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Understanding and Enacting Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Through Multicultural Children's Literature: A Case Study of Preservice Teachers in Georgia

Heather M. Huling

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UNDERSTANDING AND ENACTING CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY THROUGH MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: A CASE STUDY OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN GEORGIA

by

HEATHER M. HULING

(Under the Direction of Delores Liston)

ABSTRACT

This study explored how preservice teachers understand culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and used multicultural children’s literature (MCL) as a way of enacting CSP in their field placement experiences. This qualitative study utilized the theoretical framework of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017) and a single case study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018) to explore five preservice teachers’ understanding and perceptions of CSP and its enactment in the classroom through MCL during their final student teaching semester in their hometowns. Data collected through lesson plans, literature lists, video recordings, and semi-structured interviews and then inductively coded through holistic coding and subcoding (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). After pattern coding the subcodes and analyzing the data, the themes surrounding CSP showed that students believed CSP related to sociocultural and academic knowledge of students and the use of location and real life examples within the classroom. When analyzing MCL use as enactment of CSP, the themes of selecting MCL by content, academic abilities and student interests emerged. These findings all showed that participants needed greater instruction on the tenets of CSP in education preparation programs and modeling of practical teaching strategies, such as the use of MCL, to use in the classroom. The participants in this study were able to build connections with students, but unable to dig deeper into the cultural backgrounds, as they focused on student preferences and interests, and therefore were unable to select MCL as an enactment of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). The lack of knowledge of the foundational tenets of CSP and its enactment in the classroom were major findings from the data. Due to this, educator preparation programs need to provide
stronger instruction around diversity, cultural and equity pedagogies to equip future teachers for the diverse student population they will teach through their content and methods courses.

INDEX WORDS: Culturally sustaining pedagogy, Multicultural children’s literature, Preservice teachers, Teacher education, Educator preparation, Qualitative research, Case study
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
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DEDICATION

To all the educators out there helping others to feel empowered and seen in books… keep teaching – your students need you more than ever. To all the students who are looking to find themselves in books… keep reading – you are in there, just keep looking.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to extend a special thank you to all of my family and friends who have been with me on this journey. First, to my husband, PK, I could not have done this without you. Thank you for recognizing how important this was to me and for walking with me along this journey. Thank you for always being there to listen, reassure, and provide me with love and support when I needed it most. I love you. To my daughters, Emily and Olivia, I hope this shows you that if you put your mind to it, you can accomplish any task, no matter the size. Thank you for always believing in me and inspiring me to do this work. May there always be curiosity in your heart, and may you find the courage to chase it. I love you more. To my parents, George and Lisa, and my sister, Jennie, who have always supported my educational endeavors and set high expectations for me, thank you for believing in me in times when persistence was difficult and for encouraging me to keep going. I continue to grow and learn because of your examples and support. To my friends, thank you for always being there for with the encouraging words, the accountability, and for my favorite part, for the celebrations – both big and small. This road has been long, but oh so worth it. I am so thankful to have walked it with so many amazing family and friends by my side. We did it!

This dissertation would not have been possible without the tremendous efforts of my dissertation committee. First, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous support and guidance from my chair, Dr. Delores Liston. Her guidance and support helped me grow as a researcher and challenged my thinking and understanding of so many concepts about myself and the world. I would also like to thank my committee members. Thank you to Dr. Ming Fang He, who constantly provided me with extensive literature lists so I could keep learning and growing. Thank you to Dr. Peggy Shannon-Baker, for not only guiding my research methods, but always being available to meet and provide advice. Thank you to Dr. Sonia Janis for your extensive time and feedback on my work as a fellow practitioner. It continues to challenge my work as a teacher educator. Without the support from my entire committee, I would not be at this point in my educational career, so I thank each of you for your time and guidance.
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CHAPTER 1
CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY, MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN’S LITERATURE AND PRESERVICE TEACHERS

Within any educator preparation program (EPP), preservice teachers (PSTs) learn about content, pedagogy, and diversity. All three are critical for teachers to be effective and successful in school settings. The most difficult of all for PSTs is learning about diversity. PSTs must learn during their time in an EPP how to work with diverse populations and how to effectively create productive classrooms that embrace students from various cultural backgrounds. PSTs formulate their identities, learn about culture and asset and equity pedagogies, and how to develop a critique for injustices in education. While these three areas are a must for teachers to be effective, most often it is the part left behind or forgotten (Jacobs, 2018). You cannot teach what and who you do not know (Howard, 1999), and the research shows that many teachers, both in-service and preservice, struggle with getting to know their students and their backgrounds (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Jacobs, 2018; Lowenstein, 2009; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to better understand how PSTs comprehend culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and the use of multicultural children’s literature (MCL) in the elementary classroom by PSTs to engage the diverse elementary student population of their field experience classrooms after instruction from content courses and a senior seminar workshop. Children’s literature in this study will be defined as any text that is written or used to teach information or for the purpose of enjoyment and learning for children (Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Hintz, 2019; Reynolds, 2011, 2012). This includes, but is not limited to, trade books, textbooks, reading passages, poetry, readers theater and other forms of written drama (Reynolds, 2011). Multicultural children’s literature entails literature in which the experiences of minorities are represented in the text, illustrations, authors, and/or story elements (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). Engaging the diverse student population through MCL creates personal connections between PSTs and their students, encourages students to see themselves as valuable and worthy in the classroom through text, and develops appreciation and sustainability of cultures within the classroom as described by Paris
and Alim (2017). The use of MCL as a means of enacting culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) in the elementary classroom allows PSTs to foster environments of acceptance, appreciation, pride, and success for all students in their classrooms.

**Sociopolitical and Historical Contexts**

My study is valuable because it is occurring in a very controversial time in history. In 2020, the #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement grew and gave voice to those who have been systematically oppressed for many generations. The BLM movement has permeated into all parts of the country including the educational system, highlighting the forms of oppression that are occurring within the curriculum, administration, and school buildings (NEA, 2020). This call for an investigation of the oppression of Black students in schools creates a need for my study as well. Students of color deserve literature that reflects not only their skin color, but also their experiences, language, and traditions. As the National Education Association (2020) states, that while new and difficult, we have a responsibility to our students in regard to BLM to open doors to understanding our peers and learning more about each other. The BLM movement highlights the need for my study to analyze if students of color are being valued and highlighted through the literature selections of the PSTs placed in their classrooms.

Along with the BLM movement of 2020 also came the global pandemic known as Coronavirus, or COVID-19. This pandemic caused massive shutdowns across the world in commerce, education, and face-to-face communication for several months across the world. The sociopolitical implications of COVID-19 and the shutdowns are impacting us still causing a very different view of “normalcy.” The world had to stop and adjust to this new way of life. Education was no different. Educators had to stop and rethink everything they knew about how to teach students as they moved to virtual classrooms for remote learning (Kaden, 2020; Kennedy, 2020; USDOE, 2020b). This adjustment again is still happening at all levels of education. Prior to the shutdowns due to COVID-19, teachers who had left the classroom cited a lack of connection with diverse student populations (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Feng, 2005). The newly designed virtual learning environments only exacerbate this and make it more difficult for teachers to create meaningful, relevant learning experiences
for all students. The utilization of virtual learning due to COVID-19 highlighted the discrepancies of equitable materials and resources for students of color (Pitts et al., 2022). It is hard to create learning experiences that are engaging to diverse populations in a virtual environment when your marginalized students do not even have the abilities to log in to the virtual environment to participate (Esquivel et al., 2020; Lewis et al., 2021; Pitts et al., 2022). My study is valuable as our PSTs are entering into a newly imagined teaching environment, where classrooms and students are both face-to-face and virtual. The need to select literature that is culturally appropriate, sustaining, and accessible is more vital than ever in connecting with students in the different learning environments we are now finding ourselves in. In 2021, the divisive concepts debate in education began as a response to Delgado and Stefancic’s (2012) critical race theory practices in higher education and the K-12 setting. (Stitzlein, 2022). With many teachers feeling the stifling of their educational decisions, education once again found itself in a position with teacher shortages (Florido, 2021; LePage, 2021). Studying CSP in this current state adds to the dialogue as equity pedagogies such as CSP are being viewed differently due to these divisive concept statements and laws.

While MCL in the elementary classroom is a highly studied topic (Gere et al., 2009; Gibson & Parks, 2014; Haddix & Price-Dumas, 2013; Iwai, 2013; Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005), my study will add to the dialogue by providing several new perspectives to consider. Much of the research, as will be discussed in length in the literature review, focused on using the theoretical framework of Ladson-Billings’ (1995) work on CRP or Gay’s (2010/2018) work on CRT. My study will use the equity pedagogy framework of Paris and Alim (2017), CSP. Along with a new theoretical framework in which to view the use of MCL by PSTs, the timing and current situation of today’s educational systems and practices due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the BLM movement adds a new depth to this discussion. As Morrison (1992) stated, “American literature has been clearly the preserve of white male views, genius, and power ” (p. 5). As MCL is being published more and more a shift in those views is trying to occur. Now, more than ever, it is important that our PSTs are practicing how to incorporate diversity
through children’s literature in the classroom to continue to promote acceptance and appreciation for students of color.

My study explores PSTs’ understanding of CSP through their selection of MCL. Literacy and language are key content areas in academics and in child development, so it is important that preservice and in-service teachers are utilizing literature as a vehicle for culturally sustaining practices (Bishop, 1990; Brinson, 2012; Botelho, 2020; Hintz, 2019). According to Reynolds (2012), children’s literature helps shape students’ values and ideas of society and their role in it. The purposeful selection and use of MCL shows that representation is important for marginalized groups in the classroom (Swartz, 2020). As Kelly et al. (2020) stated, “All children deserve access to quality education. They also need books that reflect their identities and expand their perspectives” (p. 297). This study will explore if PSTs are selecting and using MCL in culturally sustaining ways in their field experience classrooms and will provide valuable insight that programs can use to improve their preparation of future teachers to have an asset mindset with culture.

**Description of the Study**

This study explores PSTs’ selection and use of MCL as a method to teach using CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). It is imperative students implement elements of an equity pedagogy, such as CSP in order to teach students and utilize a teaching tool such as literacy to do so effectively and meaningfully. While PSTs take courses on diversity that build on the foundational frameworks of Ladson-Billings’ (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) their ability to translate and apply this in their planning, teaching, and overall teaching philosophy falls short. In this dissertation, I focus specifically on the PSTs’ understanding of an equity classroom pedagogy and their ability to select texts for the diverse cultures in their classrooms. My research question for this dissertation study is: How do preservice teachers understand culturally sustaining pedagogy and select multicultural children’s literature for use in their field experience classrooms as a means of enacting CSP?

In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the key terms that are used throughout this dissertation study, my autobiographical roots and their importance to this study, the relevant background information
about my study including the background of the issue studied as well as higher education preparation programs as a whole, and the significance of my research.

**Clarification of Key Terms**

There are several key terms that are utilized throughout the study that can be open to interpretation. When referring to these key terms throughout, these definitions are those being referenced.

- **Preservice Teachers (PSTs):** Participants who are completing their final semester prior to graduation, often referred to as Student Teaching. Preservice teachers are completing a full time internship under the supervision of a classroom teacher in a K-5 classroom (PSC, 2022).

- **Multicultural Children’s Literature (MCL):** Multicultural literature will be defined as any text that is written or used to teach information or for the purpose of enjoyment and learning for children and connects to the sociocultural experiences and practices of marginalized students in order to validate their differences (Gilton, 2007; Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Hintz, 2019; Reynolds, 2011, 2012). The texts may include characters, authors, locations, and experiences connected to marginalized or underrepresented groups (Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Hintz, 2019; Reynolds, 2011, 2012).

- **Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP):** An equity pedagogy, moving beyond being asset focused, that seeks the sustainability of cultures within the classroom. As the founding theorists stated, the goal of CSP is “to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation” (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 1).

- **Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP):** An asset pedagogy focused on using cultural assets of students, primarily African American students, in teaching practices. As stated by founding theorist Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009), “uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (p. 19).

- **Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT):** An asset pedagogy focused on using the cultures of the student population in teaching practices. As stated by the founding theorist Geneva Gay (2018),
“Culturally responsive teaching can be defined 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. 36).

- **Funds of Knowledge**: According to González, Moll, and Amanti (2005), “funds of knowledge are generated through the social and labor history of families and communicated to others through the activities that constitute household life, including through the formation of social networks that are central to any household's functioning within its particular environments” (p. 18).

- **Culture**: Culture in this study is defined as a “holistic configuration of traits and values that shape members into viewing the world in a particular way” (González et al., 2005, p. 34), along with everyday life practices. Everyday life experiences and practices are included because they shape the culture of students as well (González, 2005).

- **Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)**: Programs at higher education institutions that sequence courses involving content and methods related to obtaining initial certification in different school years. For this study, elementary education is the primary focus, meaning that the courses focus on content and methods related to Pre-kindergarten (PK) to Fifth grade (PSC, 2022).

**Autobiographical Roots of Importance**

My reasoning for exploring this topic stems from my work in education as both a former elementary classroom teacher and a current clinical instructor at a teaching university in Southeast Georgia. As a former elementary classroom teacher, I can remember the excitement of selecting books to use for my instruction. These were books that I remembered from my childhood, books that I saw in the bookfair that piqued my interest or at the local bookstore that excited me, and finally books that I wanted to share with my students. From an outside view, this sounds like I was an enthusiastic teacher who made great choices for her students, but when analyzed with a critical eye, my focus was not on my students and their connections to the books, but rather my own - what I liked, what excited me, what I connected to, but not what connected to my students. Fast forward to my current role as a clinical instructor working with PSTs, and I am seeing very similar patterns in them as future teachers.
While reviewing lesson plans, observing instruction, and conferencing with PSTs, I see the same focus of self versus focus of students occurring. PSTs tend to select literature to be used in the classroom because of requirements and/or mandates, personal connection, or even personal comfort instead of considering the diverse population of students in their classroom. The interests, experiences, and funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005) that elementary students bring to the classroom daily are not being considered when making decisions about the types of children’s literature that is being used. According to González, Moll, and Amanti (2005), “funds of knowledge become cultural resources for teachers as they document their existence and bring them to bear on their work” (p. 19), and I was not seeing this in my own experiences. This pattern that I highlighted in my own classroom experience has continued in generations of young teachers and continues to be perpetuated in EPPs today. This study is necessary in that it explores an ever growing need in our EPPs, as well as K-12 classrooms, to provide education that encompasses a reflection of the students, not the teacher (Florian, 2017). Public school demographics have shifted over the past two decades and students of color who were once considered in the minority by population are now the opposite.

When speaking about the demographics of EPPs, public school students, and certified teachers, there is an overwhelming percentage of white females (NCES, 2022). I am a white female who was a certified teacher in the public school system and now teacher educator. It is important for me to acknowledge that my race provides me with privilege as a member of the dominant culture as a researcher in this study (Sleeter, 1995). Part of my passion for this study is my reflection of my pedagogy as a white female educator and my desire to change the narrative, do better to advocate for marginalized students in education, and helps PSTs to develop their cultural competence and empathy.

**Background Information**

Since 2018, students of color were the majority in numbers when compared to white students in public schools in the United States (NCES, 2022). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, white students were only 46% of the student population in 2020 (NCES, 2022). This statistic is projected to continue with white students accounting for approximately 43% in the year 2030 (NCES,
While no longer the minority according to numbers, students of color are still marginalized, underrepresented, and not provided with equitable access to resources as their white counterparts. This reality of inequity has been a long standing trend for students of color as Ladson-Billings (1995) noted over twenty-five years ago in her exploration of African American students in classrooms. When students are not viewed as equals of their white peers, expectations are not the same, therefore delivery of instruction, materials, and connections are not equitable, creating a limited learning environment in the classroom for students of color.

My awareness of this cyclical deficit of a lack of inclusion of diversity and student characteristics in children’s literature selections caused the pursuit of this study. From this, my research question, how do PSTs understand culturally sustaining pedagogy and select MCL for use in their field experience classrooms as a means of enacting CSP?, guides my exploration of PSTs in the elementary EPP in which I work. This EPP is located in a midsized university in a rural area of southeast Georgia. The closest major city is located an hour away. The school systems in which our PSTs participate in field experiences are in rural, low socioeconomic areas, and the majority are labeled as Title I schools (USDOE, 2016a, 2020a, 2022). The county in which our university is located mirrors the statistics of the United States in the diversity of public school student populations, with over 30% of the 2022 student body being white (DOE, 2016b). While the current K-12 student population is continuing to see an upward trend for students of color being the majority in the classroom, higher education institutions and colleges of education are seeing the opposite, the majority of PSTs remain overwhelmingly white.

Like many EPPs, our PST population is lacking in diversity. Our preservice teacher population, college wide, consists of approximately 70% of white females, and within the specified elementary program there are approximately 700 candidates of which over 70% are white females. While there is a rise in the diversity of PSTs in our program, the trend of EPPs as a whole remains predominantly white (Bazemore-Betrand & Porcher, 2020; Causey et al., 2000; Ingersoll et al., 2018; Morrell, 2010). This demographic highlights an area of concern with different racial backgrounds of those in the classroom. Research has shown that white preservice and in-service teachers struggle to make personal connections
with their classroom students of different cultural backgrounds (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Feng, 2005). This struggle translates in their interactions, communication, and instructional strategies. As Sleeter (1995) studied with her PSTs, we have to help our students acknowledge and recognize the power of whiteness and how it is viewed and felt in the classroom. Doing so allows us to begin conversations where we change the ways in which we teach PSTs to interact and instruct diverse populations, so it focuses on assets and enhances their classroom experience.

**Significance of the Study**

This problem is worthy of being studied because regardless of the countless number of studies that have been done on cultural responsiveness in the classroom, in-service teachers and PSTs continue to struggle with working with diverse student populations. Teacher shortages due to attrition and overall lack of interest in the educational field is a major problem facing the United States today. While there are many reasons that in-service teachers leave the profession within the first three to five years, a major one that many claim is a lack of preparedness to teach and support diverse students (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Feng, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education, the majority of educators in the United States are white females (NCES, 2021; USDOE, 2016b). Many PSTs struggle or are unable to connect with students of diverse backgrounds and therefore are unable to reach and teach them effectively because they have not been trained properly to understand how to do this (Florian, 2017; Sleeter, 2001). This inability is linked not only to the demographics of the preservice and in-service teaching population described above, but also to the training received from preparation programs across the country.

This study is valuable because it is still a crucial need for EPPs to better equip PSTs to understand equity pedagogies, such as CSP, and apply them in their teaching. The curriculum of EPPs across the country has been reviewed and revised over the last decade to address the criteria most implicative of teacher attrition (USDOE, 2016a, 2022). Under the Higher Education Act, EPPs are evaluated based on the effectiveness of their graduates, their graduates’ location of careers in high or low performing schools,
and retention of graduates in the profession after three years (USDOE, 2016a). EPPs had to revise courses to ensure they were meeting the needs of the teaching profession by including more opportunities for PSTs to learn effective instructional strategies, including an awareness of cultural differences in the classroom. According to Phillion and He (2004), they can do this through literary based narrative in multicultural education, focusing on language, culture, and identity. The program in which I work is no different and has created courses addressing cultural diversity and awareness, along with multicultural education. However, PSTs are still having a disconnect with the theory to practice aspects of utilizing cultural diversity in their teaching. Since CSP also focuses on creating a critical consciousness in students, this study will aid in understanding if PSTs comprehend how to advocate equity and justice within the classroom. By exploring this connection and instruction at the preservice level through my study, it can add to the conversation of how we prevent this struggle for the next generation of educators.

The use of MCL as a means of CSP is also significant to this study. While MCL is not a new concept in education, pointed use of it in EPPs and in the public school classroom needs further exploration. Rochman (1993) states that “books can make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building community; not with role models and literal recipes, not with noble messages about the human family, but with enthralling stories that make us imagine the lives of others” (p. 19). By researching its use as a means of CSP, we can further understand PSTs perceptions and use of them for creating community and learning about new cultures.

By utilizing a different theoretical framework other than CRP, which is what is commonly used in research studies like mine, combined with the continuing events of COVID, #Black Lives Matter, and the divisive concept laws, my study will provide a new discussion in the dialogue of PSTs’ understanding of CSP and the use of MCL. CSP allows us to continue the discussion of research on cultural responsiveness in the classroom but with a new perspective involving the sustainability of multiple cultures in the classroom and not just relevant, surface level connections as previous asset pedagogies have been interpreted (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017). The selection and use of multicultural literature as a method of CSP will allow this study to explore CSP with a particular aim in case study research. The
current trends of the #BlackLivesMatter movement and the Coronavirus-19 add a new dimension to education that will also provide valuable information in this field of research.

**Overview of Study**

In the following chapters, I will discuss my theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, data findings, discussion of findings, and final conclusions. For my theoretical framework, I will explore the foundations of CSP by outlining culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching and then explore the tenets of CSP. Following this, I will discuss the literature review focusing on PSTs understanding and use of CSP and PSTs understanding, selection, and use of MCL as an enactment of CSP. Exploring both of these is important as CSP is my theoretical framework by which I will be exploring, analyzing, and discussing my data points and MCL is the proposed vehicle my participants will be using to enact CSP in their classrooms. Following my theoretical framework discussions and literature review in chapter two, will be my methodology chapter that outlines my case study design in great detail. Chapters four and five will describe my findings and discussion based on the data collected from participants in the single case study. The study will end with the conclusion in chapter six with recommendations and final thoughts.
CHAPTER 2

CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY AND MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN’S LITERATURE: WHAT DO PRESERVICE TEACHERS KNOW AND DO WITH THESE?

In order for this study to explore preservice teachers (PSTs), culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), and multicultural children’s literature (MCL), I reviewed research in the two areas of CSP and MCL. Within both of these areas, I explore literature that defines and elaborates on the idea of both, the knowledge of PSTs in regard to each area, and finally the bridge of theory to practice as evidenced by PSTs. Through a review of literature on both topics, one can see the foundational aspects of CSP and MCL and their pedagogical implications and practices through PSTs. While the literature for both of these terms was explored, they are interconnected for this study. Employing a telescopic concept where CSP is the lens in which we frame and view the selection and use of MCL within the classroom is the intent of the study and analysis.

In this literature review, CSP will be examined as an extension of Ladson-Billings’ (1994/2009, 1995) and Gay’s (1994, 2010/2018) concepts of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT). This extending view of the asset and equity pedagogies is explored as a new way to view PSTs’ understanding of diversity in the classroom and pedagogical decisions that are utilized with cultural assets in mind. The pedagogical practice specified for this study is the selection and use of MCL. The literature review examines research studies about PSTs’ interactions with MCL in their field experiences/practicums. Researching one specific pedagogical strategy allows for a more in depth understanding of their abilities to put theory into practice in the elementary classroom setting.

**Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Theoretical Framework**

When discussing CSP, it is important to look at its foundation to understand its core values and tenets. By understanding the predecessors in this area of research, we can then discuss the relevance of using CSP for this study as opposed to other asset or equity pedagogies. While there are several pioneers in this area of research including Irvine (1990), Nieto (1991), Sleeter (1995), and Delpit (2006), I am narrowing my framework to focus on two particular theorists. With this, I review the works of Gloria
Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay in their respected fields, which focus on asset pedagogies. Since CSP is an extension of the work of these theorists, it is important to discuss their work and contributions first to understand the building of CSP by Paris and Alim and its tenets.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)**

One cannot discuss cultural relevance without the mention of Gloria Ladson-Billings. As one of the pioneer theorists in the study of culturally relevant pedagogies, Ladson-Billings first began her research in *Dreamkeepers* (1994/2009). Ladson-Billings’ (1994/2009, 1995) work laid a strong foundation for asset pedagogies that focused on the cultural assets of African American students in the classroom. She coined her theory, CRP, based on this research in *Dreamkeepers* (1994/2009). According to Ladson-Billings (1995), her theory addresses student achievement, assists in identity development, and develops critical perspectives in the classroom. According to Ladson-Billings (2021b), “teaching that focuses on advancing student learning, developing cultural competence, and fostering critical consciousness is the only practice that accurately represents what is meant by Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” (p. 351). Her study and work of CRP has become a foundational element in education, known by both in-service and PSTs alike.

CRP focuses on three major tenets that were evidenced in Ladson-Billings’ initial research project. Ladson-Billings (1995) discovered that in order to be culturally relevant, teachers must enact the three tenets which place emphasis on student achievement, an emphasis on cultural competence, and finally an emphasis on developing a sociopolitical and critical consciousness. The first tenet of student achievement brought light to the fact that high expectations should be set for all students. Ladson-Billings (1994/2009, 1995) cited that several classes with a majority of African American populations were not achieving well due to the presumed low abilities and teacher perception of the students. Teachers, who genuinely believe their students can succeed, build classrooms that focus on and celebrate student achievement at all levels (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The second tenet of cultural competence focuses on how students can succeed in the classroom setting while keeping their cultural integrity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Keeping cultural integrity refers to when teachers incorporate parts of the student’s cultural
identity into their teaching strategies to show students that their culture has a place in the classroom and holds value in learning. In Ladson-Billings (2009) words, “...students come to school with knowledge and that knowledge must be explored and utilized in order for students to become achievers” (p. 56). The final tenet of developing a critical consciousness involves teachers having background knowledge in identifying social inequities and in turn teaching students how to also recognize these (Ladson-Billings, 1995). According to Ladson-Billings (2009), it is “about questioning (and preparing students to question) the structural inequality, the racism, and the injustice that exist in society” (p. 140). These tenets are important to note because they are the building blocks for other asset pedagogies that focus on culture. In order for these tenets to be conducted in CRP, there are a few characteristics that need to occur during teaching.

In *Dreamkeepers* (1994/2009), Ladson-Billings discussed several characteristics that culturally relevant pedagogues must have to accurately implement the tenets of CRP. One characteristic of this framework is that those who practice CRP must understand conceptions of themselves, the students, and parents of their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009, 1995). Meaning that they have a solid understanding of culture and their identity first. Without having an awareness of culture and your personal bias, it is difficult to foster identity growth for your students in a positive way. Secondly, this notion of culture and understanding of identity can be used to help the students begin to develop and understand their identity and their background. Culturally relevant pedagogues also believe that all students can succeed. Students, regardless of class, gender, race, or other contexts, can all be successful, and CRP promotes strategies that highlight assets of the students and use them in the learning experiences of the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009).

A second characteristic of CRP is that social relations are developed through purposefully structured experiences in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009, 1995). Building off of knowing students and their assets and having a true belief that they can be successful is creating a community within the classroom that values and builds others up to achieve success (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009). Students are viewed and appreciated individually within the classroom but also feel connected and part of
the team within the classroom to help all grow and learn. A classroom implementing CRP has a teacher who is modeling how to connect with, appreciate, and encourage each other and the students are in turn practicing these same qualities with their peers. This shows that each student is valuable and has a self-worth that belongs to the group in the classroom setting. (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009).

A third, and final, characteristic of CRP involves the concept of knowledge. Ladson-Billings (1994/2009, 1995) described that knowledge is constantly evolving within the CRP classroom. Knowledge is socially constructed and therefore changes based on experiences and current information. Each student brings a form of knowledge to the classroom that is valuable in aiding in everyone’s understanding of topics taught in school (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009). Classrooms implementing CRP teach students the skills to critically challenge knowledge and resources used in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009, 1995). Helping students to see relevant life examples and how they apply them in the real world aids in their ability to question concepts of knowledge. Ladson-Billings also discussed how CRP helps students make connections with the community, their nation, and the world. Ladson-Billings (1994/2009) referenced an observation where a student in an elementary classroom only associated princesses with long blond hair and the teacher added an additional text about an African princess to help students understand that not all princesses are white women with blond hair. Modeling how to challenge the idea of what a princess or a main character looks, sounds, and acts like shows students how to question the knowledge they are given or that they have been told and know that their cultures are to be valued as well.

Teachers who practice CRP create classrooms that thrive on social experiences among students and teachers that facilitate academic success, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). By using these tenets in the classroom, teachers create inclusive classrooms that thrive off diversity and educate students about more than just the state mandated curriculum. It is about teaching students that their backgrounds matter and are important to the learning process in the classroom. Ladson-Billings (1994/2009) stated, [CRP] “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and
politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 20). Ladson-Billings' work paved the way for more asset pedagogies to emerge that had a culture focus.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)**

Another anchor theorist in asset pedagogies is Geneva Gay. Gay’s work began in multicultural education (1994) and from there her idea of culturally responsive theory took flight. She paralleled Ladson-Billings’ work with the formation of the CRT framework. Building on the idea of addressing and utilizing cultural assets in the classroom, Gay propelled the idea of CRT into mainstream education. For Gay (2010/2018),

Culturally responsive teaching can be defined 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. It teaches to and through the strength of these students. CRT is the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. (pp. 36-37)

CRT is a pedagogical framework that seeks to utilize the cultural assets of the students in the classroom to make learning engaging and relevant, while also teaching students critical questioning skills (Gay, 2010/2018). Gay (2010/2018) described her theory as validating, affirming, comprehensive, inclusive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, emancipatory, humanistic, normative, and ethical. Students are taught that they are important, what they have to say is important, and that it is important to question what others have to say as well. Teachers do this by getting to know their students and their interests, using knowledge of their backgrounds, experiences, and cultures in their planning, and helping students to understand the power structures in the world (Gay, 2010/2018).

Gay (2010/2018) outlined a set of tenets that guide CRT. The first tenet is that CRT is both validating and affirming. This means that those practicing CRT acknowledge cultural backgrounds and use them during planning instructional strategies, create positive home-school connections, and help students learn how to value their own cultures and those of others around them (Gay, 2010/2018). The second tenet is that CRT is multidimensional, meaning that it includes all aspects of planning, teaching,
managing, assessing, and interacting within the classroom (Gay, 2010/2018). Being purposeful in considering all the experiences that occur within the school day is important. According to Gay (2010/2018), CRT is empowering. This third tenet is about creating an environment where students know they are going to be successful, and the teacher creates activities and communities where success is encouraged and expected by all. It legitimizes their backgrounds, perspectives, and feelings in a space where sometimes they do not feel like they are valued. CRT is also transformative. Gay (2010/2018) cited this as the fourth tenet because it addresses the marginalization of the curriculum and also creates in students a critical eye for how this occurs in bigger contexts that they will have to deal with in the future.

The fifth tenet of CRT is that it is emancipatory (Gay, 2010/2018). This builds off the fourth tenet in that students know that the knowledge they learn enables them to be free of the dominating culture’s control through a critical consciousness (Gay, 2010/2018). Knowledge is power and this tenet focuses on how this power is liberating for marginalized students. The next tenet that Gay (2010/2018) identified is that CRT is humanistic. This tenet focuses on both the development of culture within the marginalized and dominant cultures of the classroom and how each can learn from the other at multiple levels, community, nationally, and globally. This is connected to Ladson-Billings (1995) and the discussion of the conception of knowledge and how students learn from one another and it in turn creates a more accepting perspective at many levels. The final tenet of Gay’s (2010/2018) CRT is that this type of teaching is normative and ethical. CRT looks to expose how traditional pedagogy used in classrooms is whitewashed and promoting the dominant, elite culture (Gay, 2010/2018). The tenets described all showcase that CRT focuses on helping students understand and appreciate their cultural backgrounds through learning activities planned around them. This, in turn, creates a community of encouragement and curiosity where students learn about each other’s cultures and respect them. Finally, this builds into equipping students with acknowledging the social injustices that occur for some but not others in education and how to begin transforming those inequities.

Culturally responsive teachers explore, appreciate, and use characteristics of students in their teaching. CRT requires teachers to (1) to have a thorough understanding of culture (values, norms,
history, styles, etc.), (2) to analyze and critique with the educational system of today, (3) to challenge educational systems and policies and create solutions for the marginalization, (4) to create knowledge that teaches about cultural diversity, (5) to believe that all children can succeed and strive to help them reach high expectations (Gay, 2010/2018).

Gay’s (2010/2018) concept of CRT has many strengths as a pedagogical framework as it is developed from Ladson-Billings’ foundational theory of CRP. It highlights the value of understanding and knowing culture. This includes the culture of the teacher and the students, and creating an accepting, appreciative, and respectful classroom community where achievement is expected for all students. Another strength is that this framework also focuses on social justice and advocacy for students who are marginalized by the educational system. Students of color, in particular, are not provided with equitable resources, curriculum, or passionate teachers who believe in them in many classrooms. CRT looks to change this and provide equitable opportunities for any student to learn and grow. Students are taught how to question knowledge and then question power, not only in school but to also apply this later in life. Gay (2010/2018) stated that the many terms used for culture-focused education are wide, but all generally aim to bring culture into the classroom through learning. Gay (2010/2018) wrote,

Although called by many different names, including culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive, the ideas about why it is important to make classroom instruction more consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students, and how this can be done, are vertically identical. Hereafter, they are referred to by my term of preference, culturally responsive pedagogy. It represents a compilation of ideas and explanations from a wide variety of scholars. Throughout this discussion, labels other than “culturally responsive” appear only when the scholars quoted directly use different terminology. (p. 36)

While these terms can be used interchangeably, each acknowledges, values, or extends these asset pedagogies in a new direction. CRP began the discussion of recognizing and accepting the culture of our students in the classroom, CRT builds on this through the focus of teaching practices that embrace the
multicultural dynamics of the students of the classroom, and this brings to light the next extension of CRP and CRT to Paris and Alim’s (2017) CSP, where the focus moves from just the recognition, acceptance, and engagement of culture in teaching to the sustainment of culture and not assimilation through all of those previous building blocks.

**Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP)**

CSP is an equity pedagogy developed by Paris and Alim based on critiques of asset pedagogies as they felt these were not enough. There were gaps between what the asset pedagogies and what Paris and Alim wanted to strive for in education for marginalized students. This work continued at the Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies Retreat in California in 2015 where ideas were written and revised based on collaboration with other pedagogues of similar values. CSP is a pedagogy that has evolved from a solid foundation of culture-focused asset pedagogies but has pushed to be more than that (Paris & Alim, 2017).

The goal of CSP is “to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation” (Alim & Paris, 2017, p. 1). CSP seeks out ways that culture and heritage can be celebrated, utilized, empowered, and sustained in the learning environment in the classroom, rather than disrupting it. CSP was developed based on critiques of asset pedagogies, in the implementation of those pedagogies, current developments for communities of color, and a deeper critical consciousness of the oppression of cultural traditions.

The work of Ladson-Billings’ (1995) CRP has become a foundational element in education, known by both in-service and PSTs alike. However, Ladson-Billings’ ideas of what CRP would be like in the classroom and the interpretation of those practicing it has been mismatched. She recognized that CSP is the next progressive step in helping students of color achieve success and developing a critical eye to the power struggles in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Ladson-Billings (2021a, 2021b) later acknowledged that CSP included more ethnicities and marginalized groups than her original focus of African American students for CRP. CSP focuses on the continual use of assets and critiques of power in the classroom to sustain cultures versus assimilation to the dominant cultural view or context. As Paris and Alim (2017) stated,
CSP - like all critical asset-based approaches, is at heart about survival - a survival we want to sustain through education- and about changing the conditions under which we live and work by opening up new and revitalizing community rooted ways of thinking about education beyond ‘the white gaze.’ (p. 13)

Much of the groundwork of asset pedagogy theorists, such as Ladson-Billings (1994/2009, 1995) and Gay (2010/2018), was studied during a time when students of color were considered the minorities within much of the public schools in the United States. However, beginning in 2014, that was no longer the case (Strauss, 2014). Even though students of color are no longer the minority in numbers nationally, they are still very much treated as such due to the elitist power of White supremacy. While numbers may have risen in the classroom demographics, that has not given voice or power to students of color in curricular decisions. CSP looks to change this and provide access to resources, education, and power to students of color. Paris and Alim (2017) stated, “CSP, then, is necessary to honor, value, and center the rich and varied practices of communities of color, and is a necessary pedagogy for helping shape access to power in a changing nation” (p. 6). This trend in demographics provides a time for change and for equity for students of color.

CSP also furthers the discussion of the evolution of practices of communities of color. Delpit (2006) stated, “It is important to remember that children are individuals and cannot be made to fit into any preconceived mold of how they are ‘supposed’ to act” (p. 167). CSP aims to highlight how all communities of color are not the same and that communities of color evolve over time. What was once a cultural practice a decade ago, may or may not be the same today. The idea that communities of color have changed over time since asset and equity pedagogies first became an area of exploration is crucial to continuing to understand the strengths of students of color and developing their critical consciousness (Paris & Alim, 2017). It is vital for PSTs to understand and use current, contemporary practices in their instruction to empower and sustain the cultures of the students in the classroom.

CSP focuses on the value of culture, how culture is an asset and not a deficit, and how culture in the classroom makes learning relevant and well rounded (Paris & Alim, 2017). The definition of culture
has gone through many refinements over the years and is defined differently among disciplines and theorists (González, 2005). Botelho (2015) pointed out that “culture is sociopolitically and historically constructed, and not biologically determined. Power relations exist at its center. Static and bounded notions of culture essentialize cultural groups by reducing them to attributes associated with their identities” (p. 270). Keeping this in mind, the definition of culture that will be used is developed from Botelho (2015) and González, Moll, and Amanti’s (2005) work with *Funds of Knowledge*. Culture is defined as a “holistic configuration of traits and values that shape members into viewing the world in a particular way” (González et al., 2005, p. 34), along with everyday life practices. These everyday experiences and practices shape the culture of students as well (González et al., 2005). While long-standing traditions, history, and heritage shape the culture of a person, so do the everyday activities and practices that they experience. Culture is not a one size fits all frame, but rather individualized based on a person’s lived experiences. These are the funds of knowledge that students bring to the classroom (Roe, 2019). These are their cultural assets that CSP demands be integrated into all parts of their education. Kinloch (2017) stated,

> CSP acknowledges the complexities of identities, lived conditions, and performances of resistance that are a part of the schooling experiences of many students of color. It facilitates and centers student learning, and it encourages teachers to have an unbreakable commitment to educational equity and cultural, racial, and social justice. (p. 38)

This requires teachers to put away stereotypes of students based on race and focus on their lived experiences and how these are used in the classroom to promote success, justice, and appreciation of their cultural backgrounds and that of others.

CSP is grounded in four tenets that all revolve around the idea of using the school as a place of sustainment for culture rather than an eradication of it (Paris & Alim, 2017). The first tenet of CSP acknowledges and engages students and teachers with multiculturalism and multilingualism. Teachers must acknowledge and help students to see and understand the pluralism of culture within their classroom setting. According to Bucholtz et al. (2017), “language and culture are not only resources to be sustained
but are themselves forms of sustenance that nurture the identities of young people of color” (p. 54). This also involves understanding that there are cultural shifts among generations and to be open to these evolutions. Culture is not stagnant; it is always evolving and growing based on the community of people, current events and trends, and daily life experiences (Brayboy et al., 2012; Grande et al., 2015; Paris, 2012; San Pedro, 2017).

Another tenet of CSP, which is built off the tenets of Ladson-Billings’ (1995) theory of CRP, is to develop and deepen their critical consciousness in sociocultural contexts, while maintaining a high achievement mindset for all students in the classroom. CSP builds on the idea that children need to develop their cultural competence in the classroom in order to carry on the ability to critically think as adults (Paris & Alim, 2017). Students need to be taught how to identify and analyze power relations in the world around them. A piece of this is also having that achievement mindset so that students know that someone believes that they are capable of more than they may have thought or been told. Teachers embody this by having high expectations for their students to succeed while teaching them the necessary skills to understand their cultural context and the power relationships around them.

The third tenet demands that a teacher and any other agent of change (3) “disrupts dominant narratives that superficially affirm differences and diversities while maintaining the status quo” (Kinloch, 2017, as cited in Paris & Alim, pp. 28-29). This is important because, if not, the dominant voice is only heard and diminishes, versus sustains, the narratives of the minority. By disrupting “the white gaze” (Morrison, 1992, p.5), we are allowing those that have been silenced to speak loudly and proudly in order to continue a conversation for years to come through conversation and community (Kinloch, 2017). Alim and Paris (2017) stated, “CSP asks us to reimagine schools as sites where diverse, heterogeneous practices are not only valued but sustained” (p. 3), and that must be how teachers become those agents of change.

The final tenet of CSP involves creating a learning environment that is welcoming, communal, and supportive of the students’ diversity in identity and ability. “We want to create conditions where children of color can both survive and thrive” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 13). This involves not only creating
a positive learning environment in the classroom but also including resources and interactions that provide them with opportunities for power and critique. As Kinloch (2017) stated, “CSP points to a necessary extension of CRP that seeks to sustain the literacy, heritage, and community practices of youth of color” (p. 29). This tenet also speaks to the sustainability of culture through fluidity and evolution (Paris & Alim, 2017). Practices and trends within cultures are constantly changing based on current events and community, so in order to have an environment that is welcoming, communal, and supportive, teachers must recognize these changes and adjust accordingly in their classrooms. Learning must be accessible and applicable to all students.

The selection of using CSP as the theoretical framework of this study is one that was analyzed with care. Since CRP and CRT are heavily rooted in education as known asset pedagogies, they are most commonly utilized in research studies. Utilizing CSP as the theoretical framework for my study provides me with the opportunity to study how PSTs are impacting students in their classrooms in a different way that moves beyond the tenets of an asset pedagogy. This study will use CSP and specifically multicultural children’s literature as means of enacting it in the classroom. While researching previous and current studies on PSTs and their selection and use of literature in the classroom, CSP was not a framework frequently used. CSP also is an extension of the tenets of CRP and charges that the experiences of school be used to sustain cultures and carry them forward in students’ lives. The use of MCL in the classroom is an excellent vehicle to explore when thinking of this extension. CSP will provide additional dialogue at a very relevant time when the exploration of culture and diversity is being questioned in education.

**Multicultural Children’s Literature as a Means of Enacting CSP**

For this study, I explored how MCL can be used as a strategy to enact CSP in the field experience classroom. I relate CSP and MCL with a telescope analogy in this study. CSP is the lens in which I am viewing MCL. These are not separate entities in this study, but rather CSP is the framework in which I am analyzing the selection and use of MCL by the PSTs. However, in order to best understand both, I wanted to provide context and foundational terminology and research through the literature review for the theoretical framework as well as the resource being analyzed as an enactment of CSP.
MCL, as defined in chapter one, is any text that is written or used to teach information or for the purpose of enjoyment and learning for children and connects to the sociocultural experiences and practices of marginalized students in order to validate their differences (Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Hintz, 2019; Reynolds, 2011, 2012). The texts may include characters, authors, locations, and experiences connected to marginalized or underrepresented groups (Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Hintz, 2019; Reynolds, 2011, 2012). These are books that provide opportunities for students to learn more about perceptions, traditions, and experiences of others.

Bishop (1990) has inspired many, including myself, to continue studying this major gap in equitable literature. Brinson (2012) noted that students need to see literature that represents their backgrounds, beliefs, races, and genders. These are what are referred to as mirror and window books (Bishop, 1990; Brinson, 2012; Botelho, 2020; Glazier & Seo, 2005). Brinson (2012), drawing on Bishop’s (1990) work, discussed,

Mirror books are those that reflect and expand upon the culture of the child reading the book, thus reinforcing the culture of that child. Window books, in contrast, offer the child an opportunity to learn about other cultures by providing a window into new experiences (p. 30).

Botelho (2020) also includes another element to the windows and mirrors analogy with door texts. Basing it off Bishop’s (1990) terminology of a “sliding glass door”, Botelho (2020) emphasized this is a means for students to “step into worlds created by the words and/or images in the text” (p. 27). This idea helps students to learn cultural empathy and cultural competence, which is a goal of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). Multicultural literature provides a voice for the minorities in the classroom setting, which allows for empowerment and understanding (Bishop, 1990; Botelho, 2020; Glazier & Seo, 2005). However, Brinson’s (2012) study showed that educators do not have the knowledge of MCL in order to be able to identify books that are culturally diverse.

It is important to understand this in order to explore how it can be used as a means of enacting CSP in the study. In the next part of the chapter, CSP is explored in the literature review first to provide
information about PSTs understanding and enactment of it through the use of MCL in the second part of
the literature review.

**Review of Research on Preservice Teachers and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

The concept of studying PSTs and CRP is a very saturated area of research. There are numerous
studies that focus on CRP, CRT, PSTs, and every content area they teach in the K-12 classroom. While
sorting through several searches revolving around PSTs, CRP and CRT, teacher candidates and preservice
teachers, field experiences, and literature, I find many articles on literacy in different content areas and a
focus on MCL as well. From here, I narrow my search to include literature such as trade books used
during instruction in the PK-12 grade classroom to provide a wide lens of knowledge on the subject. For
this study, I focus on PSTs in K-5 or elementary classrooms but knowing the context of PSTs’
experiences across all public schooling is important for a solid foundation for this study. From this
analysis, the first part of the literature review focuses on the connection between PSTs and CSP with the
three common patterns of a solid grasp of CSP, a knowledge of the sociocultural context of the student
population, and the bridge from theory to practice of CSP emerging. For the second part of the literature
review, I review a similar pattern but focus on the MCL aspect through PSTs grasp of MCL, a knowledge
of how to select MCL, and finally bridging the gap from theory to practice of selecting MCL. Reviewing
both of these key elements, it provides a well-rounded review of the research around my research
question of: How do preservice teachers understand culturally sustaining pedagogy and select
multicultural children’s literature for use in their field experience classrooms as a means of enacting CSP?

**Grasp of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy**

During the review of research on the research question for this study, this particular theme
emerged consistently among several of the articles analyzed. Studying PSTs knowledge of any of the
asset or equity pedagogies, namely CRP, CRT, and CSP for example, is a very saturated area of research.
There is much research on CRP in EPPs and CRT in EPPs (Iwai, 2013; Laman et al., 2018; Morales et al.,
2020; Nganga, 2015). CSP is an underutilized equity pedagogy in research on educator preparation
programs (Nash et al., 2022; Paris, 2016; Senyshyn & Martinelli, 2021). Some of this may be due to the
fact that CRP and CRT have been around and are commonly adopted by the states’ Department of Education nationwide (Ladson-Billings, 2014). However, among all of the studies, one common theme among all of the studies is that researchers noted that PSTs had a severe lack of understanding and knowledge of asset pedagogies. The vast majority of the PSTs who are in educator preparation programs (EPPs) and public schools across the United States are not representative of the demographics of the student populations they teach (Hayes & Juárez, 2012; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Lowenstein, 2009; Marx & Pecina, 2016; Puzio et al., 2017). It is no wonder that they have a lack of knowledge and preparedness to understand and engage in asset or equity pedagogies such as CRP, CRT, or CSP. According to Grant and Goddard (2009), PSTs shy away from difficult conversations with their students regarding contextual factors, such as race, social class, and injustices that those who are minorities encounter. Several articles noted that PSTs struggled to understand the complexities involved with identity, race, gender, class, and other contextual factors along with how asset pedagogies use these contextual factors within the classroom in positive ways (Edwards & Kuhlman, 2007; Jacobs, 2018; Pauly et al., 2019). If anything, PSTs portray a general or surface level knowledge of CRP and CRT and how that is displayed in the classroom (Iwai, 2013). Preparation programs do not provide students with the in-depth understanding and reflection needed to fully develop the foundations of CRP, CRT or CSP within PSTs (Jacobs, 2018; Lehman, 2017; Mburu, 2022). PSTs have a difficult time recognizing, planning for, and teaching cultures different than their own (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Grant & Goddard, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009). These differing cultural backgrounds and experiences make it difficult for students to learn and achieve (Marx & Pecina, 2016). Creating a solid foundational knowledge of culture, asset pedagogy, and sustainability of cultures is critical for PSTs to effectively interact and teach students of color and understand their identity and role in the classroom to promote equity and inclusion.

A major emphasis among these studies is the discussion of the demographics among PSTs and the student populations in K-12 public schools. The average demographic of a PST is white, middle class, and female while the student population is becoming vastly more diverse as students of color are now the majority in classrooms (Hayes & Juárez, 2012; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Lowenstein, 2009; Marx & Pecina,
2016; Nganga, 2015; Phillion & He, 2004; Puzio et al., 2017). Phillion and He (2004), among other researchers, noted that while student diversity continues to increase in the classroom, diversity of the teacher population continues to decrease (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Peters et al., 2018; Vinlove, 2017). This lack of diversity of the teaching population makes it incredibly difficult for white, middle class teachers to consider the funds of knowledge their diverse students bring to the classroom (Phillion & He, 2004). Hayes & Juárez (2012) concurred that this mismatch of demographics leads to PSTs being underprepared to teach students of color. Several researchers noted that this under preparedness can come from PSTs attitudes and beliefs about their ability to teach diverse students and can come from the undergraduate classes taken by PSTs that specifically prepare students for this (Laman et al., 2018; Morales-Morales et al., 2020; Nash et al., 2021; Nganga, 2015). Peters et al. (2018) echoed this through their research of PSTs in Professional Development Schools, where they discovered that coursework that specifically modeled how to implement CSP in the classroom helped students to feel more confident in doing so in the classroom. A lack of understanding of CSP in teacher preparation courses transfers into their ability to connect with and engage with CSP in the practicum setting as the research shows.

Levine-Rasky (2000) and Lowenstein (2009) discussed specifically the issue of whiteness among PSTs in undergraduate programs in the United States. Levine-Rasky (2000) discovered that the PSTs involved in her study did not reflect on their own whiteness or how this translates into their teaching practices in the classroom. PSTs did not see themselves as a member of a dominant group and initially were defensive of this label (Levine-Rasky, 2000). Sleeter (2017) noted that working with white preservice teachers on controversial or comfortable discussions such as race or theories like critical race can be difficult and therefore create disconnect in understanding foundational concepts of asset or equity pedagogies. Counteractively, Borrero et al. (2016) and Maddamsetti (2020) noted that PSTs of color had stronger understandings of the core concepts of asset and equity pedagogies of CRP and CSP. Both noted in their studies that the backgrounds and experiences of PSTs of color aided in their ability to grasp these asset and equity pedagogies in EPPs. This adds to the conversations of whiteness being a factor to the face that PSTs often do not have a solid understanding or grasp of CSP. Lowenstein (2009) researched
how whiteness affects the PSTs’ perceptions of diversity. She explored how PSTs tend to see diversity in a negative light, or through a deficit thinking lens (Lowenstein, 2009). This deficit mindset again shows a lack of understanding of CSP, which embodies the funds of knowledge, or asset thinking lens (González et al., 2005; Paris & Alim, 2017). Phillion & He’s (2004) narrative inquiry noted that the ‘heart of teaching’ is creating conversations that engage teachers and students in conversations where learning about the background, cultures, and experiences of the other. As they researched, these conversations are not actively occurring in the classroom and thus PSTs are having a lack of connection and understanding of their student body.

**Knowledge of the Student Sociocultural Context**

Many articles cited a lack of knowledge about the students in the classroom as a reason PSTs struggled with teaching in the classroom. The inability to recognize, understand, and value contextual factors of students creates an ineffective learning environment in the classroom (Casciola, 2014; Lehman, 2017; Jacobs, 2018; Lowenstein, 2009; Pauly et al., 2019). The majority of PSTs and in-service teachers are white, middle-class, and female, while the public school classroom demographics are far more diverse (Paris, 2016; Jacobs, 2018; Yuan, 2018; NCES, 2021). Research shows that teachers, in-service and preservice, claim a disconnect between themselves and their students (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Jacobs, 2018; Lowenstein, 2009; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This disconnect makes it challenging for PSTs to also understand and implement CSP’s core tenets in the classroom (Casciola, 2014; Ramirez et al., 2016; Yuan, 2018).

As noted earlier, students of color continue to trend upwards in the demographic of the public school classroom (NCES, 2021). According to Yuan (2018), “language and cultural diversity is enriching the demographic variety in the student population, at the same time, it also challenges teachers’ instructional methods and effectiveness” (p. 10). Teachers, both in-service and preservice, lack the training on how to learn about the diverse populations they teach and therefore struggle to relate and create meaningful learning moments for their students (Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Lowenstein (2009) also discussed that PSTs tend to rely on stereotypes as their means of understanding
diverse students in the class. Much of this is due to the fact that PSTs do not feel they have the time or resources to get to know the students in their classrooms (Puzio et al., 2017). When PSTs are engaged with their students, they begin to switch their attitudes, which have been in a deficit mindset to an asset mindset, and change the notion of stereotypes (Barnes, 2020; Laman et al., 2018). They begin to combine their knowledge of students, knowledge of CSP, and can plan in meaningful ways for the diverse students in the classroom.

The literature reviewed also noted that at times PSTs can feel intimidated or anxious about getting to know their students (Barnes, 2020; Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019). These feelings are shown through the lack of conversations or connections PSTs initiate with the students (Barnes, 2020; Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019). PSTs are very new in the classroom during their field experiences, so they feel underprepared for navigating uncomfortable discussions with students as they begin to open up and get to know more about them (Bazemore-Bertrand & Handsfield, 2019). It was also noted that EPPs need to provide PSTs with ways to learn more about individual students in order to ease this concern and discomfort they may have (Frye et al., 2010; Gao & Mager, 2011; Gere et al., 2009; Siwatu, 2011). Coupling this inability to learn and connect with the students in the classroom with a lack of knowledge about CSP causes PSTs to retreat further away from developing relationships with students and not being able to get to know and utilize their assets in the classroom.

**The Bridge of the Theory of Asset and Equity Pedagogies to Practice in the Classroom**

Frequently noted by teacher educators across the board, PSTs lack the ability to move theory to practice within the public school setting (Jacobs, 2018; Lee & Herner-Patnode, 2010; Nganga, 2015). This ‘bridging of the gap’ is frequently studied within clinical practice research and in CRP. Jacobs (2018) cited that, “To truly prepare teachers to engage in CRP practices in their classrooms early-career teachers need not only to learn about these theoretical tenets but also incorporate them into their own beliefs, actions, and approaches in the classroom” (p. 1541). EPPs need to be proactive by engaging in theory in courses on campus then purposefully placing PSTs in field experiences that allow them to engage in these practices with diverse students (Clark & Andreasen, 2021). Placing a high level of
importance on the field experience portion reflecting the practices learned on campus is key to bridging this gap (Osipova, & Lao, 2022). Knowledge of equity pedagogies, one being CSP, is not enough in this case, students must be able to apply that knowledge in both planning and teaching, for some studies specifically using literature in the classroom (Edwards & Kuhlman, 2007; Laman et al., 2018). It is vital that PSTs apply an equity perspective, such as CSP, when selecting literature for use in the classroom. McCullough (2013) stated, “Culturally relevant literature has the potential for students to make connections between their lived world and the world of the text to develop their interpretations by using their lived experiences to mediate the comprehension process” (p. 421). Research shows that students are missing opportunities for effective CRP, CRT, or CSP implementation, particularly through literature to be more effective in their teaching.

Ramirez et al. (2016) also noted that while EPPs are key to helping students bridge the gap between theory and practice, it is oftentimes hard to see modeled in their field experiences. Caraballo (2017) discussed the need to raise critical awareness for both educators and PSTs alike in order to continue to connect theories learned on campus with practices in the classroom. Casciola (2014) described culturally responsive coaching as a method for teacher educators to continue to help guide students toward using CRT in their field experience classrooms and beyond. While each of these studies emphasized the importance of bridging the gap, along with strategies that could assist in this, it is still an area of concern in the literature around CSP.

**Where Does This Study Fit?**

Based on the research noted in this section of the literature review on PSTs and their knowledge of CSP, knowledge of social contexts for their students, and the implementation of CSP in the field experiences classroom, my study will address these three specific areas through the implementation of pointed instruction on CSP and how that is used to implement CSP in the field experience classroom in the PSTs’ planning and teaching. A workshop conducted by the researcher for all student teachers will provide participants with knowledge and strategies on CSP and its implementation in the elementary classroom. The unit of study in the Internship II course will provide students with the opportunity to
collect data on contextual information of their schools and use these for planning the unit of study. The students will then use this data to select a list of at least 10 pieces of children’s literature to be used in their unit of study. The children’s literature in this list is then used in the lesson plans of the unit of study. Each of the areas in the first part of the literature review, CSP, contextual knowledge of students, and bridging the gap of theory of practice are all considered in the design of the study and the data points for collection in the methodology.

Review of Research on Preservice Teachers and Multicultural Children’s Literature

Grasp of Multicultural Children’s Literature

It is important to discuss the specific area of MCL for this literature review and study. Iwai (2013) stated, “multicultural literature is valued in education especially in this global society and with the increases in the population of diverse students” (p. 189). However, according to Gopalakrishnan (2011), this type of children’s literature is not commonly used in the classroom unless it is for individual student enjoyment or specific holidays or months of the year that celebrate diversity (p. 7-8). Many factors contribute to this lack of usage including the fact that people of color were not widely or positively represented in children’s literature until the 1960s (Botelho, 2015). Iwai (2013) studied PSTs thoughts on multicultural literature. The PSTs in Iwai’s study cited that they did not have a clear definition of multicultural literature, little exposure to it in their youth or EPP, and saw its importance once purposefully exposed to it (Iwai, 2013).

Howlett et al. (2017) described their introduction and use of MCL in their EPP by integrating MCL into their literacy methods courses. Providing their PSTs with pointed education on what MCL is and how to use it in the classroom through modeling different strategies helped their PSTs to have a better understanding of what MCL is and how it can be used. Howlett et al. (2017) cited that the PSTs had a different appreciation and understanding for MCL after their study as compared to before. Casto (2020) cited that the most popular strategy EPPs teach PSTs to use when using MCL in the classroom is reading responses. Multiple studies cited this strategy used in EPPs with PSTs in different initial certification areas such as elementary education, middle grades, and English education PSTs (Gibson & Parks, 2014;
Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013; Jetton & Savage-Davis, 2005). Studying how EPPs are teaching PSTs to use MCL in the classroom did not have as many search results as this is still a newer area of research.

Gere et al. (2009) discovered in their research of PSTs and CRP that multicultural literature can have both positive and negative effects on students in the classroom citing, “multicultural literature helps shape perspectives on race and culture, while others suggest it generates student resistance” (p. 5). Jimenez (2014) echoed this resistance by noting in her study that PSTs’ responses in the coursework of the EPP reflected a resistance to literature outside of their own. This aligns as well with the understanding that PSTs feel uncomfortable in creating conversations around controversial topics related to culture, diversity, and privilege (Casto 2020; Gibson & Parks, 2014; Glover & Stover, 2011). This is interesting to consider both perspectives, however, research overall describes the benefits of MCL in the classroom for both PSTs and students alike.

**Ability to Select MCL for Classrooms**

One area that many cited in their work is PSTs inability to select literature that met the needs of a culturally responsive curriculum (Bennett et al., 2018; Brinson, 2012; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Iwai, 2013; Jacobs, 2018). According to Gopalakrishnan (2011), children’s literature is widely used in the K-12 classroom to explore and engage students with many of the language arts components and content knowledge of different topics. Since multicultural literature can help to facilitate understanding of other cultures and perspectives, it is imperative that PSTs learn how to select and utilize them in their teaching (Gere et al., 2009). EPPs must have courses designed to have PSTs engage and learn how to use children’s literature effectively in the classroom (Gopalakrishnan, 2011).

Hartsfield and Kimmel (2021) studied preservice teachers’ perceptions of banned books in classrooms during graduate preservice teacher courses and why they would or would not select them for their use in the classroom. Several noted that they did not want to use them based topics they discussed such as gender, relationships, sexuality, or negative perceptions of families (Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2021). In order to help students, move past these biases, Hartsfield and Kimmel (2021) developed seven principles for selecting children’s books, including curriculum support, student interests, developmental
appropriateness, merit, accuracy, and diverse perspectives. Moorhouse (2020) developed a checklist for selection of texts for English Language Learners. These overlapped the work of Hartsfield and Kimmel (2021) including developmental appropriateness, student interests, and diverse perspectives. Having a checklist was beneficial for the preservice teachers in these studies.

The use of literature shows a disconnect between PSTs and their students because PSTs would select books that they related to but did not connect with the students in the class because of the differences in their backgrounds (Bennett et al., 2018; Christ & Sharma, 2018). Gere et al. (2009) noted that often white dominant texts are selected because it avoids controversy or uncomfortable discussions and situations for the teachers. Selecting texts that are meaningful to the diverse students in the classroom is critical in creating a culturally responsive environment (Bennett et al., 2018; Edwards & Kuhlman, 2007). Nganga (2015) noted, “Familiarity with the needs, perceptions, and optimum learning environments for all students influences teachers’ selections of instructional resources” (p. 3). Books that mirror identities and backgrounds in the classroom engage students more and create meaningful and sustaining knowledge (Christ & Sharma, 2018).

**Bridge of Theory to Practice**

Nganga (2015) stated, “Using multicultural children’s literature is a powerful tool to honor students’ cultural backgrounds and to foster cross-cultural understanding” (p. 4). We know this is a powerful tool based on the research cited in this review as well as the teacher preparation courses completed on campus, however, there is a disconnect between the information learned in classes on campus and the implementation of the practice in the field experiences. PSTs lack the ability to select effective mirror and window books in their teaching based on the research explored in this literature review. This is because of the issues cited above through the lens of CSP with the lack of knowledge on the context of students, equity pedagogies, implementation of those, and also through the lens of MCL with the lack of exposure to mirror or window texts (Grant & Goddard, 2009). Naturally, there is also a disconnect on how to use MCL in the classroom as a means of CSP.
PSTs have the opportunity to engage students in meaningful, critical discussions on culture and acceptance, and MCL provides an avenue for this. By selecting texts that are culturally relevant to the students in the class, PSTs open the doors to authentic conversations and exposure of experiences and perspectives beyond their own (Ramirez et al., 2016). Howell et al. (2017) provided students with not only education on what MCL is, but also how to purposefully choose it and use it in the classroom. They did this by modeling instructional strategies using MCL with the PSTs in their EPP (Howell et al., 2017). PSTs were exposed to read alouds, literature circles, and discussion topics related to the cultural themes in the selected MCL (Howell et al., 2017).

Christ and Sharma (2018) discussed in their research that PSTs need to see the value in using multicultural literature, purposefully select it based on the identities and cultures of the classroom and develop dialogue surrounding the multicultural text in order to provide the students with a meaningful opportunity to engage with multicultural literature and their peers (p. 69). Adding to that, Lawrence et al. (2017) studied the use of multicultural literature for comprehension, as well as student exposure to diverse texts which shows that these types of texts appeal to the tenets of making learning accessible and having high expectations for all students to be able to learn and perform in the classroom (Paris & Alim, 2014). Multiple sources of research are showing however that PSTs are finding difficulty in completing these steps while planning and teaching in their field experience classrooms as found in this literature review.

**How Does This Study Fit?**

Based on the research noted in this section of the literature review on PSTs and their knowledge of MCL, selection of MCL for their students, and the implementation of MCL in the field experiences classroom, my study will address these three specific areas through the implementation of pointed instruction the selection and use of MCL in relation to CSP and how its implementation in the field experience classroom in the PSTs’ planning in a 5 day unit of study and teaching of those plans.

In this study, all student teachers, including my participants, will participate in a workshop that will provide information and strategies on identification, selection, and use of MCL. This will be done in conjunction with CSP as a strategy of utilization in the classroom. In order to ensure that students
understand how to select and use MCL for CSP based on the context of their school sites. A list of children’s literature pieces will be provided in the unit study and then used during the 5 day unit during their teaching. Each of the areas in the second part of this literature review, knowledge of MCL, selection of MCL, and bridging the gap of theory of practice on its use in the classroom are all considered in the design of the study and help to the data points for collection in the methodology.

**Gaps in Research**

While the areas of CRP and CRT, EPPs, and PSTs are heavily saturated with several studies, there are limitations that I noticed in the literature review. Of the articles reviewed for both areas of CSP and MCL, the majority of them used either CRP or CRT as their theoretical framework. While Ladson-Billings’ (1995) CRP and Gay’s (2010/2018) CRT are similar in nature, Paris and Alim’s (2017) framework of CSP is moving beyond those tenets into the degree of sustainability. This study would provide more information in utilizing CSP as a theoretical framework and also how CSP impacts EPPs and PSTs. As mentioned in the theoretical framework section, one of the key characteristics of CSP is acknowledging that cultural practices and perspectives are always changing, thus our perspectives and frameworks to analyze research also need to evolve and change with the time.

Another gap in the research that I noted during my exploration was the question or phenomenon of preservice, along with in-service, teachers and the lack of cultural knowledge about diverse students in the classroom. This is a common occurrence noted in many articles that I explored, and no solutions have been found for this situation. This is a gap because the conversation is far from being over. The articles described several strategies that were utilized to try to bridge this gap, but the area of literacy is an area that needs more exploration to help teachers connect with their students. The strategy of using MCL adds to this area of research because literature can open many windows and sliding glass doors to understanding and connecting with the diverse populations of our current public school elementary classrooms (Bishop, 1990; Brinson, 2012; Botelho, 2020).

Christ and Sharma (2018) noted that research on PSTs, literature selections, and the use of them in a way that is culturally relevant is very limited. Casto (2020) echoed this by only truly finding a
minimal number of studies that analyzed how EPPs are teaching PSTs how to use MCL in the classroom. Lawrence et al. (2017) indicated their implications that future studies need to focus on how PSTs select multicultural texts based on their findings. My study will aid in filling this gap within the research by examining literature selection, as Lawrence et al. (2017) discussed, and its use in the classroom in a culturally sustaining way. Literature provides a vehicle for PSTs to engage students in conversations on equity and injustices in meaningful and relatable ways through the use of CSP (Casciola, 2014; Grant & Goddard, 2009; Laman at al., 2018). Bennett et al. (2018) confirmed that literature provides conversation opportunities among teachers and students to discuss contextual factors such as race, gender, social class, and culture within the classroom. These social justice conversations are one of the pieces that is lacking in the research and can be explored through the use of CSP. Jacobs (2018) confirmed, “We need to look across presumed boundaries to explore the untapped potential that thoughtful integrations across CRP and pedagogies focused on practice offer to prepare and teach learners to embrace and engage in the complicated and nuanced realities of professional practice” (p. 1544). There is a need to explore how PSTs are utilizing CSP in their teaching using literature to better learn how EPPs can equip PSTs for their future classrooms and to build cultural competence and empathy in our PSTs.

**Exemplary Studies**

Many of the studies researched included similar data sources and methods of collection. The majority of the articles are qualitatively based and used field notes, reflections from PSTs, unit plans and/or lesson plans, journals, interviews, artifacts from class projects or assignments and so forth. Some studies used a mixed methods approach to quantify survey data along with other data sources that were coded and then qualitatively analyzed. I drew upon the qualitative research articles for additional guidance and support for my methodology. There were two articles in particular that drew attention because their content and methods were similar in nature to the intent for research for this study. Christ and Sharma (2018) researched PSTs and their literature selection and/or literacy instruction. The PSTs taught literacy lessons in a K-8 environment diverse after-school program (Christ & Sharma, 2018). Their study addresses “What challenges and successes do preservice teachers experience when selecting
culturally relevant (mirror) texts and when engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy over time in a service learning literacy teaching methods course?” (Christ & Sharma, 2018, p. 56). The researchers collected several data sources including discussion posts, unit plans and lesson plans, and self-reflections (Christ & Sharma, 2018). The researchers used multiple rounds of emergent coding to identify themes and categories within the multiple data sources (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). Their work reflects the themes identified in the literature review discussion above. One limitation that Christ and Sharma (2018) pointed out was the lack of use of videos to add another data source of CRT in the classroom through PSTs teaching using literature. Not only will my study utilize a different perspective with CSP, but it will address the limitations noted by Christ and Sharma (2018) by using video observations of the PSTs teaching as part of the interview.

Jacobs (2018) studied how culture and CRP work within an urban field site. Her study is of particular interest to me because the intent is to study PSTs during their student teaching experience. Jacobs (2018) studied two questions but the one that is of most interest to this study is, “How do teacher candidates describe and engage in actualizing CRP into classroom practices during their student teaching experiences?” (p. 1522). Jacobs’s (2018) study reviewed graduate students in their endeavor to implement CRP in their respective classrooms and used field notes, recordings, and interviews as part of the data sources for this study. While her study is not focused on undergraduate students, it still is a good model for how to implement a study of this nature with undergraduates using a case study design and the types of data sources, such as recordings and interviews, necessary for its intent. Findings were described using a narrative format by telling the stories of the students and their understandings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Jacobs, 2018). My study will reflect some of the features in Jacobs (2018) such as participants in student teaching, the case study design, and the data sources of recordings and interviews.

**Conclusions of the Literature Review**

Based on the extensive review of the literature involving CSP, PSTs and MCL, my study will create dialogue that furthers CSP as a theoretical framework and explores if the utilization of MCL is an effective vehicle for creating community among teachers and diverse students. The area of CRT and CRP
is heavily studied, but the theoretical framework of CSP needs more attention in research. The sustainability of culture through different instructional strategies deserves additional dialogue as well. Based on the research discussed, PSTs are understanding the role and importance of CSP, but not progressing in the follow through of utilizing it to enhance classroom experiences for their students. MCL would be an effective option to assist PSTs in this endeavor as they are still struggling as indicated in this literature review.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY: CSP, MCL, AND PSTS: A SINGLE CASE STUDY DESIGN

Studying preservice teachers’ (PSTs) understanding of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and use of multicultural children’s literature (MCL) is a critical area of research for today’s higher education. The purpose of this study was to better understand how PSTs understand CSP and how to use MCL as a means of enacting CSP. The two areas of CSP and MCL provide knowledge on not only the theory of CSP but also the practice of it through MCL. The research question explored was: How do preservice teachers understand culturally sustaining pedagogy and select multicultural children’s literature for use in their field experience classrooms as a means of enacting CSP?

The theoretical framework for this study was CSP, as theorized by Paris and Alim (2017). In this qualitative study, a single case study method (Yin, 2018) was utilized. Using the theoretical framework of CSP allowed for new dialogue about methods that can be used in educator preparation programs (EPP) to better prepare PSTs to implement CSP in the classroom. MCL (Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Hintz, 2019; Reynolds, 2011, 2012) is used as a means of CSP in K-5 field experiences. MCL provided the method or strategy PSTs can utilize in order to enact CSP in the classroom. In this chapter, a brief overview of the theoretical framework of the study, CSP, is discussed and then the methodology of single case study is heavily explored. Following the discussion of the case study design, I outlined the data sources, collection methods, and analysis strategies that will be utilized in this case study.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilized CSP as its theoretical framework. Research in CSP is continually becoming more popular as a theoretical framework when discussing equity pedagogy. CSP was founded on the ideas of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017), which has three major tenets of student achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. As CRP has evolved in research and practice, new equity pedagogies have developed, such as that of Paris and Alim’s (2017) CSP. According to Paris and Alim (2017), CSP aims “to perpetuate and foster - to sustain - linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social
transformation” (p. 1). CSP is the next step beyond Ladson-Billings’ framework of CRP because it contradicts the misinterpretation that CRP has become amongst in-service teachers and teacher educators today (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Certain tenets of CRP have been practiced while others have been ignored. Teachers typically tend to celebrate and use the varying cultures of the classroom but fail to develop the critical consciousness that is a crucial part of Ladson-Billings’ framework of CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2014; Martell & Stevens, 2019). According to Martell and Stevens (2019), “CSP demands that teachers build their classrooms around their students’ cultures, identities, and communities” (p. 1). MCL is one way that PSTs can implement CSP in their field experience classrooms.

Teachers can use MCL to make relevant connections with students, create a critical eye, and highlight race/ethnicity within different contexts. All of these embody the ideas behind CSP, thus making MCL a natural instructional tool for PSTs to use when teaching in their field experience classrooms. Children’s literature is widely used in the K-5 classroom for preservice and in-service teachers to teach the English/Language Arts standards (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). When using children’s literature in the classroom, preservice and in-service teachers must be purposeful in selecting texts that are meaningful to the diverse students in the classroom (Bennett et al., 2018; Edwards & Kuhlman, 2007). Being a teacher who understands and uses CSP in the classroom will help guide the PSTs into purposeful selection of MCL that reflects the cultures and diversity in the classroom.

**Case Study Research**

Based on the literature review and research questions for this study, case study research was used to explore PSTs, CSP, and the use of MCL as a way to recognize and sustain culture in the classroom. Case study served as the best design for this study because of its in-depth focus on a contemporary phenomenon in the real world (Yin, 2018). Historically, case studies date back informally to the mid-1900s, however, they became formally recognized in the 1980s as a qualitative design and have since gained popularity among qualitative researchers (Grauer, 2012; Platt, 1992; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

According to Yin (2018), “case study research comprises an all-encompassing mode of inquiry, with its own logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis” (p. 16). The
definition and recognition of case study has evolved to become a main mode of exploration in social science research and was utilized for this study.

In order for case study research to be effective and rigorous, there must be several data points for data triangulation. This triangulation of data sources allowed the researched to verify the coding and themes which strengthens the findings of the case study (Amankwaa, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Multiple data sources also increase the trustworthiness of the case study by highlighting several connections between different data and the original intention of the research (Yin, 2018). This study included multiple data points to strengthen the findings of the study and provided reliability.

While reviewing literature regarding CSP and MCL, case studies were commonly used in this type of research (Caraballo, 2017; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Jacobs, 2018; Martell & Stevens, 2019; Pauly et al., 2019). Christ and Sharma (2018) researched PSTs and their literature selection used for instruction. Their research study utilized PSTs enrolled in literacy methods courses that had explicit instruction on CRP, modeling of literature selections, planning and implementation of literature in an elementary afterschool program, and reflection analysis by PSTs and/or peers (Christ & Sharma, 2018). Multiple data sources included online discussion boards, unit and lesson plans, and self-reflections and were coded by identifying first the challenges of the PSTs with using CSP and MCL, then emergent coding was used to identify patterns within the challenges (Christ & Sharma 2018). The same coding was utilized for identifying successes then using emergent coding to identify themes within those (Christ & Sharma 2018). The multiple data points and rounds of coding brought validity to their study because themes occurred across the multiple data points which could easily be connected.

Martell and Stevens (2019) applied CSP to practicing social studies teachers in their multiple-case study. Their study explored ten in-service teachers in diverse social studies classrooms through the data sources of interviews, observations, artifacts, and self-reflection (Martell & Stevens, 2019). Martell and Stevens (2019) examined individual cases and then completed cross-case analysis with the data sources (Yin, 2018). Using inductive coding, researchers together and individually coded data to identify
the major common themes from each participant’s data and through cross-case analysis (Martell & Stevens, 2019). These methodological approaches to coding allowed for deep exploration of the data and rich findings for guidance for future CSP studies.

Pauly et al. (2019), utilized CSP, case study and arts integration to research PSTs’ practices. Pauly et al. (2019) explored thirteen PSTs at the student teaching level by collecting interviews, course assignments, and observation field notes as data sources. Data analysis was completed through constant comparative analysis of the raw data (Pauly et al. 2019). The study serves as an example in their data collection sources and methods, but their analysis stance of grounded theory does not apply to this study. These three studies further justify the use of my theoretical framework of CSP and my research design of case study as being appropriate decisions. Each brings additional insight and guidance through the selection of data sources, analysis methods, and potential limitations and implications of this study.

While case study research is regarded as a form of inquiry in qualitative research, it does have critiques. These critiques include discussions of the rigor of the study, generalizing the case, and the unmanageable amount of time and effort (Yin, 2018). However, the nature of the research question best aligns with case study. In order to negate some of these critiques, purposeful selection of data sources, use of video recordings, and the characteristics used to bound the case helped. The study used a variety of data sources as well in order to not generalize the case or lessen the rigor. There were multiple methods for data collection during fieldwork including artifacts, observations, interviews, documentation, archived records, and field notes (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). Each type of data collected was added to the case study by providing multiple opportunities for research. While analysis of fieldwork can be time consuming and overwhelming for the researcher, it further strengthened the rigor of the case study.

**Research of the Higher Education Institution and EPP**

The participants for this study were PSTs enrolled in the Elementary Education program in the College of Education at a mid-sized, research two university in the southeastern United States. The College of Education of this selected institution is recognized as a prominent EPP. Students enrolled in the selected Elementary Education program were required to complete four blocks, or semesters, of
content, which are a sequence of courses with field experiences embedded in each semester. Prior to enrollment in the program, students take a semester of introductory education courses as well. The final semester is the Internship II, or Student Teaching semester, to satisfy one of the Professional Standards Commission’s (PSC) requirements for certification in our state (PSC, 2020).

During the four semesters in the Elementary Education program at the institution in this study, the PSTs were required to take a rigorous course load consisting of content and methods courses. These classes in their program of study included different subject area knowledge and methods, general curriculum development, and diversity courses (see Appendix A for program of study course list). Prior to admittance into the program, the students took a semester of introductory courses about topics around education. In that semester, courses were an introduction into what education is, how learning occurs, and specifically critical awareness and diversity in the classroom. The diversity courses were taken during the semester before admission through two different courses and also during their second semester in the program through a cultural diversity and English as a Second Language course. Built into the subject area methods courses were modules relating to diversity as these are in the course objectives, the College of Education’s mission statement, and the Elementary Education program’s mission and outcomes. Each semester there was also a field experience component included to provide the PSTs with the opportunity of turning theories learned in their courses on campus into practice in the elementary classrooms with K-5 students. The PSTs in their final semester registered for Student Teaching and Senior Seminar. The seminar course included trainings for PSTs and a senior symposium. The senior symposium included keynote speakers, a job fair, and workshops for the PSTs to attend about topics such as job interview skills, management, building relationships between teachers and parents, and instructional strategies with mathematics and literacy.

The Office of Field Experiences arranged field placements with partnership schools for all PSTs in the Elementary Education program. During each semester they spent several hours in the field and continued to build to increase this time. During the first block, they spent approximately 50 hours in a field placement classroom, each semester that time increased to 600 hours during their final semester of
student teaching. The field experiences were requested to provide students with diverse experiences in several different counties in the surrounding 70 mile radius from campus during the four semesters in the program. During the final semesters, PSTs could opt to return to their home counties and complete student teaching there. Each county had a unique set of demographics for socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and accessibility to resources that helped our students to have a better understanding of the diverse populations of students that could potentially teach.

**Role of the Researcher**

During this study, I was a teacher educator in the Elementary education program at a research two university in the southeast. As a teacher educator, I taught courses on curriculum and literacy, and I primarily supervised PSTs in field practicums during the first semesters in both the junior and senior year, or block 2 and 4 in Appendix A. I have either taught or supervised four of the five participants in this study during previous coursework or practicums, however none of which occurred during the study or their final semester. I did not hold any authority over the participants during the duration of the study as I was not a supervisor grading their work or performance.

**Senior Symposium**

During the senior symposium in the final semester, I conducted a workshop on utilizing literature to connect with diverse student populations. This senior symposium includes keynote speakers, a job fair, and workshop sessions on various topics relevant to PSTs and their future classrooms. There are PSTs across Elementary, Middle Grades, and Secondary at the symposium with some workshops pertaining to specific grade level bands or general ideas applicable to all K-12 grades. I conducted a workshop that defined and described CSP, enactments of it in the classroom and specifically addressed MCL as an enactment of CSP.

During this workshop the PSTs attended, we defined and discussed diversity and culturally sustaining pedagogy and discussed how literature can be a tool for use in the classroom. This provided students with background knowledge of diversity, CSP, and the specific strategy of literacy enactment. By providing the foundational knowledge of CSP first, students could then see how MCL is connected to
it. Then we defined and discussed multicultural literature and the PSTs engaged with literature by selecting books. I utilized Bishop’s (1990) mirrors and windows analogy as the starting point for discussing how to select multicultural literature for themselves as educators but also for the students in their placement classrooms. This then led into discussions of how we can use MCL as an enactment of CSP through its selection and use in the classroom. The presentation and hands-on application allowed students to practice the enactment of CSP through MCL with their classroom demographics in mind.

**Participant Profiles**

The demographics for the College of Education and in the Elementary Education program at this university mirrored those of the demographics of public schools in the United States (NCES, 2022). Nationally PSTs and in-service teachers were predominantly Caucasian and female (about 80% in the population) in the public school setting. In the College of Education where this study takes place, the demographics showed the total population of students was majority Caucasian and the other remainder were people of color. The faculty within this EPP were also predominately white and female like the student population. The Elementary Education program numbers were similar, with a slight increase in the number of white PSTs.

I saw these demographics reflected in the classes that I taught and the PSTs that I supervised. The majority of the PSTs who were white females were placed in diverse student populated schools in order for them to experience diversity. As seen evidenced in Appendix B, some of the participants in this study were reflective of that, while others were not. The participants in this study were all traditional student teachers, meaning they were in their early twenties and progressed into college right after high school. The participants have taken all of the same courses in the EPP as well. The participants in this study were one bi-racial female, one African American female, and three Caucasian females (see table 1). All of the participants also completed their student teaching experiences in their home county school systems. In this EPP, we called these PSTs Return to Home (RTH) student teachers. In order to be an RTH student teacher, they had to apply and be selected based on your GPA along with recommendations from faculty
and teachers. Since each of the students within this study were Return to Home PSTs, this common
denominator created the bound for this single case study (Yin, 2018).

The K-5 schools the PSTs were placed in for their practicum experience showed a great deal of
diversity among their characteristics, including the number of free/reduced lunches at each site and the
racial/ethnic demographics (DOE, 2022a, 2022b). Exposure to schools with diverse student populations is
a critical component in teacher education and considered with each field placement as these are the
populations PSTs will work with when they are in-service teachers.

Table 1

*Participant and School Information and Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Information</th>
<th>Participant Information &amp; Demographics</th>
<th>Return to Home Location, Student Demographics, &amp; Placement Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alice</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Student Teacher</td>
<td>Location: Northeast of the state capital city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bi-racial: Caucasian and African American</td>
<td>Ethnic Makeup: Latino/Latinx, African American and Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return to Home Preservice Teacher with Classroom Supervision</td>
<td>First Grade, all subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit of Study on Mathematics – Measurement Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Makayla</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Student Teacher</td>
<td>Location: North of the state capital city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Ethnic Makeup: Asian, Latino/Latinx, and Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return to Home preservice teacher with Classroom Supervision</td>
<td>Fifth Grade, Math &amp; Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit of Study on English Language Arts – Text Structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patricia</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Student Teacher</td>
<td>Location: A coastal region of the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Ethnic Makeup: Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return to Home preservice teacher with Classroom Supervisor</td>
<td>First Grade, all subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit of Study on Science – Part of a Plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sally</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Student Teacher</td>
<td>Location: Northwestern area of the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Ethnic Makeup: Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return to Home preservice teacher with Classroom Supervisor</td>
<td>Fourth Grade, English Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit of Study on English Language Arts &amp; Social Studies – Capitalization and the American Revolutionary War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shelby</strong></td>
<td>Traditional Student Teacher</td>
<td>Location: Southeastern area of the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>Ethnic Makeup: Latino/Latinx and African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Return to Home preservice teacher with no Classroom Supervisor</td>
<td>Fifth Grade, all subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unit of Study on Mathematics – Multiplication using Standard Algorithm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Methods

For this study, data collection methods included lesson plans and unit artifacts, video observations of teaching, and semi-structured interviews with the participants. The lesson plans and written artifacts were taken from the unit of study conducted during the semester the study occurred in. The video observations of teaching were a focus for the semi-structured interviews with the participants. Participants recorded their teaching, examined when and where CSP and MCL was utilized, then semi-structured interviews were conducted with participant and researcher using evidence selected by the participants. This study was conducted over a four month period from August to November during the fall semester of 2022 (see Appendix C for timeline of study).

Participants for this study were student teachers in their final semester of their clinical practice in a K-5 classroom. In order to solicit participants, the researcher sent an email to all PSTs registered for the Internship II (Student Teaching) course requesting participants for the study through a Qualtrics survey. During the fall semester of 2022, there were 53 students enrolled in the course across all sections of Student Teaching. Those who indicated interest in participating were contacted via email to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. Once confirmed, the potential participants filled out a quick questionnaire through Qualtrics providing personal information such as gender, race, field experience location, and again confirmation of their interest in the study and willingness to participate and understanding of the parameters within the study. During the semi-structured interviews completed toward the end of data collection, the researcher once again asked all who were participating of their willingness to participate to make sure everyone who volunteered was still willing and comfortable.

Unit of Study Planning Artifacts

During the student teaching experience, PSTs submitted lessons and a unit of study that was taught in their field experience classrooms. The lesson plans were submitted weekly by content area and included objectives, teaching strategies, materials, and differentiation, among other components (See Appendix B for template). These weekly lessons provided evidence of the participants’ preparation for CSP and use of MCL in their classrooms. The weekly lessons were not evaluated by the researcher but
were viewed as a data source for use of CSP and MCL. The participants submitted the lesson plans to the researcher that aligned with the video recordings so the researcher could explore the connection between planning and utilizing CSP and MCL in the classroom.

The culminating project for PSTs in student teaching was a unit of study over a standard appropriate for their grade level and classroom content. This unit of study was a multi-week project that involved planning lessons that spanned across five days of instruction, compiling materials and literature lists (see Appendix C) and recording and reflecting on teaching and assessment. The unit was a key component to show effectiveness for PSTs and was a valuable data source for the researcher. By utilizing this artifact, the researcher put no additional stress on the participants, while being provided with rich data that contributed to the research focus of CSP and MCL. These artifacts were analyzed using holistic coding then subcoding among each data set first then pattern coded among the subcodes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016; Yin, 2018). The emerging themes from the first round of holistic coding provided larger codes for chunks while the subcoding provided details and created connections for pattern coding for broad themes across all data points (Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016). The emerging themes from the pattern coding will provide broad themes across all data points (Saldaña, 2016).

**Video Recordings of PSTs’ teaching**

Observations of the PSTs teaching were evaluated by their current university supervisor during the student teaching experience at the higher education institution in this study. These types of observations are key in case study research to provide more information in the real life settings (Yin, 2018). For this study, observations of video recordings were utilized as an additional data source (Yin, 2018). As the researcher, I was not a direct supervisor of any of the participants. This ensured that participants did not feel coerced or threatened by my role as researcher during their teaching or observation. While there was the predicament of time and location of these observations of the participants and the researcher being in multiple locations at once (Yin, 2018), therefore, video recordings were used for observation purposes. Consented video recordings were used in order to negate the logistical concerns of participant-observation and were already embedded into the Internship II course as
virtual observations were more prevalent due to COVID-19 restrictions. This did not disrupt or harm the participants during the Student Teaching experience. Using a recording also helped to eliminate the bias of any researcher or participant on the events that occurred (Yin, 2018). According to Erickson (2006), video recordings have long been used in observing classroom interactions and teaching. The video recordings were viewed and used as part of the additional data source of participant interviews. Anecdotal notes were taken during the viewing of the observation video by the researcher, as well as the participant in order to prepare additional talking points for the semi-structured interview.

The researcher had the participants watch their recordings prior to the interview and select two to three times during the video, with time stamps, of where they felt they utilized CSP and/or MCL during the lesson. Roschelle (2000) pointed out to remember that video recordings capture a limited amount of what is to be seen in the classroom so having students elaborate on what is seen in the video will be important in truly understanding what is occurring. DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2012) furthered this by agreeing and indicating that multiple data sources need to be analyzed along with the video observations in order to provide a true picture of what is being studied. This study used video recordings, planning artifacts, and the participant interviews in order to prevent a limited perspective.

**Participant Interviews**

The participants engaged in debriefings with their supervisors after each lesson observation. Since the researcher was not the supervisor of the participants the element of reflexivity was lessened as no grades are subjected to the responses (Yin, 2018). These debriefs, or interviews, allowed the researcher and participant to discuss CSP and practices in the classroom through the use of MCL. Interviews for this study occurred through Zoom sessions to provide a neutral environment for the participants to freely express their thoughts. These Zoom interviews were recorded using no video and closed captioning was utilized to help with transcriptions as the recordings only had audio. The recorded video method of interviewing is called video elicitation (Henry & Fetters, 2021; Shannon-Baker & Edwards, 2018). Haynes-Brown and Shannon-Baker (2021) further examined video elicitation and stated that it “allows researchers to identify inconsistencies, raise participants’ awareness of implicit beliefs that underpin
actions, and examine how participants explain inconsistencies between their beliefs and actions” (p. 2). Doing so allowed for more honest responses and conversations around CSP and MCL for the study.

Prior to the Zoom interview, the researcher asked the participant to have two to three time stamps identified for the semi-structured interview that highlighted where CSP and MCL is utilized in their teaching video. These time stamps were used as talking points between the researcher and the participant, as well as the following questions:

- In your own words, how do you define culturally sustaining pedagogy?
- How did you utilize culturally sustaining pedagogy during the planning process?
- How did you utilize culturally sustaining pedagogy during the teaching process?
- In your own words, how do you define multicultural children’s literature?
- How did you select the children’s literature for this lesson?
- How did you engage the diverse student population using the literature?
- Is there anything related to culturally sustaining pedagogy or multicultural children’s literature that you would like to add?

The questions were given to the participants prior to the interview to allow them the opportunity to reflect on each and provide more thoughtful responses. The participant-identified timestamps and the questions above represented both components of the research question and offered opportunities for the participant to express their thoughts about CSP and MCL. While the questions above were identified prior to the interview, the interview still flowed as a fluid conversation based on the responses of the participant and the time stamps they self-identified prior to the interview (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Yin, 2018).

Recordings and transcriptions through Zoom during this study were analyzed by the researcher. Zoom recordings had closed captioning transcription and aided the researcher in transcribing the interview to accurately capture the participants’ words.
Data Coding and Analysis

For this study, the data collected was analyzed using inductive analysis as no pre-set codes were created based on the research question (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This inductive analysis occurred across all data including the literature lists, lesson plans, video recording notes, and audio recordings from the interviews. Each participant’s data was de-identified and assigned a pseudonym. Some of the participants in the study self-selected their pseudonyms while others preferred to be randomly assigned one. When approaching the data, I divided the research question into two parts focusing on culturally sustaining pedagogy and the use of multicultural literature as an enactment of CSP and utilized those during the coding and analysis process. I selected to manually code my data by assigning each participant a specific color, printing their data sets on that color, then used chart paper to begin to code the data sets.

With the amount and variety of data collected for the study, the use of holistic coding was first employed (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016). This allowed me to assign larger codes to chunks of data during the inductive analysis and begin to make sense of what the data was showing. Across the data sets these holistic codes were ordered by the two parts of the research question and organized on chart paper for further analysis. For the second round of analysis, I employed subcoding to further analyze the data (Saldaña, 2016). By utilizing subcoding, I was able to break down the larger chunk codes assigned during the first round of coding to uncover the patterns that were emerging from the data. This allowed me to see a more detailed view of the larger codes from the first round (Saldaña, 2016). Following this second round of coding, I employed pattern coding among the subcodes as I analyzed the data and patterns emerged (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016).

Methodological Limitations or Challenges of the Study

This study was not without limitations given the nature of the participants and role of the researcher also as a previous instructor, the demographics of the participants and the researcher, the topic being studied, and the potential number of participants in this case study. Each of these limitations were considered below and how this may have impacted the potential of the study.
The first limitation in this study was the relationship between the participants and the researcher. I have instructed and supervised many of the participants in other courses within the program. These former students may still have felt the desire to respond to questions during the interviews in specific ways due to our prior experiences together. This influence due to my authority in past courses may have impacted the participants ability to be vulnerable and respond honestly to their understanding of CSP and the utilization of it within their field experience classrooms. With that being said, I also think that the participants who have had me in the past and have had positive experiences may have been more open and honest in their responses due to our relationship.

Another limitation of the study was the demographics of the researcher. First, I acknowledged as a researcher my own personal biases and my Whiteness and what that brought to the analysis and findings. As a white, Middle-class female, I have to be aware of my positionality and the implications this brought to the analysis and reporting of data. I was also mindful of this during the data collection process as my experiences as a white woman are different from those of people of color. What I interpreted from the lesson plans, video recordings, and our interview may have been different than what my participants actually intended because of these differences. I acknowledged my biases during the study and remained ethical to provide valid and true findings based on the data analysis by utilizing critical feedback from a fellow researcher. I drew upon Sleeter’s (1995) reflective study on her work as a white female in this area to help me position myself in a way that did not hinder the true thoughts of the PSTs and findings of this study as well. It is important to note that while the majority of participants shared similar demographics, each participant brought a unique perspective based on their sociocultural backgrounds, so it was important to recognize these in the data sources and during analysis.

A third limitation to the study was the very nature of what is being studied. Often topics regarding culture, diversity, and racial/ethnic differences can feel uncomfortable for people because they are often worried they are going to say the wrong thing (Hayes & Juárez, 2012; Lee & Dallman, 2008; Miller & Owusus-Ansah, 2016). These can be intimidating topics for PSTs to discuss in their EPPs and with instructors because they may feel that they need to respond in certain ways (Miller & Owusus-Ansah,
2016). With that being said, the limitation mentioned before of the demographics of the participants and the researcher may have had counter effect and made students feel more at ease discussing this subject matter.

The fourth limitation to this study was the number of participants who volunteered to participate in the study. This study had five participants out of the potential PST group of fifty-three. The PSTs were solicited through email at the beginning of the Fall semester. PSTs may have been unwilling to volunteer based on previous experiences with me as an instructor or viewing their participation as additional work beyond that of a normal PST. However, the requirements for participation in this study had minimal, if any, additional work beyond that of the norm for the Internship II student teachers. All PSTs had to participate in creating units of study, record their teachings, and debrief on their lessons with their supervisor as part of the course structure in place. The interview with me was technically the only additional work on the participant as I was not their supervisor. Along with the number of participants, a limitation was also having all the participants who did consent to the study submit all of the required materials for the study as PSTs were already submitting multiple data components. This may have also impacted on the number of data sets available for analysis.

**Methodological Significance of the Study**

With the high numbers of white female preservice and in-service teachers and the growing diversity of the student population in K-5 public schools, the use of CSP in the classroom has become so much more important for teachers to make learning meaningful and relevant for their students. Using MCL is a tool that PSTs can use to help them make personal and cultural connections with the diverse learners in their field experience classrooms that helps the students to feel connected and valued. By combining CSP with MCL, this was a new way to explore how pre-service teachers can do this.

This study utilized video recordings in its data collection methods, which was a newer data source that was being utilized (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Haynes-Brown & Shannon-Baker, 2021). The research examples that guided this study mentioned in their limitations that the lack of videos from the classroom experience would be necessary as the next step in this dialogue (Christ & Sharma, 2018). The
use of videos along with the other data sources of planning artifacts, like the lesson plans and literature lists, and the interviews, which included discussions on the videos, furthered the exploration of CSP in elementary classrooms and specifically how to select and utilize MCL to do so.

This study served as new dialogue in the conversation of how to best prepare PSTs in EPPs to better support diverse student populations. Research has shown that in-service teachers, particularly those within the first five years of teaching, discussed how they struggle to connect with their students (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Feng, 2005). This was a concerning fact given that the diversity of the student population continued to grow while the teaching population remained vastly white dominated. Work must be done in EPPs, so PSTs gain the skills before entering into the education workforce. According to Paris and Alim (2017), “CSP, then, is necessary to honor, value, and center the rich and varied practices of communities of color, and is a necessary pedagogy for helping shape access to power in a changing nation” (p. 6). MCL is a way that teachers can begin practicing CSP in order to connect with their students. When PSTs engage in CSP, they are becoming more aware of their ability to motivate students, make relevant connections, and develop a critical awareness of literature.

**Connection to Curriculum Studies**

This study holds a significant place in the field of Curriculum Studies. The heart of the study was looking at how social justice and advocacy play out in EPPs and public schools and how this is seen through PSTs and their teaching in field experiences in public schools. The tenets of CSP speak to developing critical skills in our K-5 public school students and our PSTs, who will become their in-service teachers. Developing a solid understanding of the tenets of CSP and ways that can be utilized in the classroom such a MCL in our PSTs aids in our future generations of teachers becoming more critical of the power relations that occur at multiple levels of education, starting first within themselves and expanding outwards through their classrooms, schools, and so on. Utilizing a single case study allows for an in-depth study into this phenomenon and provides additional dialogue in the use of data sources such as video recordings to highlight opportunities for equity in education. By learning about CSP and MCL,
PSTs will then understand how to advocate for resources, such as MCL, for their students so that the classroom can have equitable access to learning experiences and materials for marginalized student populations.

**Trustworthiness of the Study**

In order to provide rigor for this study, I ensured trustworthiness through its credibility, transferability, and confirmability. In order to ensure trustworthiness, I employed several strategies to address the rigor of the study. I collected a range of data through my sources. Coding and analyzing the multiple data sources of interviews, written artifacts, and video recordings provided trustworthiness to this study. The multiple data sources ensured that the true findings were uncovered and not skewed by only limited sources of data (Yin, 2018). Triangulation of the data was used to verify the coding and themes that emerged in order to ensure trustworthiness (Amankwaa, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The use of peer debriefing with an external colleague to ensure biases were not skewing the findings and coding (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) added to the credibility of the study as well. Finally, I also used heavy participant voices within the findings to guide my discussion. The interview responses from the participants were heavily drawn upon to ensure credibility to the study.

This study can be transferable to other studies involving similar situations. The thick descriptions collected from the multiple data sources also provides other researchers opportunities to understand the factors of the study that can be transferred to other settings (Amankwaa, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). One factor that does make this study unique is the fact that the participants were all PSTs participating in a Return To Home placement compared to those assigned to school systems in which they were not familiar with. In order to address confirmability, the inclusion of raw data within the findings, detailed methods including the timeline and specific sources collected (see Appendix C), and description of the role of researcher are addressed.

**Summary**

This case study researched a critical area of need in EPPs around the United States. EPPs need understanding on how to better support PSTs in working with diverse student populations as evidenced in
the teacher retention rates and the discussion points of why teachers are leaving the profession at such a drastic rate (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Feng, 2005). By utilizing the framework of CSP, exploring MCL as a vehicle for CSP in the classroom, and using qualitative research through a single case study design, the dialogue grew in understanding what PSTs do know about culture and diversity in the classroom, pedagogy that is equitable, and the importance of using both in the classroom to better connect with students and meet their needs.

The single case study design allowed an in-depth view into how the participants understand the concept. The multiple data sources provided the study with strength and validity as the data can be triangulated. The design of the study can be transferable to other research studies as PSTs in EPPs are planning and teaching in diverse school settings. The qualitative nature of the study truly allowed the researcher to see the PSTs’ understanding through their own words and experiences. This study is valuable to EPPs and teacher educators as we try to strengthen our PSTs ability to teach in diverse settings.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: WHAT DO PSTS KNOW ABOUT CSP AND MCL, AND HOW DID THEY USE THESE IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

For this study, I wanted to explore the areas of preservice teachers (PSTs), culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP), and multicultural children’s literature (MCL). My research question that guided this study was: How do preservice teachers understand culturally sustaining pedagogy and select multicultural children’s literature for use in their field experience classrooms as a means of enacting CSP? In order to explore this question, I utilized a case study design that collected data in the forms of written artifacts, video artifacts, and audio artifacts (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The five participants submitted lesson plans, literature lists, video recordings, and completed a semi-structured interview that was audio recorded only. All data was deidentified and pseudonyms were assigned to each participant for confidentiality purposes. A first round of holistic coding followed by a second round of subcoding was employed for the multiple data sets. These data set subcodes were analyzed for patterns using pattern coding according to the research question then pattern matched to finds common themes across the data sets (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Saldaña, 2016).

In this chapter, we begin with the portraits, or vignettes, of participants to give context of the participant, school site, and unit of study. This context is important for understanding the themes that emerged from the data analysis. After providing portraits of the participants, I discuss the themes from the first part of the research question revolving around PSTs understanding of CSP. After discussing the themes that emerged from that part, I describe the themes that emerged from analyzing MCL as a means of CSP. A summary of themes from each section is also described as well as the common themes overall regarding PSTs, CSP, and MCL. A critical analysis of these themes is further explored in chapter five.

Summary of Participants and School Sites

To begin, I wanted to create portraits of the participants to give context to the themes that emerged from the data. The names of the participants in this study are pseudonyms. Some of the participants self-selected their pseudonyms, while others opted not to and those were selected by the
researcher randomly. The information in the portraiture is derived from the interviews and artifacts submitted as data sources, as well as the Qualtrics survey sent to recruit participants for the study. There were five participants in this single-case study (See Table 1 in Chapter 3). The participants in this study were between the ages of 21-24 years old, had GPAs above a 2.5 (all in the program must have this GPA or above), have completed their student teaching experience in K-5 setting, and were registered for the senior seminar course which includes a senior symposium. All of the participants completed their Student Teaching experience through the Return to Home (RTH) program, where PSTs completed the internship experience in an elementary school located in their hometown. This is an application process at my higher education institution that involves letters of recommendations and GPA scores as indicators. All of the participants had virtual supervision and support as RTH student teachers from an assigned university faculty member known as a university supervisor. All participants except Shelby also had supervision and support from an assigned classroom teacher known as a clinical supervisor during this semester. Shelby was designated as the teacher of record for her student teaching semester as RTH student teacher, which is different than the other participants in this study. The students were also in a senior seminar course, which includes a senior symposium of workshops on topics such as home-school connections, behavior management, working in diverse classrooms, and literacy strategies. Students were provided instruction on defining diversity, foundational knowledge of CSP and its enactment in the classroom, specifically through MCL (Paris & Alim, 2017). Participants were provided with Bishop’s (1990) framework of windows and mirrors to begin, then explored MCL to select texts for their classrooms. Finally, the participants all were successful in completing their student teaching requirements throughout the semester during which this study took place.

Alice

Alice is a bi-racial female in the Internship II cohort. Her field experience was located in a region northeast of Atlanta. She primarily worked with Latino/Latinx students in her placement. Alice worked in a first grade, self-contained classroom. Her unit of study for this research study focused on mathematics, specifically measurement.
Sally

Sally is a Caucasian female in the Internship II cohort. Her field experience was located in the northwest area of Georgia. The school in which her student teaching placement was completed was predominantly Caucasian, where she noted only “academic diversity”. Sally worked in a fourth grade departmentalized classroom focusing on English Language Arts (ELA). Her unit of study for this research study focused on the ELA strategy of capitalization, with a social studies integration of the American Revolutionary War.

Makayla

Makayla is an African American female in the Internship II cohort. Her field experience was located in a region north of Atlanta that had a student population consisting of predominately Latino/Latinx and Asian as described by Makayla. She worked in a fifth grade, self-contained classroom. Makayla’s unit of study for this research study focused on ELA, specifically focusing on text structure.

Shelby

Shelby is a Caucasian female in the Internship II cohort. Her field experience is located in the southeast region of Georgia. The school in which her student teaching placement was completed in a fifth grade classroom with the majority of students as Latino/Latinx. Shelby’s placement is unique compared to the other participants in this study as she is the teacher of record while she is completing her student teaching experience, whereas the other participants are under the supervision of a classroom teacher. Shelby’s unit of study for this research study is focused on mathematics, specifically multiplication using the standard algorithm.

Patricia

Patricia is a Caucasian female in the Internship II cohort. Her field experience was located in a southern coastal Georgia setting. Patricia worked in a first grade, self-contained classroom, with a majority of the student population being Caucasian. She cited “academic diversity” instead of cultural diversity when describing her student population. Her unit of study focused on science, specifically the parts of a plant.
Findings

During the study, I wanted to understand how PSTs engage with CSP through the use of MCL during their unit of study. During the interview, I asked questions related to defining CSP, how CSP was used during the planning process and the participants submitted their lesson plans and literature lists as additional data. I also asked how CSP was used during the teaching process and the participants submitted a video of their instruction of the lesson plan as well. I then asked questions about defining MCL, how students compiled their literature lists and how they used MCL in their planning and teaching. The semi-structured interview responses and discussions, combined with the written artifacts and video footage, were analyzed and patterns emerged across the participants in the case study.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Part of my research question addresses how PSTs understand and utilize CSP in the classroom. Data collected from the semi-structured interviews, lesson plans, and teaching videos provided evidence for this section of my research question. There were common themes related to the PSTs’ understanding and execution of CSP, such as knowledge of students, both academically and socially, use of real life examples while teaching, and use of location of their school and students’ homes. When asked about defining CSP, all participants discussed in some version gaining knowledge of students and then led into the strategies of using that knowledge and using location to discuss relevant real life experiences while teaching as methods of using CSP in the classroom. These three themes came out across the semi-structured interview responses, teaching videos, and lesson plan data sets.

CSP: Knowledge of Students

A common theme that emerged from the semi-structured interview questions was that there has to be a relationship with the students in order to engage in CSP. Every participant touched on the need to get to know their students as part of defining CSP and for planning and teaching. Alice stated, “It’s [CSP] is about using all the things you know about students while you teach. Planning for them, using their cultures and interests.” The participants in the study described the characteristics they got to know about their students further as well during the interviews. This study and all the data collected for it occurred
during the student teaching semester for the participants from August through November. The data was submitted mid-way through the semester and the semi-structured interviews took place toward the end of the semester (see Appendix D). In her interview, Patricia remarked, “It helped that I had time to get to really know them [students] so I could plan for them.” This quote is important to note because it shows that getting to know your students is a process that takes time. This time frame allowed the participants opportunities to engage with the students and community in which they taught.

**Sociocultural Knowledge**

When asked about defining CSP and how it was used in the planning and teaching process, several participants discussed learning about the personal elements of their students. When defining CSP, Sally stated, “CSP is using the cultures of your students when you teach. You know, getting to know their interests, hobbies, and backgrounds and using that in my planning.” While Sally mentioned cultures in her definition, her elaboration did not include the cultural backgrounds of her students, but more of their social interests or personal preferences. In her interview, Patricia also made a similar comment. When I asked what she meant by getting to know them to help her elaborate more on this concept, Patricia said, “Just everything. What they like to do, what they like to eat, what their family is like.” Sally also stated in her interview when asked about CSP and planning, “I considered all of my students and the things they liked and the places they were from and just everything they have told me over the past few months about themselves and like their lives outside of school.” Sally and Patricia both described getting to know students in a multi-faceted way by identifying things that they like, where they are from, and what they do outside of the classroom setting, however these do not provide those solid connections to their cultural backgrounds and norms that CSP is looking to do.

Shelby discussed how she tied in interest with culture in her classroom when asked about CSP. She stated, “Some of them like basketball, so we do problems about basketball, and I include names of players who are of the same culture as my students in the problems.” She utilized her knowledge of students’ interests and ethnicities to make her teaching more engaging. When defining CSP, Makayla included similar things to what Patricia and Sally stated, but she also included language. Makayla said, “I
take into account my students' home language too when engaging in CSP during my planning because we often forget to do that.” CSP values multilingualism in the classroom and Makayla and Shelby touched on the use of other languages in their planning. While the PSTs indicated here discussed different languages, in the videos, I did not hear or see a language other than English being spoken or translated. Learning about the students' social contexts was a common theme among the participants when asked about defining CSP and using it in planning and teaching.

**Academic Knowledge**

When asked how they used CSP in their planning and teaching, many began to discuss academic abilities within their classrooms and the diversity of those. Shelby in particular discussed learning the academic backgrounds of the students in her classroom. She stated,

I make sure that I take into account that all of my students come from different backgrounds. So, I know that they’re not all going to be on the same playing field or understand the same references I might make. I don’t just assume they already know it.

In this statement, Shelby referenced not only personal background characteristics of the students, but also the academic background of the students as she then elaborated by discussing vocabulary and word association during the interview. She said, “We talk about vocabulary that they should have had access to in previous grade levels. However, not all of them have so I remember that and take that into account.” Many of the participants discussed knowing their students’ academic abilities as a key part in their planning and teaching, especially regarding the literature selections.

Patricia explained that she had to get to know her students' academic levels in order to teach them. She said, “They’re on different academic levels and I tried to make sure I brought everyone together and got everyone on the same page but in different ways. I did a lot of questioning. Inference questioning. Higher level questioning.” Getting to know students academically was important to Alice as well because she planned her small group rotations in her lesson plans based on their academic abilities from a pre-assessment she gave to her class. Her lessons showed 4 different small groups that were tiered based on academic abilities related to the math skill of measurement. In the video, Alice showed herself
working with two different small groups and she changed the activities between each group to be developmentally appropriate for the students. Alice said, “Knowing their academic levels helped me plan activities that they could connect with, but also learn from.” The participants did not directly connect academic abilities when they defined CSP in their own words, but they did discuss it quite heavily when discussing how they used CSP in their planning and teaching, leading me to believe that they do include academic ability as a part of being culturally sustaining.

**CSP: Use of Real Life Examples**

Participants, such as Shelby and Alice, who both taught math units, mentioned that they tried to consider the real life experiences of their students when planning and teaching. When asked how she used CSP in her planning, Alice stated that during her planning she would “Try to use knowledge that they might have already known about it or maybe like they’ve heard it from their parents to try and make connections to what this object [ruler] is in front of them.” Alice said that she does this so that the students can make connections. She said, “I feel like doing this helps them make connections with their everyday life like they’re seeing it in school. They’re seeing it outside of school. It helps them retain that information.” Bringing in those everyday life examples can only happen if you know your students and their home lives as mentioned in the first theme. Creating these real life examples comes from using knowledge of students’ homelives and communities in which they live. When posed with how CSP is used during her teaching, Shelby stated, “I’ll ask them for examples in their lives so we’re trying to make a real world connection. I’m not the one making the connection for them constantly. I ask them so they can share their experiences.” Her video included a question and response set with her students where she had them share times when they used multiplication outside of school. Two students were able to name a time when they needed to use it at home but did not include opportunities out in the community.

In the lesson plans that each participant submitted, the PSTs planned for prior experience connections and real world connections. Patricia’s lesson plan revolved around parts of a plant, and she made connections to the plants that her students were familiar with. She wrote, “Plants are a part of students’ day life as we are surrounded by them.” Sally also used real life examples in her teaching video
while teaching capitalization. She used examples in her teaching video of the capitalization rules of common restaurants around the school, sports teams in the area, and student names. Alice did this through her questioning strategies in her teaching video. She asked her class, “Who can tell me where you’ve seen a ruler before outside of the classroom?” This invited her students to share real life examples and experiences of where they have seen or used a ruler. Alice noted that, “This little girl has a dad who works in construction and has shown her things like a ruler, measuring tape, and stuff like that.” This example was given when asked about how CSP was utilized during her teaching video, and she referred to this specific moment in teaching during her interview as well.

Makayla’s video showed an organic moment of real life experiences that discussed the cultural practices of a portion of the students in her classroom. Makayla had a portion of her students who celebrated Diwali and were absent from school. She engaged in conversation with them to learn more about the holiday and the traditions and practices that go along with it. While unexpected, this opportunity for communication about a holiday that was important to some of her students created community. She noted in her interview, “The next day she brought me a container of the sweets her mom had made for Diwali, and we all got to experience them as she shared more about the holiday.” Makayla also said that she then made connections with the students by sharing about her family from the Caribbean and making connections to food that is common among Indian and Caribbean cultures. She noted, “Just getting the chance to kind of connect. And we were able to bring Diwali into some of the text structure that day.” This was an unplanned real life experience that Makayla used to teach and connect with her students.

**CSP: Use of Location**

When asked about using CSP in the semi-structured interview, participants often discussed utilizing the location of where the K-5 students lived and the geography surrounding the school. This theme was common among several of the participants and came out when they were planning their lessons as well as during their teaching. Participants referred to considering the communities, geography, and languages spoken at home in the interviews. Patricia taught a science unit and discussed how she used the students’ location when planning and teaching. She said, “So I took into consideration our
geographical location where a lot of them live and things like that, and it kind of helped me plan for some of the things that I may need to teach them, or some of the things that they may already know that I can tie into my lesson.” Patricia’s book list also included nonfiction texts about plants from the area where her students lived so she used her knowledge of the location of her students’ homes to purposefully select books that relate to them, as well as instructional activities. Makayla’s students live in an area where camping is prevalent, and she used that in her planning and themed her unit of study around that idea. Makayla stated, “I really want to hear from the students and their experiences with camping. Even if some of them have not necessarily been camping before then they can learn from each other, and we can pull from other experiences like sleeping at a friend’s house or common foods from camping.” In her teaching video, Makayla wore clothing that enhanced the theme of her unit and connected with students after school experiences. Sally also themed her lessons based on location and the local sports team since she indicated her class enjoys sports. She said, “My class loves sports so it’s important to connect with their specific favorite sports team where we live.” She connected to the things within the community of her students based on their location.

Makayla’s school system is located near an international airport and the area where she completed her student teaching experience has a lot of different ethnicities represented. She noted this in her planning and said, “Our school has a large population of students that have other languages that are spoken at home. I tried to pick passages during my teaching that students could easily read on their own but could connect to their culture.” Makayla brought up great points about utilizing the different languages and cultures at home rather than viewing them as barriers to learning. Shelby also experienced working with bilingual households and engaged students with vocabulary specifically. She stated, “I don’t just assume they already know that [vocabulary words]. We talk about the vocabulary and have conversations about what they are hearing at home that relates to it.” Bringing in other languages that are spoken, either in specific households of the students or in the geographic region, was an important part of Makayla’s and Shelby’s planning strategies to engage with CSP in the classroom as they indicated.
Summary of Themes related to CSP

When asked to define CSP, participants gave basic definitions revolving around knowing the cultures of their students and using them to teach, but when asked what they learned about their students, it did not reflect a focus on cultures or backgrounds. It instead focused on more personal superficial elements. When students discussed learning about their students, often their hobbies, interests, and afterschool activities were mostly identified as what they learned. Conversations around their cultural backgrounds or traditions in their households was only identified once by Makayla when she had her impromptu conversation about Diwali with her students. She did not purposefully plan for that but engaged in the opportunity when it presented itself. I believe that the lack of data showing the focus of cultural knowledge of the student population indicates a surface level knowledge of the true definition of CSP and how it is seen in the classroom setting.

Across the data points, the themes related to CSP that emerged were related to knowledge of students, in a sociocultural context and academically, use of real life examples from that knowledge, and use of the geography or location of the communities in which the students lived. Building relationships with students is a key component of CSP, we must learn about our students in order to empower them. From building those relationships, the participants discussed how they used the home lives of their students and the communities in which they live to create real life connections from which they could learn. These real life examples were a hope to bridge the classroom to everyday life as Patricia said, “The why are we learning this?” Using those everyday life experiences and the events or characteristics of the communities of our students is one of the ways in which PSTs can engage in being culturally sustaining as well.

Multicultural Children’s Literature

The second part of my research question explores how PSTs select MCL as a means of enacting CSP in their classrooms. In order to explore this, the data from the semi-structured interviews, children’s literature lists, videos, and the lesson plans were analyzed for patterns and common themes. From the five participants, four data sets were analyzed as one did not submit nor use children’s literature in the unit of
study (see Appendix D). The common themes when discussing MCL were content focus, academic reading levels and a focus on the student. Before discussing the themes, I want to note that when asked during the interview about how CSP was used in the planning and teaching process, no participant noted literature until they were specifically prompted to discuss it.

**MCL: Selection by Content**

When analyzing the literature lists and the interview responses, the content or curriculum, is the first criteria the PSTs used when compiling their literature list. The units of study of the participants covered all content areas, with one English/Language Arts (ELA) unit, one ELA and Social Studies (SS) integrated unit, two mathematics units, and one science unit. Sally’s literature list reflected her ELA topic of capitalization and the SS topic of the American Revolutionary War. She stated, “I picked books that had more to do with the American Revolutionary War because pretty much any book would along with my ELA standard of capitalization.” In her video, Sally told her students why she selected the text they were using before beginning to show them pages to identify capitalization. Patricia's science unit on plants and Alice’s mathematics unit on measurement both had literature lists that were content aligned and included a variety of reading complexity. Patricia said, “I tried to pick informational books on plants as well as others like Jack and the Beanstalk so we could talk about the plants in that.” In her video, Patricia did not read a text, but referred back to the one she read the previous day and continued to make connections to it during her video. Patricia kept the content focused but also tried to use a variety of fiction and nonfiction options.

When discussing the selection of literature for Makayla’s unit, she commented, “For the children’s literature pieces I tried to look at the text structure since that was my standard’s focus. I did not worry so much about the content of the book because it wasn’t important.” Makayla is referring to the story or topic of the book when she said content in her quote. The theme discussed in this section relates to the content of the standard being taught. Alice did this with her math unit on measurement. She included several non-fiction books in her literature list around the math content of her student. Shelby did not provide a literature list for her mathematics unit of study. She stated, “I did not feel like I needed one
since I taught a math unit.” Shelby lack of a literature list and lack of use of children’s literature is a limitation to the study as not all participants included all data sets of analysis.

**MCL: Selection by Academic Levels**

Participants noted how important it is to know your students academically in their interviews and ways that they utilized this in their planning and teaching. It especially is evident through their selection and use of MCL. Makayla referenced both the personal and academic background of the students in her interview by selecting MCL that are differing in Lexile reading levels and also the interests. A Lexile level is a reading level assigned after a Lexile measurement assessment is conducted (Lexile, 2022). Educators then use this level to select literature that is developmentally appropriate for the student based on the level (Lexile, 2022). Makayla said, “I found a good mix of books about different things. I provided them with a list with varying ranges in terms of reading level. My class in particular is inclusion so I thought about that too.” Her topic of text structures allowed for more freedom in MCL selection, and her list included a variety of topics and Lexile ranges as well. In her video, Makayla included several passages from the books in her literature list. She would display them on the board so everyone could see the different text structures she wanted to highlight.

Alice taught a math unit on measurement, so her list was narrowed down to books about the math skill in a variety of Lexile ranges also. She said, “I tried to choose books that were age appropriate, so it wasn’t too much information for them, but it also was right on track with their reading level and things they could read on their own.” Sally echoed this stating, “I picked different levels because I have some who are not on grade level with reading, they’re either below or more advanced.” In her video, Alice worked with small groups on different measuring tools and in the independent group, you can see them reading books from a bin. Alice said in her interview that she allowed them the freedom to choose the books from her literature list and since they had to read them on their own, she wanted to pick ones that were on their academic level.

Patricia used audio books with her students as they were first graders who had vastly differing reading abilities as she indicated. Patricia said, “I tried to pick books that were at their level and
informational. They would be read to them, but I still didn’t want to pick anything too challenging.”

When analyzing the literature lists that Alice, Makayla, Sally, and Patricia submitted, there was a mixture of fiction and nonfiction texts, a variety of grade levels, and depending on the topic of the lesson, a variety of content as well. As noted before, Shelby did not create a children’s literature list for her unit of study. She said, “Since I taught a math unit, I did not use any children’s books while I taught.” I mention this again because it is interesting to point out that Alice also taught a math unit but submitted a literature list and utilized it during her teaching.

**MCL: Selection by Student Interest**

A common pattern among the selection of books was related to the student population of the PSTs classrooms. This student focus came from the PSTs comments in their interviews on student interests, characters that students could connect with, and experiences or events familiar to the students. Many participants noted that they observed the different genres and styles of text that students enjoyed reading and used those in their teaching and book lists. Makayla said, “I tried to pay attention to what they’re reading from the library. I’ve seen my students reading fantasy books, so I included those in my list.” Alice echoed, “I chose books that they’re familiar with.” This relates back to taking the time to get to know your students, the first theme in CSP section, in order to select MCL that relates to their interests. Accessibility to books was also important to Alice when she selected the books for her students. “I also tried to choose books that they had access to from within the classroom, my personal library, and the school's library as well.” Alice wanted to provide students with access to materials, so she used them during her teaching as evidenced in her video.

Alice discussed how she selected books that represented the students in her classroom. She said, “I tried to choose books where they could see people who look like them in their books as well. I have a lot of students who aren’t solely American, so I’ve tried to choose books that relate to their culture.” Using the cultures related to the students of the classroom, relates directly to how PSTs should utilize MCL as a means of CSP in their classrooms. This clearly links to how she defined MCL in her interview by saying, “It’s books that relate other cultures in the characters, settings, or events that happen.” For her
unit, Alice attempts to select MCL as a means of CSP by seeking out literature with characters that reflect the culture of a student in the classroom.

Sally selected books that connected to the feelings or experiences happening in the lives of her students. She said, “I picked books they could relate to. I asked them to connect their feelings to those of the characters and we would discuss something that is happening in their lives that they could connect with how the characters are feeling.” Makayla used two passages during her video and described that she purposefully picked passages that could relate to the different experiences of the students in her classroom. She said, “I tried to pick two different passages they could relate to. Here is a passage about camping where you’re spending a thousand dollars for a fancy lodge camping trip and here’s one where you camp in a tent in the woods.” Makayla attempted to make connections to the experiences of her students and also show them a unique experience with camping.

The languages spoken by the students and their families were also considered when participants selected the children’s literature for their units. Shelby mentioned she would use translation if the students needed that assistance during her lessons. She stated, “I don’t assume they can read everything, so I offer help by translating when needed.” She linked the translations of materials in her plans as well. Her video did not show her engaging in any bilingual strategies with her students, however. Makayla stated that she selected reading passages for her literature that were shorter in length and easier to read with less complex vocabulary. She stated, “I wanted to make sure that they could take the passages home and they could ask Mom for help reading it and ask questions. We forget the language barriers that students may have when they take things home.” It is vital to sustain the languages of our students that are spoken in their homes according to CSP so Makayla’s comments and selections of literature are an example of how PSTs can do this.

Summary of Findings Related to MCL

Across the data points, the three themes of selection by content, academic levels, and student interest came forward when exploring MCL definitions and descriptions of use by the PSTs. From the comments in PSTs’ semi-structured interviews to the analysis of lists, there are some connections to MCL.
selection as a means of CSP. The first two themes of selection by content and academic reading levels are not necessarily as closely aligned with the tenets of CSP, however, we do know that we must provide students with materials and resources that help them to be academically successful. A focus on any of the asset or equity pedagogies is that we want all of our students to be successful and providing accessibility to MCL that is developmentally appropriate and related to the standards being taught can be way of encouraging that.

The theme of selecting literature that is more focused on students however shows a deeper connection with CSP than the previous two themes. The participants noted more cultural elements when discussing the literature lists than when we discussed their planning and teaching processes. Alice and Patricia in particular discussed some of the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of their students and how those were utilized in selecting texts that were relatable and accessible to the students and their families in the classroom. When analyzing the PSTs comments and literature lists, it speaks to the core definition of the fact that CSP wants to sustain cultures, languages, and traditions of the diverse populations.

**Summary of Findings**

The analysis of the multiple data sources provided much insight into the patterns of how PSTs understand CSP and use MCL as a means of CSP in the classroom. Since the research question is broken down into two parts, I analyzed the data sets with the first part of the research question regarding CSP first and the themes of knowledge of students, academically and socially, use real life examples, and use the location of students' homes emerged. For the second part of the research questions pertaining to MCL, the data sets revealed themes of selection by content, academic levels, and student interests. These themes of how students described CSP, ways that they utilized CSP in their planning and teaching, and the selection of MCL emerged through data analysis of the lesson plans, literature lists, teaching videos, and in the semi-structured interview responses. A further in depth analysis of how CSP is defined and utilized is compared to the findings of this study in the next chapter shows a superficial view and use of CSP and MCL based on the findings presented.
Across the two different parts of the research questions, getting to know one’s students was reflected in both areas. Participants discussed how getting to know their students, academically and socioculturally, impacted their planning, teaching, and selection of the literature for their units of study. While this looked slightly different for each participant given their unit of study standards, participants all described how they used student interest, hobbies, and real life experiences to engage in CSP and to select MCL for their unit of study. I do think that the data and analysis here show that PSTs focus heavily on knowing the students superficially, and I do not think the data shows that true rich enactment of CSP in the classroom. The areas of student interest, hobbies, and real life experiences show a superficial view of a true sociocultural picture of their students as sociocultural includes “the languages, literacies, histories and cultural ways” (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2). Minimal discussions about culture, ethnicity, and language did occur but not as substantially as the social, personal pieces. In order to truly enact CSP, PSTs must know more than their students’ favorites, like the things to do or eat or watch, but engage in conversation around those cultural pieces and purposefully to use that in their planning and teaching. In the following chapter, I will break down how the findings described here relate to my theoretical framework and connect to the previous literature related to my study.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION: WHAT PSTS KNOW AND UNDERSTAND ABOUT CSP
AND USING MCL AS A MEANS OF CSP IN THE CLASSROOM

Researching pre-service teachers’ (PSTs) ability to teach diverse populations is an important area for the preservation of our educator workforce. This type of research enables Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to better equip our PSTs for their future classrooms, but also it empowers our young learners with a critical thinking lens that they may have only been minimally exposed to in the past. In this chapter, a brief overview of the study including its research question, purpose, theoretical framework, and methods will be provided. Then, findings that were described in the previous chapter will be reviewed and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and from the literature review conducted in the second chapter. The findings from the analysis of PSTs understanding and use of CSP as well as their selection of MCL as a means of enacting CSP revealed the themes of knowledge of students, academically and socially, use real life examples in teaching, use location of the elementary students when planning and teaching in regard to CSP and alignment with the content standards, academic levels, and student interest in regard to MCL as a means of CSP. These themes were broken down into the two sections of the research question relating in part one specifically to CSP and in part two relating to MCL. Finally, the implications presented will cover the areas of CSP through EPPs and practicums, MCL through EPPs, and implications for curriculum studies. A more in depth discussion of specific recommendations for EPPs will be provided in chapter six.

Summary of This Study

For this study, I wanted to explore how PSTs understand CSP and select MCL as a means of enacting CSP. The purpose of this research is to better understand PSTs understanding of equity pedagogies, such as CSP, and how these are utilized in the classroom through literature. This is important because identifying gaps in their knowledge and use of CSP enables EPPs to better prepare PSTs for the diverse student populations that they will teach in the future. The research question is: How do preservice teachers understand culturally sustaining pedagogy and select multicultural children’s literature for use in
their field experience classrooms as a means of enacting CSP? Research shows gaps in their knowledge of CSP, lack of knowledge of how to build relationships with students, discomfort with discussing sociocultural factors with students and how all of this contributes to their ability to enact CSP in the classroom (Casciola, 2014; Barnes, 2020; Bazemore-Betrand & Handsfield, 2019; Ramirez et al., 2016). My study showed some parallels to the research as well as some contradictions based on my data findings.

I selected CSP as my theoretical framework because it provides an asset lens of viewing culture, its place in the classroom, and how PSTs, our future educators, need it to be effective teachers for our students (Ladson-Billings, 2021a, 2012b; Paris & Alim, 2017). Utilizing MCL as the specific vehicle for students enacting CSP provided me with an area of dialogue in the research on CSP that there is a gap. To conduct the study, I selected a single case study design with five participants in their final student teaching semester (see chapter 3). Each participant taught in a school district somewhere in the same state as the higher education institution they attended for their undergraduate courses. The participants submitted lesson plans, literature lists, a self-selected teaching video, and participated in a semi-structured interview as part of the data sets for the study. The transcriptions from the interviews of their responses were included as a data set. After two rounds of coding, holistic and subcoding, and analyzing each data set using my research question, I then used pattern coding to find common themes across all the data subcodes relating to the two parts of my research question.

Knowledge of Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: Connections to CSP and the Literature Review

In this section, I will examine the findings in chapter four in relation to the PSTs understanding of CSP and their use of it during planning and teaching. The themes of knowledge of students, use of real life examples, and use of location that emerged from the data analysis will be examined and connected to the theoretical framework of the study, CSP, and the information learned from the literature review in chapter two.

Understanding of CSP
The first part of my research question explored PSTs and CSP, specifically looking at how they understand CSP and utilize it. When analyzing the data in chapter four, the participants discussed their understanding of CSP and how they used CSP during their planning and teaching during the semi-structured interviews. In the semi-structured interviews, I asked the participants to describe CSP and how they utilized it in their planning process and during their teaching. This allowed them to have multiple talking opportunities where they could tell me their thoughts about CSP and where they believed they were using it rather than me as the researcher controlling or guiding their discussions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Their definitions and the descriptions of their use of CSP were coded and included in the three themes that highlighted a knowledge of students, use of real life examples, and use of location as ways to define and enact CSP in the classroom.

Knowledge of Students

I noted as a common theme that the participants continued to discuss when being asked questions related to CSP was getting to know the students in their classrooms. In the literature review, some studies noted that PSTs can feel intimidated about getting to know their students (Barnes, 2020; Bazemore-Bertrand & Hartsfield, 2019), however, none of the participants in this study indicated any hesitation about getting to know their students. In fact, it came up in every interview. Patricia even started her interview by saying “I’m glad I got a chance to get to know them [students] before planning my lessons.” This is definitely different from what some researchers encountered in their work (Barnes, 2020; Bazemore-Bertrand & Hartsfield, 2019). While they learned that the PSTs in their studies were anxious about creating these relationships and gaining knowledge about the students, the PSTs in my study discussed how they were thankful for the opportunity to do just that. In their videos, the PSTs engaged with students in conversation outside of the traditional instruction of their content. I heard comments that were personable and community building, such as “How are you doing today?” “Tell me something good that happened to you today” and engaging in calling students by their names. While these are small, irrelevant comments to their actual curricular instruction, they are valuable in creating classroom community and making students feel valued.
Patricia and Sally in particular continued to revert back to this when they responded to their semi-structured interview questions. They both stated how they used their knowledge of their students’ interests and afterschool activities in their planning and teaching. Getting to know your students personally is a key tenet of asset pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010/2018; Paris & Alim, 2017). Using this knowledge as an asset in the classroom reflects the core aims of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017) to empower students by having their experiences that connect to them valued in the classroom. When prompted further to explain what they learned about their students, the participants provided responses that reflected student personal preferences. Research has shown that PSTs often gravitate toward lighter conversations that are easier and not as controversial (Barnes, 2020; Bazemore-Bertrand & Hartsfield, 2019; Iwai, 2013). Valuing the assets that students bring to the classroom and utilizing them in the everyday classroom learning experiences is a key tenet of equity pedagogies such as CSP (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010/2018; Paris & Alim, 2017). While the PSTs considered the personal preferences and interests of their students as assets in the classroom, they did not connect cultural backgrounds or practices in their responses during the interviews.

When asked what they considered CSP or what they got to know about their students, the focus tended to stay on those personal preferences or interests. Sally said, “CSP is using the cultures of your students when you teach. You know, getting to know their interests, hobbies, and backgrounds and using that in my planning.” While she did mention the cultures of her students, when Sally elaborated on it, it showed a focus on personal preferences or interests of her students, which can be considered surface level understanding of what CSP aims to do since it is lacking cultural focus. Research has shown that PSTs need more in depth learning of the tenets and concepts of CSP in order to fully understand it (Jacobs, 2018). There is a misinterpretation of what using culture and asset pedagogy entails and looks like in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2014, 2021a). The findings in my study also noted that there is a disconnect on the definition of culture and what it means when getting to know your students and being a critically sustaining pedagogue. My findings show that PSTs do place value in getting to know information about the students in their classrooms in order to use that in their planning and teaching decisions, however, the
information halts at personal preferences and interests and does not dig into the cultural backgrounds as it needs to.

This is an example of the very critique Ladson-Billings (2014) has of how her theory of CRP has been misinterpreted by educators and the need for CSP in the classroom. The goal of any equity pedagogy is to dig deeper into the *funds of knowledge* and empower students who have felt othered by education (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Paris & Alim, 2017). The knowledge of students the PSTs gained and used for their teaching is a starting point, but not exemplifying CSP as greatly as it could because of the lack of knowledge about their cultural backgrounds and practices.

*Use of Real Life Examples*

When asked how students used CSP in their planning and teaching, every participant noted that they tried to use real life examples their students could connect with. When defining culture, we have to include the every life practice because they are crucial part of how we think, perceive, and operate in society (González et al., 2005). CSP acknowledges that these life practices can evolve, and change based on different contextual factors so using relevant real life examples is key (Paris & Alim, 2017). The participants in this study used real life examples as a way of describing culturally sustaining practices in the classroom. Even though the participants taught in different grade levels, geographic regions, and had different topics and content areas, they were able to note that they could use real life examples as a way to connect with their students and help them to understand. Alice noted that she tried to connect to experiences where her students had seen or heard the vocabulary of her unit. She said, “I feel like doing this helps them make connections with their everyday life.” Doing so is a key piece of enacting CSP in the classroom because Alice is utilizing their everyday experiences and language (Brayboy et al., 2012; Paris & Alim, 2012).

Shelby challenged her students to apply their learning and provide real life examples of where they are seeing the content or skill being taught. She said, “I will ask them for examples in their lives, so we are trying to make real world connection. I am not the one making the connection for them constantly.” Challenging students to make their own real life connections empowers them to be part of the
education rather than being told. During the video, Sally had students connect to where they see capitalization, her standard focus for her unit, after school. Students were able to point out various places they noticed this is in restaurants around their area in her video. The participants in this study connected real life experiences of their students with the content being taught in the classroom. Research has shown that creating meaningful learning moments for students based on their diverse backgrounds is vital (Grande et al., 2015; San Pedro, 2017; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Research has shown that PSTs rely on stereotypes of students as a means of knowing them and selecting real life experiences to use (Lowenstein, 2009). However, the participants in my study did not reflect that in their data. Their conversations in our semi-structured interviews prior to discussions of using real life examples revolved around how they got to know their students though their interests, preferences, and afterschool lives.

**Use of Location**

When reviewing research involving location use, the articles reviewed discussed location use in very isolated areas such as Native American reservations, rural Alaska, and areas of that nature. The use of location in a rural area of state was not heavily discussed in the studies I reviewed in the literature review. However, the theme of location use frequently came up when my students discussed ways they were culturally sustaining in their planning and teaching. We know that the use of location of the students can be a component to practice CSP as the community events and practices are a key part of empowering and sustaining students’ backgrounds (Paris & Alim, 2017). Location contributes to how people act, perceive others, and experience the world as a whole (González et al., 2005). The participants in my study used their knowledge of students plus their location as a way to practice what they considered CSP in the classroom. Patricia, Shelby, Sally, and Makayla all said they utilized this in order to be culturally sustaining in their teaching. The use of location related to student homes and their everyday experiences in their geographic area empowers students to feel like they are part of the learning experiences (Adams and Farnsworth, 2020; Vinlove, 2017). The findings in my study reflect these same viewpoints as the PSTs
utilized the geographical areas of the students and their experience therein when planning and teaching in the classroom.

Over half of the participants in this study taught in what is considered a rural area in the state in which the study took place, and the PSTs attended their undergraduate program. The participants engaged in using their locations during their unit of study and frequently discussed it in their semi-structured interview responses. Sally stated, “I took into consideration our geographical location where a lot of them live and things like that, and it kind of helped me plan for some of the things that I may need to teach them, or some of the things that they may already know that I can tie into my lesson.” Participants also referenced it in their lesson plans as well. Patricia noted in her plans that she used plants in the geographic location in which they lived and went to school to identify the plant parts. The participants purposefully made real life connections of where students lived in the introduction and/or conclusions of their lessons as noted in the lesson plan submitted by each participant.

The research noted in the literature review studied how PSTs taught in very rural areas featuring the location specifically of Indigenous people (Adams & Farnsworth, 2020; Vinlove, 2017). The PSTs in my study did not work in these types of areas and did not utilize the location features in the same manner as the other researchers’ participants may have. The use of location by the PSTs in this study included places and things the students would see around them, but it did not include the types of experiences and use of languages that others described in their research (Adams and Farnsworth, 2020; Vinlove, 2017). The participants in this study utilized the locations of their students and their everyday experiences in these areas to create more meaningful learning opportunities for their students, which is a tenet of CSP in the classroom. If the participants had a deeper knowledge of cultural elements discussed previously, then this use of location and language could be better developed as an enactment of CSP.

Selection of Multicultural Children’s Literature: Connections to CSP and the Literature Review

In this section, I will examine the themes described of the findings in chapter four related to the PSTs’ selection of MCL as a means of CSP. The themes of selection by content, selection by academic levels, and selection by student interest emerged from the data analysis will be examined and connected
to the theoretical framework of the study, CSP, and the information learned from the literature review in chapter two.

**Utilization of MCL as a means of CSP**

The themes that emerged from the data sources of lesson plans, literature lists and semi-structured interview responses relied heavily on the areas of content alignment, academic reading level, and student relatability. The lesson plans and literature lists provided by four of the five participants outlined the purposeful selection of literature and areas where it was used in teaching. During the semi-structured interview, I had students discuss their thought process through selecting the literature and its use in their lessons. Shelby did not submit a list because she did not feel that literature was needed for her mathematics unit. I found this statement interesting because there are several effective children’s books that can be used to enhance mathematics instruction (Flevares & Schiff, 2014; Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Welty, 2021). The three themes listed below are reflective of how PSTs define and select MCL for use in the classroom. One major area that is missing is the multicultural aspect in their themes as I analyzed the data. The reflection of diverse voices is one that must be considered when selecting texts for classroom use in order to be culturally sustaining (Paris & Alim, 2017).

**Selection by Content**

The participants discussed how they selected their literature lists first with the content, or curriculum, in mind. When reflecting on their lists, especially those of Alice, Sally, and Patricia, one can see the direct alignment between literature selection and the content standard being studied. Each book relates to their teaching topic. Sally taught an integrated unit of capitalization and the American Revolutionary War. She said, “I picked books that had more to do with the American Revolutionary War because pretty much any book would go along with my ELA standard of capitalization.” Selecting quality books to enhance instruction is important for elementary students (Reynolds, 2011).

Makayla’s standard of text structure is present in every text, so she also considered the standard when selecting books, but the content of the books was not purposefully selected. Makayla stated, “For the children’s literature pieces I tried to look predominantly at the text structure since that was my
standard’s focus. I did not worry so much about the content of the book because it wasn’t important.” I see this as a missed opportunity where CSP could have been implemented. Purposeful selection of the content to connect with the cultural backgrounds of the students in the classroom would be a perfect way to bridge the theory of CSP to the classroom through MCL (Ladson-Billings, 2021a; Paris & Alim, 2017). Drawing on the idea of mirrors and windows would have allowed Makayla to still use the text structure content as a focus, but also provide students with opportunities to be reflected or to see into others’ lives (Bishop, 1990; Botehlo, 2015). When PSTs have a challenging time knowing the backgrounds of their students, they often rely on other factors such as academics as a way to select literature (Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Reynolds, 2011).

During their coursework in EPPs, PSTs take courses on literacy and methods including use of literature based on the PSC mandates for certification (PSC, 2022). Research on how PSTs select books for classroom use varies, but many note a connection to the curriculum, which is what the PSTs in my study indicated they used as one of their selection reasons (Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2021; Moorhouse, 2020). Using the standards and connecting the content of the book to the topic being taught allows teachers to meet goals and students to have productive learning experiences with the literature (Moorhouse, 2020). Patricia and Alice selected books that related to the topic being taught with their science and math standards. Sally taught an integrated unit with ELA and Social Studies, so she used the social studies content as her curriculum focus for her books. Makayla selected her literature around a theme of camping, as her ELA standard could be applied to any text as she indicated. The participant relied first on the curriculum standard when selecting books. Alice stated, “I started first with my standard and then went searching from there for books I could use.” Students need books that enhance their instruction, but they also need books that make them feel seen, heard, validated, and empowered while they learn more so they can retain that information (Clark & Fleming, 2019; Paris & Alim, 2017).

As stated above with Makayla’s book selection decision of not considering the content of the book and its text structure, I found this to be a very interesting piece of data given that it is selected with her ELA standard in mind, but the content of the book being unimportant stood out to me. It is a missed
opportunity where CSP could have been utilized in the book selection. Since text structure could be applied to any books, books that are relevant to the diverse backgrounds of the students in the class could have been a determining factor in selecting books for her list. Also, Shelby did not include a book list for her unit of study as she taught a math unit. Literature across multiple content areas allows students more enhanced learning opportunities (Flevares & Schiff, 2014; Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Welty, 2021). These two data points show a lack of usage of MCL as a means of CSP and a missed opportunity for engagement with the diverse backgrounds in the classroom to develop or deepen cultural empathy and competence (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Selection by Academic Levels

Every participant discussed the academic diversity of their literature selections. I drew connections between the overall discussion of MCL selection and usage and the tenets of CSP with my findings. They discussed selecting books that were developmentally appropriate and varied by reading levels. The use of reading levels is a common practice in classrooms today but does not always have to define the selection of texts used (Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2021; Lexile, 2022; Moorhouse, 2020). Providing students with access to materials in the classroom that are developmentally and academically appropriate for their capabilities is critical for student success and achievement, which is goal for CSP (Ladson-Billings, 2021b; Paris & Alim, 2017). While Ladson-Billings (2009) stressed that teachers must want their students of color to succeed, it is vital that we do so through instruction that mirrors their cultural backgrounds. While reviewing the lists and the interview responses, it shows that the participants do have knowledge of the academic capabilities of their students as they continued to refer back to satisfying these academic levels when selecting books. However, they are not showing to have solid grasp on what multicultural literature is or how it is used as a means of CSP since they continually referred back to satisfying the academic levels necessary for their students instead of cultural connections.

Asset and equity pedagogies focus on student achievement as one of their main tenets so selecting academically appropriate texts for students is important in achieving this (Gay, 2010/2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2017). The heavy discussions of diversity with content and reading levels
and the lack of discussions of diversity in characters, authors, and experiences within the texts shows a disconnect between MCL and CSP. In the literature review, a few articles cited academic abilities when selecting MCL for classroom use. When it was referenced, it was more about the content and controversial topics covered in the book versus the reading level (Hartsfield & Kimmel, 2021; Moorhouse, 2020). With that being said, some of the responses from the semi-structured interviews make me think that the participants might view the academic diversity of their classrooms as a deficit. It is common for PSTs to engage in deficit mindsets, especially with academic abilities, unless they have been specifically trained with asset pedagogies (Gray et al., 2022; Iwai, 2013; Mason & Connor, 2022). In order to practice CSP, PSTs cannot view academic abilities in this deficit way, yet comments such as “I know they’re not all going to be on the same playing field” or “I don’t want to pick anything too challenging” can easily lead into that mindset. To support marginalized students, we need to have an asset mindset (Yosso, 2005). Paris and Alim (2017) want a space “where children of color can survive and thrive” (p. 13) so the use of cognitive abilities needs to be done through an asset lens in order for it to be an enactment of CSP.

Rivera and Titu (2021) echoed this saying, “In other words, instead of focusing on what the students do not have, focus on the wealth of cultural capital students of color are bringing to the classroom” (p. 163). This leads us back to helping PSTs truly understand and grasp the idea of funds of knowledge and how CSP seeks to sustain these in the classroom. The focus on academic abilities in my study when discussing CSP and MCL, separately and together, leads me to believe that PSTs in this EPP are not fully utilizing an asset mindset when discussing CSP or MCL. Bucholtz (2017) stated, “this discourse runs the common theme of deficit: the notion that youth of color lack the language, the culture, the family support, the academic skills, even the moral character to succeed and excel” (p. 43). While trying to be effective by selecting books they deemed developmentally appropriate for their students’ reading abilities, the PSTs were not channeling all of the assets that their students bring to the table.
Selection by Student Interest

The PSTs also discussed selecting books that they thought the students in their classes would enjoy based on their interests, everyday experiences, and the genres of books they commonly read from the library or classroom. Selecting books that are of interest to students comes from the knowledge PSTs have built about their class as a whole and the individual students themselves. We see the themes of knowledge of students and their locations in their discussions of CSP, so these aid in their abilities to select books of potential interest to their students. Around half of the participants said they built their children’s literature in this way. Makayla said, “I tried to pay attention to what they are reading from the library. I have seen my students reading fantasy books, so I included those in my list.” The PSTs had lists that included a variety of genres, fiction, nonfiction, chapter books, pictures, and even audiobooks. Books need to be selected based on student preference to keep them engaged and connected (Mohr, 2006). Sally said “I picked books they could relate to. I asked them to connect their feelings to those of the characters and we would discuss something that is happening in their lives that they could connect with how the characters are feeling.” Often students want books like these so they can connect with the book, and it feels more real to them (Gray, 2009). By doing so, Sally is helping students to immerse themselves in the book and see a reflection of themselves within the characters and their emotions.

Using their interests is an effective way to entice students to want to read more books and engages the students in the class with the literature. Based upon the findings when discussing knowledge of students and selection of MCL based on student interest, PSTs are not necessarily selecting books based on cultural connections or seeing alternate perspectives like we want to in CSP. The PSTs connect their selections back to the interests, preferences, and academic abilities of their students, but not the cultural backgrounds of their students continually. Building on the PSTs’ current knowledge of their students with the inclusion of their cultural backgrounds, language, and traditions would create a more culturally sustaining environment in the classroom. This reflects Ladson-Billings’ (2014) critique of how educators commonly interpret CRP with a surface application of making learning relevant to students, but not actually making it meaningful and reflective of the true values and culture of the students.
Alice did consider the cultural backgrounds of her students when making some of her literature selections. She stated, “I tried to choose books where they could see people who look like them in their books as well. I have a lot of students who aren’t solely American, so I’ve tried to choose books that relate to their culture.” Alice here used a phrase “solely American” that I found interesting. Alice is a biracial female working in a diverse classroom with predominately Latinx students. She engaged in acknowledging that there are cultural differences in her students but used phrases such as ‘solely American’ because of her personal experiences with the dominant culture (Rivera & Titu, 2021). It seems like ‘solely American’ is being equated to being white because of the dominant cultural view.

**Discussion of Participants’ Contextual Factors**

It is important to note my findings when comparing the responses and data of my participants. While doing the pattern matching among the data sets for my themes related to my research question, I began taking notice of the responses of my participants. I noted in particular the depth and discussions revolving around culture, language, and ethnicities were different based on the diversity of the school sites, as well as the diversity of the participants themselves. Here I note my findings based on this discovery.

During the literature review, several studies noted the differing demographics between the PSTs in classrooms and the student populations they teach (Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Levine-Rasky, 2000; Lowenstein, 2009; Marx & Pecina, 2016; Nganga, 2015; Phillion & He, 2004; Puzio et al., 2017). For this case study, the demographics of the participants were all females, with three being white and two women of color (Appendix B). Of the white participants, two taught in ethnically diverse school systems which is common among PSTs according to other research studies and statistics of school demographics in the United States (Levine-Rasky, 2000; NCES, 2022; Peters et al., 2018; Vinlove, 2017). For this case study, the demographics of the participants were all females, with three being white and two women of color (Appendix B). Of the white participants, two taught in ethnically diverse school systems which is common among PSTs according to other research studies and statistics of school demographics in the United States (Levine-Rasky, 2000; NCES, 2022; Peters et al., 2018; Vinlove, 2017).

Two of my participants were women of color, Makayla and Alice. When responding to questions or providing examples from their teaching videos, Makayla and Alice discussed connections to the cultural backgrounds of their students more frequently than the participants who were Caucasian. For example, Makayla discussed the holiday of Diwali with her students and how she was able to make
cultural connections with her Caribbean background. Embracing the traditions of her students and making connections among them is a core tenet of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). Research showed that PSTs struggled with having conversations with their students about controversial topics such as race, ethnicities, religion, and things of that nature (Grant & Goddard, 2009). However, Makayla embraced the conversation around this religious holiday and used it as a teaching and learning opportunity for her and her students. Makayla also discussed making sure that the languages of her students were considered during her planning. She ensured the passages could be understood in homes where English is not the language being spoken. By providing her students with passages that can be used in multilingual homes she is utilizing CSP by empowering her students and their families linguistically, however, Makayla also selected texts that would not be too challenging for her students to read at home. This shows that the literature was lacking the rigor necessary for student achievement and engages again that deficit mindset.

Alice noted that she used the ethnicities of her students in her planning. She made sure to select books with characters that reflected the ethnicities and genders of the students in her classroom. By selecting books with her students’ ethnicities in mind she creates meaningful learning experiences (Lawrence et al., 2017). As discussed earlier, while Alice does make mention of being reflective of culture, her use of the phrase ‘solely American’ shows a limited understanding and skewed view of cultures because of her view on the dominant culture. This reflects that everyone, including people of color, have a perception that has been influenced by outside factors that are reflected in our thoughts and language.

The other participants in my study were three white females. One in particular, Shelby, taught in a diverse school with several bilingual students. Shelby also discussed how she considered the languages used at home during her planning by discussing that she offers translations for her students. This act continues to honor and sustain the cultures and language spoken at home for her students which embodies CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). The diversity of her classroom caused Shelby to be more aligned with CSP during her planning and teaching. Shelby also used real life experiences and examples for her students while teaching. In her video, Shelby has students give examples of where they use multiplication outside
of the classroom and facilitate a conversation with the class. They only provide examples of when they have used it at home, but not in the community. Shelby makes attempts at being culturally sustaining with her class but does not show a true understanding and enactment of CSP in her classroom.

The other two participants, Sally and Patricia, were placed in schools that are not as culturally diverse as the other participants. In fact, Sally specifically said in her interview that “we have very little diversity within our school. Culturally, socioeconomically, racially. Most of our students are the same.” This is particularly interesting because Sally does not see the differences among her students. While she may think they have no diversity, students all have different perspectives, backgrounds, and personal experiences that shape them. This mindset of everyone is the same is not inclusive or honoring the *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, 2005) her students have. When Sally discussed how she utilized CSP in her planning and teaching, she spoke more about common after school activities and hobbies or academic diversity. Patricia also had similar comments in her interview as well but discussed diverse socioeconomic levels of her students. The lack of demographic diversity seemed to not allow the PSTs to truly think about CSP and how it is used in the classroom because they viewed anyone with the label of White as one culture.

The experiences and discussions surrounding CSP were different between my participants of color versus my participants who are white (Maddamsetti, 2020; Borrero et al., 2016). PSTs of color have diverse backgrounds and experiences from their own lives, and these contribute to how they perceive and enact CSP in their placement classrooms (Maddamsetti, 2020). The data in my study showed this through the semi-structured interview responses of what CSP is and how it was utilized in planning and teaching. Recognizing the power of whiteness and how it is viewed in the classroom is key to understanding and teaching diverse populations (Sleeter, 1995). PSTs engage in this as whiteness affects their perceptions of diversity in the classroom (Lowenstein, 2009). While my participant pool was only five, this power was displayed in some of the pedagogical decisions and language used by the participants. The backgrounds of these participants created different viewpoints of CSP, which aligns the works of Sleeter (1995, 2017).
and Phillion and He (2004). Our internal biases and perceptions play into how we perceive, interact, and teach, and the PSTs in this study show a variety of viewpoints and understandings on CSP and MCL.

**Implications**

The research in this study contributes to the growing conversation around CSP knowledge for PSTs in a few ways. It has been evidenced that pointed education on CSP, MCL and the use of MCL as a means of CSP is still a need today in EPPs based on the literature review and my findings from my study. My research findings and discussion echoed several of the key points that researchers before me have stated, thus proving that this area of research is far from over and remains extremely relevant in today’s time. Based on my findings, we need better instruction on equity pedagogies and strategies to enact these before we can expect PSTs to practice it in the classroom. EPPs need to do the groundwork on helping students understand their personal biases and beliefs, which will provide the foundation necessary for them to understand diversity and asset pedagogies. PSTs also need more instruction on the importance and use of asset mindsets and language. PSTs need direct instruction on understanding CSP, the tenets and the practical application of this in classrooms. Having a solid foundation in CSP will allow students to then grasp MCL fully and how this can be used as a means of practicing CSP in their classrooms. We first need the groundwork of CSP in order to effectively use MCL in the classroom.

**Better Understanding of CSP in EPPs and Practicums**

While students are taking courses in their EPPs, the curriculum needs a greater focus on diversity, strategies to learn about the sociocultural diversity of the classroom, and how to use this for instructional decisions (Florian, 2017; Sleeter, 2001). Research has shown that EPPs often sugarcoat their instruction of diversity and cultural responsiveness in order to not cause any controversy for the students (Bissonnette, 2016; Galman et al., 2010). The knowledge gained from their EPPs about CSP enables them to make planning and teaching decisions with the tenets of CSP in mind (Caraballo, 2017; Florian, 2017; Ramirez et al., 2016). The lack of knowledge based on the findings in my study, compiled with the literature review’s theme of lack of knowledge of student backgrounds, shows that this is an area that still needs to be cultivated (Jacobs, 2018; Laman et al., 2018; Lehman, 2017; Morales et al., 2020; Nganga, 2015).
Students need more direct instruction on the tenets of CSP and steps that need to be taken in order to use it in their practicums and future classrooms. The PSTs in my study did demonstrate the ability to build relationships with their students and did not shy away from getting to know their personal interests and preferences. This is a start to getting to know the cultural backgrounds of their students and creating more of a culturally sustaining classroom (Paris & Alim, 2017). While the participants in my study have started a foundational knowledge of their students through some surface level characteristics, they are not digging deeper into the backgrounds and traditions of their students’ populations. Due to this, my study shows a gap in their knowledge of CSP and how this gap transfers to their planning and teaching in classrooms.

EPPs are still portraying a white dominant understanding of CSP and other asset pedagogies like it (Sleeter, 2017). It is also discussed how educators, or PSTs in my study for instance, need to have conceptions about their identities and biases acknowledged and analyzed, along with those of their students and their families in order to enact CRP, or any asset pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009, 1995). This is reflected as well in my data by the lack of discussions surrounding culture or using mislabels or stereotypes such as ‘solely American’. There is, and has been, a major need for EPPs to find a different, more effective away of addressing whiteness and its biases for our PSTs to truly begin to understand CSP and their role in the classroom (Levine-Rasky, 2000; Maddamsetti, 2020; Sleeter, 2001, 2017). Addressing the issue of whiteness in a way that is meaningful and lasting with PSTs during their courses in EPPs is an important step in understanding CSP according to the literature review and as evidenced in my data by the lack of understanding of CSP and based on the responses of certain participants.

Again, my data overall indicates that more work needs to be done with CSP and helping PSTs to understand what it is and what it looks like in the classroom. Research shows that PSTs need to understand their students and their home life and surroundings in order to plan instructional activities and curriculum using those lived experiences (Vinlove, 2017). The majority of the participants in this study noted their use of location when enacting CSP in their classroom. However, research also notes that PSTs
need more direction on how to understand CSP and all of the factors that contribute to making culturally sustaining instructional decisions, and I concur that this is still a need now years later through my study (Caraballo, 2017; Ramirez et al., 2016). When asked to describe CSP, the majority of participants provided surface level indicators of what CSP entailed and were unable to make those true connections to what it is and what it looks like in the classroom. Over half of the participants in the study discussed academic diversity heavily when asked how CSP was used in their planning process rather than discussing cultural diversity and those funds of knowledge that come from contextual knowledge. The findings in this study show that work needs to be done to specifically model CSP in the classrooms for students to see and then feel more confident in doing so themselves (Peters et al., 2018).

In chapter six, I provide specific recommendations for how EPPs can address their strategies for teaching CSP and modeling its use for PSTs. The PSTs in this study have a starting point with their ability to connect with their students through getting to know their personal preferences, interests, and location. Going forward, the PSTs need to dig deeper into the cultural backgrounds and perceptions of their students in order to begin the work that CSP aims to do, to sustain cultures within the classroom (Paris & Alim, 2017). This area of work is extremely important given the current divisive concepts laws being passed around the state and teaching the PSTs in finding ways to continue to advocate for marginalized students through our pedagogical practices (Florido, 2021; LePage, 2021; Stitzlein, 2022).

**Knowledge of MCL in EPPs**

When conducting this research, my goal was to better understand how PSTs select MCL for their placement classrooms as a means of CSP. When looking at the data and the themes that emerged, we can see that when selecting literature, the students considered the academic needs of their students more than the cultural connections. The absence of the connection of MCL being a way of using CSP in the classroom in student responses also shows that students are equating academics to culture. The participants frequently discussed academic needs and content needs in their responses and when reviewing the literature lists, which was presented as well. Several studies have shown that PSTs were ill prepared to select books that were representative of their students (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Hartsfield &
When PSTs have a difficult time knowing the backgrounds of their students, they have a more difficult time selecting effective instructional strategies and resources for them (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Grant & Goddard, 2009; Lowenstein, 2009; Marx & Pecina, 2016). My research supports that EPPs need more direct instruction on what constitutes a piece of MCL as well as how to use the diversity of the classroom to select ones that are appropriate for the given student population.

MCL is a key part of helping PSTs shape children’s values and ideas of society based on what they select (Bishop, 1990; Brinson, 2012; Botelho, 2020; Hintz, 2019; McCullough, 2013; Reynolds, 2012). All students deserve books that reflect who they are in a respectful manner and enhances their abilities to learn (Bishop, 1990; Brinson, 2012; Kelly et al., 2020). While looking at the findings, we can see that the participants in the study selected literature that enhanced their abilities to learn, but only based on the content of the standards that needed to be taught and the academic reading levels of their students, not necessarily their cultural needs (see Appendix C). Students learn better with books that help them make connections with the content and real life experiences relevant to them (McCullough, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994/2009).

The heavy discussions of diversity with content and reading levels and the lack of discussions of diversity in characters, authors, and experiences within the texts shows students do not have a depth of knowledge on MCL or how to purposefully select it for their student populations. My study mirrors others in that PSTs are unsure of what MCL is and therefore not being purposeful in using it (Brinson, 2012; Bennett et al., 2018; Iwai, 2013). González, Moll, and Amanti (2005) concurred this in their work on *funds of knowledge* as “cultural resources for teachers” (p. 19). Starting with the basic understanding of what MCL is, and then a discussion of mirror, windows and sliding glass doors texts would benefit PSTs in a basic understanding of how texts can empower students as well as help them understand others (Bishop, 1990; Botelho, 2020; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Glazier & Seo, 2005). From there, students can begin to make more meaningful connections when selecting and using the texts in the classroom through conversations about cultural acceptance and awareness (Ramirez et al., 2016). I aimed to study if students...
were able to use MCL as a means of CSP and my findings indicate there are still misconceptions about what this means to our PSTs.

I believe that this lack of MCL in the literature selections goes back to the understanding that PSTs are lacking in their foundational knowledge of CSP. For this study, I wanted to explore if PSTs used MCL as a means of CSP. Seeing through the data that students have a surface level understanding of CSP, it creates a ripple effect where they struggle to understand and select MCL as well. Research has shown that if students are unfamiliar with the contextual factors of the students in their class, the instructional choices they make do not reflect the needs of their students (Iwai, 2013; Nganga, 2015). This is evidenced in my data as well. The majority of participants in my study did not know enough about the cultural backgrounds of their students to make cultural connections with their selection of MCL. Alice was able to select a book that had characters representative of the Hispanic culture within her classroom, but the other participants selected books either relevant to the content, reading levels, or interests of their students. Purposeful education on not only CSP, but also MCL and how to use it effectively in the classroom is crucial for our EPPs to teach (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Gopalakrishnan, 2011; Iwai, 2013; Jacobs, 2018). Our PSTs need this kind of explicit education in order to be able to provide quality education for all students in the classroom regardless of the different constraints being placed upon PSTs or teachers within the educational system.

In chapter six, I provide more recommendations for EPPs based on the findings in my study. More purposeful instruction on multicultural literature needs to occur for students to then select books appropriately for use in their classrooms. As mentioned before, students need the foundational knowledge of equity pedagogies in order to select multicultural literature for their classrooms that allows students to connect or to learn from a new perspective. Using MCL as a tool for CSP in the classroom is an underutilized resource because PSTs are not being provided with the knowledge of what MCL and its impact in the classroom.
For Curriculum Studies

The findings in this study are important for the area of curriculum studies. While the case study was conducted with participants in an initial certification undergraduate program, the findings here are still applicable for graduate program work as well. In order for more educators, whether preservice, in-service, or teacher educators, to become advocates for marginalized students, there needs to be more development in the areas of identity and biases. Courses in curriculum studies can focus on identity development and how our identities feed into conscious and subconscious biases. Having this foundation is crucial for educators to be able to identify these and understand their implications in their classrooms. By doing the difficult work of uncovering identities and biases, educators can then identify the sometimes hidden power relations that occur in the educational settings. Being able to identify these, allows teachers to advocate for better resources for their students that are accessible, multicultural and allow students to have global perspectives.

Conclusion

This study explored PSTs understanding of CSP and selection of MCL in the classroom as a means of CSP. Through the case study design, I was able to code and analyze the data to form common themes regarding CSP and MCL as a means of CSP. The themes of knowledge of students and use of real life examples and location emerged when analyzing the first part of the research question regarding CSP. The themes of selection by content, academic levels, and student interest emerged when analyzing the second part of the research question regarding MCL. Overall, my findings show that while the PSTs had good intentions for enacting CSP, their surface level understanding of CSP made that difficult. The PSTs equate knowledge of students’ culture with personal preferences rather than cultural backgrounds and experiences. This in turn makes it difficult to properly select MCL that is reflective of diverse backgrounds. This analysis shows that EPPs are not effectively training PSTs in CSP and their use in the classroom.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: WE HAVE WORK TO DO

It is crucial for educator preparation programs (EPPs) to prepare preservice teachers (PSTs) for their future classrooms and students. This includes creating competency with content knowledge, varying instructional strategies, and cultural awareness. All of these are key to being an effective educator in our diverse society (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). In this study, I wanted to explore the last area of cultural awareness through PSTs understanding of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and their use of multicultural children’s literature (MCL) as a means of enacting CSP in their classrooms. My research question was: How do preservice teachers understand culturally sustaining pedagogy and select multicultural children’s literature for use in their field experience classrooms as a means of enacting CSP?

In this final chapter, I provide an overview of the study, including the context, theoretical framework, methods, findings, and discussion points. After the overview, I will then describe my recommendations based on the findings from my study. These will highlight recommendations for EPPs moving forward, as well as future research and data sources used in studies in this area. I will then discuss the limitations on my study and how these can be used to design future studies to address these limitations, the significance of my study and findings to the field of Curriculum Studies, and my final thoughts on PSTs, CSP, and MCL based on my research.

Overview of the Study

In order to research this question, I used the theoretical framework of CSP. This was a natural connection given the question, but also equity pedagogies are an important piece in education currently with the aftermath of the coronavirus, or COVID-19, the ongoing #Black Lives Matter, or BLM, movement, and the current divisive concepts educational laws. These events heavily impacted the way that society looks at education, the way that teachers connect with their students, constraints placed on teachers in pedagogical decisions, and the curriculum being implemented. Using CSP is inclusive of those events, multiple ethnicities, and interactions between teachers and students that include, but also go beyond, the curriculum. When conducting the literature review, I broke the research question down into
two sections of PSTs and CSP then PSTs and MCL. I believe that breaking it down in this way gave me a greater knowledge of the research surrounding both of these areas and helped me to have a better understanding of what research has studied and how mine would be a good fit in this dialogue. CSP is lens in which MCL is viewed because it is an enactment of the pedagogy.

My research study addressed the need of continuing to understand why PSTs feel a disconnect to their student populations, how they understand equity pedagogies such as CSP, and instructional strategies, such as MCL, that can be used to connect to the diverse populations in their classrooms. I also selected to use the data source of video recordings because one of my exemplar studies listed in their implications and recommendations to provide more rich data in this way (Christ & Sharma, 2018). While understanding CSP is a broad question, I narrowed down my research to explore a specific instructional strategy within literacy of using MCL in order to set my research apart from the others.

For this study, I utilized a single case study with five participants who were all completing their student teaching semester in the EPP of which I worked. I did not supervise or interact in an authoritative manner with any of the participants in order to not skew the results of the study. The participants may have interacted with me in previous semesters as an instructor, but I was not an instructor or supervisor of record for any participant in this study. The participants all participated in the Return to Home (RTH) pathway which allowed them to complete their student teaching experience in their hometown or county. This common characteristic bound the participants in this study. They all taught in different counties across the state and had a variety of demographics, socioeconomic statuses, locations, and experiences. This wide range gives more validity and transferability to the study as it was conducted across a wide range of factors (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

From my findings, I can concur that PSTs lack a true understanding of CSP and how it is used in the classroom. The majority of my participants cited surface level understandings of CSP and its classroom practices. More often than not, the PSTs equated CSP to diversity in academics or personal preferences. The participants in this study cited knowledge of students, academically and socially, along with their location as how PSTs understand CSP. While there many forms of diversity, the inclusion of
cultural backgrounds was not evident in their responses. The lack of discussion on cultural backgrounds and traditions speaks to their misinterpretation of the heart of CSP (Paris & Alim, 2017). They focused on the surface characteristics or personal preferences of their students including interests, hobbies, and academic abilities instead of digging into their cultural backgrounds, practices, and experiences that truly envelope the goal of CSP. Connecting to that, the majority of the participants were unable to select MCL that were purposefully selected based on their diverse student populations. Instead, the PSTs relied on the diversity of academic abilities or personal preferences of their students. The lack of cultural knowledge about the students in their classrooms hindered the PSTs’ ability to select books that are connected to their backgrounds. The participants instead indicated in their semi-structured interview responses that they selected books that aligned with the content and academic abilities of the students, which while important but do not connect to the heart of CSP.

In my implications, I stated that EPPs need to do a better job of helping PSTs to develop a solid foundational understanding of equity pedagogies such as CSP. They need to do so by addressing the tenets of CSP, addressing whiteness and privilege in a way that is relevant and makes sense to PSTs, and the modeling of practical instructional strategies that can be seen and utilized within the classroom. Doing this groundwork first will then help students to better understand MCL and its value and place in the classroom as a means of CSP. PSTs, or in-service teachers, cannot purposefully select books that are reflective of the diversity in their classrooms if they are unaware of it or have misinterpreted what it means to do that.

**Recommendations Based on this Study**

Based on the findings in my study, I have outlined the following recommendations for EPPs and researchers to continue this conversation involving an equity pedagogy like CSP and PSTs. First and foremost, I discuss my recommendations involving how EPPs are approaching CSP and diversity and MCL education, following that by data collection strategies that need to continue to be explored moving forward. While asset-pedagogy use and PSTs is a saturated area of research, this study highlights how
more needs to be explored in order for EPPs to better equip PSTs for this knowledge and how to use it in their classrooms to connect with diverse student populations.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Education in Education Preparation Programs

Based on the findings, discussions, and implications listed in chapter five, more work needs to be done in the area of PSTs and their knowledge of equity pedagogies, such as CSP. Research, including my own findings and that of the literature review, has shown that PSTs have a significant lack of understanding regarding the core of CSP. Students are unable to grasp the tenets and how those are implemented in classroom practices according to both the literature review and my own findings. There is a surface level understanding and implementation of CSP. In order to continue the exploration of this gap, my recommendation is to now examine the ways that EPPs are approaching learning and discussions about CSP in the course work. Every EPP in the state in which this study took place has to include diversity and education courses in the EPPs based on the requirements of the Standards Commissions organization that accredits all EPPs and certifies all teachers in the state. Relevant discussions and applications need to be occurring in order to help PSTs fully grasp the tenets of CSP and its implications in the classroom. Since several studies, including my own, are noting this as an issue, we need to better grasp how it is being taught in order to begin changing this process for better understanding.

EPPs typically have a variety of courses focused on diversity within their curriculum. In my particular EPP, they are front loaded in block one then one or two are included during block two and four (see Appendix A). Students need more direct discussions on diversity, asset and equity pedagogy, whiteness and privilege, and practical applications during their course work and practicum experiences while in EPPs. A study of the frequency of these courses and the ways in which diversity is being taught will be valuable in establishing effective practices and areas of growth in this learning. Research has shown that those teaching in EPPs tend to shy away from the actual deep and sometimes controversial conversations of understanding diversity, cultural backgrounds, and biases because it makes students uncomfortable (Bissonette, 2016; Galman et al., 2010). In that case, EPPs are enabling this surface level
understanding of CSP through their methods of instruction. Based on the literature review and my data, what EPPS are doing is not working so an alternative approach must be found.

More recently, scholars have been exploring how ethnicity contributes to the understanding and usage of equity pedagogies (Borrero et al., 2016; Maddamsetti, 2020; Sleeter, 2017). For this study, I had five participants who were all Return to Home (RTH) student teachers completing their final student teaching experience in their home counties. Of the five participants, three were white females and two were women of color (see chapter 3). In my discussions, I noted the different levels of responses from my participants when comparing the responses of my participants of color versus my participants who were white. I noted that my participants of color had a greater understanding and connection to culture in their responses than my participants who were white. This phenomenon needs greater exploration as this dialogue is important for EPPs to understand as they plan ways to teach CSP to PSTs. Utilizing the experiences and perceptions of CSP creates more meaningful learning experiences for all, including discussing whiteness and the dominant privilege of society. Studying how students of different ethnicities perceive CSP will aid EPPs in being able to do a more effective job at meeting and teaching every PST where they are at regarding CSP.

**Multicultural Children’s Literature in Educator Preparation Programs**

PSTs lack a general knowledge of what MCL is and how to select it for their classroom use. Research showed that students struggled to select MCL because they had a surface level understanding of their students (Bennett et al., 2018; Brinson, 2012; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Iwai, 2013; Jacobs, 2018). The findings from this study do echo this in that the majority of participants did not indicate that they selected literature based on the cultural backgrounds of the students, but instead made selection decisions based mostly on the content and academic abilities of their students. PSTs need more concrete instruction on what MCL is and how it can be used in the classroom to enhance instruction (Gere at al., 2009). Reflecting on the lists submitted by the participants as well as their semi-structured interview responses, the focus on selecting literature does not reflect cultural awareness of the students in their classrooms. Many scholars in my literature review also cited the lack of awareness of both what MCL is as well as
knowledge of their classroom cultures contributed to limited usage of MCL in classrooms (Brinson, 2012; Christ & Sharma, 2018; Gere et al., 2009; Iwai, 2013; Nganga, 2015).

Based on this information, I recommend that EPPs include education on what multicultural literature is, examples of texts that are considered multicultural and ways that those texts can be utilized in the classroom. This type of instruction could be included in the English Language Arts methods courses or diversity courses taught in EPPs. In the literature review, PSTs cited that they did not have much exposure to MCLs and therefore knew little about them or how to use them in their classrooms (Iwai, 2013). Based on the literature lists and interview responses, I can conclude this to be accurate based on my findings. While the participants in my study did have a brief exposure to MCL during their senior seminar course, the one-time occurrence was not enough to build the skills in the PSTs to implement them in the classroom. More in depth instruction and practice needs to occur in EPPs for PSTs to apply their knowledge with their future students.

**Use of Video Recordings as Data Sources**

While conducting my literature review, I came across several studies highlighting asset and equity pedagogies, children’s literature, and qualitative research, specifically reflecting on the work of Jacobs (2018) and Christ and Sharma (2018). When selecting exemplar studies, one noted that the use of video would be beneficial in learning more about this topic (Christ & Sharma, 2018). I selected to use video recordings of my participants teaching as one of my data sources. This made sense to me based on the limitation noted in Christ and Sharma’s (2018) work, but also because the participants were already doing these recordings, so it did not any additional work for them. Each participant submitted a video of themselves teaching their lesson as part of the study. This video was then viewed by the participant and the participant highlighted two or three time stamps of where they felt CSP was occurring and/or where MCL was being used. The researcher also viewed the video and took observational notes as additional discussion points during the semi-structured interview between the participant and researcher when discussing CSP and MCL.
Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of video recordings of teaching is becoming more prevalent than ever (Dockerty, 2022; Ersin & Atay, 2020). Using the video recordings as a data source allowed the participants to be able to reflect and view scenarios where they were being culturally sustaining in their teaching. Without the use of videos, participants and the researcher would not be able to see these moments and the discussions could be misinterpreted, as they would be recollections and could be biased or not as valid (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2012; Roschelle, 2000). Continuing the use of video recordings in this type of research is beneficial for many reasons. It allows the researcher to observe in the moment teaching while not having to be in real time or location. This enables a wider range of participants in multiple spaces (Yin, 2018). The video recordings also provide more valid examples that can be used for data collection versus being interpreted by the participant or researcher in a way that may not have happened. Ensuring that the video is of high quality with sound and images is key as some of the video submissions had times that were difficult to decipher and therefore unusable during the study.

Another reason I suggest using more video recordings as data sources for this kind of research is because EPPs can use them as discussion points to coach students on how to be culturally sustaining in their teaching through pointing our successful and effective moments where it occurred or pointing out missed opportunities where growth needs to happen (Haynes-Brown & Shannon-Baker, 2021). The use videos to help students see opportunities for CSP connects to Casciola’s (2014) work on culturally responsive coaching. The data shows that students need a better foundational knowledge of CSP in order to begin to practice it in the classroom, however, that education of CSP and its practice cannot stop once they leave campus and enter into practicum sites. Video recordings allow for this dialogue to continue so PSTs can bridge the gap between the theories and ideas of CSP and how it is practiced effectively in the classroom with diverse populations of students.

**Limitations**

I noted limitations to my study in my methodology chapter. One of those limitations that I still feel is important to note is the number of participants in this study. My single case study involved five participants from one EPP out of 53 possible participants. Conducting this study on a larger scale could
I also have given more perspectives on CSP and how MCL is, or is not, being utilized in the classroom. I also think that having more participants would give more validity to the research in general because of the multiple data sets to analyze and pattern match. A multiple case study could be utilized depending on the number of participants bounding them by EPPs (Yin, 2004). This would allow the researcher a more in depth view of the knowledge gained from individual EPPs on CSP and MCL. With all of the being said, there is also strength in my study due to this number of participants. The smaller number allowed for a more in-depth study. The number of data sources collected worked with a smaller participant size so that the coding and analysis could be more detailed and explored thoroughly. Also, the participants in this study were all students who returned to their home counties to student teach and had virtual supervision from the University level. This does provide a different context when reflecting on the transferability of this study. A study where student teachers had more face to face interactions with their University supervisor might yield different results and conversations surrounding culture and equity pedagogical decisions.

I also think that the relationship of the researcher to the participants could be a limitation in the way students responded to the semi-structured interview questions. I was not a supervisor of the participants during this study so they might not have felt a close connection with me and may have not disclosed all of their thoughts and actions related to my question in the way they would have with someone they felt more comfortable with. Another limitation could be that of my ethnicity as a white female. It may have been a limitation in the study given the nature of studying culture sustaining pedagogy and the uncomfortableness that could occur with this type of conversation and research. It is very common for teacher educators to teach and discuss CSP but shy away from truly engaging in those practices while teaching and interacting with PSTs (Evans et. al., 2020; Fashing-Varner & Seriki, 2011; Hayes & Juárez, 2011; Leonardo & Gamez-Djokic, 2019; Warren & Talley, 2017). With that being said, alternatively my ethnicity as a white female could have prevented me also from digging deeper into their thoughts about racial diversity and demographics or CSP as to not make my participants feel uncomfortable or defensive.
Significance to Curriculum Studies

With the teacher shortage occurring in the United States, it is crucial that EPPs are creating PSTs that are equipped to teach and interact with diverse student populations. In order to do so, learning about and practicing how to use equity pedagogies is crucial to build cultural competence and empathy in PSTs. This study explored how PSTs understand a specific equity pedagogy, CSP, and how PSTs used MCL as a means of enacting CSP in the classroom. This study is important in the field of Curriculum Studies because it looks at how marginalized students are viewed and represented through the educational decisions in the classrooms, specifically through using multicultural children’s literature as a source of culturally sustaining practices. Historically, marginalized students have had little exposure to books that are representative of their ethnicities, languages, and practices (Botelho, 2015). If anything, these marginalized students have only experienced literature that reflects themselves in the form of learning about different holidays or months that celebrate diversity (Gopalakrishnan, 2011). The fact that these types of texts are still either being used in a surface level manner or not at all makes this a very relevant conversation in curriculum studies. We have to teach our PSTs how to move beyond this and create meaningful connections through the text selections and the conversations initiated around the text (Paris & Alim 2017; Swartz, 2020).

This study is also significant as it looks to advocate for students of color to be provided with an education that relates and sustains their cultures and languages represented in their households (Paris & Alim, 2017). Often times, students of color do not have instruction that is relevant and tailored to their specific needs or backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 2021a). Many theories such as CRP, CRT, and CSP have shed light on these inconsistencies and aimed to rectify this imbalance in education for students of color compared to white students (Ladson-Billings, 2021a). Curriculum studies seeks social justice for educational settings and the CSP theoretical framework of this study aligns with those goals. While the pedagogy aspects of how to utilize in a classroom are instruction based in this study, the heart of advocating for justice for the marginalized student populations and understanding how that is perceived by PSTs through CSP speaks to the nature of curriculum studies, making this study significant to its
cause. The constraints placed on teachers and teacher educators due to government mandates or new educational laws such as divisive concepts (Stitzlein, 2022), which are beyond the control of those actually working in the classroom, continues to perpetuate these injustices. There is still much work to be done in this area, and therefore this study adds to the growing conversation of advocacy in education for students of color, which is a focus for curriculum studies.

**Final Thoughts**

Continuing the conversations surrounding the need for equity pedagogies in the classroom is crucial for striving toward a more equitable education for all students. Research has shown for decades that there is a gap in the resources, expectations of student achievement, and the educational opportunities affordable for students of color. This study continues to highlight those findings and that while there have been decades of research, a solution has yet to be found. While the participants in this study did seem to have a better ability to build relationships with their elementary students as compared to studies prior, they were still in the same position of lacking true cultural knowledge of their students. Work has been done in this area to try to shorten those gaps including research in methods such as culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogies, however, as this study shows we are still not achieving our goal of creating culturally sustaining pedagogues. Providing our educators, both current and future, with more knowledge about culturally sustaining pedagogies and its tenets, instructional practices that reflect those ideas, and an overall appreciation for the cultural diversity in the classroom is so important now more than ever to reach our growing diverse student populations in the United States.

Based on the findings in this study, EPPs are beginning to do more work on the importance of relationship building between teachers and students, but they are missing the focus on equity pedagogies in relation to cultural knowledge. Research primarily in the 2000s and 2010s noted that teachers felt overwhelmed by getting to know students of different cultural backgrounds than their own (Christ & Sharma, 2018; Jacobs, 2018; Lowenstein, 2009; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The participants in this study made connections to their abilities to get to know their students more and using that information in their planning to help students feel more connected to the curriculum. However, this
knowledge they used was based on students’ personal preferences or academic abilities, not necessarily cultural backgrounds and experiences. The participants in my study spoke about knowing the students academically and socially, but more work needs to be done to help PSTs begin to learn and understand their students culturally. EPPs must do a better job of truly addressing diversity, biases, asset and equity pedagogies, and modeling this for our PSTs. By doing so, PSTs can then make more conscious instructional decisions that connect to their students’ cultural practices, help them connect their backgrounds to the education of the classroom, and build more cultural competence and empathy within themselves and their students.

This study highlights the deficit within EPPs where PSTs are not being given the proper knowledge or tools to understand and implement equity pedagogies. The findings from my study show that PSTs are focused on the academics rather than the cultural uniqueness of the students in their classroom settings. While attempting to connect with CSP values, PSTs often cited personal preferences or personal social characteristics. This is not what CSP is aiming for teachers to understand. CSP wants teachers, or PSTs in this study, to go beyond that and understand the cultural practices, thoughts, and languages of the students and use those to create relevant, meaningful experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2021a/b; Paris & Alim, 2017). PSTs are claiming to see the cultures of their students but have not been taught what culture means or looks like outside of racial diversity. This study highlights that EPPs have a need to fill in regard to the way diversity, equity pedagogy, and cultural knowledge of students is addressed. After that foundational work is complete, PSTs can then be exposed to strategies and teaching methods to use within their planning and teaching including MCL. Without the foundation of equity pedagogies, PSTs cannot understand the value of MCL nor how to properly select it for the students within their classrooms. Without knowledge of CSP and MCL, the effective use of MCL will not occur in the classroom as indicated in the findings of this study.

All students deserve an education that puts them at the center and grows from their funds of knowledge (González et al., 2005). These assets from student’s personal and cultural experiences and backgrounds create meaningful educational opportunities that are still untapped in today’s classroom.
Utilizing equity pedagogies, such as CSP, opens that door and allows equitable education for marginalized students (Paris & Alim, 2017). Going even further, using multicultural children’s literature that connects with the diverse populations in the classroom enhances the learning experience even more for students as they see themselves represented in the literature as a mirror, but also helps their classmates learn more about alternate ideas and perspectives as a window (Bishop, 1990; Botelho, 2015; Brinson, 2012). Overall, using CSP and MCL as a means of CSP is a symbiotic relationship that continues to prosper for both the PST and the students in their classrooms overall, however, there is still a greater need to foster that relationship at the EPP level so it can be transferred into the K-5 sector.
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<td>Critical and Contemporary Issues in Education*</td>
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<td>Sociocultural Perspectives on Diversity*</td>
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# APPENDIX B

Lesson Plan Template for Unit of Study

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<th>Objective(s)</th>
<th>Links for materials for each section</th>
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<td><strong>Day 1</strong> (repeat for each day)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction (Order can be adjusted)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Behavior Expectations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hook</td>
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<td>EQ/I Can</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connection to Previous Learning/Prior Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction (Order can be adjusted)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Instruction/Modeling</td>
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<td>Guided Practice</td>
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<td>Independent Practice/Assessment</td>
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<td><strong>Closure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Review</td>
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<td>EQ/I Can</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connection to future learning/Real World</td>
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<td><strong>Assessment (Describe your assessments here)</strong></td>
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<td>-Describe your assessment given during Independent Practice</td>
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<td><strong>Unit Time Contingencies</strong></td>
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<td>If I have extra time:</td>
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<td>Students who finish early will:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students with special learning needs:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students that need extensions/supports or more challenge:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Appendix C

## Participant Literature Lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Book Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>1. <em>Measuring Penny</em></td>
<td>Loreen Leedy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <em>Hersey’s Milk Chocolate Weights</em></td>
<td>Jerry Pallotta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. <em>How Long or How Wide</em></td>
<td>Brian Cleary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. <em>How Tall, How Short, How Far Away</em></td>
<td>David Adler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. <em>Beanstalk: The Measure of a Giant</em></td>
<td>Ann McCallum</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. <em>How Tall: Wacky Ways to Compare Height</em></td>
<td>Mark Andrew Weakland</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. <em>Me and the Measure of Things</em></td>
<td>Joan Sweeney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. <em>Inch by Inch</em></td>
<td>Leo Lionni</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. <em>How Big is a Foot?</em></td>
<td>Rolf Myller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makayla</td>
<td>1. <em>Aliens from Earth: When Animals and Plants</em></td>
<td>Mary Batten</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Invade Other Ecosystems</em></td>
<td>Dorothy Hinshaw</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <em>When the Wolves Returned: Restoring Nature’s</em></td>
<td>Lee Martin</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Balance in Yellowstone</em></td>
<td>Greg Pizzoli</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. <em>Dinosaurs VS. Beasts 20 Awesome Battles</em></td>
<td>Demi</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>From The Triassic To The Ice Age</em></td>
<td>Don Brown</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Tricky Vic: The Impossibly True Story of the Man</em></td>
<td>Chris Barton</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Who Sold the Eiffel Tower</em></td>
<td>William Kamkwamba</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. <em>One Grain of Rice: A Mathematical Folktale</em></td>
<td>Judith Viorst</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. <em>Aaron and Alexander: The Most Famous Duel</em></td>
<td>Robert McCloskey</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>in American History</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. <em>Whoosh!: Lonnie Johnson's Super-Soaking</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Stream of Inventions</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>7. <em>The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. <em>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good,</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Very Bad Day</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. <em>Blueberries for Sal</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>1. <em>Roots, Stems, Leaves, and Flowers</em></td>
<td>Ruth Owen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <em>Parts of a Plant</em></td>
<td>Wiley Blevins</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. <em>Seed to Plant</em></td>
<td>Kristin Baird Rattini</td>
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<td>4. <em>Kids Learn: Parts of a Plant</em></td>
<td>Kira Freed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. <em>From Seed to Plant</em></td>
<td>Gail Gibbons</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. <em>Oh Say Can You Seed?</em></td>
<td>Bonnie Worth</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. <em>Seeds</em></td>
<td>Grace Hansen</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. <em>Leaves</em></td>
<td>Grace Hansen</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. <em>Jack and the Beanstalk</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>1. <em>If You Were a Kid During the American</em></td>
<td>Wil Mara</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Revolution</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>The History of the American Revolution</em></td>
<td>Emma Carlson Berne</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>I am George Washington</em></td>
<td>Brad Meltzer</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><em>Guts &amp; Glory The American Revolution</em></td>
<td>Ben Thompson</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td><em>I Survived: The American Revolution, 1776</em></td>
<td>Lauren Tarshis</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td><em>History Smashers: The American Revolution</em></td>
<td>Kate Messner</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td><em>The Revolutionary War</em></td>
<td>Josh Gregory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><em>If you were a Capital Letter</em></td>
<td>Trisha Sue Speed Shaskan</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Shelby | No list Provided |
## Appendix D

### Data Collection Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Collection Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-August 2022 (Attempt 1)</td>
<td>Participant Recruitment / Participant Demographics</td>
<td>Qualtrics Survey administered via Student email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of September 2022 (Attempt 2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2022</td>
<td>N/A – Informed Consent Forms Acquired</td>
<td>Qualtrics Survey administered via Participant email</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2022</td>
<td>Written Artifacts – Unit Lesson Plans &amp; Literature Lists</td>
<td>Participants submitted to Researcher’s password protected email then moved to password protected database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2022</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of October 2022 to Beginning of November 2022</td>
<td>Video Recordings of Teaching</td>
<td>Participants submitted to Researcher’s password protected email then moved to password protected database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning to Mid-November 2022</td>
<td>Recorded Zoom Interviews</td>
<td>Recordings were saved to the Researcher’s password protected database</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E

Consent Form

Informed Consent
for
Preservice Teachers, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, and Multicultural Children’s Literature

1. My name is Heather Huling, and I am a doctoral candidate at Georgia Southern University. I am completing this research as part of my dissertation, which is a requirement of the program for graduation with a doctoral degree in Education. This research is valuable because it will help to better understand how preservice teachers understand and use culturally sustaining practices through literature in the classroom. Educator Preparation programs, such as the one in which I work, will gain from this in being able to understand preservice teachers and better equip them in their programs and courses for future classrooms.

2. The purpose of this research is to gain more understanding of preservice teachers’ understanding and use of multicultural children’s literature as a means of practicing culturally sustaining pedagogy.

3. Procedures to be followed: Your participation in this research will include completion of submission of the Unit of Study Children’s Literature List and selected Lesson Plan electronically, teaching video of selected lesson plan, and participation in a semi-structured interview. All but the semi-structured interview are part of the ELEM 4799 course that you are taking as a student teacher in your final semester prior to graduation.

4. Discomforts and Risks: This study poses minimal risk which may be embarrassment or uncomfortableness when learning about culturally sustaining pedagogy or discussing their use of it in the lesson plans and teaching video. This should be minimal but does pose a risk in the study.
   - For virtual (internet based) interviews: I am careful to ensure that the information you voluntarily provide to me is as secure as possible; however, you must be aware that transmissions over the Internet cannot be guaranteed to be completely secure. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology being used. You will be subject to the privacy policy of Zoom.

5. Benefits:
   a. The benefits to you as a participant include learning how to utilize culturally sustaining practices in the classroom to empower students through multicultural children’s literature. Using texts as a way to connect, empower, and appreciate students in the
classroom helps teachers to feel more comfortable and connected in the classroom and helps students to feel valued and accepted.

b. The benefits to society include better preparing future teachers to work with diverse populations of students in their classrooms. This includes selecting literature that reflects the demographics of the classroom and making all feel included, appreciated, empowered, and sustained. This also is a benefit to society given the current teacher shortage and attrition issues that have been trending in education.

6. Duration/Time required from the participant: No more than 2-3 hours total. The semi-structured interview will be 25-30 minutes. The remainder of the materials, parts of the Unit of Study, are electronically submitted as part of the course that you are currently enrolled in, ELEM 4799. The time frame of the additional 1.5-2.5 hours listed are dependent upon your personal time to complete the assignments for your course.

7. Statement of Confidentiality: All data from this study will be accessible by me, Heather Huling, only. As the principal researcher, I will maintain the data sources on a password protected computer. All electronic submissions of work and recorded interviews will be maintained there. Data will be de-identified by me and stored in a secure location for future research use.

8. Future use of data: Deidentified or coded data from this study may be placed in a publicly available repository for study validation and further research. You will not be identified by name in the data set or any reports using information obtained from this study, and your confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.

9. Right to Ask Questions: You have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher’s faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board at 912-478-5465 or irb@georgiasouthern.edu.

10. Voluntary Participation: You do not have to participate in this research study, and you may end your participation at any time by contacting me, Heather Huling.

11. Penalty: There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study; You may decide at any time that you don’t want to participate further and may withdraw without penalty.

12. FERPA: For this study, I ask that you share some parts of your Unit of Study with me electronically. These will be stored in a secure location on a password protected computer. The parts will be your children’s literature list, lesson plan, and the video of you teaching this lesson. These artifacts of student work will be de-identified using a pseudonym in order to protect your confidentiality. Only the Primary Investigator and Faculty Advisor will have access to the data collected for this study. You will not be identified by name in any reports using information obtained from this study.

13. All information will be treated confidentially. There is one exception to confidentiality that we need to make you aware of. In certain research studies, it is my ethical responsibility to report situations of child or elder abuse, child or elder neglect, or any life-threatening situation to appropriate authorities. However, I am not seeking this type of information in my study, nor will you be asked questions about these issues.
14. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records. This project has been reviewed and approved by the GS Institutional Review Board under tracking number H23023.

Title of Project: PRESERVICE TEACHERS, CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY, AND MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN’S LITERATURE
Principal Investigator: Heather M. Huling, 912-478-5701, hhuling@georgiasouthern.edu
Research Advisor: Delores Liston, 912-478-1551, listond@georgiasouthern.edu

Please select an option below to indicate whether you agree to participate in this research:

- Yes, I read the terms above and consent to participate in this research.
- No, I do not consent to participate in this research.