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## Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Case Study in Georgia

Glenda Johnson - Mapp

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# **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: A Case Study in Georgia**

by  
Glenda Johnson-Mapp

A Dissertation  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
The Degree of Doctor of Education  
In Curriculum and Leadership  
(Educational Leadership)

*Keywords:* self-efficacy, English language learners, training support, middle school, culturally responsive pedagogy, cultural sustaining pedagogies, teaching resources

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Committee Member, Role, Rank, Department

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Johnny Allen and the late Ethel L. Johnson. I owe you everything. I cherish the foundation you instilled in me to recognize my worth and what can be achieved with determination, hard work, and sacrifice. Daddy, we did it! To my husband William, and my dear children, William Allen and Lauren, I hope this journey has inspired you that there exist no limitations for achieving your goals and aspirations. As a family our collective educational experiences have fueled my desire to research this topic and hopefully will be a catalyst for others to explore and make change.

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## **Abstract**

This study explored the phenomenon of culturally responsive pedagogy to address the problem of limited data to inform best practices in facilitating high teacher self-efficacy with culturally responsive teaching practices. Using a qualitative exploratory case study design with an initial quantitative component, the perceptions of content-area middle school general education teachers regarding culturally responsive pedagogy in their classroom teaching practices were assessed and considered in respect to their reported perceptions of self-efficacy with culturally responsive teaching. The study's quantitative component used the Teacher Self-Efficacy on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale to assess the perceived self-efficacy with culturally responsive teaching of 150 content-area teachers from three southeastern Georgia middle schools. Scores were distributed across Quartiles 1, 2, 3, and 4 to facilitate the selection of eight teachers to participate in the case study component, consisting of a structured interview, card sorting, and artifact review. Data analysis for the qualitative component followed the interpretive thematic analysis procedure to review, summarize, and compare the case study findings to the existing literature to provide further insight into the relationships of effective implementation of culturally responsive practices, teacher perceived self-efficacy with culturally responsive practices, and administrative support for culturally responsive practices.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

As student demographics change, educational policy revisions and educational challenges evolve, many educators differ with the level of knowledge and experience necessary in addressing the needs of an increasingly culturally diverse population and self-efficacy to address students in a culturally responsive context. By sharing cultural and linguistic experiences, culturally responsive teachers minimize challenges with academic instruction while increasing efficacy with their instruction of students (Moore, 2017). Despite evidence-based support for the approach known as culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), some educators may lack clarity on the concept itself, or may lack experience on how to apply it in the classroom. There exists a wide range of terms related to culturally responsive pedagogy from various researchers. In this study we will utilize culturally responsive pedagogy as the terminology to encompass the ideology to reflect the terms listed in Table 3 Similar Definitions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy later within this literature. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the conceptions of CRP practices held by content-area middle school general education teachers with varying levels of self-efficacy.

Ashreef et al. (2017) defined culture as encompassing the myriad ways of life to include arts, beliefs, and institutions of a population passed down from generation to generation. Culture represents the accepted way of life for a population (Ashreef et al, 2017). Bradshaw et al. (2018) posited that culture describes the population codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, art with five fundamental features shared by all cultures. Culture is (a) learned, (b) shared, (c) based on symbols, (d) integrated, and (e) dynamic (Bradshaw et al., 2018).

Before the expansion of technology and the election of the nation's first African American president, Barak Obama, American culture perpetuated a shift and state of transition with cultural norms. The recognition of this societal cultural transition precipitated because of the occurrences of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Hurricane Katrina, health care reform, the housing bubble and its subsequent crash, and the onset of the Recession (Bernick, 2016). Several national events over the last decade altered the cultural landscape of American life. The terrorists' attacks on the twin towers in New York City prompted amongst some citizens a distrust for Americans of Muslim and Arabic countries; immigrant legislation and regulations were confounded as a political reasoning for unemployment; and the financial distress caused by the housing market crash increased job deficits and boosted inflation widening the gap of socio-economic levels between Americans (Bernick 2016). "The American Dream" remains a staple of the American national identity and comes with a significant price tag (Jordan & Olshansky, 2016). In the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008, debt increased as Americans fought the rising costs of housing and increasing unemployment. (Jordan & Olshansky, 2016).

A meta-analysis of research found with the rising cost of housing, gentrification developed as affluent families moved into urban areas, while underserved families sought affordable living in suburban and rural areas, changing the demographic composition of the traditional communities (Pearson, 2019). This element of the changing composition and landscape of communities was attributed to gentrification (Pearson, 2019). The term gentrification represented the influx of a "gentry" in poverty-stricken communities in London during the early 1950's (Glass, 1994). The term suggested a huge change in a cities or counties socioeconomic characteristics and physical environment to include housing, infrastructure,

schools, teachers, libraries, parks, community centers, and other amenities changing the community culture (Chang, 2014). Chang (2014) concluded that the displacement of the original neighborhood residents and businesses influenced a cultural shift of the community.

Gentrification greatly influenced and reshaped public schools and contributed significantly to the diversity in the K-12 classroom (Pearson, 2019). Gentrification impacted the diversity in the public schools in the United States and contributed to the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.

The Pew Research Center projects the United States in 2045 will become a majority-minority nation (Tillison, 2019). Frey (2018) through research with the Brookings Institute (2018) found forecasts predicting during that year, European Americans will compose 49.7% of our nation's population in contrast to 24.6% for Latin American, 13.1% for African Americans, 7.9% for Asian-Americans, and 3.8% for multiracial Americans. California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas have already reached majority-minority status.

Krogstad and Radford (2019) reported that a record 44.8 million immigrants living in the U.S. in 2018, making up 13.7% of the nation's population, representing a more than 400% increase since 1960. Immigrant growth has begun to stabilize yet, the number of immigrants living in the United States is projected to almost double by 2065 (Krogstad & Radford, 2019). As the largest group of immigrants shifted from Europeans, Canadians, and other North Americans to Mexicans and other Latin nations, the largest age group moved from ages 65-69 in 1960 to ages 40-44 in 2018 (Krogstad & Radford, 2019).

The demographic shift is reflected in our nation's public schools leading to legislation to address the educational impact. Provisions in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) from the administration of former President Lyndon Johnson indicated any public

school or educational group receiving federal funding was accountable. A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1983) report under Former President Ronald Reagan stipulated all students regardless of race, class, were entitled to equal education with proper guidance to increase the competence and ability of the US to enhance industrial and technological advances for our nation. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 reauthorized ESSA focusing on accountability mostly through standardized tests and written documentation (Kozol, 2007). Meyer (2001) explained that public schools and grade levels within schools were required to meet Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) to avoid punishments, embarrassments, and sanctions. Pressure to perform within the rigor and mastery of standards while leveling the playing field of high and lower performing schools set the tone for a focus on standardized testing decreasing the priority of education of the whole child (Kozol, 2007).

### **Researcher's Experience with the Problem**

As an observer and member of the rural community of the district participating in the study, I have witnessed the transition of the rural community in the early 2000's from a predominant area of European-American descent to a community comprised of majority African Americans and Latino Americans. Working in the district as a Multi-Tiered System of Support Coordinator, I meet with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students and other stakeholders to determine the academic needs of marginalized students. Establishing interventions and goals for students with academic or behavior deficits is my primary role. Often during the meetings, the educators expressed that they were at a loss with addressing the needs of marginalized students. Some teachers contributed the academic deficits to English Language Learners (ELL) language acquisition and barriers due to ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Although ELL students may come from bilingual homes, they are educated in the

U.S. during their formative years. Educators frequently made assumptions about student abilities without measurable data. Teachers often expressed feelings of being inadequately prepared or trained to address the needs of certain students especially minority students and English Language Learners. In addition to the role of MTSS coordinator, pre-Covid -19 pandemic, I served as a cultural diversity liaison for one year. The role created by the district was designed to acknowledge the issues of teacher preparedness and empathy regarding students of varied cultural backgrounds. The role of the cultural diversity liaison was to provide professional learning to staff. The cultural diversity curriculum was limited to six lessons. Time allotted for the cultural diversity curriculum delivery was integrated into the existing professional learning schedule. Time for cultural diversity training was limited to approximately 45 minutes every other month. Recognizing the importance of the professional learning, teachers were engaged. However, time and funding for extended professional learning remained not a high priority in comparison to content and curriculum training, high stakes testing, and student performance. In the role of researcher, I viewed the phenomena of teacher efficacy with CRP and its impact with instruction as an area to examine further.

### **Background of Problem**

Contrasting cultural backgrounds are common between general educators in the United States and many of the students present in their classrooms (Wong et al., 2016). Since classroom environments are built upon a set of contexts and behaviors that may differ from those outside the educational setting, ineffective communication and a lack of shared expectations can lead to misunderstandings, discipline referrals, and other sub-optimal learning outcomes. Despite the development of a substantial body of literature supporting the use of CRP over the preceding decades, many educators still lack self-efficacy in addressing cross-cultural pedagogy.

In the 1990s, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995a) developed CRP to provide effective strategies for the instruction and management of students in the changing classrooms. In her writings, Ladson-Billings explained that many educators lacked useful strategies to assist with teaching and otherwise interacting with diverse students in a way that would ameliorate the educational barriers presented by cultural discontinuity. The principles of CRP conveyed a charge for teachers to remain non-bias and comprehensive of the cultural backgrounds of all students to effectively facilitate learning in the classroom.

Wong et al. (2016) indicated that general educators in the present era may not understand effective teaching strategies or classroom management for all students in the classroom due to a lack of self-efficacy, support, or training and contended that teacher uncertainty regarding implementation of CRP has existed due to limited training in previous teacher education programs alongside inadequate implementation into professional learning curricula within school districts.

Novice teachers have often been tasked with teaching students from differing backgrounds (e.g., African American, and Hispanic American students) while lacking knowledge about cultural competency and CRP (Lehman, 2017). The number of European American students has been decreasing while the number of non-European Hispanic American and Asian/Pacific Islander students increased (Minkos et al., 2017). Lehman (2017) and Minkos et al. (2017) emphasized both the increasingly diverse nature of the student population and that new teachers tend to be young, female, and of European American ethnicity: these teachers may not be reflective of the culture of the students they are teaching. To offer the best instruction and effectively manage the classroom environment amid the unfamiliarity, teachers require additional

support systems in the form of professional learning opportunities focusing on research-informed and evidence-based strategies (Minkos et al., 2017).

With the increasing disconnect between the racial, ethnic, and cultural demographics of teachers and students accompanied with continued disparities in the academic outcomes of African American, Native American, and Hispanic American students, Ladson-Billings (1995b) proposed a culturally relevant theoretical perspective to remain essential for teachers. Arguing that earlier sociolinguistic theoretical approaches to culturally responsive education lacked or remained non inclusive of the larger social and cultural contexts of students, Ladson-Billings (1995b) found that these earlier approaches were therefore unable to adequately explain the causes of academic success with students. Ladson-Billings(1995b) stated three criteria for prioritizing student success in the multicultural environment: “(a) an ability to develop students academically, (b) a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and (c) the development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness.” Further, Ladson-Billings (1995b) distinguished CRP components fundamentally through adherence with three broad propositions or conceptions: (a) self and other, (b) social relations, and (c) knowledge to be different from other strictly psychological models.

Haberman (2010) asserted that teacher educators and researchers were unlikely to make a significant difference in the preparation of teachers working with students in urban poverty without expanding student recruitment and training teacher candidates with the expansive view of pedagogy (including CRP). Ladson-Billings (1995b) suggested educators consider integration of the work of Bartolomé (1994) in teacher preparation programs. Bartolomé (1994) advocated supporting teacher candidates in understanding culture and the functions of culture within the educational process. Both Bartolomé (1994) and Zeichner (1989) explained the need for the



introduction of CRP in teacher preparation courses, opposing then-current versions of multicultural education or approaches from the field of human relations. Teacher preparatory courses require a design that does not problematize teaching, instead encouraging teacher candidates to query the nature of student to teacher relationships, curriculum, schooling, and society: instructing teacher candidates to systematically include student culture in the classroom as authorized or official knowledge (Bartolomé, 1994).

Sociocultural theory provides effective strategies to instruct students and manage classroom behaviors. For the design of this study, sociocultural theory provided additional guidance for student learning and the teaching practices of middle school general education teachers. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) explained how the sociocultural theory of human learning informs the education and development of students and emphasizes the independence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge in the classroom.

The work of Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1962) also informed the application of sociocultural theory in this study. The role of culture and language in student development remains a vital part of Vygotsky's theory, with tenets of the sociocultural theory suggesting that student learning and development remain socially and culturally situated (Davidson, 2010). To gain a profound understanding of the role academic language plays within the education of students and middle school general educators, one must be cognizant of the relationship between language use and larger social and cultural domains. Embedded in instruction and learning, literacy cannot be isolated from the classroom setting (Davidson, 2010).

A primary factor influencing learning of students relates to the educators' self-efficacy (Epstein & Willhite, 2015). Bandura (1977) presented an integrative theoretical framework to explain and predict psychological changes achieved by different modes of treatment. Consistent

with the premise of Bandura (2006), Cayirdag (2017) found research on teacher self-efficacy to suggest that many educators viewed their efficacy and ability to work with students as being directly related to external factors (e.g., parents, district guidelines, administration, and resources) with determinant influences on their performance as educators. According to Bandura (1977), an elevated sense of instructor self-efficacy influences and predicts the outcomes of students. Expanding the premise of Bandura (1977), Epstein and Willhite (2015) explained that student outcomes influenced educators' self-efficacy as more confident or less confident with beliefs regarding personal abilities to impact students' academic and behavioral outcomes. Epstein and Willhite (2015) suggested that teacher self-efficacy relates to personal experiences, finding that educators finding success with students experience high efficacy while educators with non-proficient students experience low efficacy.

Findings from Callaway's (2017) study support the research-based strategies of improving teachers perceived self-efficacy and culturally responsive teaching, engagement, classroom organization, and management. Investigating the relationship between teacher self-efficacy and instructional strategies within a single southeastern school district, Callaway's study sought to develop more effective multicultural classroom environments and increase the confidence of teachers working in these environments. The study showed statistically significant, positive relationships associated with the constructs of engaging students, managing the learning environment, culturally responsive teaching, and instructional strategies. Teachers demonstrating these constructs were shown to exhibit more confidence in working with diverse students than those teachers lacking the constructs.

In a causal comparative study, Wong et al. (2016) explored aspects of pre-service teacher strengths regarding readiness to teach and the impact on efficacy with instructing culturally- and

linguistically diverse students. Cultural competence, mentors, professional learning, and intern experiences were found to contribute to increased knowledge and instructional strategies with students; however, teacher candidates lacked confidence in their abilities to instruct culturally linguistically diverse students when those teachers possessed low self-efficacy.

Driver and Powell (2017) hypothesized that culturally sensitive interventions coupled with high quality instruction would lead to greater academic success. They investigated interventions for students with mathematics difficulties and found support for the premise of teacher training to implement interventions for effective outcomes. A measured effect size of 0.79 suggested that teacher training contributed a moderate to large impact on student achievement in mathematics. The findings of this quasi-experimental study indicated that teacher efficacy increased with proper mathematics interventions following training and implementation, resulting in improved performance with students.

Varied terminology is used in the literature to describe students relevant to the context of this study. Mitchell (2017) uses the term culturally and linguistically diverse students to recognize that the needs of diverse students may include but also extend beyond learning English. Both Mitchell (2017) and Ladson-Billings (2014), often refer to students as diverse learners to identify students from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families and communities of lower socioeconomic status.

Lehman (2017) and Wong et al. (2016) frequently use the term linguistically diverse students to emphasize traits related to communication, such as language family, grammar, and vocabulary; however, Hosp (n.d.) contends that the phrase English language learners are commonly used by educators in the public schools and legislators to refer to these students. Table 1 presents seven frequently used terms present in the literature. However, we will utilize the

terms diverse students and marginalized students to reflect the group of students referred to in the study.

Table 1

*Descriptive Terms of Students*

Term	Authors using this term
Culturally different students	(Beutel & Tangen, 2018; Gay, 2013)
Culturally diverse students	(Butler, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014)
Culturally and linguistically diverse students	(Mitchell, 2017)
Diverse learners	(Ladson-Billings, 2014; Mitchell, 2017)
English language learners	(Hosp, n.d.)
Linguistically diverse students	(Lehman, 2017; Wong et al., 2016)
Minority students	(Gay, 2010; Lehman, 2017)

As a response to intervention coordinator and middle school teacher within the research setting and school district, the primary researcher prepared this study to explore the persistent deficits and disparities present in the areas of foundational reading and mathematics skills. This study investigated general education teachers’ self-efficacy with the use of CRP as an essential approach to prepare students for academic success in the classroom setting (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

**Statement of the Problem**

The study examined the disconnect between the needs of students and the ability of content-area middle school teachers to provide the appropriate pedagogy to address these student needs. Existing literature on the views held by middle school general education teachers regarding the implementation of CRP was limited. Wong et al. (2016) explored teacher perceptions of pre-service candidates working with students and discovered that potential barriers included low cultural knowledge, inability to work with varied proficiency levels, and inadequate communications with many students and families. Reflecting earlier sentiments, Mosoge et al. (2018) suggested that self-efficacy regarding CRP remains an essential component

for general education teachers towards improving student performance and academic achievement.

Mosoge et al. (2018) reported that phenomenological research on perceived self-efficacy in low-performing schools within the Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality in South Africa suggested teacher self-efficacy to be a critical element: the most significant factor in improving student outcomes. Miller et al. (2017) emphasized the need for middle school general education teachers to develop skills and receive support in the form of best classroom management practices and instructional strategies. Grudnoff et al. (2017) suggested that a great challenge emerged with the relationship between self-efficacy of teachers working with culturally diverse students having apparent learning deficits. According to Grudnoff et al. (2017), inequity of student outcomes with specific groups of students depends largely on teacher quality and practices. Collectively, the literature indicates an inadequate level of teacher preparation with regards to instruction of students with diverse backgrounds (Epstein & Willhite, 2015).

In an observational study, Rutherford-Quach et al. (2018) found that many educators lack the professional learning and resources to integrate language acquisition into core curriculum. Findings indicate that professional learning identifies problems with instructional practices and provides educators with research-based strategies to meet the needs of students. The literature emphasizes the contributory factors of perceived self-efficacy and perceptions of mastery for teachers successfully providing instruction to influence teacher perceived self-efficacy. National trends indicate that English language learning students do not meet most performance indicators of basic or above level performance in reading and mathematics due to difficulty in mastering grade-level content and language acquisition, generally taught by middle school general education teachers in the United States.

McKinney and Snead (2017) found that general educators displaying low efficacy expressed frustrations with lack of training or resources to support students. McKinney and Snead (2017) included 87 teachers in a descriptive-survey study, investigating the unpreparedness of middle school teachers to work with struggling learners to better understand the relationship between teachers' perceptions of capabilities to work with students and the impact with student outcomes. Teachers reported their level of confidence in working with struggling students to be related to the level of preparation from the school and district professional development sessions (McKinney & Snead, 2017). Wang et al. (2017) suggested that, with administrator support and training resources, teacher perceived self-efficacy and teacher performance increased. With the growing number of diverse students entering school districts across the nation, an increased need exists for a systematic approach to address the instructional needs of these students and to ensure compliance with federal guidelines regarding equity in education.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case study was to determine how content-area middle school general education teachers with varying levels of self-efficacy conceptualize CRP in classroom teaching practices. The purpose statement includes the following constructs or variables: (a) middle school general educators, (b) students, (c) varying levels of teacher perceived self-efficacy for a convenience sample of middle school general education teachers, (c) views on teacher perceived self-efficacy with CRP, and (d) teaching practices in the classroom settings.

## **Research Questions**

Research questions addressed data collected from the items on the Cultural Competence Interview (CCI) in Appendix A and Teacher Self-Efficacy on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale (TSECRPS) in Appendix B (Hoy et al., 2009). The research questions evolved from the studies of Chesnut and Burley (2015) and Edwards (2014) who advocated the use of the questionnaires in future investigations by other researchers. The following research questions guided the study RQ<sub>1</sub>. How do middle school content-area teachers conceptualize implementation of CRP? RQ<sub>2</sub>. What factors influence the integration of CRP?

## **Theoretical Framework**

To better understand the concerns expressed in the above research questions a theoretical framework, was applied to this study. Aronson and Laughter (2016) identified Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings as the most cited sources for a theoretical or analytical framework regarding strategies for culturally diverse learners in the literature. As one of the two researchers credited with the foundational work for CRP, Gay (2010) defined CRP as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31).

Gay (2010) asserted that the theory of CRP contains six dimensions. In the first dimension, CRP teachers establish high expectations for students with a commitment to the academic success of all students empowering teachers socially and academically. The second dimension recognizes CRP teachers as multidimensional: engaging in cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives. The third dimension encourages CRP teacher validation of every student, balancing the communication between school and home through diversified instructional strategies and multicultural curricula. With the fourth dimension,

socially, emotionally, and politically inclusive teachers seek to educate the whole child. The fifth dimension reveals the teacher's ability to transform students with the academic environment and communities by using students' personal assets to deliver instruction, assessments, and curriculum design. The final dimension directs CRP teachers' emancipatory and liberating abilities to refrain from oppressive educational practices and ideologies as they lift "the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools" (Gay, 2010, p. 38). Research questions in the study align with the six dimensions of CRP (Gay, 2010).

In addition to the six dimensions, Gay (2013) introduced four actions essential to implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. The first action is to replace the deficit view of students and communities. Secondly, teachers must understand and address the reluctance to use CRP to increase confidence and competence in implementation. Third, teachers must understand culture and cultural differences as essential ideologies for CRP and humanity. The final action involves making pedagogical connections within a broader context while teaching.

Ladson-Billings (1995) defined culturally responsive pedagogy as a pedagogy "that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p.465). Later, Ladson-Billings (1995) described a three-component framework for CRP. The first component is long-term academic achievement. The second component is cultural competence, which "refers to helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving socioeconomic status and making informed decisions" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 36). The final component is socio-political consciousness. Tenets of the theory of CRP guide teachers into sociopolitical consciousness, which includes a



teacher's obligation to find ways for “students to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476).

Although teachers commonly interact with specific students for only a year, Ladson-Billings suggests throughout her writings that “teachers ultimately have a lifelong impact on who they become and the kind of society in which we all will ultimately live” (Ladson-Billings, 2006 p. 37). Through CRP, Ladson-Billings envisioned using constructivist methods to develop bridges by connecting cultural references held by students to academic skills and concepts (Ladson-Billings, 2006). The culturally relevant classroom stands inclusive of all students, allowing CRP teachers to build on the knowledge and cultural assets students transport into the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2006). CRP instruction extends beyond the classroom in the active pursuit of social justice for all members of society (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The sociocultural theory of human learning provided part of the conceptual basis for this study. Tenets of the sociocultural theory describe learning as a social process wherein social interaction plays a vital role in the development of student cognition (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The theory emphasizes the role those social interactions and culturally organized activities play in the psychological development of students. In this sense, students learn from a sociocultural perspective in which interaction, negotiation, and collaboration function to allow students to engage with the didactic tools of their teachers (McConachy, 2009). An understanding of sociocultural theory supports effective teaching practices and curriculum design that is cognizant of individual and cross-cultural differences in learning and development (Miller, 2011). Miller (2011) highlights the importance of recognizing that research has traditionally focused on one generally homogenous group, leading to an understanding of learning and development that may be incorrectly assumed to be universal. Since “ideal thinking and behavior

possibly differs for various cultures” and “different historical and cultural circumstances encourage different developmental routes to any given developmental endpoint,” Miller recommends avoiding such universalist approaches to education in environments that seek to value diversity as a resource (Miller, 2011, p. 198).

Sociocultural theory depicts educators and scholars as reciprocal learners, with teachers interpreting the personal meanings of the learner (Rothenberg & Fisher, 2007). The meanings emerge from the overall perspectives and the conversations of the students and the societal established interpretations of the wider community (Scott & Palinscar, 2013). The sociocultural theory, as a foundational basis, facilitates the advancement of teaching practices that address disparities in the current educational system (Alfred, 2002; Bhatia et al., 2013).

In addition, social cognitive theory informed the use of self-efficacy as a variable in this study. According to Bandura (1977), social cognitive theory conceptualizes human functioning through the interactions of personal thoughts, behaviors, and environmental factors. The social cognitive theory is also linked with the reciprocal causation model, which envisions behavior as a consistent cycle wherein thoughts, experiences, and environment influence each other, thereby helping to inform the concept of self-efficacy (Artino, 2012).

Evans (2017) identified the concept of teacher-efficacy as confidence in one's ability to perform a task, such as when the actions of teachers lead to expected outcomes. The relationships among educator self-efficacy with CRP, educator implementation of academic interventions with students, and the level of confidence of instructors in implementing interventions possibly correlates to the achievement outcomes for students (Evans, 2017).

Evans (2017) interpreted the educators' efficacy as a system controlling most personal activities, such as appropriate use of knowledge and instructional skills. Teachers' self-efficacy

reflects their beliefs regarding their abilities and skillsets as educators, serving as an important feature of instruction related to the academic success of students in the schools, as well as a correlate of behavior that likely supports behavior change in students (Evans, 2017). Self-efficacy assists with self-regulatory behaviors; prior experience with interventions intended to address student learning difficulties better equips teachers to reflect on personal views, beliefs, behaviors, educational practices, environmental factors, classroom cultures, modifications, and the degree of influence of the factors with academic outcomes (Evans, 2017).

Bandura (2006) contended that efficacy serves as the catalyst for choosing behaviors and the determination to carry out tasks. An educator's source of efficacy is derived from experiences, observations, feedback, and physiological responses to the tasks they perform; some educators may avoid difficult tasks (such as implementing academic interventions) due to existing low efficacy (Artino, 2012). Researchers (Caprara et al., 2003) have suggested that teacher efficacy directly correlates with desire to teach, job satisfaction, commitment to the profession, challenges, teacher retention, flexibility, and creativity. Bandura (2006) proposed that all teacher efficacy scales reflect "can do" statements to retrieve more in-depth responses regarding competence and ability, rather than just beliefs. Wang et al. (2017) extended the writings of Bandura by indicating that influential variables on efficacy include a wide variety of factors, such as school location, gender of students taught, ethnic backgrounds, highest degree earned to students, and previous academic achievement.

### **Methodology Overview**

A qualitative, exploratory case study design was selected to align with the guidance of researchers Connelly (2016), Hesse-Biber (2016), McNiff (2016), Park and Park (2016), and Patton (2002). Connelly (2016) stated that qualitative methods generally emphasize data

collection with a small, randomly selected sample of participants. The researcher collected interview data from eight randomly selected middle school teachers using the CCI instrument (provided in Appendix A). In addition, card sorts and artifact review data were collected. Patton (2002) observed that sample size selection is a function of the qualitative researcher's knowledge, purpose of the qualitative investigation, usefulness, credibility, and possible accomplishments with the qualitative researcher's available time and resources.

The research approach with the qualitative methods employed an exploratory case study design. The use of qualitative methods within an exploratory case study design is supported by Brinkman and Kvale (2015) and Hesse-Biber (2016), who suggested that qualitative methods support the development of a profound understanding of the components or phenomena that work together to form meaning and experiences. In the case study design specifically, qualitative research serves to facilitate the researcher's profundity of inquiry into a narrowly defined environment or situation.

Cozby and Bates (2015) commented on the relationship between qualitative methodology and case study design, saying that the case study provides guidance to explore research questions in a real-life context while participant responses are then qualitatively scored for analysis. This research explored the research questions through a single suburban school district in Georgia using qualitative data collected from eight of the district's 150 content-area general education teachers. The eight participants also performed card-sorting and artifact review, which provided further data.

Cozby and Bates (2015) explained that case studies provide an understanding about a phenomenon wherein analyzing participant responses to *how* and *what* research questions pertinent to the phenomenon. Consistent with the guidance of Cozby and Bates (2015), the

qualitative research questions used in this study were formed as *what* or *how* research questions to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of teacher perceptions of CRP.

## **Limitations and Delimitations**

### ***Limitations***

Several limitations should be considered regarding this research. The self-report nature of the TSECPS and CCI instruments presents the first limitation. A percentage of general education middle school teachers may hold or reveal self-conceptions that are inconsistent (e.g., a teacher rating themselves as ineffective despite experiencing high-proficiency student outcomes) or otherwise inaccurate. Likewise, with various types of self-reporting, some teachers may respond to questions in a way that attempts to reflect perceived expectations and beliefs that participants may presume to be held by the researchers. Validity of the data from the TSECPS and CCI should be viewed in context of the reliability and trustworthiness of the teachers' responses. Creswell (2015) suggested researchers seriously consider not only the trustworthiness of the responding teachers, but also the way that teachers' self-reported perceptions may be influenced or limited by their existing cultural competency regarding their previous or current experiences with students.

Secondly, the researcher has held a role in the studied district for many years and has previously collaborated with some of the 150 content-area teachers and students. The potential for researcher bias existed as a result and the researcher maintained a journal of self-reflections with entries related to interactions with the interviewees and all efforts to minimize the extent of self-bias in the study.

## ***Delimitations***

Since this study was performed on a convenience sample of a generally cohesive and comparatively small sample size of eight content-area teachers from three middle schools in one school district, the findings may not be representative of all teachers in the district or state. As this population consists of suburban teachers and students, their experiences and responses may not be consistent with those of urban or rural teachers and students.

## **Definition of Terms**

### ***Card Sorting Technique***

Card sorting techniques comprise the sorting of items into categories at the preference of the sorter (Rugg & McGeorge, 2005). Rugg and McGeorge (2005) stated that card sorts are the simplest form of sorts as the entities being sorted are simply names on a card. In open card sorting, participants fit the researcher-provided items into categories participants create themselves, while in closed card sorting researchers provide fixed categories with predefined names in which participants are directed to place the provided items (Rugg & McGeorge, 2005). The open card sort is considered the more flexible option as it allows the qualitative researcher to observe the participants' categories, review labels assigned to categories, and analyze interesting patterns in the breakdown of the named categories.

### ***Cultural Competence***

Hosp (n.d.) describes cultural competence as the process of incorporating knowledge and skills that is embedded into curriculum, instruction, and practices for a given group. Ladson-Billings (2017) identified four components: awareness of the teacher's personal cultural perspective, the teacher's point of view regarding cultural differences, depth of knowledge regarding varied cultural practices and ideology, and teacher ability to recognize cross-cultural

skillsets. Gay (2013) reported that teachers who develop cultural competence achieve a greater ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with students across different cultures. Nieto (2009) suggested that teachers could increase cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills through culturally competent training, a workshop, or a seminar and that teachers should be trained to hold positive views of different groups of students.

### ***Culturally Responsive Pedagogy***

Ladson-Billings (2017) described culturally responsive pedagogy as a form of teaching that engages those learners with experiences and cultures traditionally excluded from mainstream settings. Key components of culturally responsive pedagogy include teacher caring, teacher attitudes and expectations, formal and informal multicultural curriculum, culturally informed classroom discourse, and cultural congruity in teaching and learning strategies (Gay, 2013).

Ladson-Billings (2017) proposed three guiding practices: teacher instruction yields academic success; instruction develops positive ethnic and cultural identities while simultaneously assisting with academic achievement; and teaching must support students' ability to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities. Nieto (2009) stated that culturally responsive pedagogy encompassed four components: (a) teacher's mindset with respect and honor to the individuality of students, cultures, experiences, and histories; (b) commitment to continuing to learn about the diverse students' individuality, cultures, experiences, and histories; (c) engaging in critical self-reflection about values, biases, strengths, and limitations, and the factors affecting instructional effectiveness with students of diverse backgrounds; and (d) insisting on high quality and excellent work from all students.

## ***Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies***

Culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks to envision schooling as a way of sustaining, rather than eradicating, the cultural ways of being specific to communities of color (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

**Culture.** Ashreef et al. (2017) defined culture as encompassing the myriad ways of life to include arts, beliefs, and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation. Culture represents the accepted way of life for a population. Bradshaw et al. (2018) posited culture describes the population codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, art. There are five fundamental features shared by all cultures. Culture is (a) learned, (b) shared, (c) based on symbols, (d) integrated, and (e) dynamic. All cultures share these basic features.

**Diverse Learners.** Diverse learners include children and students of all abilities from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Evans et al. (2021) posited they possess linguistic, socio-cultural and socio-economic positionings and identities that differ from mainstream learners. They demonstrate in the classrooms a broad array of learning styles, different academic histories, and different social and academic needs.

**Gentrification.** Gentrification is defined as the phenomenon of middle-class people buying up homes in working-class and poverty-stricken neighborhoods, contributing to displacement of the original households, and changing the physical and social character of the original community (Chapple, 2009). Chang (2014) noted that gentrification may result in a loss of affordability homes, higher taxes, and displacement of original residents.



*Open Card Sorting.* In open card sorting, the participants create the categories themselves and fit the provided items (usually names on a card) into these self-created categories (Rugg & McGeorge, 2005).

### ***Repeated Single-Criterion Sorts***

In this card sorting procedure, respondents sort the same entities repeatedly, categorizing each one in terms of a different attribute (criterion) each time (Kelly, 1955; Rugg & McGeorge, 2005; Vickery, 1960).

### ***Self-Efficacy***

Self-efficacy has been defined as “the belief in one’s personal capabilities” (Bandura, 1977, p. 201) and manifests across different areas of teacher ability: (a) instruction, (b) behavior management, (c) academic expectations, (d) motivation, (e) social cohesion, and (f) inter-classroom dynamics. Butler (2016) indicated that the degree of teacher self-efficacy is related to the extent of professional development, training, and administrator support they receive.

### ***Stereotypes***

Stereotypes are often unfair and incorrect beliefs shared by myriad people about a group of people with a particular characteristic (Ladson-Billings, 2021). An example is all Asian-Americans are smart and good in science and mathematics.

### ***Visual Card Sorting Method***

The visual card sorting method is an interview technique used to demonstrate how individuals categorize concepts within specific knowledge domains (Gammack, 1987).

### **Significance of the Study**

This study investigated the current state of CRP by assessing the perspectives of a specific group of middle school content area teachers regarding their experiences with the

phenomenon. Butler (2016) and Ladson-Billings (2014) both reported that the literature contained an insufficient number of research studies and lacked applicable interventions designed to help teachers effectively educate diverse students using culturally responsive instruction. Butler (2016) identified teachers' low self-efficacy in working with culturally diverse students as an exacerbating concern, while Ladson-Billings (2017) pointed to the lack of culturally responsive resources, responsive course work in teacher preparation programs, and professional development from school and district administrators on strategies to teach diverse student populations.

Echevarria et al. (2015) suggested that further research on teacher-perceived self-efficacy and CRP for middle school general education teachers was warranted, given the increasing accountability to demonstrate consistent learning across all student subgroups in the classroom. Canning and Harackiewicz (2016) also noted a scarcity of resources available to support general educators in addressing large numbers of culturally diverse students in the classroom. Durik et al. (2015) emphasized a need for interventions to improve the academic climate of schools and to promote positive social and economic changes for all students and their families, while Chesnut and Burley (2015) and Ladson-Billings (2017) highlighted the need for data on the relationship between teacher perceived self-efficacy and the ability of middle school general educators to implement proper interventions.

While culturally responsive teaching is difficult at all grade levels, particular difficulty exists in middle school grades due to the rapid physical, mental, and emotional changes students experience, all of which can impact academic behaviors (Ladson-Billings, 2017). For middle school teachers to succeed, Ladson-Billings (2017) explained, they require high self-efficacy, excellent instructional skills, substantial administrator support, and culturally responsive

instructional resources that equip them to reflect the experiences of their students and facilitate strong academic performance. According to Ladson-Billings (2014), the need for teachers with high self-efficacy increases for teachers in Grade 8 as opposed to teachers in Grades 6 and 7, due to behaviors, study habits, and academic inclinations that are more firmly ingrained by Grade 8.

Subsequently, Ladson-Billings (2014) contended that some young teachers were hindered in their abilities to relate, identify, and understand the needs of minority middle school students as a result of limited exposure to minority students in teacher preparation programs, as well as a lack of understanding regarding the differences between the communities and high schools experienced by these student populations and those wherein these teachers have learned and socialized. Some individuals entering the teaching profession may have had few opportunities in their communities and college life to interact with African Americans and Hispanic Americans; for example, few of the field experiences offered in teacher preparation programs provide the opportunity to teach or tutor minority students (Mitchell, 2017). A cultural gap appears to persist today, yielding misunderstandings that can result in excessive suspensions, expulsions, and lower grades, all of which contribute to the noted disparities in educational outcomes.

## **Summary**

This study examined the presumed disconnect between the needs of culturally diverse students and the ability of content-area middle school teachers to provide the appropriate pedagogy to address those needs, providing novel data on content-area middle school general education teachers' conceptualization of CRP in their classroom teaching practices. Callaway (2017) suggested that teachers who lack self-efficacy with CRP may present an inability to effectively teach and influence students' academic achievement across diverse groups. Chapter I conveyed the purpose of the study and the research questions derived from the purpose

statement. This qualitative exploratory case study defined varying levels of teacher perceived self-efficacy for a convenience sample of middle school general education teachers to explore their perceptions of CRP regarding teaching practices in the classroom setting.

As the theoretical framework for this study, CRP informed the development of the research questions. Ladson-Billings (1994) defined CRP as a pedagogy “that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 16–17) as well as a framework encompassing three components: long-term “academic achievement, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness” (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

This chapter has imparted a brief overview of and justification for the selection of the qualitative methods and exploratory case study design. Limitations influencing internal validity of the study include the self-reporting nature of and Likert scale-basis of the TSECPS and CCI instruments as well as the researcher’s role within the district as a response to intervention coordinator. Consideration of delimitations includes the small qualitative sample size of eight teachers, which may not be representative of all teachers in the district and state. Key search terms were entered into ProQuest, ERIC, and FirstSearch, with the resulting literature review informing the constructs in the study’s problem, as well as the purpose statement and research questions, providing justification for the significance of this study’s approach to assessing teacher perceived views of CRP within the sample population.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

This study explored the phenomenon of CRP to address the problem of limited data to inform best practices in facilitating high teacher self-efficacy about culturally relevant teaching practices. The purpose of this qualitative exploratory case was to assess how content-area middle school general education teachers with varying levels of self-efficacy conceptualize the role of CRP in their classroom teaching practices.

A search of the literature was performed using key search terms in major databases (e.g., ProQuest, ERIC, and FirstSearch) based on the transformation of the constructs in the study's problem, purpose statement, and research questions. Key search terms used included *general education teacher*, *teacher perceived self-efficacy*, *sociocultural*, *teaching practices*, *academic achievement*, *culturally responsive pedagogy*, *middle schools*, *middle school teacher*, and *classroom management*. The findings of the literature review are presented in the following sections: theoretical framework, teacher perceived efficacy, English language learners, critical perspectives on language and bilingualism, preparing linguistically responsive teachers in preservice education, professional learning and training, teachers and cultural competence, motivated teachers use cultural responsive teaching, culturally and linguistically diverse students, building a caring classroom environment, and students and understanding of cultural diversity lists supporting research.

### **Theoretical Framework**

CRP served as the theoretical basis that framed this study. Two researchers, Geneva Gay and Gloria Ladson-Billings are generally credited with establishing the foundational work that has led to the current understanding of culturally relevant teaching; In fact, Aronson and

Laughter (2016) identified Gay and Ladson-Billings as the most cited sources in the literature for a theoretical or analytical framework related to the strands of either teaching or pedagogy.

Ladson-Billings (2006) suggests throughout her writings that, while teachers may have only a year-long interaction with students, “teachers ultimately have a lifelong impact on who they become and the kind of society in which we all will ultimately live” (p. 37). Ladson-Billings (1994) defined CRP as a pedagogy “empowering students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 16–17). Ladson-Billings (2006) argued further that the principles of CRP employed constructivism with the development of connections of students' references to academic ability and ideas as it relates to culture. Thus, CRP teachers must strengthen an understanding of students and the cultural assets students innately put forth within the academic setting as a foundation; the culturally relevant classroom embraces all students with inclusivity (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Gay (2010) expressed the theory behind CRP through six dimensions, which are listed in Table 2. In the first dimension, CRP teachers act to create social and academic empowerment by establishing high expectations for students and committing to the academic success of all students. The second-dimension views CRP teachers as multidimensional, engaging cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives. The third dimension directs CRP teachers to validate every student's culture as their foundational point, bridging the gaps between school and home through diversified instructional strategies and multicultural curricula. With the fourth dimension, teachers remain socially, emotionally, and politically comprehensive as they seek to educate the whole child. The fifth dimension encourages using student strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design. In contrast to oppressive educational practices and ideologies, the emancipatory and liberating approach of the final dimension seeks to lift “the

veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools” (Gay, 2010, p. 38). The interview questions in Appendix A align with the six dimensions and

Table 2

*Six Dimensions of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*

Number	Dimensions
1	Socially and academically empowering
2	Multidimensional
3	Validating of every student’s culture
4	Socially, emotionally, and politically comprehensive
5	Transformative of schools and societies
6	Emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices

In addition to the six dimensions of CRP, Gay (2013) introduced four actions essential to implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. The first action replaces the deficit view of students and communities. The second action seeks to increase teacher confidence and competence in CRP implementation by equipping teachers to better understand critical reluctance to culturally relevant practices. The third action encourages teachers to understand culture and differences as fundamental to humanity. The final action pushes teachers to connect their pedagogy within the context of their instruction and teaching (Gay, 2013).

Ladson Billings (1995b) described a three-component framework for culturally responsive pedagogy. The first focuses on supporting long-term academic achievement rather than merely focusing on end-of-year tests. The second component is cultural competence, which refers to helping students to recognize and honor their own cultural beliefs and practices while acquiring access to the wider culture, where they are likely to have a chance of improving their socioeconomic status and make informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead. (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 36)

Describing students' learning as "what it is that students actually know and are able to do as a result of pedagogical interactions with skilled teachers" (p. 34), Ladson-Billings suggests that students must learn to navigate between home and school, and teachers must find ways to equip students with the knowledge needed to succeed in a school system that some may consider to be oppressive (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The final component of the CRP framework constitutes socio-political consciousness, which includes a teacher's obligation to find ways for "students to recognize, understand, and critique current and social inequalities" (Ladson-Billings, 2006 p. 476). Sociopolitical consciousness begins with teachers being cognizant of issues of race, class, and gender in themselves and understanding the causes before then incorporating. Rather than having a set focus, Ladson-Billings (2014) asserted that CRP should constantly change to address the needs of students and stated, "any scholar who believes that she has arrived, and the work is finished does not understand the nature and meaning of scholarship" (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 82). Inclusive curricula and activities should be developed to support a culturally relevant classroom: one that provides an environment for students to develop pride in learning and sharing about the various cultures of themselves and their classmates.

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) defined the goal of education as teaching all students regardless of ethnicity, race, or cultural backgrounds. In CRP, they identified a promising area to better understand the interactions of diverse backgrounds, the educational system, and the effects of this schooling on the learning outcomes of students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The following themes were identified in their review of the literature: *identity and achievement regarding cultural heritage and affirmation of diversity, equity and excellence, developmentally appropriateness with learning and teaching styles, teaching the whole child by empowering*



*students and skill development in cultural context, and student-teacher relationships with a caring and classroom atmosphere* (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). In addition, they suggested that previous reviews did not consider the potential that a permeating thread of modern, racially motivated ideological influence could be affecting educational outcomes in the United States and extended CRP by integrating the significance of race and racism within the discussion of culture and education. They concluded that educators should be knowledgeable of both CRP and the topic of racism, prepared with responsive tools, and equipped to implement strategies to successfully teach all students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

While Gay and Ladson-Billings may be considered the originators of CRP, other research into educational disparities has used varying language to describe these populations. Maxwell-Stuart et al. (2018) used the phrase *culturally responsive education* to convey how teachers who possessed a strong understanding of the cultural context of their learners could align the instructional strategies and course content with the culturally responsive experiences of the classroom. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, according to Ladson Billings (1995) was defined as an oppositional pedagogy where students (1) experience success (2) develop cultural competence and (3) develop critical consciousness. Collectively culturally responsive pedagogy and culturally relevant pedagogy collectively have been used as resource pedagogy. Both Ladson-Billings (2017) and Paris (2012) often used the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* to represent a focus on the communities in which these culturally diverse students reside, directing pedagogy to support the cultural ways of the communities and provide students the academic and social skills for success. A summary of language used in the literature to describe these populations is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

*Similar Definitions for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*

Culturally responsive pedagogy	<p>Form of teaching that engages learners with experiences and cultures traditionally excluded from mainstream settings (Ladson-Billings, 2017).</p> <p>Teacher caring, teacher attitudes and expectations, formal and informal multicultural curriculum, culturally informed classroom discourse, and cultural congruity in teaching and learning strategies (Gay, 2013).</p>
Culturally relevant teaching	<p>Empowers students to the point where they will be able to critically examine educational content and process and ask about the role of the content in creating a truly democratic and multicultural world (Ladson-Billings, 1989).</p> <p>A pedagogy empowering student intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994).</p>
Culturally responsive teaching	<p>Use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective (Gay, 2010).</p>
Culturally responsive education	<p>Strong understanding of the cultural context of the learners and aligned the instructional strategies and course content with the culturally responsive experiences of the learners (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2018).</p>
Culturally revitalizing pedagogy	<p>Refers to disappearing languages which must be revitalized while also moving us forward in consideration of what it means to work in plurilingual educational spaces.</p>
Culturally sustaining pedagogy	<p>Perpetuates and fosters to sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling to provide students skills that will facilitate students' success in the communities in which they reside (Paris, 2012).</p> <p>Sustains lifeways of communities damaged and erased through schooling; schooling is the site for sustaining, rather than eradicating, the cultural ways of communities of color (Ladson-Billings, 2017).</p>
Cultural synchronization	<p>Interpersonal context developed between teacher and African American students to maximize learning (Irvine, 1990).</p>

Two related theories, sociocultural theory and social cognitive theory, provide support for some of the variables in the proposed study. The subsequent paragraphs discuss each theory and provide explanation for the variables in the study.

## *Sociocultural Theory*

Sociocultural theory was used in this study as a framework to help understand the conceptualization of CRP in teaching practices in middle school classrooms. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) discussed how sociocultural theorists seek to understand human activity by considering the cultural contexts in which the activity occurs, the way the activity is mediated by language and other symbolic and abstract systems, and a thorough investigation into the historical background. Regarding pedagogy, sociocultural theory challenges teachers and learners to actively create the conditions where skills are most able to develop through this approach to understanding how the educational environment is mediated by cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts.

Lantolf et al. (2015) devised a foundation of four main concepts to understand sociocultural theory: mediation, regulation, internalization, and the zone of proximal development. The principle of mediation focuses on the relationship of the mind to the world and how it is mediated by artifacts, ultimately being generated by human cultural activity (Edwards, 2001; Lantolf et al., 2015). As Lantolf et al. (2015) explained, “Humans do not react directly on the world, rather humans cognitive and material activities are mediated by symbolic artifacts and material artifacts and technologies” (p. 221). Symbolic artifacts associated with cultural tools include language, literacy, logic, as well as material artifacts and technologies (Edwards, 2001; Lantolf et al., 2015). Technologies model cultural tools, both traditional and digital, such as shovels, wheels, time pieces, or even the Internet; with these cultural tools, students’ higher order thinking skills organize and expand (Edwards, 2001; Lantolf et al., 2015). Students speaking a primary language and learning a second language may face barriers to exploring language as a mediator in this way; According to Lantolf et al. (2015), although they

may be able to speak proficiently, students learning to speak a second language may still struggle to use the new language for this type of explorative cognitive activity. Learners may then have to rely on their first language in attempting to engage in mediation in the second language. Lantolf et al. (2015) suggested that teachers and learners can foster the development of the second language (and the ability to mediate within it) by discussing its features, grammar, and syntax in either the first or second language.

The second concept of sociocultural theory depicts regulation or agency. Lantolf et al. (2015) described three types of regulation: object, other, and self. *Objects* in the environment permit cognition and activity through an individual's interaction with them; *other* is mediation facilitated by actions or responses to external feedback or guidance; and *self* refers to how the learner directs their own mediation with the environment (Lantolf et al., 2015). Edwards, (2001) characterizes the control of agency as being embedded in the "interwoven and shifting contexts" (p. 49). Learner development involves moving from other control to self-control, or as explained by Lantolf et al. (2015), "development can be described as the process of gaining greater voluntary control over one's capacity to think and act" (p. 209). The learner moves back and forth across the three regulatory types at different times and the transfer of regulation happens during a period of minutes, hours, months, or years. Edwards (2001) emphasized the importance of student self-perception as a learner and the interaction with the world.

The third concept of sociocultural theory represents internalization. Cultural artifacts are considered to act on the social level initially, with these artifacts being "internalized after initially being external to learners" (Lantolf et al., 2015, p. 210). This concept is related within sociocultural theory to the *zone of proximal development*, or the distance or space between what the learner already knows and what the learner is ready to learn, as assessed by what can be

accomplished with the aid of a more knowledgeable individual. According to Lantolf et al. (2015), the control of learning and performance first occurs in others and can then develop towards self-regulation. Edwards (2001) suggested a similar idea about teachers' assistance with helping the learner engage with a variety of methods and the concepts of the subject area, directing that the learner remain concerned with "orchestration of time and space, self and others, learners and knowledge, and affect and cognition" (p. 46). Tappan (1998) also explored how this concept can support learning, writing, "As a result of collaboration that happens in the zone of proximal development, externally oriented and socially constituted learning processes between persons become internally oriented" (p. 150). In this way, mental constructs of both the learner and the more knowledgeable learners change through their conversation and dialogue: a fact that validates participation in communities of practice (Tappan, 1998).

In context of sociocultural theory, student literacy means that students are capable of reading and writing in a culturally appropriate way that develops through an interactive process of classroom setting and teaching practices (Davidson, 2010). Consequently, literacy can be understood to be influenced by the interactions between general education teachers, students, and school and classroom settings, which is rooted in the way Vygotsky's (1962) work encompasses the social and cultural factors that influence learning and development (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). One takeaway from this theory is that teachers and administrator should be careful to consider the student or general education middle school teacher in all their broader contexts while observing the extent to which successful learning is occurring (or is not occurring) in classroom setting and the way in which that learning is being assessed. Exploring these socially embedded factors, such as literacy learning and the factors that construct academic language

remains important when seeking to increase the understanding of how to best serve the needs of diverse students (Walqui, 2006).

### ***Social Cognitive Theory***

Bandura (1977) developed social cognitive theory to support an understanding of human functioning by looking at the interactions of personal thoughts, behaviors, and environmental factors. Alongside sociocultural theory, social cognitive theory provided guidance in approaching the qualitative and quantitative research questions used in this study and informed the concept of self-efficacy as related to the confidence levels of middle school teachers regarding their use of CRP in classroom practices.

### ***Reciprocal Causation Theory***

The research of Artino (2012) connects the social cognitive theory with the reciprocal causation model, thereby informing the concept of self-efficacy. According to Artino, the reciprocal causation model depicts an interrelated cycle of thoughts influencing behaviors based on environmental experiences. Based on Bandura's (1977) research, the idea of efficacy provides a catalyst for choosing teaching behaviors and teaching strategies, highlighting the determination to execute these strategies properly and consistently in the middle school classrooms with students.

Epstein and Willhite (2015) found that educators' sense of self-efficacy was connected to their motivation to utilize best practices and strategies to attain desired goals of positive outcomes from academic interventions, supporting behavioral changes in students as a result. Self-regulatory behaviors may facilitate teachers to reflect on personal views, beliefs, behavior, educational practices, environmental factors, classroom culture, modifications, and equip teachers to consider how these factors might influence the academic outcomes of their students.

### *Teacher Self-Efficacy*

Evans (2017) identified the concept of teacher-efficacy as confidence in one's ability to perform a task, driving actions and resulting in expected outcomes. Artino (2012) suggested that educators with low efficacy tend to avoid difficult tasks, such as implementing academic interventions with students. Wang et al. (2017) found teachers with a heightened measure of efficacy to provide engaging learning environments that include flexibility and creativity with instruction; however, teachers with a heightened measure of efficacy are not necessarily providing engaging learning environments, suggesting further complexities in the teachers, the environmental factors that shape their teaching behaviors, and the interactions of these in the classroom.

Caprara et al. (2003) said that teacher self-efficacy directly correlates with a teachers' desire to teach, job satisfaction, commitment to the profession, challenges, teacher retention, flexibility, and creativity. Similarly, Wang et al. (2017) argued that a wide variety of factors can affect efficacy, including school location, gender of students, ethnic backgrounds, grade levels, and previous academic achievement. Diaz et al. (2016) contended that teachers influence student performance through their competence regarding content knowledge. Salgado et al. (2018) suggested that choices of instructional strategies, content delivery, implementation of interventions, and formative assessment development derive from teacher attitudes and beliefs in personal abilities.

An examination of the relationship between educator self-efficacy with CRP and educator implementation of teaching practices with students suggests that confident middle school teachers are more likely to be successful at implementing teaching practices that result in positive outcomes and increased academic achievement. Bandura (1997) proposed that all

teacher efficacy scales use “can do” statements to retrieve more in-depth responses regarding competence and ability and not only beliefs.

In their research, Salgado et al. (2018) discovered that teachers with high efficacy remain less affected by cultural differences, negative influences, and socio-economic status. Özoku (2018) suggested that efficacy is strongly predictive for the use of inclusive educational practices. Similarly, Callaway (2017) reported that teachers with high efficacy tend to remain flexible and acclimate to difficult teaching environments, and that a teacher with a strong sense of efficacy is better able to relate to the experiences, ideals, and values of others. Teachers bring to their teaching experiences, personal beliefs, and perceptions that provide a direct link for implementation of CRP.

### ***Variables Impacting Teacher Perceived Self-Efficacy***

Teacher-perceived self-efficacy is a complex phenomenon with many possible influences. Artino (2012) theorized that educators derived their self-efficacy from their experiences, observations, feedback, and physiological responses to the task of teaching. Hallman and Meineke (2016) suggested that a teacher’s efficacy stems from experiences, exposure, and guidance provided by administrative support and professional learning, accompanied by empathy for the students’ experiences. Their research found that both veteran teachers and pre-service teachers felt unprepared and lacked professional development in content areas and instructional strategies. Wang et al. (2017) understood Bandura’s (1977) theory to depict psychological and emotional elements as contributory factors to one’s perception of competence and suggested that these elements help demonstrate and inform the distinct challenge of maintaining high self-efficacy while teaching in difficult situations, such as student populations with pre-existing deficits.



Tanguay et al. (2018) attributed inadequacies with instructing culturally diverse students to the differences in the proportions of ethnic backgrounds between teachers and the students. Tanguay et al. (2018) reported from the research that the majority of individuals employed in the teaching profession are young, European American women, who are likely to share quite different life experiences than the culturally and linguistically diverse populations they might be tasked with teaching, leading to a need for professional development to provide support with culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and co-teaching opportunities. Miller et al. (2017) posited that the processes used to address culturally diverse students vary across the United States; therefore, this variation creates inequities in identifying student needs and services, professional learning, and procedures for implementation.

George (2016) found that districts often lack resources for instruction and evaluation for students in their native languages, creating inequity of access and inaccuracies with interventions. Challenges with second language learners are often misunderstood due to language barriers, affecting clarity on policy guidelines, timing for referrals, untrained staff, systematic programs and services for students, collaborative structures, and assessment. Edwards (2014) emphasized the necessity for understanding the process of language acquisition as the key component to effective implementation of academic interventions.

According to Driver (2014), factors contributing to student deficiencies include language misconceptions, time constraints, and inappropriate interventions administered without cultural considerations and modifications. Driver also suggested that procedural differences, bilingual resources, translators, and technology can affect the effectiveness of academic interventions.

## **Background of Educational Disparities**

With the above theoretical frameworks, this study approached the problem by developing research questions to better understand how middle school general education teachers perceived their ability and use of CRP in the classroom. The theories discussed above communicate the complexity and interrelatedness of the factors that influence educational outcomes. The following section will provide an overview of the relevant literature informing the use of CRP to address educational disparity by looking at the demographics of students and teachers, the nature and supports of the classroom environment itself, and examples regarding the barriers faced by specific sub-populations. Together with the theoretical framework above, this contextual background helped inform and direct the study.

## **Demographic Change**

Racial minorities and ethnic groups are projected as the primary group to compose the population of the US within the next decades (Frey, 2018). Small towns across rural America are also experiencing a significant demographic shift with the “re-browning of America with gentrification and immigration (Frey, 2018). With gentrification of urban housing markets, suburban and rural landscapes have changed to an ethnically diverse areas with lower economically challenged families seeking affordable housing changing the face of classroom setting (Mordechay et al, 2019). The demographic change extends the opportunity for educational agencies to foster the ideals embedded in *Brown v Board of Education* encouraging equitable opportunities with education for all (Mordechay et al, 2019). The result of the demographic shift leaves many students in segregated and poor communities often with a lack of resources and low achievement outcomes (Mordechay et al, 2019). Wells (2020) stressed the

growing complexity of K-12 racial, ethnic, and culture composition perpetuated inequities across the country with a need for instructional practices.

Gao (2016) reported federal, state, and local governments must make provisions for overlooked populations during the demographic changes removing barriers that limit services in communities and in the schools. The integrated investment of time, personnel, and financial resources, especially focused on young school children, may produce high-quality results (Gao, 2016). Callahan and Gándara (2014) reported that in recent decades, a shift started to transform our notions of race and position in America.

Gándara and Mordechay (2017) explained that a quarter of a century ago, seven out of ten school-aged children were European American, but today, that number is less than one out of two. As a byproduct of the demographic shift, more students are also living in poverty and in segregated neighborhoods, particularly Latino students (Gándara & Mordechay, 2017). Since 1990, the five to seventeen-year-old Latino population has more than doubled, increasing from 5.3 million to more than 12.8 million, making up almost a quarter of the school-aged demographic (Mordechay & Orfield, 2017).

U.S., Latino Americans academic attainment is a significant concern for the U.S, and for regions within the country like California, where Latin American represent an absolute majority of all students (Mordechay & Orfield, 2018). Latin American are the least likely of all subgroups to attain a college degree, by a very large margin: 16.4% of Latin American ages 25 and older versus 55.9% of Asians and 37.3% of European Americans (NCES, 2017). The reasons for the lack of achievement are closely connected to the fact that many Latin American suffer from triple segregation, poverty, race, and language (Gándara & Aldana, 2014). African American

students are also encountering these problems, despite a large-scale movement of African Americans to the suburbs in many parts of the United States (NCES, 2017).

Logan and Zhang (2011) indicated populations of urban neighborhoods were always changing, yet local schools did not often reflect the changes. Even as many of the nation's urban and suburban communities became more diverse, the public schools remained monolithic (Logan and Zhang, 2011). Therefore, according to Wells (2015), principals should host forums and focus groups to investigate the needs of families within their schools. School leader's community-driven efforts may permit the schools to be modeled according to the tastes of the neighborhood, making it more attractive to prospective families (Wells, 2015).

Logan and Zhang (2011) suggested good leadership may include coordinating innovative afterschool programs and high-end extracurriculars. Logan and Zhang (2011) explained that school administrators might consider the ways that having a diverse student population might improve marginalized students' learning experiences.

### ***Gentrification Influences on Demographic Change***

In the United States, displaced residents reflect ethnic minorities, lower-income persons, and working-class European Americans (Chapple, 2009). These residents were replaced by more affluent non-European Americans (Chapple, 2009). Gentrification was manifested as the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of an urban community into middle-class residential or commercial use (Freeman, 2005). Freeman (2005) explained the reasons for gentrification included revitalization of declining urban neighborhoods, due to current physical deterioration including abandoned or poorly maintained buildings, houses, and land. Freeman and Braconi (2004) asserted that middle class citizens relocated to the abandoned areas because of enhanced job and recreational opportunities, reduced land and housing prices, little

crime, proximity to beaches and lakes, and other lifestyle concerns. Freeman and Braconi (2004) reported displacement of current residents was an undesirable outcome of gentrification. Likewise, according to Freeman and Braconi (2014), viewed gentrification positively as deteriorated urban areas became improved along with the tax base and appearance of the properties, roads, and general landscape.

Zubin (2010) reported two basic correlated issues with gentrification, the economic restructuring of cities and socially mixed neighborhoods and stability. Some citizens perceived gentrification as immoral (Grove et al., 2014). The threat of displacement coerced original residents to relocate due to incapability to reside in the communities because of higher taxes and forcing residents out of the neighborhood (Grove et al., 2014).

David (2006) reported the first wave of gentrification happened at the same time as the start of the Civil Rights Movement. As people started to make new demands for greater equality, the federal and state governments intervened and attempted to forge urban equality through gentrification. According to David (2006), federal and state government intervention did not yield the desired payoffs of economic equality, racial equality, and resulted in augmented inequalities within and whitening of central cities. During the start of the Civil Rights Movement, gentrification, as a word, became negative and associated with a highly evil and racist process, detrimental to poor minorities and profitable for the wealthy individuals and corporations (David, 2006).

## **Educational Policy**

### ***Nation at Risk, Ronald Reagan, and Commission on Excellence in Education***

A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform (1983) report under Former President Ronald Reagan stipulated all students regardless of race or class were entitled to equal

education with proper guidance to increase the competence and ability of the US to enhance industry and technological advances for our nation. McDonald (2008) reported that during the Carter administration, the United States was falling behind South Korea and Japan with technological innovations. in addition to the prevalence of racial tensions. In the 1980 presidential election, Former President Ronald Reagan's platform was: a) restore prayer in schools; b) provide private school tuition tax credits; and c) abolish the Department of Education (McDonald, 2008).

A Nation at Risk was published by Former President Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983 and co-authored by the Secretary of Education Bell (Ehrman, 2006). The theme reiterated the United States decline in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovations placing American advancements less competitive (Ehrman, 2006). The lack of technological innovations and high educational standards was the perspective of most of the country, according to Ehrman (2006), and contributed to the undergirding of American prosperity, security, and civility destroyed by a rising tide of mediocrity, which challenged the United States citizens' future as a nation and as a people (Ehrman, 2006).

Public Schools in the U.S. destroyed the once-strong foundation of the American nation single-handedly with mediocrity (Goldstein, 2011). Without changes in the academic content, teaching practices, and expectations of American public schools, the country would falter financially and innovatively (Goldstein, 2011). The findings of "A Nation at Risk" immediately and irreversibly changed the realities of American classroom teachers and schools (Hunt, 2008). The commission found the declines in educational performance were the result of disturbing inadequacies in the educational processes (Hunt, 2008). The findings addressed four important aspects of the educational process: content, expectations, time, and teaching (Hunt, 2008).

For content, the commission found the secondary school curricula were homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that the curricula ceased to possess central purpose (Hunt, 2008). The content findings advocated a track for all students revolved around core classes such as math, science, language arts, and more foreign language courses for university-bound students (Zeichner, 2009). The commission argued that the content must not only be changed, but become controlled by federal, state, and local governments (Hunt, 2008).

According to Hunt (2008) the commission suggested low expectations were a concern defined in terms of the level of knowledge, abilities, and skills conveyed to students through grades, graduation requirements, scores on required competency tests. Students became victims of low expectations and low graduation requirements (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). Lack of rigor and resources exuberated the issues (Hunt, 2008).

Regarding time in the classroom, time was outlined as a major concern for reasons regarding the efficiency use in the classrooms (Hunt, 2008). The committee noted that American students devoted less hours and days in the classrooms than in most successful industrialized nations (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). Time devoted in the classrooms in the U. S. was largely not for academic content but for less valuable vocational curricula and not teaching the core subjects like mathematics, English, chemistry, U.S. history, or biology (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013).

### ***NCLB and ESEA***

According to Meyers (2013) No Child Left Behind (NCLB) or (ESEA, 2001), the legislation enacted as a cure for the influences of poverty on literacy learning failed marginalized students. NCLB engendered severe damage to teacher-created literacy curriculum and educators' views of teaching (Meyer, 2013). The precursor to NCLB, Elementary and Secondary Education

Act (ESEA), was introduced in the administration of U.S. President Lyndon Johnson as part of America's "war on poverty"(Meyer, 2013). The Act secured a promise made by the government clearly stating citizens were entitled to health, education, safety, and joy (Meyer, 2013).

Meyer (2013) posited the ESEA provided funding for preschool programs and intensive reading and math interventions. Integral to the Act was the reliance on and respect for the local development of educational policies and curriculum (Meyer, 2013). Essentialized (in a negative way), the Act threw money at the problem of education in the late 1960's and early 1970's (Meyer, 2013). Funding for ESSA (2001) earmarked for the U.S. defense and Pentagon was found acceptable (Meyer, 2013). President Lyndon Johnson's aim with ESEA (1965) was to ensure money spent for the education of the country was favorably perceived by American citizens (Meyer, 2013).

### ***Standardized Testing***

Provisions in the ESEA indicated any public school or educational group receiving federal funding demonstrated accountability through standardized tests and written documentation (Kozol, 2007). Olson (2009) reported, as ESEA (2001) maneuvered through the myriad of committees in the U.S. Congress, a significant shift occurred. Extremely passionate and powerful members of Congress complained about the perceived lack of academic progress students were experiencing in Title I programs (Olson, 2009). The powerful members emphasized international test scores, poverty not being "fixed" by the "Great Society", and the unfulfilled promises of education supported by federal funds (PDK/Kappan, 2011). The intentions, promises, and dreams of ESEA (2001) were being disentangled as hearings and meetings were conducted (Altwerger, 2005). Dismal views were portrayed of ESEA, and faith in America's public schools by citizen was deliberately tarnished (Altwerger, 2005).



Political forces united to stop the course of ESEA, and the forces were effective by 2001 to have a version of ESEA passed, named NCLB, for the first time creating a nickname for ESEA (Meyer, 2001). The NCLB version of ESEA pursued a conservative, strong, and sharp turn to the right by portraying a no-nonsense attitude towards academic achievement (Meyer, 2001).

Meyer (2001) explained that public schools and grade levels within schools were required to meet Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP) to avoid punishments, embarrassments, and sanctions. One fundamental problem with AYP, as asserted by Meyers (2001) was the stipulation of all public-school students categorized as proficient by graduation from high school. Allowing each state to set the level for proficiency and the formula for all students to reach that level of proficiency was fundamentally flawed (Meyers, 2001).

Tragedies in public education occurred in the literacy lives of children, the pedagogical choices and decision-making power of teaching, and the standing of public schools in our society. The national image of public schools was seriously attacked (Meyer, 2010) because of poorly designed tests. Goodman (2005) referred to the poorly designed tests as fragile evidence of academic achievement. Kozol (2007) was concerned because NCLB left many children of color behind who continued to live in poverty with their families. These were students who experienced minimum academic successes on the standardized tests.

Kozol (2007) related the negative effects of NCLB to the mania of obsessive testing coerced upon America's public schools and the undesirable drill-and-kill curriculum of robotic "teaching to the test". Kozol (2007) posed excessive testing and assessments and the pressure teachers experience with teaching only the information on the test contributed to excellent teachers leaving the field of education to work in business and industry. Meyer (2010) explained the premise that over a decade of students lost the joy of learning, experienced a reduced

flexibility with curriculum content, and remained in classrooms with unmotivated and disenfranchised teachers. The reality suggested many students were left behind, with the economically poor and marginalized students suffering the greatest (Meyer, 2010).

Olson (2009) delineated misfortunes students encountered in the public schools evolved from NCLB provisions and standards which fostered loss of creativity, noncompliance, rebellion, numbness, perfectionism, isolation, inattentiveness, with both teachers and students. The teachers were encouraged to alter teaching practices to follow a scripted curriculum and facilitate drill and practice (Meyer, 2001). The NCLB promoted the message of marginalized students as no longer potential to be realized (Meyer, 2010).

### **The Power of Language in Education**

National Center of Educational Statistics (n.d) identified a widening achievement gap between English language learners and native English speakers regarding basic English proficiency. Trainor et al. (2016) identified English language learners as those students who speak other languages in the home and participate in English as a second language programs. Miller et al. (2017) reported a gap in educational outcomes between English language learners and their natively-English-speaking classmates that results in comparably low academic achievement and increased dropout rates at the high school level.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), English language learners represent over 9.4% of the student population in the United States. Turgut et al. (2016) predicted that over 40% of the student population of primary and secondary schools will identify as English language learners by the year 2030. Considering the change in demographics within the United States educational system, Hoff and Core (2015) advocated for the implementation of

culturally responsive approaches to meet the needs of a diverse student population with many cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

The timeframe of second language acquisition provides important context for understanding the experience of English language learners and has implications for multicultural classrooms more generally. Hoff and Core (2015) found that, within an optimal setting, interventions resulted in English language learners taking an average of 2 years to acquire the embedded context of conversational language and 5 to 7 years to perform comparably to native English speakers, indicating a likely contributing factor that might make this student population more likely to fall behind than their classmates.

Hallman and Meineke (2016) emphasized professional development, training, and cultural responsiveness as key components in bridging the gap between outcomes for English language learners and their natively-English-speaking classmates. As will be explored further in the coming sections, many researchers suggest that closing the achievement gap requires preparation for and collaboration by teachers and administrators.

### ***Critical Perspectives on Language and Bilingualism***

While many students learn a second language in school, Flores and Garcia (2017) presented the differences between the experiences of English language learners and their classmates. While those who speak English at home are learning their second language as an additional component of their education, English language learners are learning their second language as a primary tool of education: often there is a strong racial component. As a result, they suggested, educators should ensure that students in all ZIP codes can formally study languages other than English through the more-equitable distribution of dual-language programs. Flores (2013a) explained that the disproportionate concentration of dual-language programs in

the United States in prosperous or gentrifying neighborhoods denies dual-language education programs to many of these racialized bilingual individuals and other students of color in low socio-economic communities.

Aggarwal (2016) encouraged organizations and communities, including parents, to identify and incorporate existing community resources into the classroom and support greater cognizance and awareness of engaging students in class; integration of culturally relevant materials building on the student experiences, backgrounds, and interests of racialized bilinguals; and structured collaborative groups ensuring the opportunity for success.

Flores (2013b) suggested that viewing bilingual education as an institution toward building cultural pride in Hispanic American students could possibly help remediate perceived linguistic deficiencies, but that bilingual educators struggled to develop affirmative spaces for Hispanic American youth within the context of students feeling devalued by the broader institution and society. In recent years, these affirmative spaces have been replaced with two-way immersion programs with European American communities that offer new spaces for the affirmation of the bilingualism of Hispanic American youth but do little to address the power hierarchies between the low-income Hispanic American communities and the European American middle-class communities served by the programs.

Aggarwal (2016) framed language as a political institution and suggested that students (especially those aware of the power of language) may perceive that their personal dialects, ethnolects, or vernaculars appear devalued by the broader society, even as students acquire proficiency and realize how their language ability empowers, shapes, and serves important personal and social goals. Access to and knowledge of language resources allow students to act with meaning and to analyze their actions (Aggarwal, 2016). Aggarwal (2016) concluded that

marginalized Latino-American students, navigating through the dominant discourses of society, often remaining marginalized without the tools to manipulate language.

Flores (2016b) addressed cultural advocacy movements in the context of bilingual education, emphasizing how advocate groups can help create awareness, support the dissemination of research on achievement gap interventions, and support the needs of business and government for a bilingual workforce to remain competitive in a global economy.

### ***Student Culture and Linguistics***

Nieto (1994) contended that reforming school structures in isolation will not lead to substantive differences in student achievement; however, profound changes in the thought processes that educators use to view students were needed. In this sense, modification of policies and practices is important but remains an insufficient condition for total school transformation. Nieto (1996, 1997) indicated the benefit of educators hearing the students' critical perspectives, causing educators to possibly modify the approach to curriculum, pedagogy, and other school practices.

Nieto (1999) noted that European American, middle class, monolingual teachers often struggle in forming relationships with culturally and linguistically diverse students and implementing culturally responsive teaching, whereas a teacher with a belief of belonging to a minority group may have a more natural ability to implement culturally responsive teaching and often find it easier to implement culturally responsive teaching.

An equitable education is one where “all students must be given the real possibility of equality of outcomes” (Nieto & Bode, 2008, p. 9). Instead of providing an equal education, or giving all students the same instruction, an equitable education focuses on meeting student needs for successful outcomes to achieve equality (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Students often bring to

classrooms their familiar cultural ideas, norms, expectations, or “hidden rules” that may differ from the norms of the educational system or the instructional leader. Nieto and Bode (2008) affirmed that many African American students lack experiences with the cultural capital, school norms, or the hidden rules they may be expected to follow.

Paris (2012) believed that culturally responsive pedagogy expands beyond the teachers' use of student languages and cultures to promote a focus on students maintaining parts of the languages and cultures to learn, defining the term *culturally sustaining pedagogy* as sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their student communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence. Seeking “sustained linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p. 95), this approach would suggest that providing students with skills to facilitate success as a citizen and professional in the broader community would be beneficial.

Alim and Smitherman (2012) contended that an understanding of power stems from one's ability to communicate effectively to varied groups, so youth of color who learn other culturally dominant skills and knowledge can maintain multiple ways of speaking and living. According to Alim et al. (2010), those who speak only one language or are familiar with only one cultural context increasingly find themselves at a disadvantage. Culturally sustaining pedagogy remains necessary to honor and value the rich and varied practices of communities of color and may be considered essential pedagogy for supporting access to power in a changing nation (Alim et al., 2010).

### **Multiculturalism**

Banks et.al (2001) posited the role multiculturalism plays in public schools enhances the attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed to navigate a changing, pluralistic, and democratic

society. Multicultural education includes language and bilingual students, religion, exceptionalities as gifted and students with disabilities and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities (Banks, 2013). Multicultural education was developed to address changes in the instructional framework of marginalized students (Banks, 2013). In alignment with Gay (2010) six dimensions of CRP, Banks et al (2001) developed 12 essential principles of multiculturalism into five categories: (1) teacher learning; (2) student learning; (3) intergroup relations and collaboration; (4) school governance; organization and equity; and (5) assessment. The 12 principles of multiculturalism organized for practitioners emphasized key elements of curriculum implementation to improve educational policy and practice (Banks et al, 2001). Researchers, Banks et al (2001) agreed the principles require: (1) professional learning with student culture and characteristics influencing student behavior; (2) equitable learning opportunities; (3) reflection of curriculum constructed within personal, political, and economic context (4) provide extracurricular activities to enhance academic achievement; (5) create collaborative and interracial groups; (6) inform students and staff regarding the negative effects of biases and stereotypes; (7) expand student knowledge of various cultural values of others; (8) increased social skills to interact with varied groups; (9) social and emotional learning; (10) shared decision making creating a caring environment; (11) equal funding; and implement CRP resources and related pedagogies to access cognitive and social skills with assessments.

Banks (1989) promulgated four levels for multicultural education reform: Level 1, Contributions Level, has the least amount of involvement in multicultural education for teachers and students. In Level 1, teachers tend to focus on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements. Level 2, Additive Level, exists when teachers add content, concepts, themes, and different perspectives to the curriculum without changing the structure of the curriculum. In

Level 3, Transformation Level, the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. For the highest level of Level 4, Social Action Level, students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve the issues.

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Ladson-Billings (2017) explained that culturally responsive pedagogy empowers learners “socially, intellectually, emotionally, and politically” by employing cultural referents to disseminate knowledge, skills, and attitudes (p. 42) by personalizing lessons, adapting teaching methods, and modifying the curriculum to improve comprehension and mastery for all learners. Culturally responsive instruction integrating relatable concepts associated with everyday life in cultural contexts including language (jargon or slang) and extracurricular activities (music and sports) has been shown throughout Ladson-Billings’ research to be beneficial to students. As minority students adjust to these instructional methods and strategies of teachers, the teachers’ ability to establish connections with the students and the instructional environment within their cultural context improves further (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

Fallon et al. (2019) reported that teachers and parents often oversimplify the concept of culturally responsive education, such as by merely providing instructional materials or resources in a native language, with these misconceptions leading to some possibly considering CRP a significant waste of time and energy; however, according to Maxwell-Stuart et al. (2018), designing curriculum or methods to accommodate the ethnicity and culture of minority students is not a fundamental requirement for CPR implementation in diverse classrooms, but rather the focus is on the development of a strong understanding of the cultural context of the learners,



aligning the instructional strategies and course content with the culturally responsive experiences of the learners (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2018).

Quantitative and qualitative studies have found that culturally responsive relationships between students and teachers, culturally responsive curriculum, and culturally responsive delivery mechanisms support effective outcomes for teachers (Gillies, 2016). Conversely, teachers with inadequate expertise and experiences lack the capability to accurately identify the weaknesses and strengths of the learners, meaning teacher initiatives to implement effective and constructive instructional methodology may fail unless they address the needs of culturally diverse and minority students (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2018). Implementation and delivery of uniform content with whole group methodologies limits academic performance of select students, especially those from families of low socioeconomic status due to a disconnect between instructional techniques and the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds of students (Gillies, 2016).

Slavin (2013) indicated that strengthening cultural relevance in classroom instruction supports teachers and school administrators in identifying effective strategies based on the specific school's cultural context and the demographic attributes, implementing these strategies, developing formative and summative evaluations, and monitoring the strategies to ensure successful outcomes. Effective instruction for all children benefits from integration of focused techniques to enhance student and teacher rapport (such as discussion and instruction in linguistic and behavior codes) and a willingness of the students to learn, receive good grades, and achieve high standardized test scores (Slavin et al., 2014).

## **Culturally Responsive Teaching Framework**

According to Gay (2010), culturally responsive teaching expands upon the approach to use cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of culturally marginalized students to create a more relatable classroom environment. Gay (2010) identified six dimensions of culturally responsive instruction: empowering students through high expectations; utilizing cultural knowledge, experiences, and perspectives; validating every student's culture in an attempt to bridge the gap between school and home; teaching the whole child by meeting the child's social, emotional, and political needs; transforming schools and societies by using a student's strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum; and liberating students from traditionally oppressive educational norms.

While Gay's earlier work focused on curriculum, more recent work has stressed the responsibility of the teacher to implement effective lessons for culturally diverse students (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Ladson-Billings (2017) suggested that ineffective implementation of culturally responsive practices still causes students to struggle academically, socially, and politically. Gay (2000) emphasized that the public-school system can achieve more equitable outcomes for culturally diverse students by recognizing the importance of effective culturally responsive instruction.

Gay (2002) suggested that teachers motivated to apply their culturally responsive teaching strategies anticipate a direct link between adopting the strategies into classroom instruction and improving student performance, directly narrowing, and contributing to the elimination of the achievement gap. To be an effective teacher of culturally diverse students, teachers require both the knowledge of culturally responsive teaching strategies and the sense of efficacy to effectively implement the strategies.

### ***Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Strategies***

Bradshaw et al. (2018) and Duez-Curry (2017) describe culturally responsive classroom management as an inclusive approach towards operating classrooms for all students, not merely minority students. Culturally responsive classroom management supports the classroom managerial decisions of middle school teachers to implement instruction equitably and ensure that all learners, including both high-achievers and low-achievers, experience the same quality learning opportunities (Duez-Curry, 2017). As an extension of culturally responsive teaching, these strategies focus on the backgrounds of students, their previous knowledge and academic experiences, prior social experiences, and current learning needs (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2018). In the culturally responsive classroom management approach, middle school teachers aggressively identify potential biases and seek to ascertain the influence of biases with the selection of teaching strategies, classroom management strategies, and customization of the course content (Maxwell-Stuart et al., 2018).

### ***Cultural Lens and Identification of Biases***

Investigation and root identification of the factors that lead to biases in middle school teachers remains a critical concern in moving towards more inclusive education; one way for educators to comprehend their individual inclinations and potential biases and engage in self-evaluation and self-reflection of those assumptions is by writing a personal identity story (Duez-Curry, 2017). The Cultural Proficiency Receptivity Scale, developed by Hughes et al. (2015) enables middle school teachers to examine policies and practices of the schools and districts, in addition to self-reflection of the cultural context and affiliations.

In addition to the identification of biases, Duez-Curry (2017) and Emdin (2017) suggest that teachers must be cognizant of cultural awareness of minority students to develop the

necessary skills for effective cross-cultural interactions in the classroom. Engaging in objective study of the general norms of students' cultures enables the teacher to develop an understanding of potential reactions they might encounter and the behaviors of the students and their etiquettes, communication styles, and learning styles (Duez-Curry, 2017; Emdin, 2017). To realize a more profound insight into learners' cultural context, Duez-Curry (2017) and Emdin (2017) contend that teachers can formulate study groups to explore culturally responsive literature, work with learners to establish a family history, and conduct home visits to explore educational backgrounds, interpersonal relationships, and patterns of communication.

### ***Building a Caring Classroom Environment***

Nieto and Bode (2008) determined that middle school teachers striving to improve culturally diverse elements require the establishment a learning milieu through the lens of multiculturalism. Teachers, administrators, and school leadership teams maintain the responsibility to identify, implement, and monitor strategies to communicate respect for diversity, reaffirm connectedness, and propagate a sense of community (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

Recognizing the potential for discouragement of learners by marginalization and disparagement of minority learners by educators, Emdin (2017) identified the following classroom practices that have been shown to promote cultural diversity: promulgation of world maps depicting learners' native countries, welcome signs and banners, posters representing people of various cultures along with homogenizing elements, arrangement of desks in cluster form, and setting up of 'kindness boxes' are some of the evidence-based strategies and tools implemented properly. Likewise, teachers must establish rules and behavioral expectations for all students and clearly convey the expectations to the minority students. Duez-Curry (2017) stated that teachers must model the behaviors expected from students, provide ample

opportunities for students to practice expected behavioral norms, engage learners actively in classroom discussions about behavioral norms, and remain aware of potential inconsistencies.

### ***Connectivity Among Students***

To cultivate a sense of belongingness and connectivity among minority students, teachers building a cooperative and caring environment in classrooms where learners harbor positive and respectful relationships between themselves and teachers fosters true collaboration. Substantial research suggests that strong and positive mutual connections between teachers and students both enhance learning greatly and reduce negative implications in culturally diverse classrooms (; Emdin, 2017; Gillies, 2016; Li et al., 2015; Slavin, 2013).

### **Teachers and Cultural Competence**

Demographic shifts at the middle school level are necessitating teachers and principals to be more proactive towards identifying needs of diverse students, whose parents and communities may experience dissatisfaction with an existing framework of support that some may perceive as having been designed only for one, dominant cultural group (Beutel & Tangen, 2018). Beutel and Tangen (2018) suggested that the overall unpreparedness of teachers to work with culturally different students in diverse classrooms results from limited culturally diverse field experiences in the teacher preparation programs.

Beutel and Tangen (2018) explored how the perceptions of preservice teachers affected their readiness and preparations to become effective teachers in a culturally diverse environment, finding a need for improvement in teachers' training programs: specifically, an emphasis on expanding and refining intercultural experiences of the newly inducted teachers. Yuan (2018) advocated similarly for increased cultural competence among teachers, particularly young

European American teachers, to support them in best working with minority students for enhanced academic achievement.

In a comparative study focusing on cultural competence among students at the university level before and after enrollment in cross-cultural undergraduate courses, Sandell and Tupy (2015) found that a semester of high-impact cultural partnerships resulted in improved understanding of cultural diversity. Although participants initially possessed a poor sense of cultural diversity prior to the inter-cultural communication intervention, the researchers suggested that a lack of exposure with adults and students from different cultures resulted in participants minimizing cultural differences and over-emphasizing cultural commonalities. From these observations, it appears that the integration of domestic- or community-based inter-cultural experiences can motivate and support adults in gaining more knowledge from exposure with others, learning from others who do not share similar cultural experiences (Sandell & Tupy, 2015).

### **Professional Learning and Training**

In the research, Rutherford-Quach et al. (2018) discovered that a vast number of educators lack adequate training to address language acquisition with content area instruction and knowledge of how to alter instructional practices with students. Bottiani et al. (2018) indicated that only 10 out of 179 reviewed research articles reported practical results from professional learning related to cultural responsiveness and sensitivity. Rutherford-Quach et al. (2018) discovered an increase in prominence for professional learning for educators of culturally diverse students in 2015 and suggested that the increased emphasis may relate to the growing need for teacher training with students participating in online courses.

Rutherford-Quach et al. (2018) reported that educators viewed professional learning courses as beneficial, with their participants voicing a change in the view of language within content areas, language versus language for communication, assessments, and instructional practices. Samuel et al. (2017) emphasized the need for teacher preparation programs to provide pre-service teachers with increased knowledge and tools to support culturally responsive teaching. Likewise, Lee et al. (2017) contended that teaching approaches for multicultural students and training of teachers must be incorporated into these preparation courses to provide learning opportunities for educators to be better prepared to instruct diverse students.

### ***Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers in Preservice Education***

As discussed above, the role of language in the classroom demonstrates how cultural components have direct implications for the outcomes of learners; however, teachers may need many years to develop expertise in the sophisticated and demanding set of knowledge, skills, and orientations required to effectively instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students well (Villegas & Lucas, 2011). Lucas (2011) argued that the goal of preservice teacher education (to prepare new teachers to become classroom teachers for all students) is inhibited by a lack of coherent systems providing serious and sustained learning opportunities for teachers in the United States. For successful instruction and management of classrooms with English language learners, preservice teacher preparation programs must begin this process, which should continue after teachers begin working and accelerate in the continuum of teacher development (Villegas & Lucas, 2011).

Lucas and Villegas (2013) indicated that Feiman-Nemser's (2001) framework of central tasks for learning to teach provides a useful guide to support teachers in identifying critical tasks for developing their ability to teach English language learners while the teacher candidates were

still enrolled in preservice programs. Lucas and Villegas (2013) acknowledged the difficulty of employing the framework to support culturally aware teachers beyond preservice preparation; however, the two researchers contended that Feiman-Nemser's (2001) tasks for novice and experienced teacher learning could similarly inform the identification of appropriate foci for teachers to continue learning to teach English language learners in their subsequent career phases. Lucas and Villegas (2013) advocated for the collaboration of preservice teacher educators, school-based teachers, and school administrators with the objective of further developing and implementing the framework across career phases.

Lucas and Villegas (2013) additionally stated the imperative for policymakers and teacher educators to become cognizant of the need for professional learning to span preservice, induction, and subsequent phases of educators re-training to adequately prepare all teachers to teach English language learners. Few policies appeared to support coherent, interconnected, and integrated systems of teacher preparation and development; minimum research had explored local efforts to establish such systems through university, school district, community, and business collaborations and partnerships (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Conversely, some teacher education programs at universities were found to focus resources and courses on preparing all teachers to work effectively with English language learners (Lucas, 2011).

Lucas and Villegas (2013) advocated for policymakers, researchers, and reformists working with educators in universities and school districts to prioritize the exploration of requirements to establish a viable and a coherent teacher development continuum for teaching English language learners and students of other diverse backgrounds. Upon entering the classrooms in the districts after completion of the universities' teacher preparation programs, former preservice teachers must continue to enhance their ability to work with culturally diverse



students. Lucas and Villegas (2013) concluded that extraordinarily little time is generally allowed for participants in teacher education programs to develop expertise in supporting English language learners in the classroom. Consequently, school districts need to allocate time and resources for opportunities in which teachers can continue to build on their preservice learning as they further develop and refine themselves as linguistically and culturally responsive teachers.

### **Administrators' Support for Teachers**

Richards (2004) identified 11 ways that effective principals support teachers: (a) encourages teachers to improve as professionals in their pedagogy, (b) provides professional development, (c) supports teachers in matters regarding student discipline, (d) holds consistent and high standards for all teachers, (e) maintains an open-door policy, (f) respects and values teachers as professionals, (h) remains fair and trustworthy, (i) supports teachers with parents, and (k) keeps an open-door policy. Richards (2007) declared adamantly that the phenomenon of overworked and overstressed principals due to their expanding roles necessitates further that building leaders engage in self-reflection with an awareness of the tremendous power they hold to make a difference in the lives and school performance of teachers. Teachers who feel encouraged and comfortable with support from their principals may remain at the schools when a positive climate of learning exists to support high teacher morale and greater academic achievement from all students (Richards, 2007).

Similarly, Ingersoll (2001) discussed mentorship in schools and the vital roles principals play in promoting new teacher development. Principals provide formative assessment by regularly visiting classrooms, reviewing lesson plans, and providing immediate feedback to their new teachers (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll (2001) posited five easy ways that principals can demonstrate caring behaviors to new and veteran teachers: focusing on teacher happiness,

helping teachers achieve success in the classroom, showing appreciation, and encouraging teachers to enjoy personal time, and removing excessive teacher responsibilities. Researchers associated with the Wallace Foundation (2017) explained that principals make a significant difference in the quality of the education received by public school students. Calling them “multipliers” of effective teaching, the researchers found that school leadership was second only to teaching among school-related influences on student learning, accounting for about one-quarter of total school effects.

Researchers associated with the Chicago Teacher Educator Pipeline designed an instructional program using culturally responsive classroom management to enable teachers and students to explore their own biases, increasing awareness of the history of discrimination and oppression in the educational system, and participating actively with the identification and implementation of strategies for equitable educational opportunities. Other teacher training and education programs guide teachers towards refining their implementation of the culturally responsive classroom management approach for positively shaping instructional environments, assisting with improvement of pedagogy, and enabling minority students to perform better on standardized tests opportunities (National Center for Urban Education, n.d.).

Behavioral interventions encourage students to refine behavioral norms and value the needs and concerns of peers. According to Li et al. (2015), effective interventions shape a warm and caring student community. Maxwell-Stuart et al. (2018) determined that teachers and administrators implementing behavioral modification strategies reduce the influence and prevalence of negative behaviors or biases that European American students or teachers may occasionally demonstrate in the classroom. With reauthorization of the Individual Disabilities Education Act (1997), the Positive Behavior Interventions and Support established a climate and

culture building scheme with the introduction of a behavioral support framework focused on the need for culturally appropriate interventions aligned with the individual learning history and needs of students, families, teachers, and community members, creating an inclusive environment.

### **Understanding of Cultural Diversity**

In a systematic review, Ashreef et al. (2017) explored the effects of Next Generation Science Standards on student achievement, which focuses on cultural diversity and the relationship of student backgrounds to achieving academic excellence. Ashreef et al. (2017) examined attributes of teacher cultural competence, students ascribed value to the manifestations of cultural diversity and the capacity of teachers and students to deal with the negative factors emanating from culturally diverse classrooms. Ashreef et al. (2017) utilized qualitative evidence from 52 academic journal entries, including case studies and quantitative studies, to explore student orientations towards Next Generation Science Standards. Thematic analysis of the collected data showed that students enrolled in contemporary schools demonstrate an enhanced understanding of science-related values, social presence, and responsiveness of teaching methodology (Ashreef et al., 2017).

To support these students who value cultural diversity and seek to learn and develop through a culturally diverse instructional environment, Ashreef et al., (2017) stressed the need for teachers to develop cultural competencies, grow increasingly attentive towards cultural sensitivities of the students, intuitively perceive the power distance between themselves and the students, and enhance their individual social presence to learn and practice new forms of engagement with students of other cultures (Ashreef et al., 2017)

## Summary of the Research

CRP serves as the primary theoretical basis for this study. Researchers Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay are generally credited as originating the foundational basis for CRP and were found to be the most cited sources for a theoretical or analytical framework in the literature (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31).

Another basis for this study, sociocultural theory frames the learning environment as being mediated by cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts and challenges teachers and learners to use this understanding to create educational conditions that contribute to skill development (Vygotsky, 1962). Lantolf et al. (2015) identified four concepts as foundational to sociocultural theory: mediation, regulation, internalization, and the zone of proximal development.

Teachers with a heightened measure of self-efficacy were found to provide engaging learning environments that align flexibility and creativity with instruction. Salgado et al. (2018) suggested that teachers with high efficacy may be less affected by cultural differences, negative influences, and socio-economic status than those with a lower sense of efficacy. Similarly, Özokcu (2018) suggested that greater efficacy strongly predicts the use of inclusive educational practices. Callaway (2017) reported that teachers with high efficacy tend to remain flexible and can acclimate to challenging teaching environments.

Hallman and Meineke (2016) found that a teacher’s sense of efficacy is influenced by their experiences, exposure, and guidance (or lack thereof) provided by administrative support and professional learning opportunities. Some educators may feel unprepared due to a lack of

professional development in content areas and instructional strategies, both for veteran teachers and pre-service teachers.

McKinney and Snead (2017) emphasized the use of research-based instruction delivered by highly trained educators making the decisions about effective interventions and providing at risk students opportunities for addressing deficits. Examples of research-based instructional method include culturally relevant teaching practices, differentiated instruction, technology-based instruction, and cooperative learning groups (McKinney & Snead, 2017).

To address disparities and ensure equitable educational experiences, Blitz and Mulcahy (2017) stated that administrators must support students by ensuring adequate funding and resources are available for academic interventions, support of personnel, and school initiatives. Administrators who successfully advocate for their students work to create innovative ideas and enact systematic change that addresses the needs of diverse groups such as by prioritizing the development of professional learning communities and allowing teachers time for collaboration to plan effective lessons, share resources, and examine data related to student outcomes (Blitz & Mulcahy, 2017).

Since diverse students often come from communities dissatisfied with a framework of support that may seem intended to support select dominant cultural groups, Beutel and Tangen (2018) explained the need for middle school teachers and principals to become proactive with identifying the needs of diverse students and identify strategies to support them. Culturally responsive instructors, according to Ladson-Billings (2014), integrate relatable concepts that students associate with daily life to cultural contexts, such as language (jargon or slang) and extracurricular activities (music and sports). Particularly important for middle grades is the finding that teachers who implement instructional methods that employ accessible and

personalized approaches are likely to find increases in comprehension and connection-making for all learners (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

The research summarized here has demonstrated how students bring varied experiences to the academic classroom from their unique cultural backgrounds. As well, this review has presented a collection of these researchers' suggestions for framing such cultural experiences as a strength with which to increase academic achievement and reduce outcome disparities through exposure to and integration of multiculturally-aware pedagogy. The theory of CRP provides instructional approaches to assist educators in addressing the needs of diverse learners by encouraging connections between coursework and their lived experiences. Middle grade classrooms present challenges that can be addressed with instructional strategies intended to create an inclusive learning environment conducive to the success of all students. Across this review, researchers were found to consistently state the imperative nature of collaboration among teachers, administrators, and school leadership teams to identify, implement, and monitor strategies that communicate respect for diversity, reaffirm connectedness, and propagate a sense of community that supports all students in achieving acceptable learning outcomes.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

This study examined how middle school content teachers conceptualize the implementation of CRP and the factors that influence the implementation. Limited data is available to inform best practices in facilitating high teacher self-efficacy regarding culturally relevant teaching practices; specifically, about the perceptions held by content-area middle school general education teachers.

This chapter explains the case study design, clarifies the role of the researcher in the study, and provides details regarding the population studied. This research focused on eight teachers purposely selected as representing high and low self-efficacy scores with respect to CRP from a district containing 150 content-area general education middle school teachers across three middle schools. Multiple components were used in this study: interview instrument, card sorting, teacher artifacts review, and a survey for data collection. Data analysis included triangulation and establishment of validity with the survey instruments. In addition to the interview instrument and cards sorts, teacher artifacts were collected (consisting of lesson plans, materials from lessons, and student assignments) to support the triangulation of data. This chapter provides a presentation of the procedures used for data collection and analysis, then concludes with a summary and analysis of each component.

#### **Research Design**

##### ***Description of Case Study Research Design***

Case study research investigates an issue through the exploration one or more specific cases within a bounded system, setting, or context (Creswell, 2015). Stake (1995) emphasized that the function of case study research is to allow for the ability to study a given topic, rather than being a methodological focus itself. Yin (2003) presented case study as a strategy of

inquiry, a methodology, or a comprehensive research strategy. In the present review, case study research is defined as a qualitative approach examining a bounded system (a case or school district) through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (i.e., surveys, interviews, documents, and reports) to determine a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2015).

### ***Four Categories of Case Studies***

Merriam (1998) identified four main categories of case study designs in educational research: (a) ethnographic, (b) historical, (c) psychological, and (d) sociological. Ethnographic case studies focus on behavior of people in cultural settings, such as the culture within a classroom (Merriam, 1998). Historical case studies gather a variety of evidence to understand context over time, such as the establishment and development of a private school (Merriam, 1998). Psychological case studies, such as studies by Piaget, observe individuals and analyze behavior. The sociological case study model aligned with the proposed study through the focuses on social constructs and uses of demographics (such as socioeconomic differences within a school) to analyze the case (Merriam, 1998).

### ***Basic Procedures to Conduct a Case Study***

Stake (1995) suggested six basic procedures for conducting a case study. First, researchers determine the appropriate case study approach to research the problem. An effective approach clearly identifies the cases within set boundaries and seeks to obtain an in-depth understanding of the case or cases, which may involve an individual, several individuals, a program, an event, or an activity (Stake, 1995).

Second, in choosing the case to study, an array of possibilities for sampling exists for the qualitative researcher; selection may entail ordinary cases, accessible cases, or unusual cases



(Stake, 1995). Third, data collection can be extensive, drawing from multiple sources of information, such as observations, card sorting, interviews, and surveys. Holistic analysis can be performed on the entire case, or an embedded analysis can be used to assess a specific aspect of the case (Yin, 2003).

Fourth, the data collection creates a detailed description of the case, delineating factors like the history of the case, the chronology of events, or a day-by-day rendering of the activities of the case. The fifth procedure emphasizes a few key issues or analyses of themes, seeking to understand the complexity of the case without generalizing beyond it. The final phase concludes with an interpretive report on the meaning of the case, which can arise from learning about the issue of the case or an instrumental case or learning about an unusual situation or an intrinsic case (Stake, 1995).

### ***Criticism of Case Study Research Designs***

Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that case study methods may be negatively viewed by some researchers, with some suggesting that qualitative studies may possess little rigor and result in biased research studies producing subjective findings and questionable conclusions. Other concerns may include a limited degree of generalizability for larger populations and different settings. Based on those indicated concerns, the current study sought rigor through triangulation with the card sorting technique of Rugg and McGeorge (2005), cross-checking with transcribed data from interviews, and collecting teacher artifacts including lesson plans, materials from lessons, and student assignments. Self-bias was monitored using recorded, daily reflections and review of journal entries.

### ***Strengths of Case Studies***

Both Bryman (2016) and Connelly (2016) challenged the opponents of case study research, arguing that studies are intended to be generalizable for theoretical propositions rather than to specific populations. The qualitative researcher works to develop analytical generalizations through data collection and review based on broad theories rather than merely being inferred by statistical generalizations.

Aligned with the guidance of Bryman (2016) and Connelly (2016), the current study was developed to assess the cases of the individual teachers using findings from several data sources. No cause-and-effect relationships are presumed, nor are generalized findings applied without basis to others beyond the three middle schools assessed in the qualitative data analysis.

### ***Validity in Case Study Research***

Fusch and Ness (2015) commented that validity in qualitative exploratory case studies is strongest when various types of evidence are considered together. Validity is also improved through triangulation of the data (Park & Park, 2016). In the study, consistent with the guidance of Park and Park (2016), interview data from the eight middle school teachers were cross-checked and triangulated to enhance validity using the card sorting procedure, transcriptions of data from the 15 semi structured interview questions, and review of an exemplar work product that demonstrated the implementation of CRP in their classroom. Interview participants were directed to reveal their honest thoughts and experiences regarding their personal views and self-definitions of CRP regarding their personal teaching practices in the classroom setting. This approach strengthened the validity of the interview data (Gentles et al., 2015).

The quantitative question served to support the study's validity by establishing the description of the sample middle school teachers' self-efficacy scores, serving as a tool to assist

in the selection of the eight middle school general education teachers who would then participate in the interviews, cart sorting activities, and artifact discussion.

### **Role of the Researcher**

As a response to intervention coordinator within the studied district, the researcher has engaged school administration, teachers, parents, and students to determine the academic needs of the students and meets with teachers on a regular basis to establish interventions and goals for students with academic or behavior deficits.

In that role, the researcher observed during response to intervention meetings that educators frequently expressed frustration with addressing the needs of multi-cultural and at-risk students; some appeared to attribute the academic deficits to language acquisition and barriers due to ethnic backgrounds. Many of the students in the district received early childhood education in the United States; although some students may have originated from bilingual homes, it is presumed that most students were educated in the United States during primary and formative years. Educators may have engaged in assumptions regarding student abilities and deficits without reliable data to draw conclusions. Educators also expressed feelings of being inadequately prepared or trained to address the needs of certain students, especially minority students.

In addition to the role described above, the researcher served as a cultural diversity liaison for a brief period approximately one year prior to the beginning of this research project. The district created the cultural diversity liaison role to acknowledge the issue of teacher preparedness and empathy regarding students of varied cultural backgrounds, tasking the cultural diversity liaison with providing related professional learning to staff through a curriculum of six

lessons. Given the researcher's role in providing professional learning to the staff, no interview questions were directed to teachers specifically addressing professional learning.

Approximately 45 minutes were allotted for the cultural diversity curriculum each month as part of the existing professional learning schedule. Recognizing the importance of the professional learning, teachers demonstrated a high level of engagement; however, time and funding for extended staff development appeared to remain a low priority in comparison to curriculum training, high stakes testing, and student performance. The district eliminated the cultural diversity initiative due to budgeting limitations, but the researcher's experience in this role informed the identification of teacher self-efficacy with CRP and the impact with implementation of instruction as a research topic.

Approval was obtained from the Columbus State University Institutional Review Board prior to the start of the study. Given the researcher's familiarity with the district, management of potential personal or professional bias was a high priority. The eight teachers randomly selected for invitation to participate in the study were determined from the initial surveys issued. The medium of videoconferencing was used to conduct the interviews in this qualitative exploratory case study. The researcher maintained consistent self-monitoring and self-reflecting of actions during the interviews and data analysis to remain cognizant of any indications of bias.

Precautions taken with the survey procedures include electronic distribution of the TSECRPS using the university's Qualtrics software license to the 150 content-area general education middle school teachers in the district and the use of password protection for all survey responses. Descriptive statistics for the quantitative research component were calculated with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26.0 and Qualtrics software checked by professors at the university for accuracy and signs of bias.

Informed consent was obtained from all middle school teacher participants invited to participate in the study. The researcher and administration refrained from encouraging participation in the study. Participants were notified by letter electronically with the informed consent document, the rights of refusal to participate in the study, and knowledge that withdrawal could occur at any time with no repercussions. All data was coded and stored in a locked file cabinet; only the investigator had possession of the key to the lock. Further protection of confidentiality occurred by destroying all data at the conclusion of the study with confidential document shredding according to the research protocols of the university.

## **Participants**

### ***Setting***

The research took place in a district with a combined enrollment of 14,608 K-12 students across 23 public schools: 11 elementary schools, three middle schools, four high schools, four non-traditional schools, and one virtual school. Within the three middle schools (Grades 6-8) the following demographics were noted: African American (66%), Hispanic American (15%), European American (14%), and other groups (5%).

### ***Population***

The three middle schools employed 309 teachers; of those, 150 were general education content teachers (50 at each school). Demographics for these content-area general education teachers are provided in Table 4. These demographics were obtained through the state and district's web site, where they are accessible to the public.

Table 4

*Demographics of Population (n=150)*

Demographic	Number
Gender	
Male	45
Female	105
Ethnicity	
European American	37
African American	100
Hispanic American	4
Asian American	3
Multi-racial	1
Did not check this box	5
Highest degree achieved	
Doctorate	9
Specialist	23
Master	52
Bachelor	76

***Convenience Sampling***

Mertens (2014) defined convenience or nonprobability sampling as a method chosen because of a high ease of access to the sample. As the investigator had accessibility to the sample through the role described above, the content-area middle school general education teachers included in the qualitative and quantitative components were a convenience or nonprobability sample (Mertens, 2014). Of the 150 teachers, eight were randomly selected for the interviews in the qualitative component.

As a return to intervention coordinator in the district, access to the identified sample was conveniently used to serve the purpose of the study. None of the participants were compelled to participate in any aspect of the study. The informed consent administered to prospective participants clarified that all participation would be voluntary. The sample was limited to the

single suburban district in Georgia for ease of access and concerns that the researcher heard expressed during regional professional learning and meetings. The regional educators articulated concerns regarding the need for additional support to increase the achievement of culturally or linguistically diverse groups.

### ***Purposeful Sampling***

Creswell (2015) identified purposeful sampling as a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases to support effective use of limited resources. Creswell and Poth (2018) said that a purposeful sample (or non-probability sample) selects participants based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study. They also explained that purposeful sampling can complement convenience sampling as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling.

### ***Procedures for Study's Purposeful Sampling***

Data collected from the quantitative component was used to aggregate responses into Quartiles 1, 2, 3, and 4. Four participants were identified from Quartile 1 and another four from Quartile 4, representing low and high self-efficacy scores, respectively. The remaining teachers in the other two quartiles were identified and placed on a waiting list in case one or more of the eight selected teachers declined to further participate in the study.

Teacher-perceived self-efficacy scores in the four Quartiles were delineated by following the procedures used by Heyward (2018). An overall range was calculated for the survey, consisting of 22 items on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from one (lowest) to five (highest). Scores ranged between 22 and 110. To evenly distribute the four quartiles, the difference of the extremes (88) was divided to attain a value of 22. Ranges were then set as 22-44, 45-67, 68-90, and 91-110 for Quartiles 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

To minimize bias in the selection process, random selection was used to choose four teachers from Quartile 1 and four from Quartile 4 to create the two self-efficacy categories.. The paramount aim of the sampling was to select a population of eight randomly selected teachers from Quartiles 1 and 4 with representation from each of the three middle schools.

Teachers were emailed an invitation to participate in the study in the form of a recruitment script. Teachers were required to meet five selection criteria: willingness to be interviewed, time to participate in the phone or video conferencing interview, work with multicultural students, a certified content-area general education teacher in the research setting school district, and willingness to be recorded during the interview.

## **Instrumentation**

### ***Quantitative Instrument***

The TSECRPS was used to assess the self-efficacy levels of the educators and is provided in Appendix B. Designed to gain a better understanding of the general education teachers' self-efficacy with culturally responsive instruction, the survey provided an insight into teacher perceptions of self-efficacy and CRP as well as provided general descriptive statistics.

The survey was electronically administered through the university's electronic survey distribution email system, Qualtrics, to identify participants for Phase 2 of the research study. A secondary role of the survey was to describe the sample of 150 middle school teachers by assessing the range of self-efficacy scores through placement within Quartiles 1, 2, 3, and 4. The quantitative survey served as a tool to help randomly select the eight subjects to participate in the interview, card sort, and artifacts review Zoom activities.

The TSECRPS measured the construct of perceived teacher self-efficacy with culturally responsive instruction. Bandura (2006) indicated that a strong sense of personal efficacy



correlated with better health, higher achievement, more desirable teaching behaviors, and better social integration. The construct of self-efficacy with culturally responsive instruction for students represented one core aspect of Bandura's social cognitive theory.

### ***Validity***

All items on the TSECRPS originated from TSES, and Hoy et al. (2009). Schwarzer and Hallum (2008) utilized the survey in the research study and reported that the TSES remains free for students and researchers and is available on the study's web site. According to Hoy et al. (2009), the validity of the content of the survey was established by a panel of experts, supported by the existing literature and built on the construct of self-efficacy. Hoy et al. (2009) reported the validity of the construction of the TSES and verified the tool by factor analysis and comparison to existing instruments. External validity was established through a series of pilot tests with reliability defined as a measure of internal consistency. Their analysis consistently showed three factors: Efficacy in Student Engagement (Questions 20, 21, 25, 32, and 39), Efficacy in Instructional Practices (Questions 19, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 34, 35, and 38), and Efficacy in Classroom Management (Questions 18, 26, 30, 31, 33, 36, and 37). These three factors accounted for 54 % (long form) and 65 % (short form) of the variance for teachers in service.

### ***Reliability***

Hoy et al. (2009) reported the TSES to have a high general reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .90 (Mertler, 2014, p. 9). Test-retest reliability resulted in .71 (n = 158) and .76 (n = 193) for the period of one year. Across two years, test-retest reliability was found to be .69 (n = 161). Schwarzer and Hallum (2008) conducted a reliability assessment on the TSES with 300 teachers and reported Cronbach's alphas between .76 and .82 with test-retest reliability

coefficients of .67 (N=158) and .76 (N=193) over 1 year; over 2 years the finding was .65 (N=161).

The TSECRPS is provided in Appendix B as Part I with the 17 demographic items and Part II with the 22 items from the original survey using a five-point Likert scale (*Nothing Very Little, Some, Quite A Bit, and A Great Deal*) for each item.

### ***Qualitative Instruments***

The study contained four qualitative instruments: semi-structured interview, card sorts, journal of self-reflections, and teacher artifacts. The instruments are described below.

#### ***Semi-Structured Interview***

The semi-structured interview protocol was influenced by Gay's (2010) six dimensions of CRP and statements in the writings of Richards (2004, 2007). Interview data was collected from the randomly selected sample of eight teachers using the CCI, which is provided in Appendix B. The interview protocol was organized in three parts: Part I (directions and reminders for the interviewer), Part II (demographic information), Part III (15 interview questions designed to explore issues associated with cultural competence as reported by the participants). The interview was conducted using the Zoom platform. Interview duration was no longer than 60 minutes and each interview was recorded and transcribed.

#### ***Card Sorts***

Card sorts examine the placement of items or key words into categories at the preference of the sorter. Rugg and McGeorge (2005) contended that card sorts are the simplest form of sorts as the entities being sorted are simply names on a card representing the entity. They also stated that, in open card sorting, participants create the categories themselves and place the provided items into the categories, while in closed card sorting researchers provide items for participants

to sort within fixed categories using predefined and determined names. Open card sorts present the more flexible option, allowing the qualitative researcher to determine the participants' categories, review labels assigned to categories, and analyze interesting patterns in the breakdown of the named categories.

Wilson (2011) posited repeated single-criterion sort as a variation of open card sorting that provides a simple method for uncovering important dimensions of a set of related items by using repetitive sorting to understand underlying dimensions or characteristics of a product or service. Upchurch et al. (2001) provided eight specific procedures to guide researchers in conducting the repeated single-criterion sort. These procedures were adapted and incorporated for use in this study. The following card sort procedures were conducted:

- a) Participants were asked to identify 10 key terms or phrases related to CRP and place their terms on 3" x 5" index cards. The participants were asked to categorize and prioritize the key terms or phrases in order of priority or importance and to explain their reasoning for that placement.
- b) Participants were shown 10 predetermined, frequently used key terms and phrases on the index cards from the interviews. The participants were asked to review, categorize, and prioritize the terms in order of importance and then discuss and explain the reasoning for the placement.

### ***Teacher Artifacts***

Artifacts were collected to supported triangulation of data (Yin, 2018). Artifacts collected content-area middle school teachers' lesson plans, materials, and students' assignments. Teacher artifacts consisted of one lesson plan executed before the scheduled Zoom interview reflecting culturally relevant teaching practices; all course materials associated with the lesson plan

connected to the lesson were reviewed and discussed. Participants selected the artifacts to provide.

Hinchey (2016) believed that written materials assist in providing the opportunity to understand the sociocultural context of teachers' conceptualization of CRP. Artifact collection facilitated capture and assessment of teacher views possibly not verbalized in the interviews and card sort activities. Review of these lesson plans, course materials, and assignments permitted an examination of documented strategies relevant to supporting and scaffolding of teachers with varying levels of self-efficacy and the conceptualization of CRP. Collected artifacts were used to discover unique insights into how content-area middle school teachers conceptualized CRP in their classroom practices.

Silverman (2011) stated that this type of review can offer “a relatively unobtrusive method of gaining information and may offer information unavailable from other types of data sources” (p. 97). Additionally, Silverman (2013) posited that the analyzing of artifacts allows the researcher to focus on the creation of artifacts. Collected artifacts were utilized to verify or reject the information gathered from interviews and card sorts with the content-area middle school teachers in the study. Yin (2003) contended that the use of teacher artifacts reduces the effect of researcher bias and supports a valid and reliable study. In the present study, the use of artifacts provided validation of the data generated during the semi-structured interviews and card sorts to gain a deeper understanding about middle school teachers' conceptualization of CRP in daily teaching practices within the classroom settings.

### ***Journal of Self-Reflections***

A journal of self-reflections was maintained for self-monitoring and self-reflection of actions during the interviews and data analysis for signs of self-bias through documented

influence or non-impartiality. Journal entries were monitored daily throughout the interviewing and data transcription process to support fidelity. Recording of detailed notes throughout the process of data collection and analysis served to minimize the extent of bias during the research process.

Table 5 lists the four qualitative instruments and one quantitative instrument used in the present study to assess how content-area middle school general education teachers with varying levels of self-efficacy conceptualize CRP in their classroom teaching practices.

Table 5

<i>Study Instruments</i>		
Order	Type	Name
1	Quantitative	Teacher self-efficacy on culturally responsive pedagogy scale
2	Qualitative	Semi-structured interview
3	Qualitative	Card sorts
4	Qualitative	Teacher artifacts

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Approval was obtained from the Columbus State University Institutional Review Board prior to initiating the research study. The qualitative exploratory case study design employed a sixteen-step process that participants followed from entry in the study through completion of the project:

- 1) Email addresses of the population of 150 content-area general education middle school teachers were received from the school district’s data clerk.
- 2) The recruiting script and informed consent form were emailed to the 150 teachers using Qualtrics.
- 3) A reminder was sent to follow-up and re-share the recruitment script and letter of informed consent to all 150 teachers.

- 4) Teachers who returned a letter of informed consent were accepted for participation in the study.
- 5) Upon receipt of the informed consent form, an indirect coded survey was emailed to the participants. Indirect coding identified possible participants for additional research with the study.
- 6) Upon receipt of all surveys, data was inserted into a Qualtrics data file. Once analyzed, the data was used to place the participants who completed the surveys across the four quartiles of self-efficacy from Quartile 1 (lowest) to Quartile 4 (highest). The purpose of the quartile categorization of self-efficacy scores was to support the selection of eight teacher respondents to participate in the primary qualitative component of the study.
- 7) Four respondents, with representation from the three middle schools, were randomly selected from each Quartile 1 and Quartile 4 for a total of eight participants for inclusion on the qualitative activities.
- 8) Remaining participants were placed on a waiting list as a contingency plan.
- 9) The eight respondents in Step 6 were contacted through email and invited to participate in the second phase of the study with the qualitative activities.
- 10) Once the eight respondents agreed to participate in the additional activities, Phase 2 was scheduled.
- 11) A coding list for the eight teachers was used to track the interview data, card sort data, and artifacts review data as well as to secure the identities of the teachers to maintain confidentiality. The coding sheet was saved on a password-protected USB drive, which was locked in an office cabinet located on school property.

- 12) Over a course of two weeks, respondents scheduled and participated in a 60-minute interview and the initial open card sort activity.
- 13) Interviews and the initial opened card sort were then transcribed and analyzed.
- 14) The virtual Zoom closed card sort procedure and review of artifacts were then scheduled and performed the following week.
- 15) The card sorts and discussion review and discussion of artifacts using virtual Zoom were conducted and then transcribed.
- 16) All data was then analyzed.

### ***Triangulation and Member Checking***

Triangulation was used to enhance the validity of the interview data through cross-checking of the transcripts with the results from card sorting and the collected artifacts.

Rugg and McGeorge (2005) explained three basic components for using sorting techniques to ask respondents to sort entities into groups: the manipulatives may be objects or cards, with the names of themes, objects, or situations on the cards; the groups may be chosen by the qualitative researchers or chosen by the respondents, or a mixture of both; and the sorting technique discovers a useful way of determining the agreement and disagreement levels between respondents regarding the categories. Combining different card sorting techniques (such as visual card sorting, open card sorting, and repeated single-criterion sorting) provides for triangulation (Rugg & McGeorge, 2005). Card sorting demonstrates the perceptions of the participants through the way the items are sorted by keywords or phrases.

Rugg and McGeorge (2005) contended that card sorts remain the simplest form of sorts, with the entities being sorted as names on a card. Rugg and McGeorge (2005) stated that open card sorting allows participants to create the categories themselves and then fit the provided

items into the categories, in comparison to closed card sorting where the researcher provides items to sort into fixed categories with predefined names. Rugg and McGeorge (2005) suggest that the open card sort stands as the more flexible option, since it allows the researcher to observe and assess patterns in how participants develop and assign labels to categories and items.

### ***Open Card Sorting and Repeated Single-Criterion Sorting***

Aspects of the repeated single-criterion sorts were employed in the study. Repeated single-criterion respondents sort the same entities repeatedly, categorizing in terms of a different attribute (criterion) each time (Rugg & McGeorge, 2005). The repeated single criterion sort procedure guides the relevant terminology in the research of Bannister and Fransella (1980), Kelly (1955), Rugg and McGeorge (2005), and Vickery (1960). Bannister and Fransella (1980) viewed constructs as attributes used by an individual to describe items. The construct presented to the participant may relate to academic achievement for students. Participants sorted the common/shared words using the themes retrieved from the interview or discussion, recording these on 10 cards and placing them in piles based on the construct of academic achievement for students.

Kelly (1955) defined a criterion as the attribute used for the basis of a sort when using the sorting techniques and described criterion as a *place of manufacture or cost*. The criterion provides the basis for sorting items into categories. Bannister and Fransella (1980) defined a category as a group in which to classify items using a criterion. The criterion presented to the content-area middle school teachers was teachers' conceptualization of CRP or how CRP is present in their classrooms regarding teaching practices. Teachers sorted the common/shared words (into piles using this criterion).



Both Vickery (1960) and Rugg and McGeorge (2005) identified a facet as the viewpoint used for a set of classifications. Vickery (1960) stated that computers categorized in terms of criteria relating to hardware features, or in terms of the exemplary criteria relating to usability. In the present study, the facet used for classifications reflected perceptions on effective and ineffective teaching practices for CRP with students in teachers' classroom settings. Teachers sorted the common/shared words on the 10 cards in piles using the facet of effective and ineffective teaching practices when applying CRP.

### ***Overview of Procedures for Repeated Single-Criterion Sorts***

Wilson (2011) identified the repeated single-criterion sort as a simple method for uncovering important dimensions of a set of related items, describing the sort as a variation of open card sorting involving the repeated sorting of a set of items to understand underlying dimensions or characteristics of a product or service. Wilson (2011) reported that repeated single-criterion sort technique can be used to determine if the dimensions specialists believe are most critical to product success match with the dimension actual users report as most important. Common usability surveys might use "standard" dimensions like satisfaction, efficiency, and learnability that may or may not reflect what is important to users. In this situation, repeated card sorting appears to be a feasible method of providing some validation of standard dimensions and identifying new dimensions (Wilson, 2011).

Upchurch et al. (2001) provided specific procedures to guide the research in conducting the repeated single-criterion sort. The procedures were as follows:

- a) Provide participants with a thoroughly shuffled set of cards with 10 key terms and phrases.
- b) Ask participants to sort the cards into two piles.

- c) Request participants name each pile and describe differences. For example, the participant might name one pile “Resources” and other pile “Instructional Strategies.”
- d) Shuffle all the items again and ask the participants to sort the cards in a different way.
- e) Name the new groups and once again ask the participant to describe the differences.
- f) Organize the dimensions obtained from all the participants to see if there are any common themes.

Curran et al. (2005) discussed two strengths and one weakness of this card sort technique: though a simple and easy method that provides understanding or “user-derived” dimensions, analysis of the emergent data requires some background in qualitative analysis.

### ***Specific Card Sort Procedure for Study***

The present study applied the guidance discussed above from the literature (Bannister & Fransella, 1980; Curran et al., 2005; Kelly, 1955; Rugg & McGeorge, 2005; Upchurch et al., 2001; Wilson, 2011) to develop and apply the following specific card sort procedure:

- Step 1: Video interviews were initiated with the eight content-area middle school educators.
- Step 2: Interviews were conducted using the questions from the CCI.
- Step 3: Participants were asked to name 10 key terms or phrases which came to mind when thinking of CRP (open card sort).
- Step 4: The participants were asked to place the key terms into categories and to then review, reorganize, or further categorize 10 key terms as specific as possible and discuss reasoning with the researcher.

- Step 5: Each transcript was examined prior to initial card sort to obtain shared key words or phrases, which were connected to the criterion or construct of teachers' conceptualization of CRP.
- Step 6: Common words or phrases were developed and shared with participants.
- Step 7: Each participant was then provided these 10 common terms.
- Step 8: Participants then sorted the cards into three provided categories based on of teachers' conceptualization of CRP or how CRP looks in their classrooms regarding their teaching practices.
- Step 9: Participants assigned terms to categories for each pile, described the meaning of the categories, and described differences between the categories.
- Step 10: Participants reviewed the terms and categories.
- Step 11: Terms and categories were reassigned and sorted. Once again, respondents described the meaning of the names and described the differences between the categories.
- Step 12: Data was gathered from the card sort by the eight participants.
- Step 13: Dimensions obtained from teachers were organized to review for common themes.
- Step 14: Triangulation of themes from the open card sort procedure, the repeated criterion card sort, and the themes arising from the CCI interviews and the alignment of the data.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Yin (2016) was adamant that ethical considerations require certain procedures, which were incorporated into the present study: all teacher participation in the study remained on a voluntary basis with the right to withdraw from the study at any time; all teacher participants were provided with an informed consent document indicating their understanding of the research

aim, information, and implications of the research determined by teacher participation so that none of the teachers were coerced into participation in the research; offensive, discriminatory, and derogatory language deemed unacceptable was prohibited from questions; privacy and anonymity were achieved by avoiding the use of specific names, such as school or district identifiers of participants shared in the study; acknowledgement of referred works by authors were correctly cited in APA format; (f) efforts to achieve the highest level of objectivity with discussions and analyses were made during the research study; and adherence was maintained at all times to the university's Code of Ethical Practice for the research.

Creswell and Poth (2018) indicated that a critical ethical issue in qualitative research concerns the treatment of research participants and outlined three ethical practices to consider in the treatment of participants: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The first practice, respect, involves participants' right to privacy, such as the protection of identifying information and maintenance of confidentiality through safeguards with coding documents, removing names, password protected USB drives, and fabricated names; elements used in the present study. Creswell and Poth (2018) identified the second ethical practice of beneficence as implementing procedures for maximizing benefits to participants while simultaneously minimizing harm. In the present study, beneficence was practiced through a conscious consideration for the participants' emotions and their relationships with other teachers, students, and administrators. Protecting participants from any harm remained a paramount concern in the study. For the justice consideration, Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the treatment of all research participants requires fairness and a lack of coercion to participate in the interviews or any part of a research study. In the present study, participation in the research was explicitly stated to have no bearing on teaching responsibilities for the middle school teachers. A statement was included in the

consent form that provided affirmation of the voluntary nature of participation in the study (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

### **Trustworthiness**

Herr and Anderson (2014) emphasized the importance of gathering valid and reliable results in qualitative research. Aligned with the premise of Patton (2014), the researcher worked to ensure that the interview protocol and interview questions were clear, understandable, and not intentionally leading the teacher participants to any specific responses. The CCI-adapted questions are minimally affected by bias and therefore viable and capable of collecting relevant and useful information on middle school teacher perceived self-efficacy with CRP.

### **Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability**

Credibility (internal validity) in the study arose from triangulation and member checking procedures (Yazan, 2015). O'Reilly and Parker (2013) explained transferability as being equivalent to generalizability (or external validity) in quantitative research. O'Reilly and Parker (2013) indicated that a study will possess transferability if it provides readers with sufficient evidence to ascertain how results for each of the research questions may apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations. Transferability or external validity was established by using the semi-structured interview responses from the eight content-area middle school teachers to provide an in depth description of the data, as advocated by O'Reilly and Parker (2013). The CRP phenomenon was explained and described in sufficient detail so that others could evaluate the extent to which conclusions drawn can be transferred to varied settings, situations, and people. Aligned with the guidance of O'Reilly and Parker (2013), adequate evidence allows readers to make judgements regarding use of the findings in other school or district work settings. To this purpose and keeping with Gentles et al. (2015), transferability was manifested

through the development of a thorough description of the phenomenon of CRP and a robust and detailed account of perceptions of the eight content-area middle school teachers.

Yin (2016) said that dependability (reliability) and confirmability (objectivity) occurred by the utilization of an audit trail and triangulation. Documentation of procedures allowed future researchers to replicate the process of data collection and analysis. The audit trail categories pursued included: (a) electronically recorded material, written field notes, and unobtrusive measures, such as transcribed notes from digital recording; (b) data reduction and analysis products to include write-ups of interview notes, condensed notes; and theoretical notes; (c) data reconstruction and synthesis products, structure of themed categories; (d) findings and conclusions and a final report, with connections to the existing literature; (e) process notes (methodological, trustworthiness, and audit trail notes); and, (f) material relating to intentions and dispositions (inquiry proposal and personal notes; Bryman, 2016).

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Qualitative Data Analysis***

Qualitative data analysis served as the primary form of data analysis in the study, informing both the overarching research question and research questions 1-2.

The overarching research question asks, “how do teachers of varying levels of self-efficacy self-define or conceptualize CRP in their classroom settings?” Research Question 1 explores, how do middle school content-area teachers conceptualize implementation of CRP? Research Question 2 explores, what factors influence the integration of CRP?

For the two qualitative research questions, all transcribed interviews from the eight content-area middle school generation education teachers were coded for themes and reviewed with a systematic framework for data analysis. The methods for interpretive analysis explained by

Marshall and Rossman (2016) and McNiff (2016) were followed. The three researchers described six phases of data analysis, which were employed in the study.

The first phase of interpretive thematic analysis is referred to as familiarization with data. Familiarization with the data was achieved by reading and re-reading the transcribed interview data. The second phase selects units of meaning from the text or coding. During this phase, concise labels were generated for specific units of meaning within the data. McNiff (2016) explained that the third phase consists of assigning groups of common codes to thematic groups and suggested that, following the identification and correlation of common codes, assessment of these common codes can determine overarching themes. In the fourth phase of reviewing themes, a theme is ascertained and appropriately aligned with the statement reflective of the theme. The objective of the review was to ensure that themes accurately reflected the statements in the full set of transcriptions. The fifth phase defined and named the theme considered for the overview, the ideas conveyed, and identified how the topic aligned with the result. Marshall and Rossman (2016) reported that the final phase results in a presentation of the findings, describing each extracted theme using supporting quotes and narratives to define the theme's meaning across participants.

### ***Quantitative Data Analysis***

Quantitative data analysis was used to assess data scores to appropriately place all scores into Quartiles 1, 2, 3, and 4 with ranges 22-44, 45-67, 68-90, and 91-110 respectively. The quantitative instrument served as a tool to assist with selection of the eight teacher participants for the Zoom interviews, card sort, and artifact review. The eight teachers were selected from Quartiles 1 and 4.

## Summary

Chapter III explained the qualitative exploratory case study research design. The researcher's relationship to the studied district was stated and the procedures and behaviors undertaken to mitigate the potential for self-bias to influence results were described, including the use of journal reflections during the interviewing and data analysis processes. Demographics for the 150 middle school general education teachers across three middle schools in the district who comprised the pool of educators of the selected participants were reported, as well as the selection process for the eight participants. Consent to participate in the study was obtained by surveys distributed electronically through the university's Qualtrics system to the 150 teachers. The instruments used to classify the eight participants into self-efficacy groups were discussed, including the interviews, card sorts, and artifact reviews.

In this chapter, the selection procedure for and interview process of the randomly selected sample of eight content-area middle school teachers were provided. Data collection procedures for the survey, interviews, and card sorting activities were reviewed. The two research questions and the procedures for qualitative data analysis, interpretive thematic data analysis, triangulation, and member checking were also disclosed. Triangulation and member checking assisted with the verification of validity regarding the data. The methodology and design in Chapter III guided the data analysis, which is provided in Chapter IV alongside a summary of the main findings that supported analysis and how these addressed the qualitative research questions.



## Chapter IV: Findings

### Quantitative Data

The quantitative data analysis provided general information concerning the convenience sample for this study and allowed the differentiation of respondents into low and high self-efficacy groupings. Out of the 150 teachers invited to participate, 98 returned the TSECRPS, which is a return rate of approximately 65 %. The respondent group was comprised of 20 men and 77 women ranging from 21 to 60 years of age. Of that group, 74 identified as African American or African American and 22 as European American, with two respondents declining to respond to the question regarding ethnicity. Highest level of education reported: bachelor's (33), master's (44), specialist's and terminal degree (10). The participants' teaching experience varied between 5 or fewer years (28 respondents), 6-10 years (51 respondents), 10 or more (19 respondents). One respondent did not complete all questions. A total of 41 indicated they had traveled outside of the United States. Eight teachers reported being proficient in a language other than English. Of all the participants, 54 stated they had received no professional learning on CRP. Only 46 % of the participants felt that the administration provided adequate administrative support, training, and resources.

The survey total was calculated, and the results were divided into 4 quartiles ranges. The scores for the TSECRPS ranged from a low of 22 to a high of 105 out of a possible range of 22 to 110 as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Composite Self Efficacy Scores from the TSECRPS (n=98)*

Survey code	SE score	Survey code	SE score	Survey code	SE score	Survey code	SE score	Survey code	SE score
T001	70	T021	51	T041	59	T061	45	T081	99
T002	22	T022	75	T042	45	T062	40	T082	42
T003	58	T023	65	T043	66	T063	75	T083	65
T004	68	T024	79	T044	48	T064	77	T084	60
T005	29	T025	71	T045	60	T065	77	T085	78
T006	65	T026	72	T046	78	T066	49	T086	57
T007	88	T027	46	T047	53	T067	66	T087	29
T008	76	T028	48	T048	53	T068	105	T088	81
T009	58	T029	67	T049	54	T069	95	T089	55
T010	68	T030	98	T050	84	T070	68	T090	81
T011	67	T031	79	T051	69	T071	47	T091	55
T012	91	T032	45	T052	55	T072	51	T092	60
T013	62	T033	41	T053	74	T073	22	T093	80
T014	51	T034	73	T054	62	T074	39	T094	76
T015	68	T035	67	T055	54	T075	55	T095	76
T016	63	T036	67	T056	40	T076	73	T096	69
T017	51	T037	77	T057	94	T077	53	T097	22
T018	67	T038	51	T058	51	T078	64	T098	70
T019	62	T039	71	T059	58	T079	66		
T020	77	T040	93	T060	54	T080	52		

***Focal Participants***

Random selection was used to choose eight participants to interview, participate in card sorts, and share lesson plans and artifacts. Four teachers from Quartile 1 and four from Quartile 4 comprised the two self-efficacy categories. Quartile 1 were the low self-efficacy group and Quartile 4 forming the high self-efficacy group. The random sampling included representation from each of the three middle schools. The basic demographics of the eight participants are summarized in Table 7. The table lists gender, highest degree of completion, ethnicity, years of experience, and the self-efficacy. Pseudonyms are provided for the participants.

Table 7

*Demographics of Participants in Phase 2 (n=8)*

Participant	Gender	Highest degree	Ethnicity	Experience	Self-efficacy quartile/SE scores
Jane	Female	Doctorate	Black	10+ years	High-98
Jill	Female	Bachelors	White	0-5 years	Low-29
Joyce	Female	Specialist	Black	10+ years	Low-40
Judy	Female	Specialist	Black	10+ years	High-98
John	Male	Doctorate	White	10+years	High-93
Joseph	Male	Doctorate	Black	10+years	High-94
Jade	Female	Specialist	Black	10+years	Low-39
Jennifer	Female	Master's	Black	6-10 years	Low-42

Additional information was collected during introductions during the interviews as each participant gave insight into their background of previous educational experiences and community involvement. This information is summarized below.

***Jane***

Jane is an African American woman with a doctorate degree, 14 years of teaching experience, and a leadership certification. Jane has served as mathematics instructional coach, administrative assistant, and faculty advisor to many school organizations. Jane is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and was serving as the support committee chairperson for Historically African American Colleges and Universities at the time of this study. She was also acting as a member of the school building leadership team, mathematics department chair, learning support teacher, director of schoolwide interventions and supports, member of the leadership training cohort for the district, and community Sunday school teacher.

***Jill***

Jill is a European American woman with a bachelor's degree and four years of teaching experience who was pursuing a master's degree during the time of the study. Jill was also

volunteering at the local YMCA and Girls and Boys Club and serving as the Grade 6 chairperson. Jill performed schoolwide technical training on software for teachers and staff as technology committee chairperson and technology teacher of the year. Jill was serving as faculty sponsor and coach of the basketball and track teams as well as co-chairperson for the cultural programs committee.

### ***Joyce***

Joyce is an African American woman with a specialist degree and a veteran educator of more than 30 years. She has served as instructional coach, grade level chairperson, and English department chair, and has a background in speech pathology. the time of the study, Joyce was serving as an instructor in the community after-school program with 21<sup>st</sup> Century state programs, working in church and community affairs, and directing summer camps and summer vacation bible school. Joyce was serving as secretary in the National Association of Colored People organization and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Joyce also was acting as the previous middle school leadership team chairperson and director of the at-risk student support team.

### ***Judy***

Judy is an African American woman with a specialist degree and a 35-year career as veteran educator specializing as a reading support specialist. At the time of the study, Judy was serving as English language arts coordinator, member of the building leadership team, grade level chairperson, cultural committee program chair, and teacher mentorship chairperson. Judy works in the community with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and with youth in her church community as director of educational programs. She also served with military schools in Germany.

### ***John***

John is a European American male with a doctorate degree and a 20-year span as veteran educator. At the time of the study, he was serving as special education coordinator for the school and is a building leadership team member. John is an advocate for students who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, or transgender and provides guidance to the student support groups. John is a cultural committee program member who is involved in civic activities with the Jewish community and church affiliations.

### ***Joseph***

Joseph is a European American male. Joseph has a doctorate degree and more than 30 years of teaching experience. He is a former administrator in the juvenile justice system where he retired prior to teaching. At the time of the study, Joseph was serving as an English language arts teacher and tutor and as the special education coordinator for the middle school, as well as a positive behavior intervention and supports coordinator. In the latter role, Joseph is charged with the implementation of behavior interventions and transformation of the culture and climate of the middle school with rewards and restorative practices. The educator provides mentoring for youth in the community with Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., where he served as a founding member of the local chapter. Joseph is active in the church youth programs and community with voter registration initiatives and the National Association of Colored People. The educator volunteers with many community-based organizations and non-profits. At the middle school, Joseph developed a behavioral curriculum to implement with students that emphasized the needs of African American students as these students are often viewed as disciplinary concerns and disproportionately placed in special education for behavior issues.

### ***Jade***

Jade is an African American woman with a specialist degree and 15 years of teaching experience. At the time of the study, Jade was serving as a teacher in the gifted education program, leadership team member, and chair of enrichment programs at the school. The educator was also volunteering with Big Brothers and Big Sisters of America, as well as mentoring several students within her building. Jade had also organized and taught beginning Spanish with the Spanish club and served as grade level chair for several years.

### ***Jennifer***

Jennifer is an African American woman possessing a master's degree and 6 years of teaching experience. Jennifer has been active as the eighth-grade chairperson, social studies department chairperson, and building leadership team chairperson. Jennifer was serving as a field trip coordinator and the coach of the cheerleading squad and dance teams while also pursuing advanced leadership courses. Jennifer was acting as a building mentor to students, volunteering with the local government youth leadership program, and serving as building representative for the National Education Association.

### **Qualitative Data**

All data sources were reviewed individually for salient codes in a continuous, iterative fashion until all codes were stable and no new codes were identified. The results of the coding are summarized by data source.

### ***Semi-Structured Interview***

The interview explored the educators' perceptions and awareness of CRP within the general education classroom. The interviews ranged from 45 to 60 minutes and were held virtually on the Zoom teleconferencing platform. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and

subsequently examined and categorized in a systematic manner using the ground-up approach of inductive coding, where the codes are derived from the data. This revealed 16 initial codes as provided in Table 8.

Table 8

*Semi-Structured Interview Codes*

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Prioritization	Resources
Professional learning	Cultural awareness
Training	Student centered
Funding	Projects
Materials	Literacy integration
Lesson planning	Linguistics
Exposure to diversity	Home connections
Group collaboration	Student empowerment

---

***Card Sorts***

The card sort initially involved an exploratory activity in which the participants self-derived terms that they believed conceptualized CRP. The participants were asked to provide the terms and key phrases that came to mind when thinking of CRP, and to range those in priority (Table 9).

Table 9

*Initial Criterion Sort of Prioritized Terms relative to CRP from High to Low*

Priority	Participant name							
	Jane	Jill	Joyce	Judy	John	Joseph	Jade	Jennifer
1	self-identity	student centered	awareness	awareness	curriculum instruction	student centered instruction	lack of administrative support	relationships
2	awareness	inclusion	acceptance	self- identity	resources	ethnicity	lack of resources	student centered curriculum and activities
3	similarities/ differences experiences	confidence	lack of admin support	experiences	differentiated instruction	racism	lack of time	culture
4	inclusive climate	individual need	lack of time	heritage	demographics	misperceptions	inclusive	real world experiences
5	learning styles	diversity	flexibility	ethnicity	socio-economic status	resources	sense of belonging	high expectations
6	student engagement	open minded	resources	resources	cultural awareness	multicultural instruction	relationships	differentiated instruction
7	planning	equity	students engaged	admin support	respect	bilingualism	code switching	social & cultural barriers

(continued)



Table 9 (continued)

*Initial Criterion Sort of Prioritized Terms relative to CRP from High to Low*

Priority	Participant name							
	Jane	Jill	Joyce	Judy	John	Joseph	Jade	Jennifer
8	flexibility	engaging	communication	curriculum	self- esteem	equity	linguistics	modifications
9	curriculum	facilitator	progress monitoring	collaboration	heritage	inclusive classroom	differentiated instruction	lack of support
10	resources	awareness	stereotypes	linguistics	achievements	self-identity	holiday observances	lack of resources

From this initial sort, the following terms emerged as the most mentioned: *curriculum, equity, student-centered, differentiated instruction, communication, awareness, self-identity, inclusion, administrative support, and resources*. These ten terms were then provided to each participant for re-prioritization, and the results are provided in Table 10. These 10 terms also represented the initial codes from this portion of the data.

Table 10

*The Prioritization of the Most Frequently Cited Terms in the Repeated Criterion Card Sort*

	Jane	Jill	Joyce	Judy	John	Joseph	Jade	Jennifer
Curriculum	1	6	6	4	1	2	6	4
Equity	2	7	2	7	5	5	5	3
Student Centered	3	3	8	3	6	1	7	6
Differentiation	4	5	5	5	7	3	8	7
Communication	5	4	4	8	8	8	3	8
Awareness	6	2	1	1	3	7	1	1
Self-identity	7	9	3	2	2	6	2	2
Inclusion	8	8	7	6	4	4	4	5
Administrative Support	9	1	9	9	10	10	9	9
Resources	10	10	10	10	9	9	10	10

***Teacher Artifacts Discussion***

All participants provided an exemplary lesson plan with activities that they felt demonstrated their incorporation of CRP into classroom instruction. The researcher held a brief discussion with each teacher to gather their perceptions regarding the artifact selected and its connection to CRP. Table 11 comprised the description of the lesson plans and activity artifacts provided by each participant discussed with the researcher. The codes that were generated from the review of the artifacts are provided in Table 12.

Table 11

*Summary of Discussion of Teacher Artifacts*

	Artifact description
Jane	<u>A science hub website called “the Node” offered several ideas for activities for integrating CRP into science lessons. Integrating social injustice into science, studying female and scientist of various ethnicities, using vocabulary study as a collaborative oral tradition and storifying, and focusing on scientist and researchers of various ethnicities. The best practices of CRP were embedded into activities and supported by CRP research and studies.</u> <a href="https://thenode.biologists.com/kicking-notch-becoming-culturally-relevant-science-educator/education/">https://thenode.biologists.com/kicking-notch-becoming-culturally-relevant-science-educator/education/</a>
Jill	Introduction to Investment Finance integrated both mathematics skills and concepts with social studies incorporating writing with a game called “Spent!” The activity facilitated a poverty simulation where students struggled to maintain the necessities of life within a budget while recording the feelings as the students followed the challenges of being a part of the underserved community. All socio-economic groups were represented in the simulation as students were assigned different roles in society and government agencies.
Joyce	“More Activities for Youth and Adults” an online resource from Penn State building cultural competence. The Potato Activity examined individuality of a potato eliminating stereotypes “getting to know” the potato and introducing it to the class and being able to identify the potato in the group of potatoes. The activities spurred discussion starters to discuss various perspectives.
Judy	The ELA instruction with the vocabulary lesson involved tiered instruction with teacher modeling, collaborative small group activities, and an independent assignment with the word “jazz”. The students would explore various ways to use the word and its different meanings. The student definitions demonstrated the meaning of words in different cultures.
John	The word problem activity included culturally relevant components including student names in word problems, connecting student interest, and incorporating cultural elements of the students’ cultural background.
Joseph	The Paycheck-to-Paycheck activity incorporates problem solving, math computation, and writing. The real -world experience explores being unemployed and managing a household with only \$1000. Students write about the experience.
Jade	The Green Book: African American Experiences of Travel and Place in the U.S explored the planning of a trip across American during the Jim Crow era. Students worked in small groups to plan the trip from the east coast to west coast and journaled the imaginary trip.
Jennifer	Students create a PowerPoint about an essay topic outline with a relevant topic to social injustice. Topics include racial/ethnic/class injustice(s); excessive deadly police force; BLM protests (in and of itself an act of civil disobedience); other acts of civil disobedience; voter suppression; cultural representation within the media; the government and its citizens; white allyship; the "school to prison pipeline;" any type of unjust marginalization/oppression.

Table 12

*Codes from Teacher Artifacts*

inclusive	real-world
interdisciplinary	non-vetted
online resource	planning time
collaborative	frequency
small group	prioritization
similarities	differences
awareness	

***Axial Coding***

All the codes generated from the semi-structured interviews, card sorts, and teacher artifacts were combined and subsequently used to develop axial codes, with some of these initial codes supporting multiple axial codes. These axial codes were then further condensed to three emerging themes. The connection between codes, axial codes and emerging themes are provide in Tables 13 – 15.

Table 13

*Initial Codes and Axial Codes Associated with the Theme of Barriers to CRP*

Initial Codes	Axial Codes	Theme
prioritization funding administrative support flexibility/autonomy	admin support	Barriers to CRP
planning time materials/supplies	time	Barriers to CRP
online resources curriculum	resources	Barriers to CRP
professional learning training cultural differences	training	Barriers to CRP

Table 14

<i>Initial Codes and Axial Codes Associated with the Theme of Pedagogical Approaches</i>		
Initial Codes	Axial Codes	Theme
student centered group collaboration project based learning linguistics home connections interdisciplinary small group instruction real world experiences differentiation inclusion frequency	instructional strategies	Pedagogical Approach
non vetted materials curriculum	Resources	Pedagogical Approach
professional learning training/ coaching	Training	Pedagogical Approach

Table 15

<i>Initial Codes and Axial Codes Associated with the Theme of Cultural Competence</i>		
Initial Codes	Axial Codes	Theme
cultural awareness exposure sensitivity equity inclusion communication relationships self-identity ethnicity/race subgroups	teachers lack of cultural knowledge	Cultural Competence
	students characteristics	Cultural Competence

## **Emerging Themes**

### ***Barriers to CRP***

The theme of Barriers to CRP was reflected across all three data sources and could be considered as referring to both external barriers and internal barriers. Most of the data spoke to the external barriers to CRP implementation, which were associated with inadequate support

from school administration in various ways. Regarding district support and professional learning opportunities provided to support a culturally responsive classroom, all but one felt this support was minimal or virtually non-existent. Jill offered, “I received so little support in that area from the district in that regard.” John responded strongly, saying “None! Support is provided by select schools and individual teachers...I cannot recall being provided support from the district or school based professional learning to receive assistance with my culturally responsive classroom.” John expressed his belief that issues related to the 2020-2021 COVID-19 pandemic may have diverted administrators’ attention and funds to pandemic-related issues and away from establishing and maintaining CRP classrooms.

While virtually all participants felt that administrative support and professional development was absent in their setting, there were different opinions as to the degree of importance of such deficiencies. Jennifer expressed that the ultimate responsibility fell to the educator:

I think having the support from administration is important, however whether they are supportive or not, and whether my students and I have the resources needed for their success at the school or district level, I take on the challenge each day to find what is lacking. Regardless of the lack of resources, I owe it to my students to have their best interest at heart, and their best interest is their success.

This position was echoed by John who offered “Even before the world wide web was available to all of us, we have sought to provide students with what is needed. Teachers have always researched and sought out resources to deliver curriculum.” Joseph shared that “Administrative Support and Lack of resources is less important because teachers provide their own information and resources all the time. This is my spin on things.”

For others, however, the insufficient administrative support was a paramount concern. “A priority for me would be lack of administration support which would lead to the second priority of a scarcity of resources and little training” (Jade personal communication). Jade continued:

Culturally Responsive Practice in a school it starts with the Top, placing my number one being administrative support. Teachers must be trained and aware of what this pedagogy is and what it means for students. Communication is the key for the school to be on one accord with equity, differentiation, and curriculum.

Internal barriers focused primarily on the of time needed to plan and implement a lesson that effectively addressed CRP. Regarding internal barriers, Jade stated, “I would need about 2 hours a week or more because I have to seek out and research other resources.” Jill responded similarly, saying, “I don’t have much time to devote, so I have to be intentional during every planning time.” With respect the time needed for planning she offered that “at least two hours a week [are needed] to plan for the following week and to be able to get the resources.” Joyce shared that “No specified amount of time is devoted in the daily school schedule. Two - three hours each week is needed to plan and collect materials.”

Jill felt that her role as a science teacher proved challenging with respect to using strategies that implemented CRP. Jill offered, “I use this website <https://thenode.biologists.com/kicking-notch-becoming-culturally-relevant-science-educator/education/> as a resource to guide my lessons. It has great resources and strategies to implement CRP in Science.”

Judy voiced the difficulties of having to seek out resources to meet the needs of all students whether administrative support is given, or supplemental materials are given to teachers to integrate CRP. She offered:

Educators who are committed to equity realize that we must begin our differentiation process to meet the needs of each child as soon as they are assigned to us. We design curriculums that are inclusive and rich with support to meet those needs whether the administrative support and/or lack of resources are present or not.

### ***Cultural Competence***

The second theme to emerge from the data is the concept of cultural competence. As defined by Ladson-Billings (2017), cultural competence means a teacher acknowledging the need to be aware of their own cultural views and differences, possessing knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and being able to implement cross-cultural skills in the classroom.

Teaching practices implemented to achieve some degree of cultural competence were manifested in the teachers' artifacts, based on Gay (2013) and Nieto (2009) descriptions of cultural competence. Gay (2013) reported that teachers who developed cultural competence achieve a greater ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with students across different cultures. Nieto (2009) suggested that teachers might increase cultural competence through culturally competent training, a workshop, or a seminar, and that teachers should be trained to hold positive views of different groups of students.

The review of the artifacts generated 13 codes that conveyed attempts at achieving cultural competence as evidenced by their exemplar lesson plans (Table 12). Aligned with the 13 codes, various specific teaching practices represented efforts to achieve cultural competence in selected lessons. Teachers integrated social injustice into science with activities on females and scientists of various ethnicities. There was an activity on poverty simulation where students used various budgeting strategies, and students played the role of different socio-economic groups and



governmental agencies. The Potato Activity facilitated students to examine individuality and showed students how to cope with stereotyping. The students explored various ways the word, jazz, was used in different cultures. The Green Book Experience provided students experiences in planning an imaginary trip across America during the Jim Crow era. In small groups, students created a PowerPoint on social injustice with topics such as excessive deadly police force, Black Lives Matter protests, voter suppression, and cultural representation of minorities within the media. Integration of CRP in specific lessons was a good *first strategy*.

In the study, evidence exists in the data that teachers' integration of CRP in classroom instructions touches on Banks (1989) Levels 1 and 2, but not on Levels 3 and 4. Level 3 typically is initiated by curriculum developers from universities, state department of education, and school districts who design the content standards, curriculum, and standardized tests. Level 4 is more appropriate for older and more mature high school students and not appropriate for primarily middle school students. Most teachers' classroom instruction reflected Level 1 and 2 where teachers gathered supplementary materials and online activities to integrate in the existing curriculum. Examples are the "Spent Game", "Potato Activity", "Pay-check-to-Paycheck Activity", and "Green Book Experiences". Students viewed and understood concepts, issues, and events through the activities. Added topics in lessons, such as excessive police deadly force and Black Lives Matter protests, helped students understand current issues.

Jill addressed this idea by stating the following:

In context to the classroom, culture means that we are all aware and are a part of a community that wants the best for all. The classroom culture involves respect, and acceptance of similarities and differences to name a few. It's a place where culture is exchanged, and we establish our own.

Cultural competence was demonstrated by Joyce in her lesson plan. She elaborated on her personal approach:

In my classroom students are encouraged to explore aspects of their own culture through activities that support them better understanding who they are, what they like, and what is important to them. Introducing cultural activities where they can share where they are from, their favorite activities and family traditions bring recognition of value to the conversation and help them to see similarities and differences in others. They will also see pictures, read stories and explore people who look like them.

This code of inclusion was reflected by other participants. One interview question asked, “Do you feel awareness of others' cultures begins with awareness of one's own ethnic, cultural, and racial identity? Provide justification for your responses? How do you define your cultural identity?”

Jane answered affirmatively, adding the following statement:

Yes, I believe that awareness of others' cultures begins with awareness of one's own ethnic, cultural, and racial identity. To recognize and accept the differences between ourselves and others, we must first be aware of who we are. I define my cultural identity as an African American, middle-class, southern, Methodist.

Jennifer responded with this similar perspective:

I do believe that being culturally aware of other's cultures, comes from an understanding of my own ethnics, cultural and racial identity.

The card sort strongly supported this theme of cultural competency. Of the 80 terms/ideas provided by the participants during the first card sort, those associated with cultural competence appeared 28 times and were represented by phrases such as self-identity, awareness, relationships

with students, ethnicity, inclusion, similarities and differences, respect for other, equity, racism, heritage, and sense of belonging. When like terms were used in the repeated criterion card sort, awareness, equity, and self-identity were placed as either the most important or second most important by seven of the eight participants (Table 10).

Jennifer's emphasized the importance of cultural competence and awareness in as she elaborated on the card sort activity.

I strongly believe that before you can begin teaching students, no matter their cultures, you must have a sense of awareness of the differences and similarities their cultures have with your own, as well as a sense of self identity. I begin to look at the curriculum and determine ways to bring everyone's cultures into the lessons to build on my student's prior knowledge and to aid them in learning the material by teaching to their real- world experiences. I have always been against having all my students who identify as having the same culture grouped together, so they are included within student centered groups amongst their peers to learn from each other. All lessons are then differentiated to meet the needs of all my students.

Jade commented on her repeated criterion sort that awareness or knowledge of her class composition is essential,

Ok you began with cultural competence, the most important term to me is Awareness. You must know who you are dealing with to plan, teach or conduct any activity. Your audience is important. If you are not cognizant of the group of students, you are servicing in the classroom you have lost the battle before it begins. So, the order goes Awareness and Self-identity. One must know who they are including students and teachers.

Jade categorized elements of linguistics (bilingualism, code switching, and communication) as representing previous experiences with English language learners and ethnic sub-group as cultural competency. Jill expressed knowledge of how different groups communicate and how knowing what certain terms and phrases mean within various cultures is vital to being culturally competent.

Judy provided a similar statement:

Having worked with teachers who don't have a clue about the students in which they are teaching, and their backgrounds are a major problem. Many teachers come with preconceptions and believe stereotypes which impacts their instruction of the students. Students should be encouraged to acknowledge their self-identity and share their experiences and background. The cultural exchange of various ethnic groups creates reciprocal learning for both teacher and student. This helps the teachers to adjust teaching styles.

Jade referenced the importance of the work of Geneva Gay in her understanding of cultural competence,

Her [Gay] quote is what made me become a teacher in the first place. There were too many white teachers/administrators railroading African American students into special education classes without warrant. There were too many suspensions and too many expulsions of African American students. Overall, just way too much judgement and not enough compassion.

Joseph responded with his perspective:

Cultural assets are the habits, beliefs, norms, behaviors, knowledge, social status one has. The curriculum should reflect the principles of diversity and equality. It has been said that

one-third of the students in our American schools do not see themselves, their families, or their communities in the curriculum. My lessons began by reflecting on the reality of our multicultural world rather than just the piece that belonged to the dominant groups.

Jane voiced her strategies:

As a classroom teacher, I engaged students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and contributions in a culturally relevant way with my teaching strategies by using real-world connections/applications that related to the different cultures that were represented in the classroom and by taking the students' cultural background into consideration when soliciting volunteers for participation in class.

While most expressed moderately well-developed concepts of cultural competency, some views were limited. Jade, who had a CRP self-efficacy score in the lower quartile, expressed that "Culture in the context of my classroom means the ethnicity to which a student belongs."

### ***Pedagogical Approaches***

Pedagogical approaches in the context of CRP are teacher practices which facilitate learning for all students within the classroom (Ladson Billings, 2021). The educators shared a variety of instructional strategies considered to be best practices in the educational arena, however from the discussions in the interviews, these were not implemented on a frequent and consistent basis.

Judy stated,

Though out my teaching career I learned that the most valuable lessons are often learned through a student's own experiences, so giving them some freedom in how they learn encourages more connection to the curriculum and my teaching strategies. As a teacher, I would act as a facilitator and encourage conversation and between diverse opinions.

John uses a variety of activities and resources in his classroom,

We have puppet shows and virtual field trips to allow students to gain knowledge of the culture and backgrounds of others. We have a music teacher to come into the class and teach students songs from other cultures. I have also encouraged students who are from other countries to bring in musical instruments or clothing or food that they are familiar with and that represent these various cultures. We also have had projects involving paper dolls, where the students had to pick a country and design a paper doll with native clothing, hair and jewelry if they like. If a student does not speak English as a first language, we modify written assignments and reading assignments so that they are successful.

Jade expressed the need to bond with students:

One of my students was Chinese and I made it a point to talk to him outside of class during lunch. Those experiences led to my meeting his siblings and parents. Building relationships with students helps to close the gaps between school and home.

Joseph emphasized the importance of developing relationships similarly, saying “I have always tried to work and build relationships with my students to ensure they feel respected, valued, and seen for who they are culturally.” The relationship code with students appeared not only in the interview with respondents but also in the card sort and collaborative activities that were indicated in the artifacts shared. “Collaborative activities allowed teachers to learn more about their students,” Joseph stated.

Next communication and inclusion are key components building upon awareness to create relationships encouraging students to engage more in the classroom experience.

Relationships help to create Equity in the classroom. The relationships and equitable environment make the presentation of curriculum more engaging.

Part of Joseph's pedagogical approach started with the development of his own cultural competence. Joseph offered, "As a teacher I had to be able to transcend my own cultural background to develop learning experiences that would build on the cultural backgrounds of my students...I must be an active participant in the education of my students." He accomplished this through the incorporation of the principles of social justice and equity. He continued, "Social justice, democracy, power, and equity become more than discussion items; they become guides for our actions in the classroom, school, and community." In doing so "students can step outside of their cultural box and share their thoughts – thus engaging the students in the course materials."

Joseph acknowledged that his preferred style of teaching was one that was formed through his own "cultural background and experiences." However, he quickly learned to be aware of that bias and to "develop a repertoire of different ways to teach subject matter." Without such a shift he realized that all students would "get the full benefit of the lesson." He continued that "We can't just take a lesson plan on a particular topic and not see how it will impact the students." Instead, he adopts a student-centered strategy "where the students are empowered to assert their ideas and thoughts." In that manner "students can step outside of their cultural box and share their thoughts – thus engaging the students in the course materials." In this setting, "Social justice, democracy, power, and equity become more than discussion items; they become guides for our actions in the classroom, school, and community."

Jennifer offered how her classroom structure becomes part of the overall pedagogical approach to CRP:

Learning stations are used to deliver different forms of content, through creating drawings, playing games, reading articles, and skits in my Social Studies classroom. If PowerPoints are used, I try to make subtitles available for any English Language Learners in my classroom.

She continued that while the site covers the elements of CRP, I can only “implement these activities periodically as the curriculum pacing allows.” Jennifer viewed CRP as an isolated component, which could only be implemented as time permits instead of integrated as a part of consistent instructional practices.

One participant discussed how components of CRP were implemented in this class as part of project-based learning. John offered, “We do projects that ask students to share their backgrounds, their heritage, and how they celebrate their identity.”

Joyce voiced that some pedagogical difficulties, “It takes courage to go against the traditional practices and ideologies, but it is in that struggle that you find the freedom for autonomy and is best able to teach from the heart.” She accomplishes this by selecting “literature class book sets to provoke enriched dialogue, engagement and critical thinking,” and believes this is a better approach “than blindly moving from story to story in a reading textbook series.” Jennifer expressed,

I agree with the statement Gay (2010) made about culturally responsive teachers being emancipatory and I believe that a culturally responsive classroom encourages students to actively participate in the learning process and good instruction will teach them how to take risks and be critical and creative thinkers. As a culturally responsive teacher, I work hard to create a classroom where my students see themselves reflected in their activities



and where they feel someone listened and their opinions are truly taken into consideration.

Specific strategies were also evidenced in this theme and expressed as being vital to CRP. Joseph focused on a student-centered approach and offered “I chose student-centered [instruction] because when the interests and needs of the students are incorporated in the curriculum, students achieve more.”

This same approach was echoed by John “Student-centered instruction helps to ensure that the curriculum is individualized and meeting individual needs. This means creating activities that encourage each student to share their knowledge and culture.” He clarified that within the student-centered approach, “Differentiation of instruction allows for individual success and fills the gaps in the curriculum that would otherwise not embrace diversity and inclusion.”

John continued, “Curriculum needs to include information about various cultures and values and each student's individual needs must be considered and met. This means that equity is necessary. No one culture should receive more attention or be seen as more valuable.”

One facet of Joyce’s pedagogical approach was evidenced in the lesson plan she provided that explored the economic perspectives of students in a very diverse setting in a Title I school. While still needing to ensure alignment with district learning goals, Joyce offered “I try to incorporate these real-world activities by the unit.” The perspectives were interesting and informative and offered many students a different real world view regarding money management of lower socio economic to upper income individuals. “

Judy shared her instructional strategies that she found in a website from Penn State Extension. She offered, “I love to make sure I have what I call ice breaker lessons quite

frequently to promote cultural awareness and cultural competence. It also stimulates learning and engagement with the state mandated curriculum.”

Jane emphasized that “the pandemic has caused me to seek other online activities, but I used these with face-to-face instruction and try to modify for online learning. The lessons deal with eliminating stereotypes and understanding our differences.” She uses data on the students’ background and multiple intelligence surveys to guide her lesson planning. For my lessons, I planned for culturally responsive pedagogy by being intentional to incorporate appropriate activities that allow group discussion about our cultural and social differences. The lesson incorporated culturally responsive teaching best practices and Universal Design of Learning which yielded the opportunity to have my students discuss their preferences and culture about different types of music genres.

Jade shared the following reveal:

This is awful, but I don’t really think I have done beyond the basics of reading different versions of fairy tales or stories from other cultures. All I can say is that teachers are so bound by the standards that it makes it difficult to bring in cultural pieces at times.

The results of this study displayed that all the teachers valued CRP as a critical component of instruction to be implemented as a consistent part of curriculum. However, the educators failed to realize CRP as ideology and not a formulated curriculum.

## **Chapter V: Conclusions**

The case study initially included all middle school faculty in the school district who agreed to participate in the TSECRPS survey. These 98 individuals comprised 65% of the middle school teachers within the school district and represented both diverse demographics and a wide range of CRP self-efficacy scores. Most of the information for the case came from the experiences, views, and perspectives of the eight educators who participated in phase two of the study with interviews, card sorts, and artifact discussions. The data were used to answer research questions: RQ<sub>1</sub>. How do middle school content-area teachers conceptualize implementation of CRP? RQ<sub>2</sub>. What factors influence the integration of CRP?

### **Teachers' Conceptualization of the Implementation of CRP**

The data from the eight (8) participants reflect a disconnect between their understanding of CRP and its importance, and their conceptualization of the implementation of CRP in their classroom. This in essence points to a difference between the perception and conception of CRP. Bueno (2013) distinguishes between perception as –the gaining of awareness, and conception as the development of understanding. Conception, therefore, influences the use of the knowledge, and would be reflected in the implementation.

Regardless of their reported self-efficacy, all participants acknowledged an understating of CRP and the importance of teaching in a culturally responsive fashion. All teachers expressed in the interviews and card sort the elements of inclusion, equity, and cultural awareness as key concepts necessary for implementing CRP. A recognition of the importance of maintaining awareness of students' cultural backgrounds and empowering students to embrace their own cultures were also commonalities. In the interviews, several participants highlighted the importance of inclusivity and culture, and in the final card sort, terms of awareness, self-identity

and equity were ranked the highest. This suggests they are familiar with the literature supporting CRP and can be taken as representing the participants' "perception" of culturally relevant pedagogy. However, transitioning from this awareness of the value, importance and broad features aligned with CRP, to the conceptualization and implementation in the classrooms is shallow. This finding was reflected by all the participants regardless of their identified level of self-efficacy with CRP.

This shallow conception of CRP was demonstrated in the exemplar lessons and from the discussions that arose during the interviews. Instead of incorporating an overarching philosophy of cultural responsiveness throughout, teachers conceptualize CRP as something to add to the base curriculum, usually in an isolated and reduced fashion, as they strive to teach the mandated standards. The teachers in this study unanimously described CRP as single, stand-alone lessons that were implemented infrequently, instead of a philosophy that permeates the classroom and all instruction. This, unfortunately, aligns with the finding of Gay (2010), who suggested teachers, even those who exhibit high self-efficacy in CRP, often possess only a surface-level understanding of culturally responsive practices and demonstrate this understanding by emphasizing holiday observances and multicultural posters. For example, Joseph, a seasoned educator with high self-efficacy commented on the incorporation of environmental setting changes, such as posters and targeted literature. Jill, a new teacher with low self-efficacy, demonstrated a deeper understanding of CRP implementation according to Gay (2010) dimensions. This suggests that without a complete conception of CRP, based on a strong knowledge base, self-efficacy alone is not enough.

The literature broadly supports this disconnect between perception and conception found in this case study. Samuels (2018) offers that having a belief in CRP, without a deep

understanding or exposure to different cultures and the students' cultural assets, coupled with a disconnect from true student communities, often translates to ineffectiveness in the classroom. Personal and cultural self-awareness rooted in self-reflection is a foundational underpinning of CRP (Gay, 2010). Some teachers in the study expressed the need to be aware of cultural perspectives but offered little evidence of reciprocal learning from students or true engagement. Educators presented the impression of understanding the cultures of their students from the single perspective of the teacher. As noted by Evans et al. (2020), the practices demonstrated in work products and in the associated discussions were "laden with good intentions" (p. 5), but good intentions are not enough. Educators in this case study seemed to welcome and value CRP without possessing a depth of knowledge regarding the framework and conceptualization of the many facets of the pedagogy (Diamond & Lewis 2015; DiAngelo, 2018).

When comparing the exemplar lessons, as supported by the interviews, to the essential six dimensions of CRP as expressed by Gay (2010), the disconnect between perception and conception is clear. During discussions and in the card sort, the educators in the case study sufficiently embraced only two of the dimensions, while partially touching on others inconsistently. When voicing opinions and speaking about CRP, the participants seemed to acknowledge it needed to be multidimensional, and practiced in a manner that engaged cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives of the students. However, this was only partially reflected in action of the participants, primarily as it relates to their commitments to seeking supporting materials independently and did not effectively translate to the lesson plans provided. Since CRP lessons were not found in the curriculum pacing guide or the state content standards, the efforts of the teachers to seek out potential resources confirmed the desire to validate student culture with embedded multicultural curriculum. However, most educators relied

on external resources for CRP instruction focusing on culture without expressed connections to the content standards. CRP literature and activities were analogous to the periodic insertion of a culturally responsive lessons into the curriculum.

When considering the four levels of multicultural education as provided by Banks (1989), the participants predominately achieved Level 1, and occasionally Level 2, but did not progress further. The participants incorporated holiday celebrations and cultural elements (Level 1) and gathered information to insert into standard curriculum (Level 2). Level 3, where the curriculum is changed to incorporate the varied cultural perspectives of students, and Level 4, where the students have some autonomy to make to make decisions regarding social and cultural issues and convert perspectives to application with real world experiences, were not evidenced in the data. This includes not only the exemplar lesson plans, but also in the ancillary conversations conducted during the interviews.

While the teachers in this study expressed a desire to embrace cultural differences, the emphasis on academic assessment performance and student achievement remained the primary measure of student success. Gay (2010, p. 54) asserts that such traditional ideologies, instead of supporting CRP, often result in “cultural blindness “that views some students’ negative academic outcomes as a deficit. Researchers Ladson-Billings (2017) and Gay (2010) affirmed the impact of CRP with diverse students remains as influential with growth outcomes as traditional instruction impacts proficient students considered middle to upper class or of European influence.

Despite the changing landscape of urban students moving to rural areas for affordable housing, middle school teachers used the same classroom teaching strategies while instructing the transitioning urban middle school students and the rural middle school students. Samuels

(2018) contends this can reinforce the disconnect between teachers and the students' true communities. The same significant focus on state-driven content standards of learning and instruction alignment with standardized tests remained the priority despite the influx of English language learners and inner-city students. Maintaining the pacing of instructional content to provide proficiency with testing outcomes persists as the goal of administration to evaluate accountability for the district.

### **Factors Impacting CRP implementation**

Despite educators seeking more freedom with implementing the curriculum when trying to escape the oppressive limitations of teaching explicitly to state content standards, they accepted the challenge to find what was lacking in the instruction. Teachers voiced the desire to have students' best interest and positive outcomes as the center of instruction with equity. Teachers independently sought out resources and varied research-based instructional practices to supplement the curriculum. The educators concurred that CRP was a key element necessary to obtain successful academic outcomes and learning experiences for students and to positively impact student achievement.

Educators cited both internal factors and external factors hindering integration of CRP into classroom instruction. Internal factors included personal biases, self-efficacy, and lack of cultural competence. External factors included lack of planning time to implement CRP, subpar professional learning, and lack of support from school administrators.

Regarding the *internal factors*, the participants voiced the importance of their own personal cultural awareness, awareness of student cultural differences, and having respect for other cultures. However, as the literature supports, the mere recognition of student identities or teachers simply reflecting on their own culture is not enough to engage students with critical

thinking or transformative learning within the classroom. In practice this can manifest itself as a celebration of differences, which, Kim and Slapac (2015) contend can spark misleading concepts of culture and identity. Nieto (2009) stated that culturally responsive pedagogy encompassed a teacher's mindset with respect and honor to the individuality of students, cultures, experiences, and histories. Ladson -Billings (2010) ascertained that a teacher must engage in critical self-reflection about values, biases, limitations, and insist on high quality and excellent work from all students. Within this present study no evidence of self- reflection to the level needed to transform learning and empower student use of identity and cultural assets (Kim and Slapac, 2015) were shared by participants. The literature also contends that some teachers have automatic deficit perspectives of cultural differences rather than viewing cultural aspects positively to use as tools of student empowerment (Kim & Slapac, 2015). In the present study, participants conveyed integration of CRP as a supplemental strategy to assist struggling students and encourage inclusion, rather than a non- negotiable essential ideology. During the interviews and throughout the interactions, respondents consistently referred to other barriers to effective implementation of CRP rather than turning inward and adopting self- reflective practices. Gordan and Espinoza (2020) indicate the importance of self -reflection, assessment, and development of self- improvement is essential for effective implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Self-efficacy, another *internal factor*, did not appear to be a determining factor in CRP integration in their classroom instruction based upon the review of the eight participants in the case study. This is consistent with the findings of Ganzalez, et al. (2017), who found no statically significant mean difference between high and low teacher self-efficacy with respect to the implementation of CRP instructional strategies. However, in broader terms beyond the concept



of self-efficacy, the overall perspective of an educator still remains critically essential to aligning culturally responsive instruction and student needs (Abacioglu, Volman, & Fischer, 2019).

Across the spectrum in this study, regardless of the level of self-efficacy, this broader overall perspective was echoed by all teachers as they spoke to the desire to ensure academic success for students in their classrooms and use of some form of best practices in teaching students.

The most cited *external factor* hindering integration of CRP into classroom instruction was time to implement and plan. The educators associated the lack of time to incorporate CRP due to an emphasis on state-mandated content standards and needing to remain synchronized with the state pacing guidelines. Standards based education and teacher accountability systems have become entrenched in testing assessments and are aligned with academic success of schools (Holloway, 2020). The literature supports that time needed for CRP is often negated by data driven educational communities and high stakes accountability with standard based strands, evaluation frameworks, and rubrics which diminish teacher autonomy and rendering educators powerless against tracking and monitoring of standards mastery (Holloway, 2020). Achistein and Ogawa (2011) documented with a study of teachers of color with marginalized students that the conversion of classrooms to standardized instruction, as a result of the educational reform of the 1980 s and 1990's, contributed to the lack of delivering culturally responsive pedagogy. The authors found some teacher participants were incapable of meeting the student needs and presenting curriculum from a common cultural viewpoint due to the system demands and accountability measures, and that this resulting in a personal toll of guilt. This study associated the focus on the administration on raising achievement scores lead to a lack of support for CRP, and the authors advocated for the revamping of school leaders and policymakers to reorganize

the context of instruction to incorporate culturally based frameworks along with standardized curriculum content.

In order to effectively implement CRP and support reform to dominant paradigm of standards-based education, Roach and Elliot (2009) believe teachers need autonomy to utilize alternative methods to determine content mastery, and alternate forms of assessment that allow various, appropriate means of expression by the student. They contend this can be implemented while still incorporating appropriate levels of rigor for assessment purposes. Schettino et al. (2019) believe that the legislation associated with the ESSA has moved the paradigm in the right direction and broadened the discussion to consider the parallel roles of CRP and accountability. The constant changing of curriculum and standards impacts the efficiency of teachers in facilitating student mastery. Hogan and White (2021) emphasized that concurrent with administrative expectations and the focus on high-stakes accountability, teachers have limited control with implementing major change.

The lack of in-school time allowed for lesson planning with CRP meant most planning was conducted on personal time. Over decades, the lack of adequate time for teachers to prepare has continually been identified, and the literature aligns with the plight of educators' lack of time, command of time, and inability to perform the planning and tasks relative to actual instruction of students (Education Commission of the States, 1986). According to Hogan and White (2021), teachers struggle to meet all expectations placed upon their positions, which often including bus duties, lunchroom or hall monitoring, committee meetings, parent/teacher conferences, mandated professional development, and other administrative duties. Hogan & White (2021) have contended the amount of time required by teachers for planning beyond work hours, if they truly want to meet the needs of the students, is and unsustainable expectation.

The educators in this present study emphasized the desire for professional learning and ongoing training to integrate CRP. Gordan and Espinoza (2020) concur that teachers require professional learning to understand and holistically integrate CRP teaching practices and stipulate that instructional supervision and coaching must be collaborative, ongoing, and reflective if teachers are to engage in meaningful CRP instruction. The authors also affirmed the supervisory processes necessary for this CRP integration requires implementing professional learning, time for planning and reflection during professional learning communities, curriculum development, and action research with assessment of areas of need to assist educators with effective CRP implementation. In addition, Abacioglu et al. (2019) support the need for professional learning to include exposure to linguistically diverse literature to create empathy of diverse populations; allow for participation in variable cultural communities differing from their own; and be accompanied by critical dialogue helping to transform teacher education into practice. Teachers who receive support through ongoing professional learning are prepared to address diverse learning needs and most likely remain in the profession (Candace, 2021).

The teachers in the study during the interview often voiced the view of the administration as the origin of the obstacles faced in their efforts to implement CRP in the classroom. The educators faulted administration for limited or non-existent professional development, lack of supporting resources, lack of adequate time in the school day to prepare, and an undercurrent of needing to prioritize content standards to obtain improved test scores and achievement. The teachers voiced an overwhelming need for support including comprehensive training, frameworks, and explicit lessons tailored for the content area taught. Research findings support the teachers view of administration's role with support and perception of leadership support as significant with teachers' ability to implement innovative practices and behaviors (Khaola& Oni,

2020). Teacher perceptions of administration and organizational support play a significant role in transformative leadership needed to implement CRP or make any building level cultural change (Akar & Ustuner, 2019). Samuel (2018) reported administrative support schoolwide with CRP implementation and multicultural education, accompanied by professional learning and protected time for collaborative planning in professional learning communities produced positive achievement outcomes.

CRP professional learning for school leadership and guiding teachers with student-centered instructional strategies with the integration of CRP in classroom teaching practices proved beneficial in prior studies (Mette et al, 2018; Samuels, 2018). Research has also supported that CRP resources need to include a parent component with effective communication between the teacher and the home, and a comprehensive review of incentives for teachers such as stipends for after-hours planning (Gay, 2018; Irizarry, 2017).

Findings noted in the literature revealed the immediate need for school leaders to recognize the challenges faced by educators with CRP to meet the instructional needs of the individual students, employ comprehensive reform efforts, and explore CRP to increase student achievement (Candace 2021). Previous studies evoked a need for specified instructional coaches and facilitators dedicated to modeling CRP and coaching staff by providing instructional support (Candace, 2021). Subsequently exposure and training for CRP may increase self-efficacy and cultural competence through self-reflection and evaluation of teaching practices (Gay, 2010). Although teachers place the blame for ineffective implementation on lack of administrative support, both teachers and administration share the burden of effective CRP implementation (Samuel, 2018). Although teaching practices are monitored and evaluated by administration with an emphasis on accountability for achievement and growth, teachers seem to realize that

classroom instruction and pedagogy is the responsibility of the classroom teacher equally. The acknowledgement of this responsibility is demonstrated with the teachers seeking resources outside of the curriculum (Gay, 2010). Both administrators and classroom teachers are collaborative partners with pedagogy implementation (Akar & Ustuner, 2019). While the lack of administrative support was commonly voiced by the participants, it is interesting to note that when forced to prioritize terms important for CRP implementation, all but one teacher rated administrative support at or near the bottom of the priority list. This exemplifies the value of incorporating multiple data sources in a qualitative study and suggests perhaps that when openly discussing issues teachers find it easier to focus on perceived external barriers, instead of looking inward.

### **The Case Description**

As mentioned earlier, one of the goals of a case study is to provide an overall description of the case. This case involved middle school content educators in a single school district. The quantitative data showed there was a wide range of self-efficacy values in the case when it came to culturally responsive pedagogy. The qualitative data that incorporated teachers with both high and low self-efficacy scores showed an acknowledgment of the value of CRP and connected addressing cultural responsiveness as integral to student success.

This understanding of CRP, however, was only shallowly reflected in the lesson plans provided and the teachers elaboration on instructional strategies. Universally the participants in the second phase of this study addressed CRP through the incorporation specific activities or modifications to some lessons. CRP was something to consider when possible and when the demands of accountability were otherwise addressed. Therefore, their true understanding of being culturally responsive is incomplete. There is a disconnect from the tenets of CRP and the

value of CRP to effective implementation as a holistic approach to education. This finding is in line with previous researcher discussions where isolated lessons centered on some aspects of culture are inaccurately assumed to address cultural responsiveness (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 2017). Findings tell us the content-area teachers in this case require additional support with understanding and unpacking CRP and require a collaborative “school culture” that supports a climate of cultural competence and responsiveness (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2017; Nieto & Bode, 2008).

### **Implications of the Study**

This study points to the disconnect between understanding the value and importance of classrooms being culturally responsive and the translation of that understanding into practice. I consider this the divide between the perceptions of CRP and the conceptualization of CRP as evidenced by actions. These findings, however, are not new, despite decades of recommendations from researchers. With the multiple demands placed on education for accountability, and the stress on public school educators meeting the demands, what we have done so far does not seem to be working if we want genuine consideration and affirmation of cultural perspectives in the classroom. Several avenues exist for remediation.

One recommendation that could possibly assist with CRP implementation with incoming educators into the field is enhanced pre-service focus on CRP. Better alignment between understanding and action might be facilitated if during preservice programs candidates are provided with extensive experience with culturally responsive pedagogy and instructional approaches. Lambeth (2016) concurs and asserts that it is important for professors in teacher education program to equip preservice teachers with the necessary skills to conceptualize how CRP should look in the classrooms to be competent to teach all culturally diverse children,

especially children of color. Preservice teachers must be cognizant of and allowed to practice the varied pedagogical teaching approaches for culturally diverse students (Acquah & Szeeler, 2018). Pre-service education programs should provide instruction and field experiences for preservice teachers to become more knowledgeable on building and maintaining positive relationships with all students and families (Gay, 2018; PBS Wisconsin Education, 2020; Lambeth, 2016; Beutel & Tangen, 2018). Acquah and Szeeler (2018) have suggested that if educational institutions provide adequate and comprehensive CRP knowledge and experience with course work, student teaching experiences would contribute to teacher preparedness to meet the needs of growing multicultural classroom settings.

While addressing the issue during preservice education is important, this effort should be continued through in-service professional learning. Samuel (2018) asserts that districts should develop CRP professional learning facilitators and trainers within their organizations. These specialized coaches, facilitators, and trainers would need to model how the tenets of culturally relevant and responsive teaching can be embedded into daily instruction. This would afford greater opportunities for teachers to increase knowledge of differentiated strategies while still addressing content needs (Tanase, 2020). Samuels (2018) contends that using CRP as a best practice may also address the dual need to demonstrate increased academic performance.

Durik et al. (2015) emphasized a need for employing CRP teaching practices to improve the academic climate of schools and to promote positive social and economic changes for all students and their families. Similarly, Chestnut and Burley (2015) and Ladson-Billings (2017) both contended that research-based teaching practices (e.g., peer facilitation, modeling, differentiation of instruction, interdisciplinary lessons, real-world experiences) should be implemented with culturally and linguistically diverse students according to the laws and

procedures of the state and federal government. Ladson-Billings (2017) and McKinney and Snead (2017) suggests that middle school students require high self-efficacy, excellent instructional skills, administrator support, and culturally responsive instructional resources to best succeed.

Finally, if administration desires to infuse culturally responsive pedagogy across the school, they must acknowledge that this requires their support in both resources and time. Simply acknowledging the value of CRP, without providing adequate scaffolds for educator is doomed to fail on the cultural front. The desire to “move the needle” of academic achievement in consistent and in alignment with culturally responsible practices. This must come with an understanding that content without cultural connections is not achieving the needs of the student population in our current times.

As cultural diversity training and inclusion continue to emerge at the forefront of our culture through speech, more equitable representation in images and advertising, changing corporate hiring practices, the influence of cultural advocacy movements, and the connectivity of social media, educators must continue to recognize the importance of CRP integration and how it aligns with these societal changes to support all students. CRP integration appears to be an essential component in best practices for teaching instruction amid the ever-changing composition of our society.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The findings in the study should be considered in context with the limitations. Merriam and Grenier (2019) reported that the qualitative research contains certain limitations: possible small sample sizes, potential bias in answers, self-selection bias, and potentially poor questions from researchers. Boudah (2020) and Yin (2018) explained that the limitations of case study



designs can typically include a lack of scientific rigor, inadequately provided basis for generalization of results to the wider population, and influence of the researchers' own subjective feelings (researcher biases) on the findings of a case study. Boudah (2020) also suggested that case study research designs are difficult to replicate due to the individual perspectives.

One limitation that may impact the current study is lack of diversity of the participants. The sample of participating teachers may not be representative of all practicing teachers in the district or state. The demographics of the participants in this study differed from the demographic composition of all educators in the district. The views may be representative of a small sample size of the rural district. Sample sizes play a vital role in determining the reach and parameters of duplicating the study for other groups. Larger sample sizes would contribute to a wider perspective needed to analyze further (Hu & Bentler, 1998; Lambeth, 2016).

The tools of the TSECPS and CCI themselves also contained limitations as self-reporting instruments. With self-reporting, participants may respond to questions in a way influenced by their personal perceptions of and to others, or their perceptions of the expectations and beliefs of the researchers. A percentage of general education middle schools involved in the current study may have inaccurately revealed personal perceptions regarding their teacher perceived self-efficacy with CRP (Fraenkel et al., 2019; Gay, 2018). Johnson and Christensen (2019) suggested that researchers seriously consider not only the trustworthiness of responding teachers, but also teachers' perceptions of the students as the teachers' self-reported. This limitation was however mitigated by using multiple data sources (i.e., card sorts, exemplar lesson plans, and journaling of reflections) to identify consistencies or discrepancies.

The findings and results of the study could possibly be limited because the participants teach in a rural area or region. The National Center of Statistics (n.d.) suggest that state and

federal statistics indicate the growing number of culturally diverse students and immigrants increasing the student population from the majority European descent to majority persons of color. The demographics have rapidly, changed over the last decade with the student enrollment within the district of the study due to immigration and gentrification to rural areas with the increased cost of housing in urban and suburban areas. The findings in the current study indicated the lack of professional learning and training with the implementation of CRP as parallel to lack of experience with the growing demographic change. The findings could not be duplicated in suburban or urban areas with historically larger numbers of both diverse students and teachers with greater experience with teaching various cultures.

An additional limitation to the current study could be relative to the researcher, serving as a response to intervention coordinator and educator in the district for many years, the researcher may have engaged in previous collaboration with some of the participants. Self-bias cannot be eliminated, although it was reduced by application of constant self-reflection of action through a journal of reflections and recording data without leading questions or influence (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). As a result the possible limitation is that the study weighed primarily on qualitative components and the quantitative component was primarily used to support the procedures of the qualitative methods.

A further but significant limitation to the current study may relate to the influence of COVID-19 pandemic, which might have affected the research process. Many middle school educators may have been experiencing stress and frustration about the plight of teaching remotely. Collection of data was solely conducted through virtual and electronic methods to limit this impact. The case study was limited to one school district thus limiting the possibility for broader replication. The small district as the center of the study may not compare to a larger

urban district with increased funding, resources, and training to accommodate culturally diverse and marginalized students.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Following completion of the study, areas were identified for further investigation into the relationships of content-area middle school general education teachers' self-efficacy and the use of CRP in classroom teaching practices. This study provided an exploration of how content-area middle school teachers conceptualized CRP in classroom teaching practices as a surface-level exploration into the topic, serving to render a powerful inclination for deeper inquiry by the researcher. The study supported the need to encourage and support content-area middle school teachers and researchers in self-examining their knowledge and use of CRP to enhance the successful outcomes of culturally and ethnically diverse students, as suggested by Minkos et al. (2017).

Specific recommendations for further research include the following:

- 1) The inclusion of middle school teachers and structured research studies by novice and experienced researchers with continued exploration into students' and teachers' conceptualization of CRP in classroom teaching practices, particularly in specific grade levels and content areas. Additional research studies should be performed using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods designs to investigate and compare the experiences of students at specific grade levels, content areas, and teachers. Exploration should be conducted with small cooperative learning groups and whole group instruction of culturally and ethnically diverse students to better understand these experiences with CRP in classroom teaching practices (Evans, 2017).

- 2) Studies to determine if pre-service, inexperienced, or veteran middle-class and upper-class female content-area middle school teachers can effectively implement CRP in teaching practices with students in under-served communities of different ethnicities. Students need to perceive that teacher care for them, understand them, and can relate to their culturally different interests and backgrounds (Callaway, 2017). As an experienced veteran, female teacher, the researcher observed many teaching situations where teachers displayed a lack of awareness on how to motivate underserved students or competently explore varying cultural backgrounds and made assumptions based on stereotypes and appearances.
- 3) Investigation of the interactions between upper- to middle-class middle school male and female students and middle school male and female underserved minority students regarding the existence of cultural divides is needed. Middle school male and female minority students were found to be cognizant of their differences with peers outside of the classrooms and similar differences with teachers and teaching practices in the classrooms (Cayirdag, 2017).
- 4) Teachers frequently identified a lack of time in the school day to incorporate CRP activities in classroom lessons, suggesting that researchers may want to investigate how to align CRP with curriculum based on state standards and learning targets and review the professional learning for teachers with best practices and CRP implementation (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

### **Recommendations for Replicating Results of Research Study**

Researchers replicating this study design are recommended to consider that any varying instruments are equivalent to those used in the present study and possess a documented degree of

validity and reliability. The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale, also known as the Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale, is a recommended tool for broadening the data collection to include information on the type of variables that create difficulties for teachers in the school environment. The 24-item instrument contains three teacher efficacy subscales: instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement.

The present study used the open card and repeated single criterion sort procedures. Other researchers might use the hybrid card sort procedure, which combines the open and closed card sort procedures (Conrad & Tucker, 2019). In the hybrid card sort, the more rigid closed approach initiates the activity and is then followed by having the participants suggest further categories and repeating the process. The hybrid card sort includes the advantage of collecting more structured data, providing researchers with the opportunity to observe and gather more perspectives on thought processes and innovative data not available from the closed session (Conrad & Tucker, 2019). Findings from potential future studies should be compared to the findings of the present study.

Experienced qualitative researchers seeking to replicate the study are also recommended to use the data collection and data analysis procedures delineated in Chapter III. With similar processes, the experienced qualitative researcher might attain the same results as indicated in the findings. A veteran qualitative researcher, with funds from a federal or state grant agency, might have more time and resources to conduct the study. Findings may be compared with the findings in the present study. Similar findings would strengthen the credibility of findings in the present study, further inform the literature, and add more value for decision-makers on professional learning, curriculum, and funding, such as middle school leadership teams, school administrators, school district administrators.

The final recommendation is to replicate the study but focus on a different population than content-area middle school general education teachers, such as elementary or high school content-area general education teachers, or a more specific group like special education teachers. Findings on specific groups may provide support for teachers to better apply the tenets of CRP across all educational levels.

### **Dissemination of Findings**

The plan to widely disseminate the study's findings includes distribution through professional training, to stockholders, and for publication. The researcher will seek district approval to present findings at professional training sessions for the curriculum and instruction department of the district. A summary of the findings will be shared with all middle school principals, instructional coaches, and district administrators participating in the study. A manuscript will be prepared and submitted for publication to the *Middle School Journal*, published by Taylor and Francis Group, or to the *Middle Grades Research Journal*, published by the Zucker Family School of Education at Citadel; both are peer-reviewed journals.

### **Conclusions**

Creating a collaborative culturally responsive climate schoolwide fosters training and a comprehensive understanding of CRP and relative ideology (Samuel, 2018). Results of the study are supported by the literature and have meaning for the primary groups of school stakeholders recognizing CRP as a viable strategy to increase student achievement (Samuel, 2018). School leaders (i.e., principals and school leadership team members), university teacher educators, instructional facilitators, and trainers (i.e., multi-tiered system of supports facilitators, instructional coaches, and school and district professional development coordinators), and middle school content-area teachers represent the change agents for transforming traditional

pedagogy to align with the changing demographical composition of the classroom reflected by society (Candace,2021). The study suggests teachers require school leaders to be on board with educators and remain intentional with CRP implementation to assist teachers with meeting diverse middle school students' academic and social needs with school improvement plans and reform.

As the literature affirms what teachers lack in experience and knowledge, they make up with their willingness to provide CRP no matter how limited the understanding of the ideology (Tanase, 2020). Although studies show that implementation of CRP has been proven to increase student achievement with underserved and marginalized groups (Samuels, 2018), our focus remains on the issue of high stakes testing and accountability inspired by previous political views and educational legislation. Ladson-Billings (2017) and Mitchell (2017) indicated that a cultural gap can cause teachers to express minimal tolerance with the cultural habits of minority students resulting in cultural conflict, leading to excessive suspensions, expulsions, and lower grades. An aggravating factor has been a lack of adequate planning time in the schools for CRP teaching practices and minimum support from administrators to acquire meaningful instructional resources (PBS Wisconsin Education, 2020).

Supported by the literature instructional practices referenced and included activities to stimulate critical thinking, group work and making connections to real-world events (Tanase, 2020). Recognizing CRP as a pedagogy and framework for instruction opposed to an activity or lesson emerged as a disconnect with the educators. The educators voiced limited flexibility to teach outside of the content but did not fully make the connection of use of instructional strategies and high- level practices to achieve academic goals with culturally diverse students

(Tanase, 2020). Gay (2010) emphasized the teachers' perspective of culture drives curriculum delivery.

Our educational system, designed to prepare workers for industrialization age in the 1900's has not met the vast needs of our country's changing demographics and cultural shift. All participants in the present study prioritized elements of cultural competency as a vital part of CRP and necessary for today's changing classroom landscape. The educators emphasized the importance of understanding both similarities and differences with inclusion solidifying the opportunity for success for all students. In alignment with the literature (Ladson Billings, 2006), culturally responsive classroom environments incorporate inclusivity of all students to allow CRP teachers to scaffold knowledge of the culture and utilize the cultural assets of students to create instructional strategies for effective student learning. However, the study confirmed a disconnect with the teachers' understanding of the value and importance of CRP and how they conceptualize CRP through their implementation in their classrooms.

Recently, national debates have emerged beyond the educational arena into the political sector regarding culturally sensitive content being taught in schools such as Critical Race Theory and the Black Lives Matter Movement elements solidifying a need to address the inadequacies of CRP within public schools. Ladson-Billings (2014) posited *the four tenets of CRT* provide a framework for unpacking and understanding the fact that racial differences in important social and academic outcomes exist in public schools and persist in the United States despite advances in civil rights and equality in many facets of our society. The educational debate must critically examine the law as the law intersects with issues of politics, education, and economics. CRP is firmly grounded in a commitment to educational and social equality helping to contextualize the educational experiences of underachieving, underserved and marginalized students (Ladson-



Billings, 2006). Solender (2020) asserted that exploring inequality in education through the prism of CRP helped to “identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintained subordinate and dominant relationships inside and out of classrooms” (p. 68). Understanding the tenets of CRT might support closing the achievement gap.

The rallying of Black students behind the Black Lives Matter slogan on campuses across the country, the rise in protests and political debates regarding the rights and support of the Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual Transgender (LGBT) community with the passing of legislation in Florida , May 6, 2022, .regarding the “Don’t Say Gay” bill in schools is a contemporary example of that sense of commitment in action needed, solidifying a case for using a culturally responsive pedagogy that integrates elements of Gay’s (2010) six dimensions of CRP and Banks (1989) four elements of multicultural education in public school settings. The aim of the CRP integration in public schools is to close the achievement gap and provide effective classroom teaching strategies for all students using CRP as a holistic framework (Menakem, 2017). A strategy schools may use to achieve the objective of Hollie (2018) is by the integration of CRP in classroom instruction as a holistic framework to both reflect and effect societal change with reduction of the achievement gap. Bandura (2006) contended that establishing sociocultural change begins with an understanding of the problem.

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## Appendices



## Appendix A

### CULTURAL COMPETENCE INTERVIEW

#### Part I: Interview Protocol

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Code \_\_\_\_\_

**Introductory Comments:** Introduce researcher and establish rapport. Thank participant for agreeing to take part in the interview. Briefly review the study and informed consent form. Call attention to the participant rights, describe methods for ensuring confidentiality, and remind respondents of participation being voluntary and withdrawal from the study is permitted at any time.

**Instructions for Interview:** During the interview, I will ask you to respond to questions related to culturally responsive pedagogy. There are no right or wrong answers; responses are based on your own personal experiences. As a researcher I appreciate your candid responses. Although I am taking some notes, I would like to remind you the interview is being recorded. At times, I will follow your response with another question just to make sure I fully understand your meaning. I will provide you the opportunity to review my notes at the end of the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?

## **CULTURAL COMPETENCE INTERVIEW**

1. Do you feel awareness of others' cultures begins with awareness of one's own ethnic, cultural, and racial identity? Provide justification for your responses? How do you define your cultural identity?
2. What does culture mean to you in context of your classroom?
3. How do you socially empower your students in your classroom? How do you academically empower your students? Can you provide examples supporting your confidence in knowing all students are empowered both socially and academically?
4. How do you measure student growth and academic success other than formative or summative assessments?
5. Think about how you engage your students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and contributions in a culturally relevant way with your classroom teaching strategies. Can you provide some specific examples?
6. Define cultural assets? What cultural assets have you observed with your students? How do you utilize the cultural assets of your students to design multicultural curriculum lessons?
7. Give examples and describe culturally responsive teaching practices you implement in your classroom?
8. After reflecting on these practices, what is the frequency of your implementation? (daily, weekly, monthly, holidays)
9. How would you endeavor to bridge your students' cultural gap between school and home?
10. Can you tell me a little bit about your thoughts on educating the whole child in your classroom? What are some positive and/or negative benefits of educating the whole child?
11. Is most of the time in your classroom spent with whole group instruction, targeted small group instruction, class preparation, or feedback?

12. What types of instructional resources and support do you receive from the district or administration to assist you in the development of a culturally responsive classroom? Give specific examples.
13. What types of support from the district or school based professional learning have you received to assist with your culturally responsive classroom? Can you provide specific examples?
14. Planning for engaging lessons requires a substantial amount of time. With the demands of teacher workloads and expectations, how much time do you have to devote to the planning of a culturally responsive instruction? How much time do you need weekly to adequately plan for a culturally responsive classroom?
15. Geneva Gay, a leader in culturally responsive pedagogy, wrote in 2010, “culturally responsive teachers are emancipatory and liberating from oppressive teaching practices and ideologies as the teachers lift the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in the schools (p. 38),” What are your thoughts on this statement regarding the teaching practices and ideologies you typically use in your classroom? or How does this ideology play out in your classroom? Share examples.

## Appendix B

### Teacher Self-Efficacy on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Scale (TSECRPS)

Survey Code \_\_\_\_\_

#### PART I. DEMOGRAPHICS

**Directions:** Please honestly answer the following questions about your personal and professional background. All responses are confidential, and no names or identify information will be indicated on this survey.

Please check the appropriate box.

1. Gender:  Male  Female
2. What is your age?  21-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  61+
3. Race/ Ethnicity:  Asian  African American  Hispanic/Latino  European American
4. Is English your first language?  Yes  No
5. Highest degree earned:
  - Bachelor's Degree  Master's Degree  Ph.D./Ed.D.
  - Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. How many years have you been teaching?
  - 0 – 5 years  6 10 years  Greater than 10 years
7. Area of certification:  Early Childhood  Elementary Education  Middle Level Education  Secondary Education  Special Education
  - Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
8. In which of the following area(s) are you currently teaching?

Please check all that apply

- English (ELA)  Science  Social Studies  Mathematics

- Related Arts (e.g., Music, Art, PE)  Other (Please specify) \_
9. What grade-level(s) are you currently teaching? Please check all that apply
- Sixth Grade  Seventh Grade  Eighth Grade  Other \_\_\_\_\_
10. Is your school a Title I school?  Yes  No
11. For how many students in your classes is English not their first language? \_
12. How many years have you worked with diverse students ? \_
13. Are you proficient in a foreign language?  Yes  No
- If yes, which language(s): .
14. Have you ever taken any college courses on teaching culturally diverse learners?
- None  1 course  2 courses  3 courses  4 courses  5+ courses
15. How many hours of professional development have you received on how to teach diverse students? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Have you traveled outside of the United States to a non-English speaking country?
- Yes  No  If yes, where have you traveled: \_\_\_\_\_
17. Do you think your experience traveling outside of the United States has helped you in teaching diverse students?  Yes  No  Not applicable

**PART II. TEACHER SELF-EFFICACY on CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY SCALE (TSECRPS) ITEMS**

**Directions:** The TSECRPS items are designed to help gain a better understanding of middle school general education teachers use of culturally responsive pedagogy strategies with culturally diverse students in the classrooms. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential. Your responses should be based on your available resources and current and past teaching experiences in a middle school setting with culturally diverse students in the classroom.

Nothing    Very Little    Some    Quite A Bit    A Great Deal

18.    How much will your training allow you to promote the social cohesion of the most difficult students in your classroom?

Nothing    Very Little    Some    Quite A Bit    A Great Deal

19.    How much can you do, based on your resources, to help your students think critically?

Nothing    Very Little    Some    Quite A Bit    A Great Deal

20.    How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork?

Nothing    Very Little    Some    Quite A Bit    A Great Deal

21.    How much can you do, based on your professional development, to promote inter- classroom dynamics in the classroom?

Nothing    Very Little    Some    Quite A Bit    A Great Deal

22.    How much administrator support do you have for high academic expectations for your students?

Nothing    Very Little    Some    Quite A Bit    A Great Deal

23.    How much general administrator support do you have to help your culturally diverse students value learning?

Nothing    Very Little    Some    Quite A Bit    A Great Deal

24. How will your training and resources allow you to personalize your classroom instruction to support achievement for all students?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

25. To what extent will your professional development help you craft good questions for your culturally diverse students?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

26. How much has administrator support contributed to your management of acceptable classroom behaviors?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

27. How much can you do, based on available resources, to improve the understanding of students who are failing?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

28. How much training have you had that will support you to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

29. How much professional development have you had to help you use a variety of assessment strategies?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

30. To what extent has your training supported you in providing an alternative explanation or an example when students are confused?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

31. How much will your available resources and administrator support facilitate you to assist families of in helping their children to do well in school?

Nothing Very Little Some Quite A Bit A Great Deal

32. How much will your training support you to implement alternative strategies in your classroom?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

33. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

34. How well does training and preparation in your subject area help you in teaching?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

35. How much administrator support do you have to provide language support?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

36. How well, based on professional development, are you able to integrate cultural backgrounds into your classroom?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

37. How well will your training and resources support you to help students to adapt to the American culture?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

38. How well will your training and resources support you to adjust lessons to their proper level?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

39. How well will your training and resources support your skills to gauge student comprehension of what you taught?

Nothing      Very Little      Some      Quite A Bit      A Great Deal

40. I am willing to participate in additional phases of the study if needed.

- Agree
- Disagree



**Adapted from original Instrument** from Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale in Woolfolk, W. Hoy, W. K., & Davis, H. A. (2009). *Teachers' perceived self-efficacy beliefs*. In K. Wentzel & A. Wigfield (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation in school* (pp. 627-654). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum