysis for each teacher (case) as part of a multiple-embedded design (Yin, 2018).

Over the course of the 2021-2022 school year, we conducted three interviews with each teacher. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed – each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The first interview was designed to learn about their identity, background, and teacher preparation experiences (research question 1). The second interview was adapted from the CRIOP and examined these teachers' pedagogies and their understanding of culturally responsive instruction (research question 2). The last interview focused on the teachers' school setting and their perceived school's messages and expectations regarding teaching and learning (research question 1). Further, we also used the CRIOP as an observation tool to observe and evaluate their mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) instruction and examine what types of instructional practices these teachers enacted (research

question 2). We conducted three observations in each subject area for a total of six observations for each teacher.[2] Each observation lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour and all observations were video recorded. When appropriate, we also collected worksheets and curriculum materials as units of analysis that the teachers used in their lessons.

Data Analysis, Credibility, Authors' Positionality

In this study, we used provisional codes as first cycle codes to analyze all interview data (Miles et al., 2020). We developed provisional codes (i.e., a priori codes) based on the research literature pertaining to culturally responsive instruction and community-engaged teacher preparation. After we completed first cycle coding, we proceeded to do second-cycle theoretical pattern coding. During this second cycle, we created codes drawing from activity theory that organized our data into theoretical patterns, categories, and themes that we then used to create separate cases and conduct cross-case analysis (Grossman et al., 2000; Yin, 2018). For our observation data, we rated each teacher and assessed the extent to which they enacted CRI. Using the 2nd Edition of the CRIOP (for the complete manual, see Powell et al., 2017), ratings ranged on a 5-point scale where 0 indicates practices were never observed, a 1 means they were rarely observed, 2 indicates they were sometimes observed, 3 means they were often observed, and a 4 indicates that practices were observed consistently. We reviewed each lesson multiple times and rated teachers' practices through each indicator (24 total) within each of the six holistic elements. When there was a score discrepancy between raters, we discussed the discrepancy until an agreement was reached. Scores were averaged across each indicator to provide a comprehensive score for each element for a given observation. We then aggerated the averages across each of the three observations in mathematics and ELA to provide an overall

average score for each holistic element in both subject areas – see Tables 2 and 3. See Table 4 for their family collaboration scores.

It is imperative for qualitative researchers to both utilize practices to ensure credibility and recognize their own identity and positionality. To ensure credibility, we used multiple methods in this study. We specifically triangulated our data by using different data sources (interview, observation, document collection) and different evaluators to analyze and interpret the data, and we analyzed the data through different perspectives (theory triangulation; Yin, 2018). We also conducted member checks with each participant in the study to ensure our interpretations and meaning making were accurate. Further, we recognize that our own identities and background play a significant role in our worldview and epistemologies as education researchers. Our team consists of three White teacher educators where one member is a cis-gender male and the other two are cis-gender females and an undergraduate researcher who identifies as a cis-gender female Asian-America. We view ourselves and our work as allies in trying to achieve the goals of social justice and equity in education. We do not trivialize or take lightly these notions of culturally responsive instruction, community engagement, justice, or equity (Philip et al., 2013). Throughout this study, and in our work, we continuously reflected on our own identities and backgrounds and tried to anticipate challenges that were seen, unseen, and unforeseen through our research as racialized researchers (Milner, 2007).

Context

Before we present our findings, we first provide the context of the semester-long community-engaged program these teachers attended as teacher candidates and the overall university elementary preparation program. Starting with the university, Plainville State University is a moderately large regional public university located in the Midwest. Plainville

enrolls over 20,000 students; most of whom are undergraduates and are predominately White, making up about 85% of student population. The School of Education at Plainville is one of the largest schools at the university with over 3,000 students. The School of Education offers a variety of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Most undergraduate degrees offered are in education with teacher certification in a specific content area. Focusing on the elementary education program, most teacher candidates in this program declare their major by their first year. The program is large with about 500 total elementary teacher candidates. Teacher candidates in this program take a series of concentration-focused courses (e.g., elementary mathematics, literacy) of their choice and practicum where they are situated usually once a week in a local elementary school or in one of the professional development schools partnered with the university. Elementary teacher candidates participate in a practicum every semester through the program except for student teaching during their last semester. The elementary department's mission statement focused on "prepar(ing) culturally responsive, critically conscious educators who are committed to social justice."

Elementary teacher candidates have different paths they can take in their field experiences, with one option being a community-engaged strand – here, we share the context of this strand. Known as Schools and Community (SC) strand, SC is a rigorous, semester-long program that requires teacher candidates to take six courses, spend several hours a week in the community's schools and after school center for their practicum, and partner and learn from a community mentor. There are about 20 teacher candidates in each cohort, most in their 2nd year, and candidates are selected based on their willingness to participate and focus on becoming culturally responsive teachers. The candidates are away from the Plainville campus and do all their coursework and field experience in the Eastside community center. The mentors come from

the Eastside neighborhood, which is predominately an African American community where each teacher candidate is matched with a mentor. Most candidates spend one day a week with their mentor and typically attend family dinners, church services, and community events.

The candidates' courses consist of Educational Psychology, Social Foundations, Literacy Methods, Social Studies Methods, Classroom Management, and an elective known as Advanced Community Engagement. Once a week, the faculty and teacher candidates engage in "courageous conversations" where teacher candidates discuss multicultural issues (e.g., race and racism, LGBTQ+, etc.). Faculty in these courses meet once a week to plan and teach concepts and skills that are thematically driven and reinforce one another. The faculty also design assignments that integrate what is learned across courses and are relevant to the work of the teacher candidates in their practicum placements. Many of the assignments focus on the components of CRI; building a critical consciousness, drawing and using community expertise and cultural wealth, and helping candidates understand their identities and how their identities impact their teaching. Once the semester is over, the teacher candidates return to the larger elementary education program at Plainville to finish the rest of their courses, practica, and student teaching internship.

Findings

In our study of graduates of this community-engaged program, we present our findings in two sections. First, we found similarities among all five of these teachers based on their backgrounds, preparation experiences, and school settings. We present these findings through a cross-case analysis in the first section. In the second section, we present the nuances and differences between these teachers based on their observed instructional practice. We present these differences in three cases using activity theory to explain how the teachers represented

specific cases based on their identity and background, school and community setting, and tool use. We used observation and interview scores from the CRIOP to help us map these cases along with interview data we analyzed. Here, we provide a brief introduction of the three cases. The first case is known as *integrating culturally responsive instruction.* In this case, one teacher in our study, Ms. Apitz, had a robust understanding of CRI as a framework and was able to start applying her understandings through instructional strategies/practices and her use of curriculum materials. She provided opportunities for her students to engage in lessons that were multicultural and built their cultural competence. Ms. Apitz also started to utilize curriculum and instruction as a means for her students to learn about real-world issues. Through the CRIOP, we observed her enact multiple elements of CRI.

The second case is known as *developing culturally responsive instruction*. In this case, Ms. Anderson had a strong understanding of CRI as a framework but was only able to partially enact practices that were culturally responsive. In terms of the CRIOP, Ms. Anderson enacted one to two elements of culturally responsive practices. In the third case known as *beginning to conceptualize culturally responsive instruction*, Mr. Lamb, Ms. Karen, and Ms. Ellis were all still early in developing their understanding CRI as a framework. These teachers understood some components of the framework but were missing others. Further, these teachers at times misappropriated their practices; that is, they believed they were being culturally responsive, when they were not. When sharing the findings for this group, we focus on Mr. Lamb as a case. Granted, there were idiosyncrasies among these three teachers that were associated with their trajectory within this group, but they indeed shared common pedagogical (or lack of) beliefs and enacted similar types of instructional practices. To note, these three teachers were interestingly all in the same district. When we present our findings below, we describe the district, school, and

community contexts where these teachers taught and describe how their respective settings were associated with their pedagogical beliefs and instructional practice.

While it seems clear how these teachers were grouped into these cases, activity theory in our study points to the complexities of how these novice teachers were assigned to a certain case when factoring in individual variation, the settings and activity systems they navigated, the tools they appropriated in their practice, and the object they were trying to achieve through praxis. We present our findings first through a cross-case analysis of these five teachers' preparation experiences and their school settings and similarities across these areas. Then we present differences and nuances of the three cases we mentioned above based on the intersection of each teacher's identity, preparation experiences, school setting, and tool use.

Cross-Case Theme: Navigating Through Different Messages and Tensions Across Activity Systems

All five teachers were White, middle-class individuals who had similar conceptual shifts in their beliefs about teaching based on their experiences largely in the SC program. All of these teachers grew up in the Midwest and were raised either in rural or suburban areas that were predominately White and working/middle class. When they were students themselves, these teachers reported that their families were involved in their schooling and a major focus was on their grades and academic achievement. They also reported they had little exposure to peers of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. While each teacher had their own idiosyncratic reasons why they wanted to become a teacher, all of them shared that prior to their preparation, they initially wanted to "save" children and "change the world." These goals stemmed from deficit-oriented views of children from marginalized backgrounds as deprived and in need of a savior. However, when all these teachers entered the Plainville elementary preparation program, they explained

that the SC program played a significant role in how their beliefs about teaching shifted. For example, Ms. Anderson explained that she initially had a "savior" mindset when viewing students and families, but the SC program provided her with opportunities to unlearn biases and learn about the expertise that students and families bring. She shared that SC,

> "completely changed my thoughts and thought process and everything along those lines… I realized that kids do not need to be saved and families are definitely our biggest asset and are so knowledgeable about not only their children, but the community and their experiences and what school should look like."

Other teachers described similar shifts in their beliefs and explained that the SC program challenged them to think about their identities, backgrounds, and perceptions when working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Ms. Apitz explained that SC "really shifted my understanding of how I need to check my lens at the door, and I need to constantly be reflecting and examining my thinking and bias." The faculty in the SC program explained that they designed their program for their teacher candidates to reflect on and examine their identities and understand the expertise and wealth that comes from communities that have historically been marginalized and often did not have a voice in teacher preparation.

The intersection of readings and coursework, weekly journal writing, weekly courageous conversations, and working with a community mentor were impactful for these teachers' critical consciousness and their development and understanding of culturally responsive instruction (CRI). As White teacher candidates, these teachers were initially challenged and experienced White fragility with grappling with their own privileges while trying to dismantle their biased beliefs. Mr. Lamb explained how the intersection of different parts of the program impacted his learning,

> "we would do readings that were to help us like wrestle with our own idea of like what privilege would look like with us and what it looks like in the classroom, and so there were a lot of times where I was writing journal entries or we're having courageous conversations where… I would just sit there in silence, and I was like, 'Oh, my goodness,' because it was like I don't want to feel like a bad person, but now I'm reading this and I feel like a bad person, so how do I wrestle with that?"

Other teachers reported similar reactions and experiences as White teacher candidates as the program created opportunities for them to examine their own backgrounds and beliefs and shift how they viewed teaching and learning. While coursework played an important role, work in the community with their mentor seemed to be impactful. Candidates had opportunities to spend time with their mentors in different capacitates such as church services or family dinners. These experiences provided candidates with opportunities to dismantle their biases and learn about the community's cultural wealth. Candidates also had a final assignment where they created their "culturally responsive manifestos" and presented what they had learned over the semester to their peers, SC faculty, and mentors.

While these teachers reported common experiences as candidates during the SC program, they also reported similar experiences with their transition back into the larger elementary education program at Plainville University. After a semester-long cohort experience where candidates spent all their time situated in the Eastside community, they returned to Plainville where they took courses again at the University along with many other candidates in the larger elementary education program. The five teachers in this study reported that their transition back to Plainville was challenging in that they felt the larger program did not share a similar focus on preparing community-engaged, culturally responsive teachers compared to SC. Ms. Anderson

felt that courses in Plainville did not discuss aspects of CRI or social justice, or if they were discussed, it was in a superficial manner as she explained,

> "it was almost like, 'oh you're reading this book during read aloud and it has someone who's Black in it- that's great, you're being culturally responsive,' but like that isn't necessarily what it means to be culturally responsive. It was mentioned, but I don't know that it was valued."

Other teachers had similar reactions when taking courses and practica at Plainville. Mr. Lamb explained that he felt he had to learn how to write lengthy lesson plans and learn teaching practices that he said were "generic" and not culturally responsive – as in lessons that were highly structured but did not include elements from the CRI framework.

The overall elementary preparation program claims at the beginning of their mission statement to prepare teacher candidates for "community engagement… (including candidates) who are culturally responsive, critically conscious, and committed to education for social justice in our democratic society." While these aspects seemed apparent in SC, the teachers in this study reported that these features were not adequately addressed during the rest of their preparation program. Beyond this first part, the rest of the mission statement includes specific aspects of teaching such as "using technology" or "knowing multiple content areas." Based on interview data from the teachers, it seemed these features were more apparent whereas the community-engaged and CRI aspects were left solely to SC.

As mentioned, most candidates in this program participated in the semester-long community-engaged experience during the beginning of their 2nd year as teacher candidates. They spent the rest of their coursework and practica at Plainville. Faculty members in this program reported a lack of program coherence among faculty and that not everyone held the

same values or convictions related to CRI. While these teachers criticized the Plainville program for not focusing on topics like CRI and social justice as SC did, they did feel the program provided them ample opportunities to be in classrooms (a practicum every semester) and to learn to structure their lessons. However, as reported in the instructional practice section below, there were also differences between these teachers' preparation experiences and their school settings that shaped their teaching and pedagogy.

Case Studies

Integrating Culturally Responsive Instruction

When walking into Ms. Apitz's first-grade classroom, the brightly colored walls were covered with student work, art, and anchor charts. Individual student desks were organized into rows; despite this desk arrangement, throughout our observations, Ms. Apitz frequently had students collaboratively work together with opportunities for students to do independent work. In front of the room next to the smartboard is the carpet area where students often sat when Ms. Apitz conducted mathematics and ELA lessons. The classroom library was rich with texts of diverse characters from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and who were written by authors from diverse backgrounds. Every student in Ms. Apitz's class was White. Amongst our participants, Ms. Apitz scored the highest on the CRIOP and was the only teacher in this integration stage. As a White woman, who grew up in a similar nearby community, Ms. Apitz initially felt guilty for not teaching in a more culturally and ethnically diverse setting, but explained her unique opportunity to teach in a virtually all-White school,

> "I really wanted to keep in mind that I almost felt like I wasn't doing [the SC program] justice coming to a school like this… I almost had this little bit of guilt, but I keep reminding myself that these students need that exposure [to culturally responsive

> instruction] … I want I take it upon myself to not to focus on the thought that I'm taking the easy way out. I try to focus on showing these kids what I wish I would have been shown when I was young."

Based on Ms. Aptiz's critical consciousness and her identity as a White, middle-class woman, who comes from similar a background as her students, she firmly believed that CRI was a powerful pedagogical framework to support her White students in developing both their own cultural competence and critical consciousness – things she did not get exposed to when she was a student.

Throughout our observations, it was clear that Ms. Apitz enacted many practices that were identified as culturally responsive. Using the CRIOP holistic elements to organize instructional practices and tool use, Ms. Apitz scored the highest of the five participating teachers in every element category except for critical consciousness for mathematics. For example, regarding classroom relationships, in every observation, Ms. Apitz showed an ethic of care for her students that made them feel welcomed and comfortable. She demonstrated high expectations for her students and gave them assignments, projects, and materials that were challenging but developmentally appropriate. Students worked well together due to both Ms. Aptiz's effective use of classroom management and instructional practices she used to engage her students in lessons. Particularly in her ELA lessons, Ms. Apitz utilized different strategies to organize her lessons and to keep her students engaged such as working together in groups when appropriate or having students work on projects and activities that focused on real-world issues that were relevant to them and their lives.

In one particular ELA lesson focused on writing, Ms. Apitz taught students about forming an argument by stating a claim and reasons. She read aloud from a picture book that

showed figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X and focused on protests during the Civil Rights movement. She used this book as an example to show how arguments can be used for positive social change. She provided opportunities during the lesson for students to reflect on their own lives and issues that mattered to them. Students during the lesson had several opportunities to turn and talk and engage in discourse with their peers. Many students during the lesson only identified small, localized issues within their school (like the amount of time to eat their food during lunch). Nonetheless, once students identified an issue they cared about, Ms. Apitz asked them to think of reasons to justify their claim during independent work time. She modeled and provided scaffolds using her own examples to support her students. Students throughout the lesson were highly engaged and Ms. Apitz checked for understanding and used different forms of formative assessment to ensure student learning (e.g., observation, student feedback, exit ticket). This lesson is a primary example of the types of practices we observed in our observations of her teaching.

While Ms. Apitz was implementing, or beginning to implement, culturally responsive practices, she explained that working in a predominately White, middle-class school with expectations for high test scores was not easy for her to navigate. Ms. Apitz was situated in a rural/suburban setting where over 90% of the students and families identified as White. In interviews with some families whose students were in Ms. Apitz's class, they explained that they specifically moved to the neighborhood due to it having excellent schools based on academic merit. The school district prided itself on having blue ribbon schools and reporting some of the highest standardized test achievement rates in the state. When reviewing their action plan and goals for their teachers, we found that the district listed mostly plans and targets related to standardized test scores and benchmarks. These plans were detailed and featured in almost the

entirety of the document. There was one small paragraph that explained how the district supported students from diverse cultural backgrounds, which seemed to be an afterthought more than an intentional plan.

Ms. Apitz initially felt under constant pressure to implement the mathematics and ELA curricula with fidelity and that she could not deviate from the units or lessons in her district's pacing guide. Her district required their K-2 teachers to report data from several different assessments and show that academic growth was being made – quarterly benchmarks in mathematics and ELA were mentioned as having high importance. However, she had participated in district-led professional development and heard messages from her principal that it was okay to modify curricula using her discretion in response to her students' needs. To note, when we interviewed Ms. Apitz's principal, she did not recognize or espouse CRI and did not refer to adapting the curricula in this manner, but focused more on making adaptions that would reflect student academic achievement. Despite being in a setting that did not necessarily support CRI, Ms. Apitz used these messages as permission for her to adapt lessons and curriculum tools to be culturally responsive. Another challenge she has faced was working with other colleagues who were not like-minded. Recognizing that she was the youngest in the building, she saw other teachers engage in practices that were not culturally responsive, but she did not engage them in a discussion or shared her perspective. Since her first year, she felt as a younger teacher that she had to work hard to earn her respect. While she felt that she eventually earned respect by other teachers and parents/families, she still felt she had to carefully navigate her school context and not be vocal with her colleagues unless she had to. The respect she earned from colleagues and families seem to stem more from her ability to manage her classroom and her students reporting high levels of achievement on benchmark assessments.

In terms of her preparation, Ms. Apitz explained in her interviews that she felt the SC program helped her form her critical consciousness and provided her with some strategies to start implementing culturally responsive practices. However, she was disappointed when she returned to main campus as a 2nd year teacher candidate and felt that she was not headed in the right direction with her learning. She stated, "I definitely felt like I was going backwards." Ms. Apitz believed the larger program did not have the same focus on topics like CRI or equity which she felt hindered her learning. She explained that despite a shift in focus between SC and the larger Plainville program, she was able to find opportunities to make connections that supported her development. She had one professor at Plainville who stressed the need to be reflective as an educator and this message resonated with her. She looked for and found opportunities to be reflective and use her critical consciousness when doing coursework at Plainville. She provided a specific example when she was planning lessons with a group of other elementary candidates who did not participate in the SC program, and one candidate described an instructional activity she was going to do to teach to kindergarteners about farmers. As Ms. Apitz recounts:

> "'Oh, I plan to do this activity where it's this little farmer and they have this little barn and these little animals and stuff' and I looked at her, and I was like, 'I mean that's an American farmer or like a farmer that we would see around here, there are other farmers and should we talk about like other farmers around the world. Like every country has farmers that form different crops' and I said, 'that might be a good thing to talk about and share with the kindergarteners too since there are different crops and we get those from around the world.' And she's like, 'Oh,' like she was like dumbfounded – that hadn't even crossed her mind.

In her interviews, Ms. Apitz provided many more examples from different parts of her preparation experiences that supported her development. She especially highlighted working with her cooperating teacher during student teaching in first grade as impactful. She explained that she learned strong routines and structures to engage students, using songs and hand gestures, and being cognizant of time which helped her vision her practice in her future classroom. While it seemed that larger preparation program provided little opportunities for Ms. Apitz to continue to learn CRI, she continued her development toward being culturally response by being continuously reflective, critically conscious, and having the fortunate opportunity to have a strong cooperating teacher.

Developing Culturally Responsive Instruction

When entering Ms. Anderson's fourth-grade classroom, there was no door since the school was originally designed to be open concept. There was a large partition that separated her classroom from the other class, but during our observations, it was constantly shaking due to the movement of students in other classrooms. There was warm lighting with lamps scattered throughout the room with the florescent ceiling lights turned off. Like Ms. Apitz's classroom walls were covered with student work and art and anchor posters, Ms. Anderson also had posters of multicultural figures with positive and motivating quotes. Student desks were arranged in a U-shape to promote both attention to the teacher and collaboration. Most of the students in the classroom were White with over one third of the students identifying as Black or mixed race. Ms. Anderson explained that nearly all her students received free and reduced lunch and that poverty and food insecurity were significant issues in the surrounding community. In addition, she shared that besides poverty, many of her students and families she worked with suffered from many

different forms of trauma. For example, she explained she had quite a few students who had lost their moms.

During classroom observations, Ms. Anderson enacted some practices that were culturally responsive, particularly in the classroom relationships element of the CRIOP. It was clear when we observed Ms. Anderson that she established strong relationships with her students and created a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment. Students frequently wanted to interact with her, and all interactions observed were positive in nature. Even when handling misbehavior, Ms. Anderson always interacted with students in a firm but respectful manner. She also prioritized building relationships with not just her students, but with families. She used different means to engage parents and families in non-traditional ways. For example, Ms. Anderson would spend time talking to parents in-person after school; or learning about what was happening at home when initially making a positive phone call home; or messaging parents in a private Facebook group. Knowing what was happening in her students' lives was paramount to Ms. Anderson's practice, especially since many of her students were impacted by trauma – "if I didn't reach out and valued those relationships I wouldn't know [what was going on.]"

While Ms. Anderson enacted culturally responsive practices in areas like classroom relationships and family collaboration, she struggled to enact instructional, assessment, and discourse practices that were culturally responsive. During observations, she enacted lecture-based instruction where there were little to no opportunities for students to engage one another in discourse such as turn and talks or students working together in groups. In these lectures, Ms. Anderson did not contextualize the content to make it relevant to students lives. She started lessons by explaining how to fill out a worksheet or how to solve a problem and would end lessons by giving directions. There were no hooks, or analogies, or emphasizing the point of the

lesson – which made the lesson feel generic and amorphous. After she lectured, she gave students a worksheet to complete on their own. The worksheets that the students completed were not rigorous nor were they relatable or contextualized to their lives. In mathematics, these worksheets were usually simple computational problems. In ELA, worksheets consisted of reading a short passage and answering multiple-choice comprehension questions. If students finished their work early, they were instructed to independently do their education-based apps on their computers.

The school context where Ms. Anderson taught also seemed to affect the extent to which she was able to enact CRI. Unlike Ms. Apitz's school and district setting, Ms. Anderson's district seemed to be more intentional about not only supporting student academic achievement but also engaging in social justice and equity work. For example, the district featured a specific plan and provided resources for teachers and staff that focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Part of this plan included professional development opportunities and resources such as books and articles for teachers to access. The district's vision seemed to be mainly aimed at academic achievement and preparing students for college as the primary focus with equity and social justice work seeming more secondary. Similar to Ms. Apitz's setting, Ms. Anderson's school district expected their teachers to attend to the prescriptive curricula and aim for high achievement rates on quarterly benchmark assessments in mathematics and ELA.

Despite some similarities, as previously mentioned, Ms. Anderson's school had many students who suffered from a variety of traumatic events which caused behavioral challenges – when we went to observe Ms. Anderson, it was common to find students running in the hallways screaming and cursing. In addition, She experienced tension with a fair amount of her colleagues. When we asked about her perceived "fit" at her school site, she said that she

connected with only about 60% of her colleagues. She reported that when she heard a comment that she perceived to be harmful toward students and families, she was vocal about her disapproval, as she stated, "when I hear people who are saying things that are hurtful or harmful, like I'm not going to just not say something." These interactions have caused her non-likeminded colleagues to not interact with her or they acted differently when she was around. Lastly, she did not have access to curriculum tools or materials that were culturally responsive. Her district expected their teachers to use the curriculum with fidelity, but the curriculum tools we observed were not rigorous nor were they contextualized to students' lived experiences.

In interviews, Ms. Anderson described ways that she was becoming culturally responsive. She explained that she continued to stay connected to her community mentor and reflected on her coursework from SC. Also, like Ms. Apitz, Ms. Anderson found her student teaching experience in that she was able to practice certain skills and pedagogies she learned in SC – particularly building relationships with students. During her student teaching, Ms. Anderson's efforts were recognized by the school's principal, and she was hired as a fourth-grade teacher for the following year. What's important to highlight about Ms. Anderson is that she taught in the same district where Plainville and SC were located whereas the other teachers student taught in other districts. She explained that she felt she knew the school's context well and the community where her students come from which enabled her to continue to focus on aspects of her pedagogy like building relationships with students.

Beginning to Conceptualize Culturally Responsive Instruction

When entering these three teachers' classrooms, we observed classroom structures, instructional practices, and settings that were similar. However, while the reasons each of these three teachers was assigned to this group varied, there were large similarities and consistencies

that we present here by focusing on Mr. Lamb. One common theme amongst these three teachers was their lack of understanding of CRI and were missing other components within the framework. For example, Mr. Lamb emphasized the importance of making curriculum reflective of students' identities. While to an extent he mentioned about building students' sociopolitical consciousness, he did not focus on how to use the curricula and academics as conduits to learn and to enact social justice.

Along with having partial, or limited, conceptualizations of CRI, Mr. Lamb misappropriated his instructional practices identifying they were culturally responsive when they were not. Like Ms. Anderson, Mr. Lamb enacted lecture-based instruction and did not use ways to engage, contextualized, or provide opportunities for students to connect to the curriculum. Often, phrases like, "today, we are going to start on page 45" or "after you finish this worksheet, you will do this packet" were commonly expressed in Mr. Lamb's classroom during observations. Students in Mr. Lamb's classroom had little to no opportunities to work together, and when they did, it was a short turn and talk that lasted for a minute or less. A few students in his classroom often fell asleep during lessons and would stay asleep throughout the lessons. Despite what we observed, Mr. Lamb thought his conceptualizations and practices in mathematics and ELA were culturally responsive when they were clearly not.

Concerning school context, Mr. Lamb felt he was not allowed to deviate from the curriculum or his districts' expectations regarding curriculum implementation. His school district recently adopted a new mathematics curriculum and teachers were instructed to implement the curriculum and its lesson sequence with fidelity. As he explained,

> "for math especially this year, because we have our new curriculum this year it was; we will do all of the components, we will do it at the same time, every single day, we will do

it for the exact amount of time that we have to do it and we will follow the book as it is written."

Hearing these kinds of messages from his principal and district officials, he reported that he did not modify the mathematics curriculum or his mathematics instruction despite him believing that it was not culturally responsive. However, even though there was more room for modification with the older and established ELA curriculum, his instruction was nearly identical to his mathematics instruction where he had students complete worksheets and instruction was lecture-based; this usually involved the Mr. Lamb modeling how to solve a problem or how to complete a worksheet. This is not to say that he described all his practices were culturally responsive. Instead, he reported that often it was too difficult to try to implement culturally responsive practices as he stated, "with reading and math being almost scripted lessons for us, it's really hard to be very culturally responsive. It takes a lot of effort on our parts." Indeed, it can be difficult for novice, and even veteran, teachers to try to enact CRI while expected to be following a prescriptive curriculum that may not be culturally responsive and are lacking models and examples from both their preparation and in-service experiences.

Mr. Lamb, like the other teachers above, also had common perceptions of his experiences at Plainville where he felt he did not have opportunities for him to learn more about topics like culturally responsive teaching and equity outside of SC. This is a perception shared by Ms. Apitz and Ms. Anderson, but with the exception that Mr. Lamb did not seem to make as frequent or as meaningfully connections. When we asked him about what practices he learned and found impactful in his preparation at Plainville, he replied "I feel like all my stuff is [SC] focused not [Plainville]." He felt the Plainville program did not give him specific strategies or models to support his efforts to enact culturally responsive practices. In his interviews, he seldomly shared

any specific practices, frameworks, or experiences in student teaching that shaped his beliefs and pedagogy. Further, he did not necessarily seek opportunities to support his own development, unlike Ms. Anderson and Ms. Apitz, and ultimately felt constrained and unable to enact culturally responsive practices. Figure 1 provides a visualization of our findings in this study; to note, this figure is contextualized to the findings in this study for these teachers in their given settings. For example, Ms. Apitz was beginning to integrate instructional practices that were culturally responsive but did not follow her district's curricula as she was expected to, hence a disconnected line. However, some settings may endorse CRI and have adequate curricula to where there could be a lateral, or bilateral, connection between the teacher, their given setting, and tools provided to them.

Discussion

Our study attempted to fill a crucial gap in the literature by understanding what types of instructional practices graduates from a community-engaged teacher preparation program enacted in their classrooms as 2nd- and 3rd-year elementary teachers (Zygmunt et al., 2018). We used activity theory to analyze each teacher's background and characteristics, the school settings and messages and expectations they received on teaching and learning, and the tools they used in their practice (conceptual/practical). While these teachers graduated from the same community-engaged program, through both our observations and interviews with each of the five teachers, we found variation as described above. We noticed that all these teachers had similar practical tools at their use (e.g., curriculum materials and textbooks) but the differences in their conceptual understanding of CRI impacted their practical tool use and overall enactment of instruction. For example, in interviews with Ms. Apitz when she described her pedagogy, she referred to building students' cultural competence, ensuring students were understanding the academic content, and

was beginning to use curriculum and instruction to build students' critical consciousness – key tenets that reflect Ladson-Billings' (1995; 2014) culturally relevant framework and Gay's (2002) culturally responsive framework. With this robust understanding, Ms. Apitz appropriated practical tools (like scripted lesson plans from curricula) and modified them to best fit her understanding of CRI. Even though she was in a setting that espoused high academic achievement through standardized tests and closely following pacing guides and curriculum tools, she used her principal's approval to modify instruction as permission for her to enact CRI. Based on interview data, it seemed that Ms. Apitz had a pragmatic approach; while she navigated across different boundary settings that did not particularly endorsed CRI, whether it was in her preparation or at her school site with her principal, she took ideas and materials and would readjust them to fit her pedagogy and beliefs about CRI.

Ms. Anderson also found opportunities throughout her preparation to develop her skills in CRI. In particular, she had the opportunity to student teach in the district where she would eventually teach – this helped her become familiar with the district and community context and to use such understandings to focus on building relationships with students and their families. What differentiates Ms. Anderson from Ms. Apitz, as we noted above, was that based on the CRIOP, Ms. Apitz was able to more frequently enact multiple elements of CRI while Ms. Anderson enacted one to two elements – classroom relationships and family collaboration. Ms. Apitz noted that she felt she had a strong cooperating teacher during her student teaching who modeled several practices that she adopted and modified into her own. However, for Ms. Anderson, she explained the practices that she enacted were largely learned in the SC program and she did not report that her cooperating teacher provided her such models and strategies during student teaching. The SC program provided Ms. Anderson a strong conceptual

understanding of CRI and some practical tools, but her classroom practices and use of curriculum for her may have derived from her district's expectations related to curriculum use and her cooperating teacher's pedagogies while she was a student teacher. This finding connects with prior research on teacher preparation that there can be significant differences in opportunities to learn for teacher candidates based on the factors such as their student teaching placement (Anderson & Stillman, 2011).

The beginning to conceptualize teachers like Mr. Lamb, he also had some similar experiences working with their cooperating teachers and following their district's expectations regarding curriculum implementation as Ms. Apitz and Ms. Anderson. But his conceptualization of CRI was not as robust as the other two teachers. He mentioned the importance of culture and providing opportunities for students to see themselves in curriculum and instruction, but he was limited in the critical consciousness component – teaching his students about inequities and real-world issues. Further, he conflated other strategies or instructional practices with CRI (e.g., differentiated instruction). Through each of the three interviews, Ms. Apitz and Ms. Anderson continuously indicated that their goal was to be culturally responsive and frequently referred to the CRI framework when discussing their practice. Ladson-Billings (2014) has described her frustration with teachers who say their practice is culturally relevant but are missing the sociopolitical, or critical consciousness, component. For the conceptualizing teachers like M Lamb, he was missing this key component while also claiming his instructional practices were culturally responsive. This difference between these two groups of teachers seems to suggest that if teacher candidates do not have a robust critical consciousness, then this may limit their opportunities to learn the overall CRI framework during their preparation and thus hinder their ability to enact CRI (Dyches & Boyd, 2017).

This finding is similar to Thompson and colleagues' (2013) study of novice science teachers where one group in the study identified their science teaching practices as ambitious (which was espoused by their preparation program), but their instructional practices were not ambitious based on observation data. While Ms. Anderson enacted similar instructional practices, a key difference between her and the conceptualizing teachers was that she did not describe all her instructional practices as culturally responsive. Ms. Anderson emphasized how she wanted to continue to see more models and examples in areas like mathematics in order to be culturally responsive. She believed her strengths resided in building relationships with students and families – this can be seen based on her CRIOP scores in these first two elements.

All the teachers in this study were challenged with the expectations from their districts to implement mathematics and ELA curricula with fidelity. As described above, both Ms. Anderson and the conceptualizing teachers felt they needed to follow the scripted lesson plans provided by their districts. While outside the scope of this study, the curricula provided to these teachers did not seem to be culturally responsive – they did not represent students' lives nor seem to provide opportunities to build cultural competence. Using these curricular tools may have hindered these teachers' ability to enact practices that were reflective of CRI. These teachers instead enacted practices that were lecture-based and teacher-centered, with little to no opportunities for students to engage in discourse and academic conversations. These teachers did explain that their settings were not stringent, and they were able to make some modifications. The modifications that Ms. Anderson and the conceptualizing teachers consistently referred to were extending the length or number of lessons to get through a given unit. For Ms. Apitz, while her principal allowed her to modify her instruction and use of curriculum tools, when she discussed modifying the

curriculum, she referred specifically to the *content* of the lesson where she tried to implement her understandings of CRI.

All these teachers when they were candidates reported their challenges with returning to Plainville after completing the SC program. While the teachers made it clear that there were elements of the Plainville program that supported their development as teachers, the program according to these teachers did not focus on CRI as a framework. Past studies of teacher preparation programs have emphasized the importance of program coherence (Darling-Hammond, 2005; Elmore et al., under review; Zeichner, 2016). Without a clear vision that is carried out through all parts of a teacher preparation program, teacher candidates may have a fragmented experience that may hinder their opportunities to learn.

While the elementary program in their mission statement mentions the importance of being "community-engaged," or "culturally responsive," it seemed only the semester-long SC program espoused these dispositions unlike the larger elementary program. Ms. Apitz and Ms. Anderson seemed to adopt these dispositions and had a strong conceptual understanding of what it means to be culturally responsive. However, teachers such as Mr. Lamb were beginning to conceptually understand the CRI framework. It seems having an incoherent program limited these teachers' opportunities to learn more about the CRI framework and how it operationalizes in practice. Faculty interviewed in this study reported different paradigms of teaching and learning within their department that caused some divisions among faculty. All these teachers reported not seeing models or examples of culturally responsive practices in content areas like ELA and mathematics. Plainville seems to be reflective of many teacher preparation programs where there are many different actors, interests, and beliefs that can create tensions within these settings (Zeichner et al., 2015). While it seems clear that the semester-long SC program provided

an important start of preparing culturally responsive teachers, this type of preparation needs to be continuous and sustained through all parts of teacher preparation in order to adequately prepare candidates for the complexities of CRI.

We finally want to identify some limitations and outline suggestions for future research. First, this study focused heavily on what these teachers were doing and not as much their students. Granted, we looked for student engagement and how students worked with one another, but our unit of analysis focused specifically on the teacher and what types of instructional practices they were enacting. Shifting the unit of analysis to students is also important when understanding CRI and should be considered for future studies on the extent to which teachers enact CRI. Another limitation is that this study was qualitative in nature. While this study provided rich description of these five teachers and their preparation, there needs to be future studies that follow a larger sample of teachers to understand the association of preparation experience on classroom practice at scale. Tying into this limitation, it will also be fruitful to examine student achievement data in conjunction to observing instructional practices. This study also focused specifically on novice teachers. It would be fruitful to examine graduates who have taught for several years and understand how factors such as teaching experience impact one's enactment of practice.

While we found the CRIOP tool helpful in our evaluation to the extent to which these teachers' enacted CRI, we, and the authors of the CRIOP (Powell et al., 2017) maintain that the CRIOP is not the sole determining observational tool or framework to evaluate for what counts as CRI and what does not. However, we found in our study that the CRIOP did help us frame and begin to understand to what extent teachers operationalized the practices of CRI (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2016). To note, while we mentioned that many of the teachers enacted

teacher-centered or lecture-based instruction, we do not necessarily find these practices inherently ineffective or not culturally responsive. But when it is the only modality of instruction and other aspects such as students' cultures, identities, and family values are not attended to, then we do not find such practices to be culturally responsive. It is important to also note that our observations focused on ELA and mathematics instruction. We did not observe other content areas like science or social studies or areas like morning meeting and social-emotional lessons. These other areas, like morning meetings, could also have provided information to what extent teachers enact CRI. As we mentioned throughout this study, we found the curricular tools to not be reflective of CRI, a major hindrance for all the teachers in this study. Studies that examine different curricula and determine the extent to which are culturally responsive would be helpful for the field. Overall, we firmly believe future research attending to these limitations would make important contributions to the field.

Conclusion

Preparing teachers to work effectively with marginalized students by developing the knowledge and skills of culturally responsive instruction is complex, especially within the current political landscape of teacher preparation. But despite this work being challenging and complex, it is highly needed. As the U.S. will continue to become more culturally and linguistically diverse, there is a need for teachers to be effectively prepared to support all their students and their families through culturally responsive instruction. We believe that teacher preparation programs can, and should, prepare teachers for CRI through community-engaged efforts and have a vision for CRI that is highly coherent across *all* parts of preparation. Faculty within preparation programs will have to find common ground and work together towards a specific framework in order to help candidates learn to enact culturally responsive teaching.

These programs need to also be meaningfully connected to schools and the contexts of their settings. This will require faculty, communities, schools to work together in third space settings to develop a vision and create structures to prepare all their teacher candidates to become community-engaged, socially-just, and culturally responsive teachers.

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Table 1.
Teacher and School Demographics

Teacher	Gender	Race	Year	Grade	School Type/Free-Reduced Lunch	White Student Pop. %	Students of Color Pop. %
Ms. Apitz	F	White	3	1	Rural/Suburban – 15%	90%	10%
Mr. Lamb	M	White	2	6	Urban/Suburban – 100%	8%	92%
Ms. Karen	F	White	2	5 High Ability*	Urban/Suburban – 100%	30%	70%
Ms. Anderson	F	White	2	4	Urban/Suburban – 100%	75%	25%
Ms. Ellis	F	White	3	4	Rural/Suburban – 100%	8%	92%

Note. *We do not use this term. This term comes from the district in this study.

Table 2.

CRIOP Score Averages Across Three Mathematics Observations

Element:	Classroom Relationships	Assessment Practices	Instructional Practices	Classroom Discourse	Critical Consciousness
Ms. Apitz	3	1.83	1.93	2	0
Mr. Lamb	1.33	0.5	0.53	0.5	0
Ms. Karen	1.5	0.83	0.4	0.67	0
Ms. Anderson	2	0.75	0.6	0.67	0
Ms. Ellis	1.5	1.33	0.8	0.83	0

Table 3.

CRIOP Score Averages Across Three ELA Observations

Element:	Classroom Relationships	Assessment Practices	Instructional Practices	Classroom Discourse	Critical Consciousness
Ms. Apitz	3	2	2.5	2.5	1.22
Mr. Lamb	1.5	1.08	1.13	0.67	0.56
Ms. Karen	0.83	0.83	0.73	0.42	0.78
Ms. Anderson	2.13	1.13	0.8	0.63	0.67
Ms. Ellis	1.67	1.33	1.47	0.75	0.89

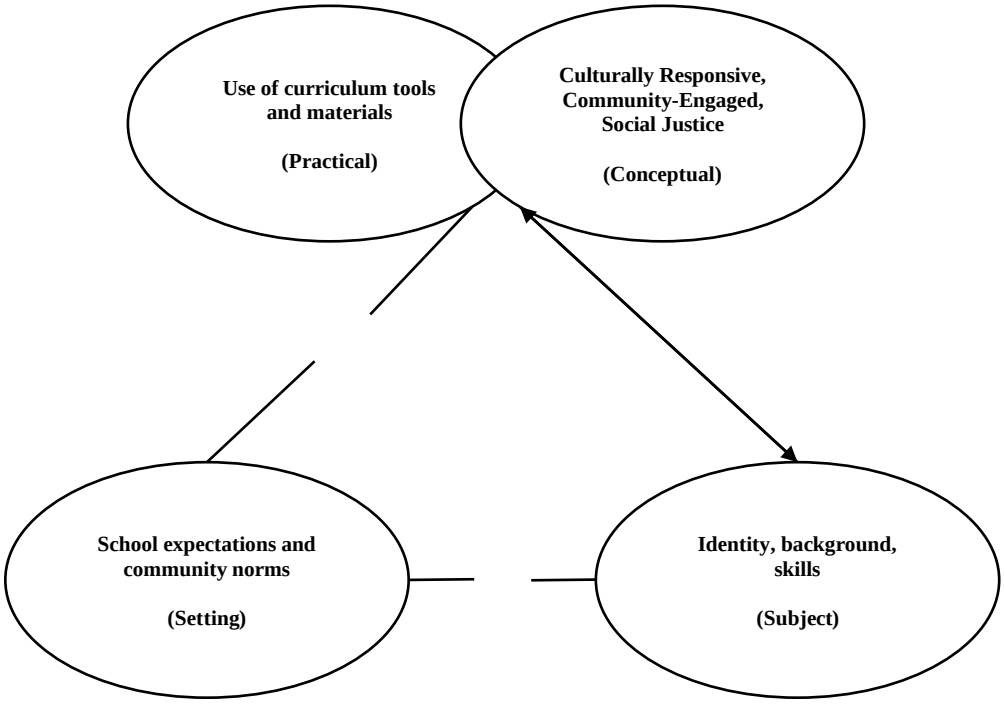
Table 4.
CRIOP Family Collaboration Score

	Classroom Relationships
Ms. Apitz	2.25
Mr. Lamb	1.25
Ms. Karen	1.5
Ms. Anderson	2.25
Ms. Ellis	1.5

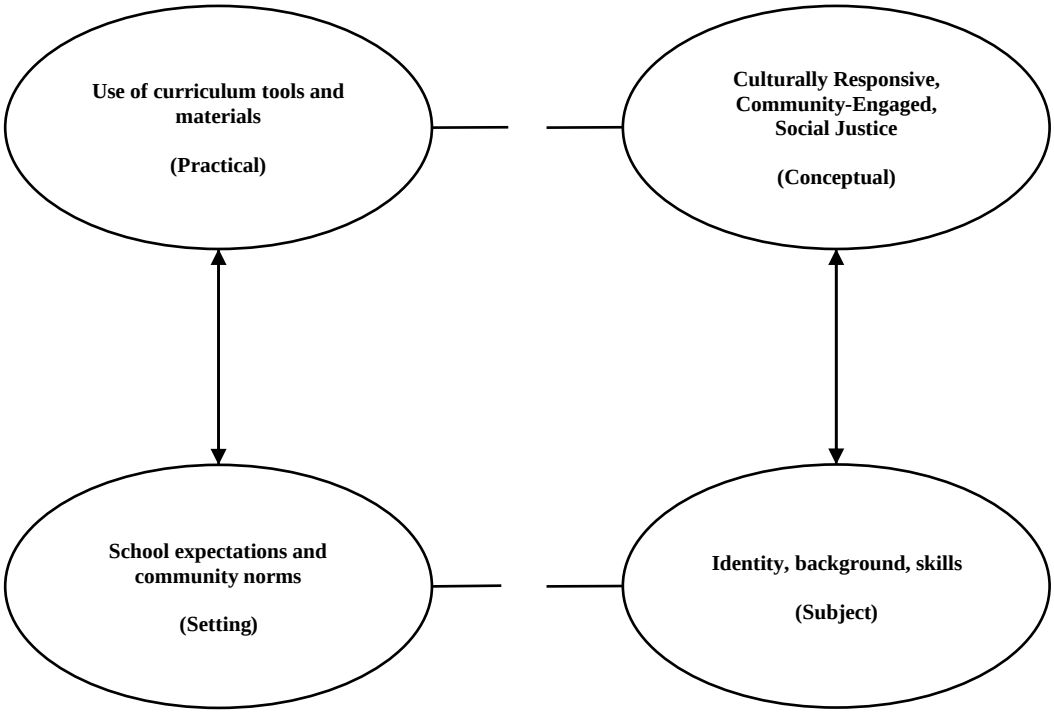
Figure 1.

Three Cases of CRI

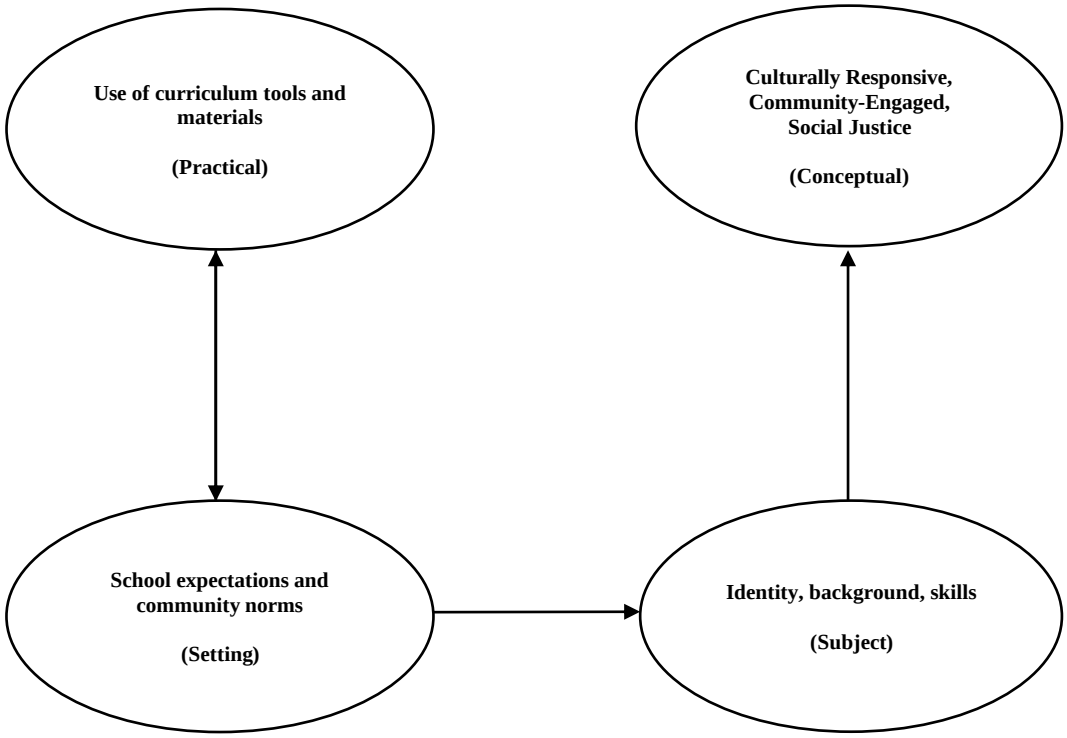
Integrating CRI



Developing CRI



Beginning to Conceptualize CRI



Note. The arrows indicate either a bilateral or unilateral direction. The lines that are dashed indicate a disconnection while no lines indicate no connection. Lastly, in the integrating diagram, the overlap between the practical and conceptual indicates the integration between these two types of tools.

Saying the Right Things: Principals' Sense-making Related to Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction

Jacob Elmore, Eva Zygmunt, Kristin Cipollone

Abstract

Principals and school leaders play a vital role when it comes to supporting both teacher and student learning. Different frameworks have been used to conceptualize and operationalize behaviors and practices that effective leaders do. However, these frameworks rarely examine leadership practices through the lens of culturally responsive pedagogy. Using Khalifa and colleagues' (2016) culturally responsive school leadership framework, we interviewed four elementary school leaders and interviewed and observed five novice teachers in the Midwest through a qualitative multiple-embedded case study. We used sense-making theory to understand how these school leaders conceptualized culturally responsive pedagogy and observed at least one novice teacher who worked in their school. We found that school leaders' understanding and conceptualizations of CRP seemed to influence the messages they gave their teachers concerning expectations for curriculum and instruction. These messages seemed to also influence the teachers' enactment of instructional practices. We provide implications for research and practice.

Research has demonstrated that while teachers are paramount to school reform and improving learning outcomes for children, principals, too, play important roles in these efforts. While it is important to have a strong teacher workforce, principals also play a significant role in their schools when it comes to curriculum implementation (Coburn, 2001; 2005), instructional and distributed leadership and teacher professional learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2009), mentoring and retaining teachers (Youngs, 2007), and ultimately supporting student learning (Branch et al., 2013; Newmann et al., 2001). Prior research has focused on the characteristics, behaviors, and actions of both effective and ineffective principals. These studies point towards different types of leadership styles (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Theorharis, 2007), how principals leverage resources and materials (Ainscow, 2005) and how they support teacher professional development (Bredeson & Johansson, 2007). But the prior literature is scant when it comes to principals' dispositions, behaviors, and efforts to implement culturally responsive curriculum and instruction (Khalifa et al., 2016).

This is notable since culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) has gained significant traction over the last 40 years as an asset-based framework to support students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Powell et al., 2016). Educational theorists have stressed that children learn best when curriculum and instruction draw meaningfully on their cultures, identities, and languages. These theorists explain that opportunity gaps and an "education debt" have persisted in the U.S. due to curriculum and instruction being White and Eurocentric, and often neglecting cultures and identities that do not fit within this frame (Banks & McGhee-Banks, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006). At the same time, while CRP has been highly theorized, research on operationalizing CRP has been limited (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2017). This is especially true with regard to principals' understanding of

CRP as a framework and how they support their teachers' enactment of CRP (Khalifia et al., 2016).

Addressing this crucial gap, the purpose of this study was to examine elementary school leaders' sense-making regarding how they conceptualize CRP and support their teachers to implement CRP, their districts' curriculum implementation policies, and their engagement with families and communities. We used a qualitative multiple-embedded case study design that featured interviews with four principals located in the Midwest. We also drew on teachers' observed instructional practice and interview data, and their districts' policy statements on pedagogy as subunits to inform and make meaning of these cases. In the proceeding sections, we first review the literature concerning principals through the framework of *culturally responsive school leadership* (Khalifa et al., 2016). Next, we present how we used sense-making as a theoretical framework. We then proceed to describe our methods, findings, and discussion including implications for developing and recruiting culturally responsive school leaders.

Literature Review

Culturally Responsive Teaching and School Leadership

Education researchers for quite some time have pushed the field to prepare educators to enact instructional practices that are asset-based and connected meaningfully to students' cultures, identities, and backgrounds within a pluralistic society (Au, 1980; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Muhammad, 2020; Paris, 2012). These asset-based scholars use different terms that have nuances in their meaning and conceptualization, but nonetheless converge on similar foundations. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2016) argue that while there are nuances to these terms and frameworks, it can be counterproductive to argue about which term to use since they are all speaking to similar ideas. Because the focus on this study was on school leaders and their

sense-making, we drew from Khalifa and colleagues' (2016) framework regarding culturally responsive school leadership. Khalifa and colleagues draw from seminal asset-based scholars like Ladson-Billings (1995; 2014), Gay (2002), Paris (2012), and others to create a framework of culturally responsive practices for school leaders (i.e., principals, assistant principals).

In their framework, there are four behavioral strands that conceptualize culturally responsive school leadership. The first is *critical self-awareness.* School leaders need to have an awareness of their values, beliefs, and dispositions regarding children of color – also known as a critical consciousness (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). The second is *culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation* which focuses on principals ensuring that their teachers and the school's curricula are culturally responsive. This means that principals work to secure curricula, resources, and materials that are culturally responsive and they lead staff in professional development efforts to support culturally responsive teaching. The third is *culturally responsive and inclusive school environments.* This strand focuses on school leaders' efforts to promote both a culturally affirming and inclusive school setting. This third strand encompasses strands one and two but ensures that cultural responsiveness and inclusion are visible and felt by students and families. The last strand is *engaging students and parents in community contexts.* This last strand focuses on engaging students and families in culturally appropriate ways. Specifically, principals need to develop community-based partnerships where they work with students, families, and community members to "understand, address, and even advocate for community-based issues" (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 1282).

Despite widespread attention to CRP in education practice and research, we agree with Khalifa and colleagues' (2016) statement that research on culturally responsive school leadership is "deeply undertheorized and underresearched" (p. 1297). Prior literature on school leadership

has largely focused on different types of leadership styles (e.g., instructional, distributed, transformational); principals' efforts to support teacher professional development and retention; principals' role in curriculum implementation; and principals' sense-making regarding federal, state, and district policies and their implementation in schools (Coburn, 2001; 2005; Khalifa et al., 2016; Leithwood et al., 2004; Spillane et al., 2002). The field is only beginning to examine how school leaders conceptualize CRP and how their meaning-making impacts curriculum implementation and teachers' enactment of instructional practices. While this is an area that is underresearched, prior studies on principals' characteristics, behaviors, and actions point to some initial propositions that informed our study.

One line of scholarship has examined how principals and school leaders play an important role in teacher development and student learning. For example, Youngs (2007) identified how principals' professional backgrounds, beliefs, and enactment of leadership, induction, and teacher evaluation seemed to impact beginning teachers' instructional growth. Research has also signaled that principals play an important role in student achievement. Specifically, principals who are both more experienced and able to retain their teachers are likelier to see gains in reading and mathematics achievement (Branch et al., 2013). Other studies have demonstrated that principals' enactment of different forms of leadership (instructional, distributed, etc.) also plays a foundational role in teacher professional learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). Leithwood and colleagues argue that principals are indeed instructional leaders, but their leadership practices are normally distributed where teachers and other school actors take on leadership roles. For example, a principal can recruit teachers who they believe can be effective teacher leaders to assist them with implementing curricula and providing staff with professional development opportunities to learn specific pedagogical practices and strategies. Leithwood and

colleagues (2009) found that school leaders who practiced distributed leadership widely and strategically had high performing results in student achievement. What can be gleaned from these studies, and many others, is that principals matter and play a crucial role when it comes to supporting teachers and students.

Prior research has also shown that principals and their background, identities, and characteristics play a vital role in policy implementation. Researchers have used cognitive frameworks, such as sense-making, to examine how actors make meaning of a given policy and how their schemas and values influence their conceptualizations and enactment of such policies (Spillane et al., 2002). For example, Coburn (2001; 2005) has shown that principals' content knowledge and sense-making regarding reading and mathematics curricular policies affect the expectations they hold for their teachers' enactment of specific pedagogies. Regarding racial and gender identities, a growing body of scholarship that has examined Black and Brown school leaders and their experiences and leadership practices. Smith (2021) examined the philosophies and beliefs of Black male school leaders and found these leaders to be grounded in their leadership practices with an explicit focus in areas such as community-engagement, social justice, and anti-racism and liberation. While Black male school leaders may hold these beliefs, Khalifa (2015) has shown how Black principals can also be subject to an internalized sense of racial interiority which he found two Black leaders in his study enacting harmful practices and behaviors toward their Black students. Khalifa found that these principals' sense-making reflected their location in a predominately White environment where Whiteness prevailed, and their actions caused them to not adequately support their Black students. These studies show the complexity of identity and sense-making and how individuals situated in organizations and

spaces that create conflicts between their identity and messages in their organizations, thus leaving individual actors to make meaning and decisions based on these conflicts.

When it comes to education policy (e.g., federal, state, local/district), prior literature has shown that many educational policies are racially neutral and often lack an equity orientation (López, 2003; Milner, 2017). Even when there are equity-oriented policies that pertain to supporting culturally and linguistically diverse students, Trujillo (2012) found that school leaders altered these policies due to their own backgrounds and beliefs and their school district's political context. Trujillo found that principals' meaning making regarding these policies impacted how they articulated their visions of pedagogy to their teachers. From Trujillo's (2012) study, we want to emphasize the importance of one's background and identity and how schemas impact one's sense-making. Parallels can be made based on research on teachers and teacher preparation. Previous studies have shown that many future or practicing teachers often conceptualize and enact pedagogies that reflect what they were exposed to when they were students' themselves (Labaree, 2007; Lortie, 1973). As shown above, while principals may not be engaged in the act of teaching like teachers, their conceptualizations, schemas, and pedagogies are largely shaped by their own backgrounds which influence their sense-making concerning curriculum and instruction. Psychologists outside the field of education have shown that human cognition uses intuitive judgement that is largely informed by one's backgrounds and experiences, biases, and heuristics which informs their interpretations and decision-making (Kahneman, 2011; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Spillane et al., 2002). Thus, it is essential to learn about actors' (in this case, principals') background and their beliefs to begin to understand their sense-making and actions (or inactions) toward a specific policy and/or framework.

As mentioned above, even though CRP has gained significant traction in the education field, most curricula are not multicultural, and many policies do not enable equity-oriented actions and behaviors among educational actors. Ladson-Billings (2014) has stressed that most teachers and principals claim that their practices are culturally relevant when in reality they are missing important components such as the sociopolitical component in her framework. Despite this keen observation, more research is needed to understand how principals' sense-making influences how they conceptualize CRP, support their teachers to implement CRP and their districts' curriculum implementation policies, and their engagement with families and communities. Ladson-Billings argues that researchers need to theorize and understand phenomena to then inform practice – which points to the need for this study. In our study, we posed the following research questions to address these crucial gaps in the field:

1. How do elementary principals define and conceptualize culturally responsive pedagogy?
2. How do elementary principals' sense-making regarding implementation of district curricula seem to influence teachers' enactment of culturally responsive pedagogy?

Theoretical Framework

In this study, we used the cognitive framework known as sense-making theory (Spillane et al., 2002). As a cognitive framework, sense-making accounts for how actors interpret messages related to instructional practices and how policies articulate conceptions of teaching and learning. We drew from Spillane and colleagues' sense-making framework to orient and analyze our study. We want to note that other theories, particularly sociocultural theories, draw on situated cognition regarding how actors engage in specific settings or activity systems (Roth & Lee, 2007; Thompson et al., 2013). While we believe these theories provide powerful models of how individuals engage in certain settings, they focus on more situated, or contextual, factors

when examining practice. These theories focus less on one's interpretation or meaning making when thinking about policy and practice (Spillane et al., 2002). Sense-making accounts for situated cognition but centralizes on actors' interpretations of the messages they receive and how their interpretations inform their practice.

Spillane and colleagues (2002) explain that there are three core elements to consider in sense-making. The first is the individual interpreting agent. In this element, an actor is highly influenced by their own background and identity which shapes their sense-making. This element explains why two individuals exposed to the same policy can draw different interpretations and meanings (Coburn, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002). Everyone will have their own characteristics and idiosyncratic experiences which inform their schemas and heuristics that they use for decision-making (Kahneman, 2011). The second core element is the situation in which sense-making occurs. While sense-making accounts for the individual, this second core element addresses the fact that principals (and humans in general) do not exist in a vacuum and are integrated within social contexts and organizations where messages and policies are distributed across different settings (e.g., school district central offices, schools, classrooms). Overlapping contexts can attend to the same policy or framework yet present conflicting messages to actors. Individual actors then confront these conflicts and must make meaning and take actions in relation to these conflicts themselves. Granted this doesn't mean that all settings will come into conflict with one another. Rather, overlapping contexts are shaped by their own cultural and historical norms and the particular actors that occupy a given space will influence how cognition is distributed across an organization.

The final element is the role of representations of policies. Spillane and colleagues (2002) maintain that substantive versus superficial policy implementation is hard to achieve. Actors

need representations of policies that are not only more detailed but provide opportunities for analogies and connections to prior schema. Connecting to prior schemas can provide opportunities for actors to then create new cognitive frames which could influence behavior and practice. Abstract information can be challenging to understand, and human cognition will often revert to simple, more concrete examples affecting one's decision-making and heuristics (Kahneman, 2011; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Spillane and colleagues note that frameworks and policies that provide modest changes to one's schema are often more influential than policies and frameworks that require a significant conceptual shift.

What does this mean with regard to culturally responsive school leadership and supporting teachers to enact CRP in their practice? Returning to Ladson-Billings' (2014) frustration that individuals misconceptualize her framework on culturally relevant framework, it is important to analyze how principals and teachers interpret CRP in light of the school contexts and settings in which they are situated. For example, there could be intense accountability standards/policies and perennial political divisiveness across overlapping contexts. In our study, we were interested in understanding how elementary principals' sense-making with regard to CRP accounted for what messages they articulated to their teachers about instructional practice and curriculum use. As prior research on human sense-making has shown, the beliefs an individual has can influence how they appropriate both their language and practice. The three core elements: individual interpretation, situation and setting, and roles of representations of policy provided us with useful analytic tools in our study of elementary school leaders. In the next section, we describe more in depth how we used these analytic tools to inform our methodology, design, and analysis for this study.

Methods

Sampling & Data Collection

This study drew from another qualitative study on teachers who graduated from a community-engaged elementary teacher preparation program. As a part of that study, we gathered data on elementary principals' sense-making and interpretations with regard to CRP influenced the messages they conveyed to their teachers concerning instructional practice and curriculum implementation. For this study, we utilized a multiple-embedded case study design (Yin, 2016). Four principals were selected and bounded due to having a teacher on their staff who graduated from the elementary community-engaged program. These principals were also situated within the same state and were influenced by the same state policies, especially concerning standardized assessments. See Table 1 for a breakdown of the four principals by their identities and school demographics and contexts. Case study was a suitable method due to our ability to examine within and across cases – we found similarities and differences that enabled us to understand these four principals' sense-making. As we mentioned above, a multiple-embedded case study also allowed us to examine different units of analysis within each case. Below we provide more details on how we collected and analyzed this data.

Data Analysis, Credibility, and Authors' Positionality

Our study primarily draws upon interview data we gathered from four elementary school leaders (three principals and one vice principal) who represented three different school districts in a Midwestern state. We conducted one semi-structured interview with each school leader; the interviews lasted about 45 minutes each. We designed this interview drawing from the literature on school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016) and sense-making theory (Spillane et al., 2002). For the sub-units, we used interview and observational data of five teachers who graduated from the community-engaged program. Teachers in this other qualitative study were selected according to

the following criteria: they graduated from the community-engaged program, were early career teachers (i.e., < 3 years), and, as a group, were teaching different grade levels and in different school contexts.

In this other study, we observed them teach three English Language Arts (ELA) and three mathematics lessons each and examined the extent to which they enacted CRP using the Culturally Responsive Instructional Observation Protocol 2nd Edition (CRIOP; Powell et al., 2017). When interpreting observation scores in Table 2 and 3, there are six holistic elements that constitute culturally responsive instruction on the CRIOP: (1) Classroom Relationships; (2) Family Collaboration; (3) Assessment Practices; (4) Instructional Practices; (5) Discourse; and (6) Critical Consciousness. For family collaboration, this is based mainly on interview data from the CRIOP and these scores are shown in Table 4. Within these elements are specific indicators that identify discrete behaviors and practices – there are a total of 24 indicators that span across the six elements. Scores range from 0 to 4 where 0 indicates no enactment of CRP, 1 is minimal, 2 is sometimes, 3 is often, and 4 is consistent across observations and content areas. All elements scored were from observations while the family collaboration was scored as part of an interview component. Scores were averaged across the three observations in each subject area.

We used provisional codes as first cycle codes to analyze all interview data (Miles et al., 2020). We developed provisional codes (i.e., a priori codes) based on the research literature pertaining to culturally responsive school leadership. We used codes that reflected Khalifa and colleagues' framework and asset-based pedagogies using terms like "Critical self-awareness" or "allocating curricula." After first-cycle coding, we proceeded to do second-cycle theoretical pattern coding. During second cycle, we created codes drawing from sense-making that organized our data into theoretical patterns, categories, and themes that we then used to create

separate cases and conduct cross-case analysis (Yin, 2018). We used Spillane and colleagues' (2002) three core elements: individual interpreting, situation and setting, and roles of representation of their sense-making framework as second cycle codes to organize the data within this study.

It is important in qualitative research to triangulate and ensure our understanding of phenomena from the perspectives of others. We used multiple forms of data collection that included teacher interviews along with observational data of each teacher's instruction. Further, we analyzed policies articulated by these school leaders' districts through their districts' websites and publicly available documents pertaining to their mission and vision for curriculum and instruction. The subunit data in this study, particularly the teacher data set, helped us make meaning between these school leaders' sense-making and what they articulated to their teachers, concerning instruction and curriculum implementation. When we initially examined these different data sets, we formed rival propositions and ideas that challenged our assumptions and pushed us to analyze the data through different lenses (Yin, 2018). Through careful analysis, we found school leaders' sense-making of CRP clearly affects how they articulated their understanding to their staff which seemed to influence their teachers' instructional practice.

Before we present the findings, we also want to recognize that our own identities and backgrounds as researchers play a significant role in our worldviews and epistemologies. Our team consists of three White teacher educators where one member is a cis-gender male and the other two are cis-gender females. We view ourselves and our work as allies in helping achieve the goals of social justice and equity in education. We do not trivialize or take lightly these notions of culturally responsive school leadership, justice, or equity. Throughout this study, and in our work, we continuously reflected on our own identities and backgrounds and we tried to

anticipate challenges that were seen, unseen, and unforeseen through our research as White researchers (Milner, 2007).

Findings

Through our analysis of the data, we found some similarities across these four school leaders, but we also found important distinctions between one school leader, Mr. Roberts[3] and the other three school leaders. We used the four elements from Khalifa and colleagues' (2016) framework on culturally responsive school leadership to analyze Mr. Roberts' sense-making. We first present Mr. Roberts as his own case and then present the other three as a case and describe their similarities and differences. Then we synthesize across these four school leaders and describe some elements common to all of them.

Case Studies

Mr. Roberts

Washington Elementary is a K-5 elementary school located on the southside of Allen – a small city of 60,000 people. Outside the city of Allen are rural farmlands with crops and fields. Allen was once a thriving industrial town in the Midwest during the 1980s; however, economic recession hit and many of the factories in the area had to close; this displaced thousands of employees in the local area. Since then, Allen continued to suffer from these legacies where over 30% of the population is currently living in poverty. Washington Elementary is one of five elementary schools in the district and the local community served by the school has a concentration of poverty. Most homes surrounding the school are single family units with several that are dilapidated and damaged. There are limited sidewalks with potholes on many streets. Washington Elementary is located behind the homes of the Southside neighborhood. The façade of the school is covered with bricks and there are no windows. The building is one story and was

built in the 1980s with the design of an open concept school. The school does not follow the open concept model and has used partitions to create separate classrooms within the large physical space. In 2021-22, the school served just over 500 students with about 3-4 teachers per grade level. The student population is broken down into being about 60% White, 20% Black, and 20% of two or more races. All students at the school qualify for free and reduced lunch.

Mr. Roberts is a Black male who was in his third year as principal of Washington and his 16th year in education. Prior to becoming a principal, He was an elementary teacher for six years in the district where he now was a principal and he also spent seven years holding various leadership positions, including being an assistant principal. Mr. Roberts brought a strong conviction to his vision and role as principal of Washington as he explained that his main priority was to be integrated within the larger Allen community and to use his knowledge of the Washington community to advocate for it across different contexts. Mr. Roberts stated,

> "[I'm] trying to be as involved in the community [through] different boards and committees professionally as possible, a lot of that is very selfish, to the extent of I want [Washington] to always have its name presented in different ways, so I don't want decisions to be made in the community without people having to talk about [Washington within Allen school district] that's why I try to stay as active and I encourage my colleagues to be active as well."

Mr. Roberts emphasized the importance of using the contextualized knowledge of the surrounding community to build relationships with students and families. He believed that relationships with students and families were integral to efforts to support student learning.

As an Black male, Mr. Roberts explained that recognizing his intersecting identities impacted his self-awareness when working in a largely White, female-dominated profession. His

staff were representative of the U.S. teacher workforce demographics and there were only two male teachers in the building. He explained that while there was a lack of diversity in both his school and the profession at large, he believed that any teacher could be culturally responsive. In particular, he indicated that his hiring practices focused on trying to secure culturally responsive teachers. He said that despite having White, female teachers, he believed that they can be effective teachers for students of color and male students. He explained that when he hires new teachers, he looks for teachers who have the dispositions and willingness to be culturally responsive.

Ms. Anderson is the community-engaged graduate whom Mr. Roberts hired to work as a fourth-grade teacher at Washington Elementary. In our other qualitative study on community-engaged graduates, we found Ms. Anderson to enact some practices that were culturally responsive, particularly in classroom relationships and family collaboration (see Table 2). We observed Ms. Anderson displaying an ethic of care toward her students and having strong relationships with them by frequently communicating and working with families. Ms. Anderson knew the context of Washington and her training to become a community-engaged, culturally responsive teacher within the Allen community adequately prepared her for what Mr. Roberts wants out of his teachers. He explained in his interview that he expects his teachers to build relationships with students; to authentically seek input and engage families; to put in effort when the work becomes challenging; and to prepare well thought-out lessons.

While having these expectations for his teachers, Mr. Roberts noted there was a constant tension he was facing with his staff who had been teaching at Washington before he became principal and the new teachers he had hired – including the community-engaged graduate, Ms. Anderson. He stated that not all staff members shared his vision and that many were at their own

stage of their learning. In interviews with Ms. Anderson, she echoed this tension between her views of CRP and those of her colleagues – often with other colleagues holding deficit-oriented views of students and families. Ms. Anderson explained that there has been a high turnover rate at her school of teachers quitting and leaving, and she said that Mr. Roberts is "really trying to find people who want to be at [Washington] who have a heart for the southside of [Allen] and who want to be planted here."

Part of Mr. Roberts' vision for his school is not only to secure and support culturally responsive teachers, but to draw knowledge and expertise from families and communities to support student learning, Mr. Roberts is critically conscious with how parents, families, and the surrounding community are (and are not) connected to his school; he explained that his school has a lot of parent *involvement* but not *engagement*. He shared that there was no parent teacher association or organization, and the school had its own parent engagement team that consisted of school staff. Mr. Roberts was not satisfied with this current structure, and he explained that the vision for Washington was to make a shift from parent involvement to parent engagement. As he stated,

> "the vision of where we want to go is a collaborative network, you know, that triangular connection of student to parent/guardian and family to school, so making sure that everybody's having the right conversations… I think if we're talking about where it currently is, we have a high involvement of parents, but not engagement… our parents right now have a high level of trust in our school, so I think it's very much, 'We trust you to do what's best for our students,' so when they're with you, you have it, but we want it to be more of an open communication like, 'No, it's just, not us – it's everybody… we all play a role in students' learning."

Mr. Roberts believed that families played a vital role in their children's education and needed to be stakeholders in decision-making concerning student learning. However, while he held these beliefs and visions, he emphasized that his school was not there yet and there needed to be a continuous effort to shift from involvement to engagement. To make this shift, Mr. Roberts maintained that his staff needed to be willing to adapt and shift in response to the community and context of where they teach. Mr. Roberts made it clear that being adaptive for his teachers required knowing the community through learning and listening and using that information to transfer into classroom practice.

At Southside, the student achievement rates from the statewide assessment on ELA and mathematics were 14% and 19% - these trends have been consistent even before Mr. Roberts' leadership. Mr. Roberts emphasized these academic struggles at his school and explained that he is not necessarily concerned with student achievement when students were multiple years behind. He was concerned more about growth and trying to catch students up so then they can eventually "achieve." The Southside community has suffered from significant poverty where issues like food security and children were going through trauma had impacted student performance. Mr. Roberts had utilized different local organizations to provide food and services to support students and families like the local food pantry and working with the local neighborhood coalition where they worked on tackling localized issues and providing before and after school childcare services to families.

Mr. Roberts sense-making of CRP has informed how he tried to engage in his work as principal of Washington Elementary. Drawing from the culturally responsive school leadership framework, Mr. Roberts seemed to articulate beliefs and practices that resided in critical self-awareness, culturally responsive teacher preparation, and beginning to create an inclusive school

environment and considering ways to promote family and community engagement. But Mr. Roberts was more limited in securing, or modifying, curricula to be culturally responsive – we will share more in-depth of this finding later in the proceeding sections. We now present the three other principals in our study as their own case.

Mr. Fosberg, Ms. Henry, & Ms. Rotte

These three school leaders are grouped here in their own case due to their sense-making concerning CRP and their articulation of their leadership practices to supporting their teachers' instructional practices. We connect these three school leaders together and do not describe each school leader in depth as Mr. Roberts but share similarities that tied these three school leaders within this case. We also present nuances between these three school leaders that seemed to possibly explain why their sense-making was not as robust as Mr. Roberts in terms of CRP.

We start with Mr. Fosberg, who is a White male and was in his 18th year in education – all in the same school district. Mr. Fosberg was the only school leader in our study who had two teachers in his school who graduated from the community-engaged program. Mr. Fosberg's school was a K-6 elementary school located in the suburbs outside a large metropolitan city. The student demographics compromised about one third White, one third Black, one third Latino students; where over 90% of the student population received free and reduce lunch. Mr. Fosberg was in his first year as school principal and replaced a former principal who had highly focused on CRP in her leadership as he stated, "the principal prior to me… really led that initiative of the culturally responsive pedagogy." He shared that CRP was his focus as a school leader and that he was trying to maintain the work that was done prior to him and where they needed to go next. However, he did not provide, like Mr. Roberts, clear examples of what he believed his teachers

needed to work on next in terms of CRP. He shared vaguely that every teacher was on their own journey and that there needed to be opportunities to continue grow and develop.

Mr. Fosberg explained elements of his beliefs and conceptualizations of CRP that seemed to be superficial and/or celebratory versus being meaningfully integrated in curriculum and instruction. For example, when he described the work of his school equity team, he explained,

> "[Our] school equity committee really tries to celebrate the diversity in our staff and our students, and so they plan, you know, months like this is Asian American Pacific month and so we're highlighting famous Asian Americans or Pacific islanders. They'll put displays around the building for that or Black history month displays, or Hispanic heritage month displays or Arab American month displays. We [also] do parades and they organize parades through the school."

This quote here gauges toward a celebratory orientation, which may not promote deep learning or building students' cultural competence. However, when we did walk the hallways, students' identities were clearly represented with maps of students' ethnicities, flags, posters, and quotes of multicultural figures. The hallways seemed to create an inclusive classroom community but warrant to question the extent to which students were engaged and building cultural competency, and not on a superficial level. For Mr. Fosberg, we found there were elements that he seemed to lack depth as we shared above, but he was able to articulate and conceptualize CRP to reflect Khalifa and colleagues' (2016) framework in some ways. For example, Mr. Fosberg shared in his interview about being attentive to maintaining restorative justice practices when handling student behavior and discipline; he mentioned paying special attention to the discipline data of his Black and Brown male students. Overall, Mr. Fosberg's partial conceptualization of CRP seemed to influence how he articulated his practice as a school leader. We now move to Ms.

Henry and Ms. Rotte to explain how their sense-making of CRP was limited through the element of critical self-awareness.

While Mr. Fosberg had partial understanding of CRP, he seemed to be more developed in his critical consciousness than Ms. Henry and Ms. Rotte. For example, Ms. Henry was the assistant principal at a school that was also in Mr. Fosberg's district. Ms. Henry's school also shared a similar demographic breakdown to Mr. Fosberg's school with an even breakdown of White, Black, and Brown students with over 70% of the students on free and reduced lunch. When conceptualizing and explaining her views of CRP, she explained elements that included incorporating students' identities and backgrounds into curriculum and instruction and stressed the importance of academic success but did not attend to the sociopolitical or critical conscious piece. Ms. Rotte, who was the principal at a predominately White elementary school in a suburban/rural community, did not articulate a specific behavior or practice connected to CRP, when we asked to what extent she believed her teachers, enacted CRP, she explained the protocols they used as a school to look at student assessment data. She did not refer to the importance of using students' cultures, frames of reference, identities, nor discussed or shared about building students' critical consciousness. It seemed that Ms. Rotte did not acknowledge, or possibly recognize, CRP as a framework for teaching.

Of these three principals, Mr. Fosberg and Ms. Henry were more similar as a case than Ms. Rotte, but all principals displayed a partial, or limited, understanding of CRP which seemed to inform how they articulated their practices as school leaders. Unlike Mr. Roberts, these school leaders focused more on family involvement versus engagement. While Mr. Roberts explained that while his school promoted involvement practices as well, he recognized this was an issue compared to the other three principals who were content with how their families were involved

through school-centric approaches – a finding we share below more in the discussion section. Mr. Fosberg and Ms. Henry were more robust in their conceptualizations of CRP than Ms. Rotte. For these two principals, their district espoused CRP while Ms. Rotte's district did not. These two principals were also located in a highly diverse school district outside a metropolitan city while Ms. Rotte was situated at a predominately White school within a rural/suburban community. These contexts heavily shaped these school leaders and their sense-making of CRP. In this first section, we presented how these principals define and conceptual CRP. In the next section, we share how these two cases (i.e., Mr. Roberts and the other three principals) are similar concerning the data on their teacher's instructional practices and their focus on implementing mathematics and ELA curricula with fidelity.

Cross-Case Analysis – Attending to the Curricula

All the school leaders in this study converged concerning their expectations and sense-making with curriculum implementation. From the other qualitative study of the five community-engaged teachers, we found these teachers were often hindered with their ability to enact CRP because they felt they had to prescriptively follow the given curricula. For example, Mr. Fosberg's sense-making of following district initiatives concerning curriculum implementation influenced his priorities as an instructional leader. His district purchased new mathematics curricula and it was being implemented for the first time in that school year. When asked about his views on curriculum implementation he stated that his expectations were that,

> "They implement the curriculum- plan around the curriculum, they assess the curriculum, they provide feedback on the curriculum. – those would be my expectations, because you can't tell me how students are doing unless you're implementing it to an element with fidelity."

Across three different school districts, this was a message all the teachers reported they heard consistently in their respective school settings, and they felt they were not allowed to modify or deviate from the curriculum.

Mr. Fosberg believed that the new math curriculum needed to be implemented with fidelity to know how students were doing academically. When sharing about his expectations on CRP, he believed that his teachers were being culturally responsive which he based on student engagement. However, from our other study on the two teachers in his building, Mr. Lamb and Ms. Ellis, we observed that students were often not engaged due to teacher-centered instruction that provided little to no opportunities for students to engage in academic discussions. As shown in Table 2, Mr. Lamb and Ms. Ellis scored consistently around a 1 on the CRIOP, depending on the element and subject. A score of 1 on the CRIOP means we observed minimal enactment of culturally responsive practices. Both these teachers taught from the ELA and mathematics curricula where instruction was heavily teacher-centered and we seldomly observed opportunities for students to work collaboratively or to engage in discourse with their peers. For ELA, Mr. Lamb and Ms. Ellis often read a short passage or text aloud and would model how to answer comprehension questions on a worksheet. Students would then proceed to read another short passage and answer another set of comprehension questions as part of their independent practice. For mathematics, it was a similar approach: these teachers would model how to solve a particular set of problems on a worksheet and then have students do another worksheet on their own. There were little to no connections to students' identities and backgrounds or opportunities to building their sociopolitical consciousness. To note, we want to make it clear that we don't view teacher-centered, or lecture-based, practices as not being culturally responsive; but when these practices are the only modality of instruction and do not include other components such as

building students' cultural competency or critical consciousness, then we deem these practices to not be culturally responsive.

Ms. Henry shared in her interview that she believed her teachers were enacting elements of CRP like students' identities and cultures being represented in the curriculum. However, when we observed Ms. Karen, we did not see students' identities being represented in the curricula and Ms. Karen's instructional practices, similar Mr. Lamb's and Ms. Ellis', were teacher-centered and worksheet heavy with little to no opportunities for students to work together. Ms. Karen shared the messages and expectations that her district and school leaders conveyed to her, "we just adopted the [new] math curriculum, we're going to go through their scope and sequence; we're going to try and stick to the book as much as we can." Mr. Fosberg and Ms. Henry were both situated in the same district where it seemed their district had a clear vision pertaining to its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) vision and mission. The district website provided a robust layout for staff where there were resources, links to books and articles, information and history about the local community the district was serving, and a calendar with professional development opportunities pertaining to different topics within DEI. From interviews with these school leaders and their teachers, it was clear efforts were being made. However, it seemed that these efforts pertaining to CRP or topics related to DEI were not being meaningfully integrated into the mathematics and ELA curriculum – a finding we return later in the discussion section.

While Mr. Roberts seemed to enact more of the behaviors of Khalifa and colleagues' (2016) culturally responsive school leadership framework, he seemed to also be entrenched with following his district's expectations for curriculum implementation, despite the curricula not being culturally responsive. Ms. Anderson was beginning to enact culturally responsive practices in some elements like classroom relationships and family collaboration, but her instructional and

discourse practices were not necessarily culturally responsive. She enacted practices similar to the teachers we mentioned above (i.e., teacher-centered, lack of discourse, worksheet heavy). When we asked Mr. Roberts about his expectations with curriculum implementation, he said, "those expectations are quite high from a district level just because we've adopted new curriculum recently." Mr. Roberts explained that he does not expect his teachers to follow the prescribed curriculum in verbatim, but he has communicated that their practices maintain the core elements and expectations of using and implementing the curricula and curriculum tools. For Ms. Anderson, we found through interviewing her that she felt she lacked seeing culturally responsive practices modeled during her teacher preparation and that she needed to follow the district-sponsored curriculum with fidelity, which she believed was not culturally responsive.

There was one teacher, Ms. Apitz, who was beginning to make significant modifications to the curriculum which enabled her to enact CRP more than the other teachers. While in her school setting, she heard messages from both her district and principal, Ms. Rotte, on curriculum implementation, she also heard messages that she was allowed to modify and adapt based on her students need. Ms. Apitz internalized these messages with her beliefs and knowledge of CRP and modified the curriculum and her instruction to be more culturally responsive, especially in ELA. While these were messages from her setting, we argue from our analysis of her data in both this study and the other study, that we found she heavily associated these modifications from her pedagogical beliefs and what she learned in her teacher preparation – not as much the role of her principal. Ms. Rotte in her interview did not acknowledge CRP nor any topic related to multiculturalism, diversity, equity, or inclusion. The district where Ms. Rotte and Ms. Apitz were situated in was a high performing district based on standardized test scores. Ms. Rotte being

situated in such a setting made it clear that her goal was as elementary principal was to build the foundation for academic success within her district.

While analyzing the curricula to the extent to which it was culturally responsive is outside the scope of this paper; however, we wanted to note that from our observations of teachers' instruction, we examined the curriculum tools they were given, and it was clear to us that these tools and materials were not culturally responsive. The curricula did not reflect the lives of students, nor was it contextualized. Further, the curricula did not seem to build students' cultural competence or critical consciousness. While it seemed, the curricula were limited in these ways, the school leaders were all expected by their school districts to ensure teachers were implementing the curricula with fidelity. Granted, there were some minor exceptions where each school leader mentioned flexibility, but this was largely relative to the timing and sequencing of lessons and not the content of the lessons themselves. This discrepancy between the CRP framework and the curricula materials and tools these districts provided and their expectations for curricula implementation was consistent at every school.

Discussion

In our study of four elementary school leaders, we found that these school leaders' sense-making varied which seemed to influence how they work with their school staff and families and communities. When drawing from sense-making theory, there are three elements to consider: one's interpretation, the situation and setting, and the roles and representation of a given policy/policies (Spillane et al., 2002). We consider each of these elements for the school leaders in this study about their sense-making of culturally responsive school leadership.

Mr. Roberts' own identity as a Black male whose background consisted of working in the same district for many years as a teacher shaped how he interpreted his role as the principal of

Washington Elementary. Prior research has shown how Black school leaders have taken on leadership practices that are oriented toward anti-racism, community engagement, and social justice (Brown, 2005; Smith, 2021). Through sense-making theory, we found Mr. Roberts shared and reflected on leadership practices that fit within multiple elements of the culturally responsive school leadership framework (Khalifa et al., 2016). For example, Mr. Roberts seemed to have a critical self-awareness of his own identity and understanding the larger challenges within society and in education, like the lack of diversity within the teacher workforce. He was aware that despite challenges like these, he could still look to hire and secure culturally responsive teachers – as he has done the last couple years during his leadership. He also explicitly focused on efforts to trying to build relationships with students and families; but he was not satisfied with the current structures at his school where families were more involved than engaged in the educational programming at Washington Elementary. By trying to secure and develop culturally responsive teachers and beginning to consider how to better engage families, Mr. Roberts was trying to create a welcoming and inclusive space for all students.

Mr. Roberts was situated in a school district, like Mr. Fosberg's and Ms. Henry's district, that seemed to endorse DEI efforts. Despite being situated in districts that claimed to support DEI-related efforts, all of these school leaders were expected to follow their new district-sponsored curricula in mathematics and ELA with fidelity. Granted, all these school leaders mentioned that they communicated to their teachers that it was okay to deviate and modify the curriculum, but these expectations were tied to the pacing and sequencing of the curricula and not the content. Even though it was outside the scope of this study, we found the curricula in both mathematics and ELA across all three school districts were limited or not culturally responsive. Even if the curricula were asset-based, scholars in the field have argued that having

specific materials or tools, like books and curricula, alone are not sufficient to enact asset-based instruction like CRP (Vlach, 2022). Instead, it is a combination of utilizing instructional tools in tandem with CRP that is enacted by the teacher. It is not an easy feat for a school district with many students and teachers who need materials to teach academic content and skills, to both attain curricula that is culturally responsive and support teachers with their skills to enact CRP – this last point addresses the third element in sense-making which is roles of representation.

The school leaders in this study had varying roles of representation of CRP articulated by their respective districts. For example, in Mr. Fosberg's and Ms. Henry's district seemed to have had a robust platform on their district website pertaining to DEI for their staff members that included links to articles and books on topics like CRP; a calendar for professional development on varying topics in these areas; and other resources connected to the surrounding community, such as information about partnerships with community-based programs. For Mr. Roberts, his district was similar, but it seemed the resources provided to school leaders and teachers were limited and not as contextualized as Mr. Fosberg's and Ms. Henry's district. While his district seemed to provide trainings and structures to support their teachers in areas like implicit bias and other equity-related issues, there seemed to be little to no resources connected to the Allen community or materials to contextualized to students' lives. Ms. Rotte, her district had no information on their public files related to CRP nor DEI. In the mission and vision statement for this district, they shared how they were a premier district and had excellent results based on standardized test scores.

Each of these principals interpreted CRP differently which affected how they defined CRP and communicated to their teachers about their expectations for instructional practice. Both Mr. Fosberg and Ms. Henry claimed that their teachers, including the community-engaged

graduates we observed to be culturally responsive when our observation data showed that that was not the case. This is not to say that these teachers did not enact any practices that reflected CRP, but from our observations of these teachers showed that generally their practices were not culturally responsive. There could be other teachers in their buildings that we did not observe who were enacting culturally responsive practices, but because they claimed their teachers featured in this study were culturally responsive, then this already warrants to question the extent to which other teachers were enacting CRP. This juxtaposition reflects to Ladson-Billings' (2014) frustration that many teachers and school leaders misappropriate her culturally relevant framework by often missing components in their practice – usually the sociopolitical or critical consciousness piece. While there seemed to be missing elements or misconceptions of CRP from some of these school leaders, none of them, except for Mr. Roberts, seemed to address the sociopolitical piece, or building students' critical consciousness. This connects importantly to Mr. Roberts' identity as a Black male, as scholarship on Black school leaders has shown that these leaders often bring a strong sociopolitical, or critical, consciousness to their work as they are aware of their own identity within a racialized society (Khalifa et al., 2016; Milner, 2017; Smith, 2021). Mr. Roberts made it clear throughout his interview that he was always trying to be cognizant of his identity while working in a White and female-dominated profession.

Our findings of these school leaders' sense-making of CRP and the challenge that all of them experienced with maintaining their districts' curricula implementation policies seemed to impact their instructional program coherence (Newmann et al., 2001). Instructional coherence refers to a, "set of interrelated programs for students and staff that are guided by a common framework for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning climate and that are pursued over a sustained period" (p. 297). Newmann and colleagues have found that school leaders who

were more effective at supporting student learning maintained instructional program coherence to support their teachers than school leaders who had multiple different programs and efforts being implemented which created incoherence for their teachers. All these school leaders, particularly Mr. Roberts, Mr. Fosberg, and Ms. Henry, seemed to be facing multiple reform efforts from their districts. A large focus for these districts was to raise academic achievement and by using materials like the mathematics and ELA curricula despite these curricula not being culturally responsive. However, while these respective districts seemed to advocate for instructional practices that were asset-based like CRP, their expectations for curriculum implementation were not in alignment. This discrepancy seemed to be caused by the setting and situation these leaders were in along with their own identities and background. For example, Mr. Roberts emphasized the importance for teachers to build relationships with students and to engage with parents and families – practices that Ms. Anderson was beginning to enact. However, Mr. Roberts seemed to be compliant with his district's expectations for curricula implementation and following the curricula with fidelity – here, we observed Ms. Anderson struggle to enact culturally responsive practices. Parts of Mr. Roberts sense-making were consistent with Ms. Anderson's instructional practice. This was a finding that was consistent with the other school leaders and teachers except for Ms. Apitz. It seemed that Ms. Apitz felt that she had more agency despite being in a setting that did not endorse CRP. She seemed to be "teaching against the grain" and resisting the practices and beliefs her school setting and principal espoused (Cochran-Smith, 1991). While this was an exception to this finding, it leaves us to wonder about the extent to which Ms. Apitz would have enacted even more robust culturally responsive practices had she been in a setting that endorsed such pedagogies. Nonetheless, it was clear in our study that principals' and school leaders' sense-making played a

vital role in how they communicated their instructional expectations to their teachers and how this may have impacted teachers' enactment of instruction.

Our study provided some important implications for research and practice. First, school leadership and principal preparation programs need to strive to prepare their school leaders for the demands of a growingly diverse student population and the complexities of culturally responsive school leadership. This means that school leadership preparation programs need to make the elements of CRP and culturally responsive school leadership clear for their candidates. Further, during this preparation, future school leaders need to develop skills and have access to tools to enable them to examine curricula and instructional materials to ensure they are culturally responsive. Currently, such tools exist like the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Curriculum Scorecards (Peoples et al., 2022). There needs to be stronger alignment between the CRP framework and tools and materials that are provided in schools.

Apart from school leadership preparation, our study also showed the importance of maintaining instructional program coherence (Newmann et al., 2001). These school leaders were expected to ensure the curricula their school-districts provided were being implemented with fidelity, but these curricula were not culturally responsive. As we mentioned above, even if the curricula were culturally responsive, this does not enable teachers to become culturally responsive in their practices. Teachers who are culturally responsive modify the curricula to contextualized it for their students and make it meaningful to them. For many educators, CRP seems to be abstract which then hinders their ability to articulate or enact such practices (Kahneman, 2011; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Spillane, 2002). While this indeed has been an on-going issue in education (Ladson-Billings, 2014), recent scholarship has shown how CRP is operationalized (Howard & Rodriguez-Minkoff, 2016; Powell et al., 2016), and there are clear

examples of how asset-based pedagogies like CRP can connect meaningfully to academic content and skills (Dyches & Boyd, 2017; Muhammad, 2020). This line of scholarship and materials should provide educators opportunities to operationalize CRP while attending to academic content and skills.

While our study examined school leaders' sense-making with regard to CRP, there were some limitations to this study, First, we only interviewed each school leader once and did not observe them in different capacities like leading a professional development meeting. Future studies should not only interview but observe school leaders work and lead amongst other staff. Further, our study also examined early career teachers' extent to which they enacted CRP in their classrooms, observing other teachers at different stages within their careers would also be fruitful to examine in conjunction with school leader's sense-making of CRP. In addition, we found the curricula to not be culturally responsive. Future studies should evaluate the curricula in conjunction with observing instructional and leadership practices. This would help the field better understand how teachers and school leaders can more effectively use curricula to be culturally responsive. Finally, future scholarship should address both the specific behaviors and other types of leadership practices (e.g., distributed; Leithwood et al., 2004) school leaders utilize and how these behaviors and practices enable or hinder them from enacting culturally responsive school leadership.

Conclusion

Prior research has shown the value and influence that different leadership behaviors and practices can have on student learning and academic achievement (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood et al., 2009). However, when examining this literature, it is limited through the lens of CRP and culturally responsive school leadership (Khalifa et al.,

2016). This is not to say that leadership practices like distributed leadership are not effective. Instead, we argue that forms of leadership like instructional and distributed leadership should be used in conjunction with Khalifa and colleagues' culturally responsive school leadership framework. These other leadership practices and frameworks can be integrated and used a means to recruit, support, and retain culturally responsive teachers and school curricula. We found in our study that school leaders' sense-making varied on CRP, and this seemed to influence their teachers' instructional practices and their expectations concerning curriculum implementation. It seems that if school leaders have a robust understanding and conceptualization of CRP, then other forms of leadership and behaviors, when used effectively, can support with teachers' development and enactment of culturally responsive pedagogy.

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Table 1.
School Leader and School Demographics

School Leader	Gender	Race	Role	Years of Leadership	School Type/Free-Reduced Lunch	White Student Pop. %	Students of Color Pop. %
Mr. Fosberg	M	White	Principal K-6	10	Urban/Suburban – 100%	8%	92%
Ms. Henry	F	White	Assistant Principal K-6	5	Urban/Suburban – 100%	30%	70%
Mr. Roberts	M	Black	Principal Pre-K-5	10	Urban/Suburban – 100%	8%	92%
Ms. Rotte	F	White	Principal K-2	20	Rural/Suburban – 15%	90%	10%

Table 2.
CRIOP Score Averages Across Three Mathematics Observations

Element:	Classroom Relationships	Assessment Practices	Instructional Practices	Classroom Discourse	Critical Consciousness
Ms. Apitz	**3**	**1.83**	**1.93**	**2**	**0**
Mr. Lamb	**1.33**	**0.5**	**0.53**	**0.5**	**0**
Ms. Karen	**1.5**	**0.83**	**0.4**	**0.67**	**0**
Ms. Anderson	**2**	**0.75**	**0.6**	**0.67**	**0**
Ms. Ellis	**1.5**	**1.33**	**0.8**	**0.83**	**0**

Table 3.
CRIOP Score Averages Across Three ELA Observations

Element:	Classroom Relationships	Assessment Practices	Instructional Practices	Classroom Discourse	Critical Consciousness
Ms. Apitz	**3**	**2**	**2.5**	**2.5**	**1.22**
Mr. Lamb	**1.5**	**1.08**	**1.13**	**0.67**	**0.56**
Ms. Karen	**0.83**	**0.83**	**0.73**	**0.42**	**0.78**
Ms. Anderson	**2.13**	**1.13**	**0.8**	**0.63**	**0.67**
Ms. Ellis	**1.67**	**1.33**	**1.47**	**0.75**	**0.89**

Table 4.
CRIOP Family Collaboration Score

	Classroom Relationships
Ms. Apitz	2.25
Mr. Lamb	1.25
Ms. Karen	1.5
Ms. Anderson	2.25
Ms. Ellis	1.5

[1] All names of the teachers, the teacher preparation program, schools, and communities are pseudonyms.

[2] One teacher was observed four times: two in each content area.

[3] All names of school leaders, teachers, schools, and communities are pseudonyms.