The purpose of this qualitative study was to design and implement a model of cultural-responsiveness within a social studies teacher education program. Specifically, we sought to understand how pre-service grades 6-12 social studies practitioners construct culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in their lesson planning. In addition, we examined the professional barriers that prevented teacher-candidates from actualizing culturally responsive pedagogy. Incorporating a conceptual model of Review, Reflect, and React, 20 teacher candidates in a social studies methods course engaged CRT theory and practice. Thematic analysis of lesson plans and clinical reflections indicated successful proponents of CRT critically analyzed their curriculum, explored the diverse needs of their students, and engaged learners in culturally appropriate social studies pedagogy. Findings also showed that unsuccessful CRT was characterized by a lack of content knowledge, resistance from the cooperating teacher, and a reliance on the textbook materials.

Key Words: 6-12 education, Culturally responsive teaching, Pre-service education, Social studies, Social studies curriculum, Teacher characteristics

Introduction

In their position statement on the responsibilities of teaching and learning, the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) encourages instruction that precipitates dialogue between different groups of race and ethnicity (NCSS, 2002). Yet, current social studies curricula remains grounded in a male-dominated, Eurocentric tradition that promotes a myopic grand narrative (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Epstein, 2001). Non-majority peoples are relegated to the margins of the curriculum as footnote idiosyncrasies, or presented superficially as tokenized heroes within the context of the dominant society. Standardization has led to a “narrowing of the curriculum” (Crocco & Costigan, 2007, p. 529) that hampers teachers’ ability to utilize engaging and dynamic pedagogy. The confluence of these forces perpetuates a loss of identity for children of diversity in our social studies’ classrooms. The purpose of this study was to design and implement a model for cultural-responsiveness within a social studies teacher education program. Specifically, we sought to understand how pre-service grades 6-12 social studies practitioners construct culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in their lesson planning. In addition, we examined the professional barriers that prevented teacher-candidates...
from actualizing culturally responsive pedagogy.

**Conceptual Framework**

*A Curriculum of Castes*

The social studies are an intuitive conduit for multicultural education. The subject matter and disciplines provide an ideal environment for teaching issues of cultural diversity (Rong, 1998). Furthermore, NCSS has recommended that social educators situate multiculturalism in the curriculum (NCSS, 2002). Yet, if curriculum is the “communication” of the discipline (Trueba, 2004, p. 167) then current social studies has failed to include non-majority learners in the discussion. Across school systems, historical content and social science perspectives remain dictated by a pro-Western paradigm. This grand narrative gravitates toward Eurocentrism and modernist epistemology (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Harvey, 1990). The powerful, dominant group (White) maintains a cultural and intellectual dominion over the other. This other is relegated into the role of the oppressed in both the curriculum and the classroom. The non-White learner views his or her culture through a curriculum lens of exhibitionism; perceiving his ethnicity as an idiosyncratic contrast to the dominant cultural mores (Willinsky, 1998).

Traditional social studies curriculum developers will argue that social studies texts and standard courses of study include non-White, non-majority examples. Yet, these examples most often fit within the context of what James Banks (1994) refers to as *heroes and contributions*. This smattering of significant historical and social figures who made contributions within the context of the dominant society is supposed to provide examples of success and perseverance (Sleeter & Grant, 1991). Conversely, politically correct agendas subscribe to tokenized multiculturalism as well. In an attempt to appear culturally relevant, liberal social studies curriculums often depict non-majority groups as victims (Danker, 2002). Portrayed as powerless or socially deficient, this sort of malefic compassion only exacerbates the devaluing of marginalized learners. Neither of these categories of multicultural education elicits critical discourse. Social systems and economic structures are not challenged. Worse yet, historical meanings are constructed as absolute truths. Students exposed to this shallow form of multiculturalism are not expected to challenge the status quo, nor are they prepared to evaluate their own enfranchisement within our democratic system to advocate for social justice (Bohn & Sleeter, 2000; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1991).

Christine Sleeter and Jamy Stillman (2005) argue that current social studies curriculum is “presented as if there were no more serious ideological debates” (p. 43), thereby perpetuating a cultural-reproduction of “caste-like” social identities. Transformative multiculturalism (Banks, 1994; Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol, 2001) counteracts the hegemonic forces that dominate the social studies canon by encouraging critical, curricular analysis of historical positionality, power structures, and stakeholders.

Successful CRT participants recognized cultural disparities in the curriculum, promoted student-centered instruction, and reflected on their practice.
In order to promote transformative multiculturalism, James Banks (1994) and Charles Jenks, James Lee, and Barry Kanpol (2001) encourage educators to look beyond the male-dominated, Eurocentric exploits of history and find spaces in which to incorporate a more inclusive perspective of social studies. In reflecting on the curriculum they teach, social studies educators should explore how goals and objectives represent the students in their classrooms. Annad Marri (2005) suggests that educators address two questions when thinking about the social studies curriculum, “1. Who is and is not participating in democracy and on whose terms? 2. How wide is the path to participation?” (p. 1037).

Standardization and Pedagogical Stagnation

Along with these issues of socio-cultural exclusion, current social studies curriculum is often standardized and tied to high-stakes testing. The inception of No Child Left Behind (2002) has increased statewide testing procedures across content areas, including social studies. Previous research suggests that within this era of increased standardization, teachers feel limited in their pedagogical options (Cimbricz, 2002; Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Fitchett & Heafner, 2010). Andy Hargreaves (1994, p. 117) refers to this process as “intensification,” whereby external forces (often bureaucratic) diminish teacher autonomy. Packaged curricula, pacing guides, and other teacher-proof materials illustrate this phenomenon at its most current iteration. Teachers acquiesce to lecture/teacher-centered instructional modes in the face of pressures to cover tested content (Anderson, 2009). For non-minority learners, this “banking” approach (Freire, 2000, p. 74) fails to resonate. The concern is also that pre-service teachers are not trained on how to integrate their own knowledge/interests and students’ backgrounds within a packaged curriculum. Marginalized learners fail to find their historical positionality within the content, thereby losing interest in the subject (Salinas, 2006; VanSledright, 2002).

Researchers have concluded that student-centered, inquiry-based instruction provides social studies learners’ with more opportunity to interact with the content and critically analyze their place therein (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Salinas, 2006; Ukpokudo, 2006). These transformative practices include instructing students to be critical purveyors of their own knowledge. In her study of teachers of minority students, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995b) noted that good teaching challenges students to think critically about social issues, integrate various disciplines, and encourage student interaction.

Within social studies, these strategies include, but are not limited to, cooperative learning, simulations, primary source analysis, multiple perspective taking, and historical questioning. Fostering dynamic instruction that moves beyond the all-too-familiar recitation-style of typical social studies pedagogy (Wineburg, 2001; Ravitch & Finn, 1987) motivates non-majority learners to engage the content in a meaningful way.

From Theory to Praxis: Providing a Framework for Cultural Responsiveness

The challenge of confronting a standardized social studies curriculum is daunting for many novice practitioners. In his study of New York pre-service teachers, David Gerwin (2004) indicated that pre-service social studies educators often felt beholden to teach in a didactic/lecture style due to content coverage concerns.

Teaching within this context, practitioners are less likely to address socio-cultural identities of their students (Crocco, 1998; Salinas, 2006). Yet, as Anita Bohn and Christine Sleeter (2000, p. 157) indicated, “standards per se are not necessarily antithetical to multicultural education” in that they offer explicitness to the
Disclosure of social studies intent and values affords practitioners a framework in which to pedagogically maneuver. Accordingly, while an educator might be charged to teach the “formal curriculum;” their experience in the classroom is the “enacted curriculum” — the beliefs, values, and preferences that influence day to day instruction (Ross, 2006). Social studies methods courses can have significant influence on how pre-service teachers develop their understanding of the enacted curriculum (Thornton, 2001). We referred to Stephen Thornton’s (2001, 2005) concept of “gatekeeping” as a fundamental disposition for developing our framework; whereby the practitioner is the agent of curricular decision-making. Thus, we ascribed to the belief that standards should not predetermine teacher-centered, didactic instruction.

In order to challenge traditional teaching of standardized curriculum, we argue for a more transformative pedagogy. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies provide pre-service social studies practitioners with the instructional skills needed to work effectively within a diverse environment. Margaret Crocco (1998) adds:

For some beginning social studies teachers, the challenge to their idealism represented by many aspects of (standardization) can ultimately be defeating. Our task as teacher educators is to gird new teachers for the struggle, help them find space to practice culturally responsive pedagogy, and work to reform a system harnessed to educational standardization at the expense of educational quality (p. 129).

Culturally responsive teaching is the process of “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance styles of students from diverse backgrounds to make learning environments more relevant to and effective for them. It is culturally validating and affirming” (Gay, 2000, p. 2). Components of culturally responsive teaching according to Geneva Gay (2002) are (1) developing a cultural diversity knowledge base, (2) developing culturally relevant curricula, (3) demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, (4) exhibiting effective cross-cultural communications, and (5) delivering cultural congruity in classroom instruction. From Gay’s (2000, 2002) theoretical framework, we devised and implemented a culturally responsive model for lesson plan development (see Figure 1). It is imperative that pre-service teachers realize that there are “rules of engagement” for being a culturally responsive teacher; it is not a haphazard, nonchalant attempt to connect to culturally diverse students. Within the Review, Reflect, and React process, each of Gay’s (2002) CRT components were emphasized.

Conversely, this study exposed substantial systemic and dispositional obstacles toward developing a cultural responsive model in a secondary environment. We argue that cultural responsiveness should be a priority for all secondary teacher education programs. Accordingly, our model encourages practitioners to critique, engage, and reflect to develop social studies practice that celebrates our pluralistic society.
In the first component, *Review*, pre-service teachers were instructed to critically examine the standard course of study for their social studies discipline. Operating upon Sleeter and Stillman’s (2005) curricular analysis strategy, practitioners reviewed the curriculum from a culturally conscientious perspective. A questioning activity was employed incorporating Marri’s (2005) introspective structure. Keeping with Gay’s CRT framework (2002), preservice professionals were encouraged to develop a culturally diverse knowledge base by finding “spaces” in the curriculum (Crocco, 1998, p.129), specifically, places where the non-majority learners were underrepresented and culturally relevant instruction was appropriate. In addition, they critiqued the positionality of minority peoples within the current canon: How did they interact with the majority? Why do you think the curriculum has situated these peoples/cultures in this manner? From this activity, we sought to instill social
studies teacher candidates with the metacognitive strategies to critically navigate their curriculum, so that they can remain vested in a standard course of study (often tied to their job performance), while simultaneously acknowledging the cultural discrepancies that need to be addressed within their own instruction.

The second component, Reflect, was operationalized into two parts. First, teacher candidates passed out a questionnaire to their students. This student demographic survey asked learners questions regarding their race/ethnicity, gender, perceptions of social studies, birth-place, and mother’s highest level of education (a comparable indicator of socioeconomic status). These confidential responses provided teacher candidates with a context of the classroom culture. Second, candidates conducted formal observations of their cooperating teacher. Pre-service professionals took note of instructional style, classroom management, teacher/student dialogue, and overall demeanor toward their students. From these combined field notes, pre-service teachers developed “cross-cultural communications” (Gay, 2002, p. 110); whereby they reflected on the learning environment and interaction between the teacher and students. Referring to the theoretical foundations of multiculturalism explored through various readings and dialogue (i.e. Banks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Ukpongodu, 2006), candidates were encouraged to integrate a critical analysis of how the curriculum was realized through instruction. From this work, pre-service educators’ were to extrapolate the funds of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) that students bring to the classroom. Candidates wrote reflections on the context of their classroom environment; specifically, who were the students and how did the cooperating teacher interact with them. As Gay (2000, 2002) points out, developing a culturally diversity knowledge base is essential to become responsive practitioners.

Tamara Villegas and Ana Maria Lucas (2007) note, “... learners use their prior knowledge and beliefs to make sense of the new ideas and experiences they encounter in school” (p. 29). Similarly, in this third component, React, practitioners utilize cultural responsiveness in developing their own lesson plans, thereby demonstrating “cultural caring” via instructional decision-making (Gay, 2002). Specifically, how pre-service teachers instructionally react to the context of the schooling environment. Ladson-Billings (1995b) points out that culturally responsive pedagogy “appears to refer to a more dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (p. 467). Moving beyond the innocuous level of superficial multiculturalism (Banks, 1994; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Bohn & Sleeter, 2000), candidates developed and taught lessons that drew upon the community as a content-rich resource, incorporating “culturally-relevant curricula” (Gay, 2002, p. 108). Candidates were encouraged to integrate student-centered, inquiry-based teaching strategies that were culturally congruent to the learning styles of the diverse classroom community (Gay, 2002). Because this process was meant to be generative, candidates wrote self-reflections on their teaching practices. Geneva Gay and Kipchoge Kirkland (2003) and Tyrone Howard (2003) suggested that self-reflection is an essential practice for pre-service teachers. Self-analysis of instructional endeavors helped pre-service social studies teachers prepare lessons that better motivated and situated learning within the sociocultural perspectives of their students.

A majority of previous studies have explored the practice of culturally responsive teaching in elementary social studies classrooms (Ladson-Billings 1995a, 1995b; Ukpongodu, 2006). Yet, few studies have explored the implementation of culturally responsive teaching theory into practice models for pre-service middle/secondary (grades 6-12) social studies candidates. We argue that the prevail-
ing trend of a pro-Western, standardized curriculum serves as a pedagogical barrier to providing culturally responsive instruction in grades 6-12 social studies classrooms (Crocco, 1998; Crocco & Costigan, 2007). The increased presence of high-stakes testing in social studies at these particular grade levels seemingly inhibits dynamic pedagogy among novice practitioners (Gerwin, 2004). We designed and implemented a culturally responsive teaching program that underscored the three specific themes of Review, Reflect, and React. From this study, we sought to understand how a theory-to-practice model might influence pre-service grades 6-12 social studies practitioners to pedagogically actualize culturally responsive teaching theory. We wanted to know what sort of “restrictive forces” might prevent teacher candidates from teaching in a culturally responsive mode.

**Methodology**

**Participants**

For this study, we employed a biased sample of convenience: a class of 20 students in a middle/secondary (6-12) social studies methods course (taught by one of the principal investigators) at a large, urban university in the southeast. The participants were part of a graduate licensure program that provides social studies teaching credentials to post-baccalaureates. All of the students in this class had Bachelor’s degrees in social studies-related fields (i.e. history, political science, etc.). Demographically, the class cohort consisted of ten white females, two black females, and eight white males. The approximate age range of the participants was 23 to 60 years of age.

**Implementing a Culturally-Responsive Teaching Component**

From the onset of our program implementation, we assumed the participants had limited exposure to culturally responsive practices. These suppositions were confirmed through informal conversations with participants. Several students noted that they associated multicultural theory with surface-level content supplements, akin to the Banks (1994) *heroes and contributions* metaphor. Therefore, before participants could successfully review their standard course of study from a critical lens, they were exposed to various sources/readings of culturally relevant pedagogical theory and practice (Banks, 1994; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Moll, 1992; Willinsky, 1998).

After being introduced to culturally responsive theory through readings, dialogue, and discussion, we instructed student/participants to *review* the state standard course of study for their specified discipline. Marri’s (2005) questioning framework guided this practice (see Figure 1). Participants were challenged to critically examine the narrative of their assigned curriculum. They explored the historic positionality of the text and used the questioning strategies to determine whose voice is empowered by the curriculum and whose voice is suppressed. After an initial analysis, students worked in small focus groups of similar content areas and discussed their findings. Through this dialogue, students shared their own personal praises and indictments of social studies curricula. Students were encouraged to quote or refer to, critical multiculturalism when speaking, so that the abstract theoretical lexicon could become more ingrained in their own pedagogical vernacular. Disagreements ensued, voices raised, and discussions were not always conciliatory. Yet, through the uncomfortable and often sensitive conversations, student/participants realized that a social studies curriculum is not culturally universal, nor is it without its own shortfalls.

In the next step of the program implementation, students/participants asked learners in their student teaching clinical classroom to complete an anonymous questionnaire. This
instrument asked students to describe their cultural background, views/perspectives on the importance of social studies, and mother’s highest education level (see Appendix A). From this data, student/participants gained a more substantive context for the learners’ sociocultural backgrounds. In addition, student/participants spent approximately 25 hours in classroom observation of their cooperating teacher. They were held to specific observation criteria including pedagogical style, classroom management, student communication, and perceived cultural-responsiveness (see Appendix B). Student/participants expressed their findings in short observational reflections. Incorporating knowledge of the standard course of study, CRT principles, and their own field notes, student/participants journaled on common teaching practices, learner behavior, and classroom interactions. This writing activity challenged prospective social studies teachers to apply theoretical concepts of transformative, responsive multiculturalism to the atheoretical realities of the classroom experience. Thus, buoyed by their critical review of the curriculum, student/participants were able to more comprehensively reflect on instructional practice.

As a final step to the program implementation, social studies teacher-candidates designed and taught two lessons in their clinical (student teaching) experience. Supported by the instructor/researcher and their cooperating teacher, these lessons aligned with the state standard course of study for their given discipline. Before designing the lessons, student/participants were provided with additional scaffolding through a reading and discussion of Geneva Gay’s (2002) principles of CRT. Then, pre-service practitioners reacted to the curriculum and learner context by developing instructional lessons. Student/participants also were asked to reflect on their implementation (teaching) of the lesson. Not hampered by restrictions or qualifications, student/participants were given the instructional freedom to
device culturally responsive lessons as they envisioned. After the first lesson, we provided the students with feedback on their instructional choices, cultural responsiveness, and personal reflection of the teaching experience. With this insight, students developed and taught a second lesson. This final component was viewed as a culminating step and served to demonstrate the generative process of teaching (i.e. revision and metacognition). Also, student/practitioners were challenged to reflect on how lessons were received by learners, while noting how they would improve and revise the lesson for future classes. As Gay and Kirkland (2003) suggest, we hoped that metacognitive reflection would facilitate critical introspection of culturally responsive practice within the context of the classroom environment. Put another way, we wanted our social studies pre-service teachers to realize that no two classes are the same. They were encouraged to adjust and revise lessons to meet the needs of multifaceted learning communities.

This study instituted a gate-keeping model for bridging the gap between the theory and practice of culturally responsive teaching for social studies teacher candidates working within urban, secondary schools.
In experiencing the “Review, Reflect, and React” framework, the participants adopted the role of social science researchers: examining the curriculum, gathering data on student demographics, and observing their cooperating teachers. Previous studies have concluded that pre-service teacher-led research is a valid form of educational study (Liston & Zeichner, 1990). Specifically, it can increase dialogue between student teacher and teacher educator, encourage critical reflection on instructional practice, and help teacher candidates familiarize with complexities of the profession (Beckman, 1957; Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Wood, 1988). Though not the focus of our study, we acknowledged these welcomed ancillary effects to our overall instructional/research goal.

Procedure

We utilized a qualitative methodology to investigate how our theory-to-practice culturally responsive model might influence pre-service secondary social studies educators’ pedagogical decision-making. Thematic analysis was employed to examine our research question. Data for this study were gathered from student/participants’ reflections of classroom community, written lesson plans, and informal conversations. We incorporated investigator triangulation in order to ensure greater reliability of coding (Denzin, 2009). In keeping with Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke’s (2006) six phases of thematic analysis, we first familiarized ourselves with the data by individually reading and re-reading lessons and reflections. Initial codes were recognized. Then, we discussed initial findings and collated relevant codes. During a third reading of students’ work, tentative themes emerged from the coding patterns. Themes were reviewed within the context of the entire dataset. Next, revised themes were defined and labeled. As a final step, we extracted salient examples of the emerging themes of analysis.

In the subsequent section, we identified these themes of how pre-service social studies teachers made pedagogical sense of our cultural-responsive teaching model along with obstacles to their progress.

Results

Cultural Responsive Enactment of the Formal Curriculum

Geneva Gay (2002) contended that practitioners who advocate for a CRT model should develop a cultural diversity knowledge base. As a first step to operationalizing a CRT model, we encouraged teacher candidates to critically review their curriculum standards by asking specific questions about who is represented in the canon and in what context. In reviewing the observation reflections, we noticed that successful proponents of CRT tended to critically assess the pedagogy and curriculum at work within their cooperating teacher’s classroom. Often these candidates/participants noted that teacher-centered, didactic instruction failed to motivate learners. They suggested that coverage-obsessed teaching practices offered a myopic view of social education that was irrespective of cultural inclusion. Mitch, an ex-Marine turned future educator, noted that in the Advanced Placement (AP) class he observed, “There is no diversity at all in the instructional technique. The teacher does not address the learning styles and motivations of the various students.” Other candidates seemingly conceded that the current public school system stifles culturally responsive practices (Crocco, 1998). One such pre-service educator, Luke, wrote, “I am sorry to say that in my many hours of observation … that in the ‘real world’ of the public school system, this particularly important aspect of pedagogy (CRT) … often falls to the wayside.” Pre-service teachers reported a discrepancy between what was being emphasized in their social studies methods course and what they
were observing in the clinical environment (Tellez, 2008).

These critical condemnations of curriculum and practice were not only exhibited in observation writing. Culturally responsive candidates carried this epistemology into their own pedagogical design. While lesson planning, Sara, a middle grades social studies candidate, challenged her students to critique the textbook as “propaganda,” while introducing the topic of the 1960s Civil Rights movement. She noted that the benign story unfolding within the textbook failed to capture the social violence and political upheaval of that era. Sublimating her own critical observations into practice, Sara sought to engage her students in a critical discourse so that they could become active “reviewers” of the curriculum imposed upon them.

**Developing a Context for Understanding**

Another principle of Geneva Gay’s (2002) concept of CRT encourages educators to demonstrate cultural caring while building a learning community. Specifically, she suggested that practitioners employ “cultural scaffolding”; wherein the culture and experiences of the learners are utilized to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement (Gay, 2002, p. 109). We noted that the participants/teacher candidates were not familiar with the funds of knowledge or the urban environment in which many of their students lived. We established a Reflect component to our CRT program in which pre-service social studies educators would consider their own teaching philosophy/goals within the learning environment and socioeconomic environs of the learners. These considerations manifested in the lesson planning of CRT-savvy teacher candidates. Carol, a former Teach for America practitioner and current administrator of a KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) school, used community examples and current events in order to describe abstract nuances of geography such as place and location. Drawing from the local urban environment, Carol incorporated photos of familiar buildings and parks to describe place, whereby she used a political map to show the location of the city in which she taught. Carol encouraged students to answer questions on how their urban place perspective differed from the map pinpoint location. Then, she challenged students to think critically about how “place” changes as buildings are torn down and rebuilt, parks renovated, and new schools built in the students’ neighborhood. Utilizing an epistemology similar to Todd Kenreich’s (2010) theory of changing spatial patterns and geographic identity, Carol successfully connected students’ lived-experiences with the obscure standard course of study.

Likewise, Samantha, student teaching in a high minority, urban high school sociology class, provided examples of urban development to her students, challenging students to determine which model best fit the current ghettoization of their community. Whereas, Wendy, working with a class of urban, middle grade learners developed a simulation of the early 20th century factory system, highlighting the similarities and differences between immigrant and women’s rights then and now. She wrote in her reflection, “I was pleasantly surprised that some of the male students really took the perspective of being a female seriously into consideration and reflected that in their explanation of why they would/would not join the strike.” Perspective-taking activities as designed by Wendy and others demonstrated a willingness to provide a meaningful context to instruction so that students’ historical positioning (VanSledright, 2002) no longer seemed so distal.

**The Practice of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Working within students’ funds of knowledge, did not always manifest as a content
supplementation; such findings would have suggested students were pursuing a simplistic notion of multiculturalism a la heroes and contributions (Banks, 1994). Encouraging participant/candidates to React to their students’ learning environments, we observed an emerging theme of cultural-pedagogical consideration akin to Gay’s (2002) notion of “cultural congruity in the classroom” (p. 112). Luke, developing a high school lesson on the U.S. Civil Rights movement, noted that a number of his students were interested in automobile mechanics. He sought to motivate learners through instruction that would stimulate their physical/mechanical interests. Luke’s students designed a learning cube to help them better understanding concepts of the era. He wrote, “... so I thought that having them create a ‘product’ that demonstrated learning would be a great way to keep these particular students focused, while having them engage in the material.”

While participants noted feeling hamstrung by the prescriptive requirements of the standard course of study, successful teachers of CRT demonstrated methodology that sought to counteract the prevailing, Eurocentric canon of social studies instruction. Incorporating “symbolic curriculum” devices (Gay, 2002, p. 108), pre-service practitioners used symbols, icons, and mottos to teach specific morals, knowledge, and skills. Benjamin, a middle-aged factory worker-turned educator, employed various iconic images to stimulate discussion among his urban, middle-grade students over what he described as “cultural universals” (i.e. religion, government, etc.). Benjamin wrote that his objective for this lesson was for students “to learn that in a democratic and multicultural society there is a need to evaluate multiple perspectives that derive from the different cultural vantage points.” Along similar pedagogical lines, Bob, a middle grades teacher seeking certification, integrated literature from around the world into his lesson on geography and culture. In his lesson plan, he indicated that folk tales of countries in Africa and Western Europe expand similar values; suggesting that while people have different social structures, histories, and belief systems there exist similarities along lines of human morality and dignity. Bob noted that within his diverse classroom population these findings would help students overcome perceived cultural stereotypes.

As we read and critiqued participants’ lesson plans for CRT strategies, we discovered that successful culturally relevant instruction utilized multiple resources beyond the textbook, similar to Gay’s (2002) principle of societal curriculum. Candidates who wished to provide accurate societal perspective used current events and more often, primary source material. Sandra, an African American woman who also as working on a Master’s degree in History along with licensure, remarked that her goal for teaching was to “move above” the standard course of study. She utilized primary source materials in her teaching of African American slavery, Reconstruction, and Civil Rights, while providing a contrasting view from the textbook. Sandra taught in a predominately White, suburban classroom. Finding it difficult to culturally and historically “relate” to her students, Sandra used primary sources as an attempt to challenge students into understanding different perspectives. By engaging students in letter writing and other forms of historical empathy (Davis, Yeager, & Foster, 2001; Foster & Yeager, 1998), she was able to introduce an uninformed, dominate cultural group to the complex socio-cultural role of African Americans within current and past US history. Similarly, Beth, teaching in an urban middle grades classroom, incorporated various written sources and images to depict Columbus’s “discovery” of the Arawak peoples. By providing students with the various facades of history, Beth helped her students understand how hegemonic forces shape historical interpretation. She wrote:
“The goal of this lesson is to provide students with an understanding of the impact colonization has on the native people and how one person’s victory is another person’s defeat. Students will be able to critically examine the positive and negative aspects of Spanish conquest.”

Understanding the social construction of history via primary source materials provides learners with a discerning insight into values and biases inherent to our society. Cinthia Salinas (2006) noted that primary source material motivates diverse learners most often when it reflects, directly or indirectly, their own experience. We uncovered this trend among successful CRT participants. Sara, using various primary source materials in a lesson on Women’s Suffrage, discovered that her female students, often less active in conversation, took the lead in a discussion on women’s roles in the 20th and 21st centuries. By incorporating culturally relevant source material, pre-service social studies educators were able to successfully motivate diverse student populations.

Within the scope of lesson planning, participants who incorporated CRT into their lesson design were more likely to use student-centered and inquiry-based pedagogy. Previous studies of CRT and theory have endorsed innovative, non-didactic instructional practices (Gay, 2002; Ladson Billings 1995a, 1995b; Ukpokudo, 2006). In examining lesson plans and participant/candidates subsequent teacher reflections, we found a substantial amount of complexity, authenticity, and creativity among participants. Notably, participants Luke and Sara incorporated historical drama and structured seminar. Whereas simulations afforded young learners the opportunity to enact familiar and contrasting social roles, seminars encouraged discourse on potentially controversial issues of race, class, and power. In exploring segregationist practices of the southern United States, Sara presented primary source material of local Jim Crow laws. Then, students read documents pertaining to current de facto segregationist forces such as zoning laws. After analyzing the juxtaposing documents, students took part in structured class discussions, which challenged learners to compare current examples of racism to historic events. Analogous to the findings of Diana Hess (2004), Sara noted that seminars challenged students’ beliefs, and encouraged learners to take ownership over their thinking.

Other participants held informal discussions and constructed cooperative learning modules. Participants valued the cross-cultural possibilities inherent to this form of instruction. Benjamin, one such advocate, noted in a lesson designed to use cooperative learning,

I want whites to mix with other races and students to get with peers outside their normal peer group … When students graduate to the work force, they will experience a multicultural life. This experience will open their eyes to realizing that success will occur when they understand others.

Culturally responsive participants utilized student-centered pedagogy to encourage critical discussions and provide opportunity for interaction within diverse classroom environments.

(Re)-evaluating Culturally Responsive Teaching

As participants reacted to the context of their teaching experience and the curriculum pressed upon them, we envisioned a generative model. As such, we encouraged participants to critically reflect on their lesson planning. By developing these metacognitive skills, pre-service social studies practitioners will be able to adjust and re-imagine their pedagogy to suit the multifaceted backgrounds of their students.
The Review, Reflect, and React model we have proposed is not terminal, but a foundational and continually changing process. Often, we found that participants sought to improve their pedagogy to better motivate learners. Reflection often leads to better and more informed decisions for teacher and student alike (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Luke, while teaching a cooperative learning activity, noted that student engagement was lopsided with one or two students per group doing most of the work. He addressed these issues in his reflection commenting, “Group dynamics are something I need to consider carefully in my own classroom before implementing cooperative learning strategies.”

Yet, in other circumstances, it was necessary to become more knowledgeable of students’ lives and community, while citing one’s own ignorance. Carol, a white female teaching at a predominantly African American KIPP school remarked while reflecting on a class discussion,

“This sparked a somewhat heated comment from one student who said that he was partially White because a slave owner raped his great grandmother. It definitely made me realize that there were race issues discussed in other contexts at home and how larger discussions about race and diversity would (mean) more prepping to speak to tolerance."

In developing a metacognitive component to their teaching practice, CRT candidates were able to confront epistemological challenges to pedagogy and devise strategies for meeting the needs of young learners.

**Obstacles Toward Culturally Responsive Teaching**

In our informal conversations, analysis of pre-service teachers’ work, and reading of their reflections, we recognized that a number of candidates seemingly rejected the principles of CRT in their lesson planning. One consistent theme that emerged was resistance from the cooperating teachers (CT) to allow participants to explore and present culturally responsive pedagogy (Tellez, 2008). Sandra commented that her CT was frustrated that cultural inclusive pedagogy would take away from the standard course of study, remarking that it was “impractical.” While Sandra chose to switch cooperating teachers, other participants remained with skeptical CTs either due to necessity or professional choice.

Pre-service teachers, collaborating with resistant practitioners, tended to reject CRT practices in their lesson design, thus confirming that CTs are a major influence on pre-service teacher’s performance and instructional ideology (Anderson, 2007; Tellez, 2008). Rick’s CT indicated that his classes act “wholly American,” and he did not have the “time to be culturally-conscientious.” Perhaps not coincidentally, Rick designed lessons that failed to move beyond the scope of the traditional social studies practice. Conversely, cooperating and pre-service teachers may believe that they are culturally responsive on a surface level, but teaching practices do not always confirm it on a deeper or active level, which is another form of resistance (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Tabitha, a second career female with excellent content knowledge, noted in her reflections how much she endorsed culturally responsive teaching practices. Yet, her lesson preparation revealed something quite different. She consistently utilized lecture as the sole instructional strategy, while commenting in her lesson plan reflections that the non-White students “just didn’t get it.” Though instructors provided the social studies cohort with several alternatives to lecture, Tabitha remained inflexible to instructional change, thereby demonstrating a resistance to adapting to the learning styles of her diverse learners.
In addition to CT and pedagogical resistance, a number of participants suggested that the prepackaged materials (i.e. lesson plans, pacing guides, and even primary source documents) limited their pedagogical independence (Hargreaves, 1994). Candidates were discouraged from including authentic materials to supplement their lessons, or they supported the idea that the curriculum in place was a universal or correct curriculum (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Rick, one of the least successful proponents of CRT, consistently included worksheets, quizzes, and lesson ideas recycled from the school system’s homogenized course packs. As we investigated this phenomenon, we found a parallel between dependence on packaged materials and relevant content area knowledge. We noted that successful proponents of CRT such as Luke, Sandra, and Sara wrote highly detailed, competent lessons; often discreetly subverting the system by including materials not supplied by the school system. Conversely, participants less comfortable with their content area were less likely to address cultural responsiveness. Jean, teaching in a class of 95% self identified students of color, found it difficult to connect Western African empires such as Timbuktu with her predominately Black class. In informal conversations, she remarked that World History was not her strongest subject area and that she felt the need to rely on the textbook.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to develop and implement a culturally responsive framework for pre-service middle/secondary social studies teachers. We sought to determine, within the scope of our framework, how teacher candidates authentically operationalized CRT within their own lesson planning. Also, we investigated possible obstacles to our program design so that we could adjust the framework for future pre-service candidates. Our research suggests that a Review, Reflect, and React (3 R’s) framework can successfully introduce principles of culturally responsive teaching to pre-service social studies teachers. Social studies candidates have to be provided with the opportunity to critique their curriculum and reflect within the context of their classroom community. To pedagogically engage students, novice practitioners need to be able to incorporate primary source documents, perspective taking, historical empathy, and student-centered instruction within the context of the learners’ community. In addition, our findings indicate that a 3 R’s framework is generative, whereby candidates constantly challenge themselves to become more culturally aware.

The innovative lesson planning exemplified by participants in this study offers hope in a system mired by high stakes testing and ideologues competing for control of the curriculum. We believe this model serves as a gatekeeping archetype for offsetting the perceived lack of autonomy so often associated with middle/secondary social studies teachers (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Gerwin, 2004). Successful CRT practitioners from our study taught their standard course of study while simultaneously subverting the traditionalist canon by providing critique, context, and perspective. They viewed their practice (and that of their CT) from a critical lens incorporating content and strategies that met the needs of their diverse, urban environment.

Through critical analysis, observation, planning, and self-reflection, this study demonstrated that culturally responsive teaching can be accomplished in a secondary social studies classroom. Culturally-responsive pre-service practitioners employed culturally congruent methods that engaged learners within the context of their sociocultural environment. Facilitating structured seminars, incorporating historical perspective taking, and using inquiry-based strategies broke from traditional, perfunctory social studies instruction (Ravitch & Finn, 1987). From authentic educational
strategizing, successful CRT participants demonstrated that innovation of pedagogy can coexist within a prescriptive, standardized environment. In reflecting on practice, preservice social studies practitioners perceived CRT as an organic endeavor that required constant modification; thereby shaping instruction to meet the changing need of learners (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

In analyzing the impediments to the CRT framework, our study elucidates the discrepancy between the pedagogical goals of a teacher education program and the realities of the professional world. John Dewey (1916) referred to this divergence of purpose between academia and society as the “separation of town and gown” (p. 416). Thus, the various institutions of education, within and outside of higher academia, often operate unilaterally, leading to conflicting ideals regarding the nature and purpose of teaching.

We noted that cooperating teacher resistance contributed to a lack of CRT lesson planning among pre-service candidates. Deferring to the CT’s instructional style is not an uncommon practice among pre-service practitioners (Tellez, 2008). The pressure of evaluation from the CT encourages many teacher candidates to replicate mentor behavior and methods of teaching (regardless of personal preference), rather than experiment with their own ideas or methods in the classroom (Anderson, 2007). Moreover, cooperating teacher resistance to CRT was indicative of the ideological rift between the aims of teacher education programs and classroom practice. Challenging teachers to reevaluate their disposition toward instruction from a culturally responsive framework is particularly difficult.

Villegas and Lucas (2007) noted that successful culturally responsive pre-service education utilizes all stakeholders of teacher education. In order to strengthen the ties between teacher education and local urban schools, we suggest that the community of teachers and schools become more engaged in the CRT process. Likewise, teacher educators should dialogue with practitioners to determine where the “town and gown” converge and diverge in their instructional aims. Professional development schools serve as a model to join schools and teacher education institutions under shared goals. These programs foster collegiality, professional collaboration, and an openness toward teaching practices and beliefs (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Through a deliberation of ideals, meaningful partnerships between classroom teachers and teacher educators can develop and sustain CRT practice endorsed by the all the participants (academy and community) of a teacher education program.

While our 3 Rs model provides a framework for bridging cultural responsive theory to practice, it assumes that educators have a strong content background in their discipline. Findings suggested that practitioners lacking in content knowledge were unable to successfully implement culturally relevant pedagogy (Villegas & Lucas, 2007), often relying on textbooks or prepackaged materials. We recommend rigorous content area study for pre-service practitioners to establish a necessary foundation for implementing the dynamic pedagogy necessary for successful culturally relevant teaching. Simply taking more history/social science courses is not enough. As Thornton (2001, 2005) suggests, content preparation should be more reflective of the subject matter that teachers teach in schools. In order for CRT to be successful in a discipline-specific secondary curriculum, practitioners need to be exposed to course work and content relevant to the disciplines they will be charged to teach. This conceptualization requires joint work between teacher education programs and their colleagues in the arts and sciences.

In addition to systemic barriers to CRT, we encountered practitioner resistance. These findings led us to consider possible limitations to our study. Specifically, we can infer from reflections and lesson plans that a number of
the participants appear committed to utilizing cultural responsive practices, but we do not know if and how they will carry this ideology over into their professional careers. From an empirical perspective, a longitudinal study of CRT prepared teachers would be beneficial to determine the overall validity of the 3 R’s model. In further revising the 3 Rs model, we suggest incorporating rationale-based epistemology to encourage purposeful CRT practices (Shaver & Strong, 1982). Recent research (Hawley, 2010) indicates that incorporating rationale-based practice can impact pre-service teachers’ instructional strategies and professional disposition well into their career.

Conclusion

This study instituted a gate-keeping model for bridging the gap between the theory and practice of culturally responsive teaching for social studies teacher candidates working within urban, secondary schools. Successful CRT participants recognized cultural disparities in the curriculum, promoted student-centered instruction, and reflected on their practice. Conversely, this study exposed substantial systemic and dispositional obstacles toward developing a cultural responsive model in a secondary environment. While the findings are unique in the context of data collection, issues of cultural responsiveness, diversity, and cultural democratic thinking are important regardless of the demographic breakdown of a given community (Banks, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). We argue that cultural responsiveness should be a priority for all secondary teacher education programs. Accordingly, our model encourages practitioners to critique, engage, and reflect to develop social studies practice that celebrates our pluralistic society, whether teaching in a suburban or an urban setting.

References

Fitchett, P.G., & Heafner, T.L. (2010). A national perspective on the effects of high-stakes testing and standardization on elementary social studies marginalization. Theory and Research in Social Educat-


**Web-based**

http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v10n2.html


**About the Authors**

**Paul G. Fitchett**, Assistant Professor of Social Studies Education in the Department of Middle, Secondary, and K-12 Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. His research interests include culturally responsive teaching, social studies education, and educational policy. He can be reached at Paul.Fitchett@uncc.edu.

**Tehia V. Starker**, Assistant Professor of Elementary Education in the Department of Reading and Elementary Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research interests include culturally responsive teaching, motivation, and self-efficacy, and pre-service teacher education.

**Amy J. Good**, Associate Professor of Elementary Education in the Department of Reading and Elementary Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her research interests include social studies and technology integration.

**Citation for this Article**
Appendix A

Student Demographic Questionnaire

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

ALL ANSWERS ARE CONFIDENTIAL.

Thank you for taking part in this questionnaire. All of your responses are strictly confidential and will not be used outside of instructional purposes.

Student Demographic Questionnaire

1. In what social studies subject are you currently enrolled?

2. What grade are you currently in?

3. How old are you?

4. What is your gender:
   A. Male
   B. Female

5. Where is your family from?

6. How would you describe your race or ethnicity?

7. What is the highest level of education that your mother attained?
   A. Went to High School
   B. Graduated from High School
   C. Attended some college
   D. Graduated from a two year college
   E. Graduated from a four year college
   F. Attained a graduate degree
   G. Attained a doctoral degree (PhD, law degree, medical degree)
   H. Other

8. Briefly describe what you believe to be the purpose of this class.
Appendix B

Social Studies Structured Observation Guide

As you observe social studies being taught in the middle/secondary classroom, reflect on the following aspects of the lesson. In your write-up of the observation please address each of these areas.

Lesson Introduction

How was the lesson introduced? How were connections made between students’ prior knowledge and the new ideas to be learned?

Purpose of Lesson

What was the purpose or intent of the lesson? Were students aware of what they were going to learn and why it is relevant to them?

Instructional Delivery

What methods were used in conveying the new information?

Closure – How was closure carried out in this lesson?

Lesson Outcomes

Do you feel the goals and objectives of the lesson were met? Why or Why not? Did students experience success with the assignments given to them?

Classroom Management

What classroom management strategies/techniques were of interest to you as you observed this class?

Lesson Reactions

What were the strengths of this lesson? What aspects might you change or do differently if you were responsible for teaching this material?

Personal Reflections

What will you take away from this experience that will impact your future social studies teaching?

Cultural Consciousness

Does this lesson reflect a culturally conscious classroom? What are students in the class doing? How diverse are the instructional techniques? Does the teacher address the learning styles and motivations of the various students?