

# Culturally Responsive Teaching: Examining Teachers' Understandings and Perspectives

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## Abstract

This action research study examines a graduate level course on Ethnicity and Education. Eighteen teacher participants enrolled in a Master of Education program. Course instructors analyzed teacher participants' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching. A teaching plan, a post-course questionnaire, a focus group interview, and a follow up questionnaire were collected after the course. Analysis of the data generated three themes: 1) Doing culturally responsive activities; 2) Moving towards culturally responsive teaching as a perspective; and 3) Being a culturally responsive teacher. This article suggests ways teacher educators might re-conceptualize culture-based courses to deepen teacher perspectives rather than merely enhance teaching activities which support culturally responsive teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** culturally responsive teaching, ethnicity and education, teacher education

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Teacher Education and Diversity Coursework

Teacher education curricula across the United States often include courses about cultural diversity intended to promote a just and equitable education for all. Professional organizations such as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment Support Consortium (INTASC) include standards that emphasize culturally responsive teaching practices. Despite emphasis on diversity, teacher education programs can offer fragmented and superficial treatments of diversity (Mills, 2008). Additionally, empirical studies on multicultural teacher education coursework and fieldwork show slight and inconsistent effects on future teachers' perceptions of diversity (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2003) and at times, teacher candidates negate the need to be culturally responsive by resisting conceptions of diversity and maintaining their naïve understandings of equity (Rose & Potts, 2011). Although there has been a strong emphasis on multicultural education (Banks, 1981), culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000), helping teachers become culturally responsive continues to challenge teacher educators today (Ladson-Billings, 2011).

### 1.2 Culturally Responsive Teaching

Earlier studies which incorporated students' culture and instruction centered on the notion that there is a cultural mismatch between school and home. The terms used to describe the cultural mismatch—*culturally appropriate* (Au, 1980), and *culturally compatible* (Jordan, 1985), are useful; however, they can imply that the students' culture should accommodate the mainstream culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Students bring with them a set of values and beliefs, or their “funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) from their homes and neighborhood cultures that may complement or clash with the school culture, and may legitimate the social, economic, political, and cultural hegemonic values of the dominant society. Thus, other terms such as *culturally responsive teaching* (Gay, 2000), *culturally responsive instruction* (Au, 2007) and *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995) promote social justice through a focus on equality and celebration of diversity. While each of these terms have specific meanings and distinctions, with respect to this particular inquiry, the term *culturally responsive teaching* is employed to highlight the three major dimensions of culturally responsive teaching: 1) Cultural relevance and pedagogy is connected to students'

cultural backgrounds (Gay, 2000; Sleeter & Grant, 2000). 2) Communities of learners socially construct knowledge inclusive of all students (Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). 3) Culturally responsive teaching reflects a social justice perspective and challenges assumptions, and the status quo (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter and Grant, 2000).

### *1.3 Complex Challenges*

While teacher educators have been successful at helping teachers teaching in culturally responsive ways, (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries; 2003; Gay, 2000; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Nieto, 2000) the development of culturally responsive teachers can present several layers of complexity for teacher educators. Teacher educators must help teachers understand their own socio-cultural history (Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and help teachers see that they come with their own cultural identity which positions a person to various forms of oppression and privilege (Cochran-Smith, 2004). This initiates the exploration of the notion of culture and culture group (Gay, 2000). For many teachers discussing and deconstructing one's own socio-cultural history, values, and sharing cultural identity can be uncomfortable and for some, viewed as unnecessary.

Furthermore, building culturally responsive practices requires teachers to construct a broad base of knowledge that shifts as students, contexts, and subject matters change (Banks, et al., 2005). This is further complicated by the fact that their students come to the classroom with multiple cultural identities. Additionally, rather than provide generic strategies for teaching for diversity, teacher educators need to help teachers find "generative ways to understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own" (Cochran-Smith, 1995; p. 495). In most teacher education programs, however, teachers take a "multicultural" or "diversity" course which is an "add on" to regular teacher education programs rather than integrated within the curriculum. This can be problematic because "the very coursework that comprises teacher education fails to take up notions of culture and learning in robust and substantive ways" (Ladson-Billings, 2011; p.14).

Although teachers and teacher educators are often well intended and commit to culturally responsive teaching, teachers and teacher educators may inadvertently or unintentionally present simplistic notions or trivialize culture (Banks, et al., 2005). At times merely providing access to information can provide a superficial view of culture that increases students' awareness of cultural differences and diversity but runs the risk of reinforcing negative stereotypes (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 1999).

Hayes & Juarez (2012) argue that culturally responsive teaching and social justice is not occurring in many public schools and teacher preparation programs in the U.S. due to "privileging of Whiteness in teacher preparation." However, rather than point to issues of race, others argue there is a disconnect between culturally responsive pedagogy's articulated commitments and actual practices and that there are misunderstandings between culturally responsive pedagogy's theoretical underpinnings, implementation, and teachers' praxis when they are in the field (Fasching-Varner and Seriki, 2013). Pollock, Deckman, Mira, and Shalaby (2010)'s research points to the need to address teacher tensions between concrete applications of theoretical ideas about race and everyday activities which disrupt inequity structures. These differences between articulated and actual practices serve as additional struggles for teachers' in the field. These factors clearly assert the increasing challenges ahead for teachers and teacher educators working toward cultural and linguistic relevance, creating communities of learners and working toward social justice.

### *1.4 Research Question*

As instructors of a course on ethnicity and education, our intention was to present teachers with meaningful and relevant treatments of diversity. We wanted for teachers to leave the course being able to implement practices, which support a culturally responsive education. One of the major course assignments was a "Culturally Responsive Teaching Plan (CRTP)." The CRTP required an ethnic profile of their classes along with teaching strategies that clearly outlined how the needs of their learners would be met. To help us understand teacher perceptions we asked the following research questions: 1) What are teachers' understandings of culturally responsive teaching and 2) How do teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching?

## **2. Method**

Data were gathered from a course on ethnicity and education; thus for the purposes of this study we define the notion of culture as racial and ethnic background. While we realize the term culture is inclusive of multiple identity categories such as gender, sexuality, social class, age, etc. it is beyond the scope of this project to address other categories.

The data were gathered from 18 teacher participants with a range of teaching experiences and teaching contexts in a rural island community. Data collection came post course completion. Our study took place over the course of eighteen months and utilized qualitative data collection methods and techniques. Our collaborative group included the course instructor, a co-teaching partner and a teacher education colleague who observed from the side, offering a bit of distance

and another perspective. Both the co-teaching partner and teacher education colleague often helped the primary course instructor thoughtfully problematize practices. We met a total of five times. Together we analyzed coursework products, examined questionnaire responses, participated in a focus group interview, and engaged in critical self-reflective discussion to identify areas of need and ways to enhance the course and university teaching practices.

It is important to note that our own identities as a fourth-generation Japanese-American teacher educator, a Native-Hawaiian cultural practitioner with extensive ancestral knowledge, and a Japanese-American & Native Hawaiian teacher educator and our own transformational educational experiences and histories with unjust of inequitable schooling influenced our perspectives in unique ways. At the same time, we all grew up within the same state; thus, we had similar ethnic and lived experiences with the population of teacher participants we taught.

### *2.1 Teacher Participants*

The eighteen teacher participants in the study were part of a cohort. At the time of the course they had taken 23 credits together and had a firmly established sense of community. Years of teaching experience ranged from two to twenty years. There were five males and thirteen females. The class included four White males and females, twelve of the class members were of “mixed” ethnicity (Asian or Native Hawaiian mixture), and two were Japanese-American teachers. There was one English Language Learner and a few teachers who were fluent in the Hawaiian language. Teachers also worked in a variety of teaching contexts. Two of the teachers taught in higher education, one was not actively teaching, eight teachers taught in the public school system, four at a private school, and three were employed by public charter schools. Two of the charter school teachers taught at a language immersion school.

### *2.2 Procedures*

The primary course instructor was a university professor. The course was co-taught with a culture and language immersion school administrator. This intensive summer course took place over a two-week session, with seven days of intensive instruction. The school administrator led the first two days of the course and the university professor facilitated the rest of the course. The first two days were spent exploring a sense of personal identity and going on a field trip of places within the community. This was followed by coverage of seven units: Definition of Race and Ethnicity, History of Education (localized to place), Cultural Identity Schools, Language, Community Context, Cultural Orientation in Instruction and Cultural Orientation in Assessment & Classroom Management.

The course was designed for teachers to develop a particular perspective – individual (How would you address this topic/issue in the classroom with individuals?) or policy (How would this topic/issue impact policy?). Teachers engaged in small group discussion using driving questions to generate insights, then presented their perspectives on the topic to the whole class. The intent of this assignment was to help teachers deepen understandings about the topic, help teachers “see” through a different lens, and build critical analysis skills

#### *2.2.1 Culturally Responsive Teaching Plan*

One of the major assignments included a “Culturally Responsive Teaching Plan” in which teachers provided a demographic profile of his/her students, described how to implement the plan and identified sample resources, lessons, and relevant literature books that might suit the community of learners. This plan was used as a data source to indicate teacher perspectives and understandings of CRT.

#### *2.2.2 Post Course Questionnaire*

One semester after the course ended, all the course participants completed a questionnaire to reflect their perceptions and understandings of culturally responsive teaching and implementation of their “Culturally Relevant Teaching Plan.” They were also asked to identify factors that facilitate culturally responsive teaching and barriers or obstacles to implementing culturally responsive teaching.

#### *2.2.3 Focus Group Interview*

Nine of the initial eighteen teacher participants voluntarily agreed to attend a focus group interview six months after the course completion. The primary instructor sent out an email message to all the teachers. This interview was approximately 1.5 hours in length and the primary course instructor, co-instructor, and researcher colleague were present for the interview. The purpose for this interview was to gain insights about teacher perspectives on culturally responsive teaching. This interview started with sharing some of the initial patterns that surfaced in the post-course questionnaire.

#### *2.2.4 Follow up Questionnaire*

After reading through the focus group interview data, the three researchers met. From previous research on transformational learning (name deleted to maintain the integrity of the review process) we knew that some of the facilitating factors for implementing culturally responsive teaching had to do with continuous support systems. We

wondered if they had systems within their contexts that supported their practices thus, another questionnaire was emailed to the focus group participants. Questions included: Do you have the opportunity to team or collaborate with others to support your teaching? All nine responded.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

We read through the data with the following questions in mind: 1) What are teachers' understandings of culturally responsive teaching? and 2) How do teachers perceive culturally responsive teaching? The two course instructors looked at the culturally responsive teaching plan and the post course questionnaire. We sifted through the data using the process of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), to address the research questions.

## 3. Results

As a result of analyzing the data, three distinct patterns emerged to describe teachers understandings and perspectives of culturally responsive teaching: 1) Doing culturally responsive activities; 2) Moving towards a culturally responsive perspective; and 3) Being a culturally responsive teacher.

### 3.1 Doing Culturally Responsive Activities

Many teachers listed culturally responsive activities within their plans, which seemed to supplement their existing curriculum or serve as separate units to be taught at a specific time of year. For example, in her post course questionnaire, one high school teacher mentioned, "At this point, my plans are the same. However that (culturally responsive) teaching unit will not be included until 2<sup>nd</sup> semester." This implied that culturally responsive teaching was a separate unit to be taught at a particular time during the school year and not a particular perspective or stance taken toward teaching.

Typical teaching plans included activities that focused primarily on learning about different ethnic groups and these activities were often dependent upon available resources. For example in the interview, one elementary school teacher said, "My goal was to do Chinese versions of another book in *Dragon Wings* (Yep, 1975) and then use other books that had a Chinese theme to get the Japanese and the Chinese because that was what we had in our library." Consequently, this teacher may have provided her students with access to cultural stories but in essence used traditional stories which might reflect their ethnic background but not relevant to their lives today. This same teacher expressed in the interview, "We were going to do an ethnic research project to cover the research standards and we didn't get to that yet because we had a whole lot of, how would you describe it? Of mandated computer things" thus, she didn't have the chance to implement her plan - doing research on their ethnic groups because she wasn't able to access the computer lab.

In the interview, another elementary school teacher mentioned having students do "a cultural research project so they make their special food" and "also through music, we have a fabulous music teacher, so we are learning different songs from different countries." Another elementary teacher stated in the post course questionnaire, "I hope I'll be able to do the ethnicity research project but it depends on whether or not we have time in the day. Since we have scripted programs and strict pacing guides." For some teachers culturally responsive teaching appeared to be an activity or something that is done when there was extra time in the curriculum. These types of activities highlighted cultural traditions – music, food, dance, etc. of other people of another time and place, may provide a "tourist view of multiculturalism" (Hade, 1997) which "ignores and devalues the everyday experiences of many minoritized and immigrant groups students in our country," (Amanti, 2005; pg. 131) and is often outside the P-12 students' experiences.

For teachers who viewed teaching about culture as an activity, some were intimidated by their lack of cultural knowledge or did not see the value of being responsive to students' culture. A community college level teacher stated that a possible challenge "Is the lack of knowledge or research with a particular ethnic group." A middle school teacher mentioned that the, "unfamiliarity (with other cultures) that are totally different that what the teacher is used to" could be challenging.

### 3.2 Moving Towards a Culturally Responsive Perspective

These teachers integrated culturally responsive activities within their teaching framework. For example, in her post course questionnaire, one of the elementary teacher states, "Culturally responsive teaching is when relationships are at the core of everything a teacher does." In her culturally responsive teaching plan, another elementary school technology teacher shared that she planned to focus on who her students are and "use my blog to engage them on a regular basis in discussions that ask them to share their opinions and beliefs, look at things from multiple perspectives, and appreciate the input of people different than themselves." She also planned to use proverbs and poetical sayings of the host culture on a daily basis and planned to find wise sayings from other cultures to use in conjunction with the sayings. She wanted, "My students to realize that every culture has important messages and sayings that are passed on to the younger generations." A high school biology teacher planned activities and projects that "integrate language (of the host culture), values and perspectives within my curriculum." For example, he developed a unit on ecology that focused on sense of

place. He planned for his students to choose a “place” or location that was significant to them, he then planned to integrate and emphasize the ecological and cultural concepts tied to that specific location. These teachers consciously made connections with their students’ cultural backgrounds as a part of their daily practices. In addition, some teachers began to question some of the assumptions of the practices and develop social consciousness. During the focus group interview, a high school teacher who was relatively new to the community was particularly bothered by the ethnic name calling at his high school, and as a result of his personal discomfort and discussions in the ethnicity class, he changed his classroom policy. “My challenge at my school, was for me at least, students all identify as native Hawaiian but there are always other (Japanese, Filipino, Chinese, Caucasian) in there and students are challenging through comments with each other. . . You are ‘less’ or you are ‘more’ native Hawaiian (than others). At first I was taken back by their reactions because I think it is one of those things that are kind of accepted [here], like people crack jokes and they think it is acceptable, and people laugh so they think that it is funny and they laugh but I know that the underlying comment is actually digging at people. Even if they (the students who are being teased) say, ‘No matter mister, it doesn’t bother me.’ I’m like ‘NO’ so I told them it is zero tolerance.” Being a relative newcomer to the community, this teacher was confronted with his own tensions – he wondered if he should conform and accept the ethnic name-calling or not tolerate it. His own life experiences and world-view told him it was wrong and he initiated a “zero tolerance” name calling policy in his classroom. While he did not deconstruct the meanings behind the name calling or bring students’ conscious knowledge in class, the course was a beginning place for him to self-reflect, confirm his personal values, beliefs, and in effect, initiate a policy within his classroom which supported those values

### 3.3 Being a Culturally Responsive Teacher

At this point two themes were identified: Doing culturally responsive activities and moving toward a culturally responsive perspective. We asked teachers in the interview: *How is teaching in a culturally responsive activity different from teaching with a culturally responsive perspective?* hoping to gain insights that would deepen our teaching practices. One high school teacher stated, “It is the difference between teaching about vs. teaching through something.” Another elementary school teacher shared, “Perspective vs. activity is like being vs. doing, laughing with you vs. at you; teaching as a calling vs. teaching as a job; wanting vs. having to; I mean anyone can do a culturally responsive activity.” Teachers were able to articulate a distinct difference; however, others saw the value of the activity along with having a culturally responsive perspective. In the focus group interview, one high school teacher stated, “It is not that an activity is a negative thing because I think that an activity tied in with a purpose is a very good thing, but I think the stronger impact is having a perspective in that students know where your values lie.” He then questioned, “Are you [the teacher] just talking about culture and doing single activities? Or is it part of who you [the teachers] are and who they [the students] are?” Thus, doing culturally responsive activities alone or in isolation was not as desirable, but having a culturally responsive perspective or purpose along with the culturally responsive activity held greater value. At the end of the focus group interview, a high school teacher reflected, “To me culture is really important, I’ve come to realize for myself that education, cursory education is the main way we acculturate our society, it is the way we infuse culture into our community through our children in everything we do. We all teach from a culture – we teach through, within, from a culture, many cultures actually. Sometimes people don’t realize that my point is you already teach through a culture: Do you realize that you do already infuse so many values, language, terms, emotions, all kinds of things through a culture or typically through many cultures? As teachers we all infuse culture every minute, every second during the day in our classrooms and we are not conscious of it and we don’t use it to the best of our teaching ability. So for me it is really key to teaching my students and it is not only important to respond to what the classroom needs in terms of culture but to be proactive in how we go about doing it because that is what the role of education is. So I integrated it into whatever I can, into biology into various units--whether it be genetics or evolution or ecology or whatever it might be.” This teacher is beginning to take into account his behavior and his view of the world and consciously reflecting on one’s self and situation through sociocultural consciousness (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). He recognizes that teaching is a political act and is moving towards a transformative perspective that supports culturally responsive teaching and embeds culture in every aspect of teaching throughout the day.

## 4. Discussion

Some of the teachers who were “doing culturally responsive activities” did attempt to connect with students’ cultural backgrounds. However, these connections could be interpreted as mere attempts to include culture within their curriculum. Others found culturally responsive teaching as challenging, and viewed students as coming from the same culture, therefore, it was unnecessary. While we did not inquire about teacher participants’ perspectives on how learners construct knowledge, given their responses, they seemed to focus on maintaining the status quo rather than moving toward a culturally responsive perspective.

Teachers who were “moving toward culturally responsive perspectives,” indicated that they tried to connect pedagogy to students’ cultural backgrounds and construct knowledge inclusive of all students; and a few began to challenge the

status quo but did not initiate policies to take action toward change. Teachers who were “being a culturally responsive teacher” believed that they taught in culturally responsive way whether they had a supportive teaching context or not. A middle school teacher stated in the follow up questionnaire, “I think it is up to the individual and how they see culturally responsive teaching. I personally feel that culturally responsive teaching can happen with any other priority or initiative at the school if it is of value to the individual.” Thus, if culturally responsive teaching was valued by the individual, they believed it would happen, whether they had competing initiatives or not. Those who viewed culturally responsive teaching as a perspective weren’t afraid to implement their culturally responsive curriculum because they didn’t perceive themselves as lacking cultural content knowledge but rather promoting a perspective of respect for cultural knowledge and practice. For those who saw culturally responsive teaching as an activity, this meant they had to have outside resources come in to teach them how to do it and without those resources and support, it wasn’t possible. Without a firm foundation or having a perspective that supports culturally responsive teaching, teachers’ saw culturally responsive teaching as limited “doing activities.” Without a perspective which valued culturally responsive teaching, teachers saw many barriers and were limited by external factors such as lack of time, lack of resources, and competing initiatives.

#### *4.1 Lessons Learned*

Insight gained through this inquiry suggests that there was a range of teacher understandings and perspectives of culturally responsive teaching. As teacher educators we were disappointed to find that we established a teaching context which emphasized, “doing culturally responsive activities” and inadvertently encouraged superficial teaching of culturally responsive activities. In addition to the culturally responsive plan, the culminating project required teachers to share cultural knowledge about a particular ethnic group in the island community. This was intended to build cultural content knowledge about the major ethnic groups; however in the end this may have modeled the idea that teaching others about culture is limited to ethnic and cultural traditions. We now realize that teachers needed more opportunities to engage in critical discussion to challenge the injustices and inequalities of the status quo. For example, for the teacher whose students engaged in name-calling, a critical reflective discussion might have presented an opportunity for him to begin unpacking his worldview and thus, bring about a sense of sociocultural consciousness (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This points to the importance of critical self-reflection upon experiences, values, beliefs, and attitudes and creating a deep understanding of culturally responsive teaching instead of focusing heavily upon “activities” or the academic knowledge – instructional strategies, skills and resources without the theoretical framework to work from. Teachers needed opportunities to critically self-reflect their cultural beliefs and values. We attempted to provide students with opportunities build critical analysis skills through taking alternate perspectives—individual or institutional; however, the discussions focused heavily upon the type of academic knowledge and skills that promote “instructional strategies,” or designing culturally responsive activities. This may have encouraged teacher participants to examine issues from a distance rather than reflecting from within. While we still realize the need to help teachers understand and identify actionable steps they can take to work toward racial equality in their classrooms and schools (Pollock, Deckman, Mira, & Shalaby, 2010), we “did activities” without engaging teacher participants in necessary self-reflection using the interpretative frameworks needed to teach diverse populations. This includes examining critical racial assumptions and raising socio-cultural consciousness which leads toward transformation (Gay and Kirkland, 2003). Additionally, we realize that we needed to further examine our own positions and stances as teacher educators, such as the primary course instructor’s own Japanese cultural identity and value upon maintaining harmony and personal discomfort towards discussing uncomfortable issues dealing with race relations may have played an influential role in hindering teacher transformation.

We realize there were a number of limiting factors in this inquiry. All teachers agreed to participate in the study, all granted permission for use of the “Culturally Responsive Plan,” and all completed the Post Course Questionnaire; however only half of the original teacher participants were included in the interviews. While we are not sure why nine of the eighteen teachers elected not to participate in the focus group interview, the teachers who did participate reported interest in the topic and desire to help with a research project

#### *4.2 Reconceptualizing Our Practices*

As a result of this inquiry, we are reconsidering our teaching practices and we are restructuring this particular course. In order for teachers to immerse themselves rather than distance themselves from course content we want for them to reconsider personal knowledge and experience (Cochran-Smith, 1995); thus, we are reframing the course around “story.” Teachers will read and listen to powerful cultural stories of others. They will read, gather, and discuss ancestral and contemporary stories tied to a sense of place and as a final course assignment, rather than a “Culturally Responsive Teaching Plan” the final course assignment will be a personal narrative. Each teacher will write his/her narrative representing “who I am” based on personal cultural beliefs and prior experiences. Academic readings that introduce historical perspectives and interrogate ideological assumptions as well as readings that provide theoretical framing to

effectively teach diverse populations will be carefully selected. Course participants will have opportunities to read and discuss these academic articles to help gain new insight and perspective on culturally responsive teaching. The new course design provides the time and space to support critical self-reflection of teacher beliefs and practices. The course builds up to the narrative by taking the teachers through a number of experiences which include weaving cultural stories through the course, taking field trips that integrate place-based stories and storytelling, interviewing and listening to stories of marginalized immigrants in the community, reading, responding to, and discussing both academic and multiethnic children's literature, and daily critical self-reflection upon these experiences. These experiences along with academic readings and discussions are intended to help teachers begin to examine and challenge some of their own cultural assumptions and encourage them to inquire into the background of students to bring about a sociocultural consciousness. In essence, our goal for the new version of the course is for teachers to experience personal identification of culture first rather than focus heavily on activities. Through the course we are modeling how to focus on one's own culture and how that influences perceptions of diverse cultures and what implications that has on instruction. With the previous course we provided information about different ethnic cultures and information about how to implement. The primary shift in the course is to provide teachers with course experiences that will help them clarify and critically self-reflect upon cultural identity and the role it plays in making decisions as a teacher and the influence that those decisions have upon teaching diverse learners. Additionally, as suggested by Cochran-Smith's (1995) study, we also hope to walk through the course experiences with teachers and problematize our own teaching and share with teachers our own struggles as we deal with issues of race and share the contradictions between our philosophical beliefs and actual practices. We acknowledge the range of teacher understandings and perspectives of culturally responsive teaching; however, it is our hope that as we ourselves continue to examine and critically reflect upon our culturally responsive teaching practices, we might inspire and motivate teachers to do the same within their classrooms.

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