

Examining Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Teacher Preparation and Teacher Leadership Candidates

Amy J. Samuels University of Montevallo
Gregory L. Samuels University of Montevallo
Tammy M. Cook University of Montevallo

The study examined a multi-tiered approach for facilitating learning and examining perceptions about culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher preparation and teacher leadership programs. The study aligned with a learning unit we designed to (1) increase understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and (2) investigate perceptions of cultural responsiveness. We collected data through surveys, collaborative discussions, and active learning projects. Findings revealed participants see value in culturally responsive pedagogy, but have limited exposure to the approach and struggle to imagine how the framework can be regularly implemented. Major themes suggest increased exposure to culturally responsive pedagogy is necessary to promote socially just teaching.

Although America's schools are becoming increasingly more diverse, America's teachers still largely represent the dominant population and are more than 80 percent White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016), many of whom grew up in monocultural communities with minimal exposure to people of other racial, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite increasing diversity in demographics, classroom teachers often feel unequipped to successfully meet the needs of diverse learners (Gay, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Consequently, more than ever before, educational preparation programs must ensure they are providing teachers and teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills, and tools to create inclusive classrooms that embrace and foster diversity.

While current research suggests theories associated with multicultural education and cultural responsiveness are well-developed, many researchers continue

to critique existing frameworks for the limited consideration of practical application in the learning environment (Gay, 2015). As a result, our action research study was designed to increase students' exposure to culturally responsive pedagogy and explore their perceptions regarding how the framework can be fostered in their teaching practice.

Related Research

While educators have made progress in exploring the theoretical framework of culturally relevant and culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paris & Alim, 2014), there continues to be a disconnect in the field between theory and practice (Gay, 2015). Although the conceptual frameworks of multiculturalism and cultural responsiveness have been solidly explored, defined, and developed, facilitation of cultural responsiveness can still remain a vague, abstract, and elusive concept (Ladson-

Billings, 2006; Paris, 2012). Therefore, educators must continue to explore detailed pedagogical tools and strategies for fostering sustaining pedagogies since this is an area with which many teachers struggle, even those with the best and most motivated intentions (Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2006; Paris, 2012; Sugarman, 2010).

Culturally responsive teaching refers to a multidimensional, student-centered approach that promotes equitable excellence and serves to validate and affirm the experiences and contributions of students from all cultures and backgrounds. The framework gained attention through the work of Gloria Ladson-Billings in the 1990s and has grown extensively over the last two decades. It is connected to the larger field of multicultural education, but highlights not just inclusiveness of curriculum, but how to validate students' lived experiences, negotiate change, and promote advocacy in the current social and political contexts (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). The comprehensive framework is designed to encourage inclusiveness and responsiveness in the thoughts and actions of both teachers and students, as well as in framing and implementing empowering learning activities and transformative educational experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy is characterized by teachers who are committed to cultural competence and students who can maintain their cultural identities and integrity while flourishing in the educational context.

The process of positioning prospective and practicing teachers for valuable opportunities is emphasized by Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999) as planning activities that engage and support the languages, literacies, and cultural tools of students who represent the dominant and marginalized sectors of society (as cited in Durden & Truscott, 2013, p. 74) and involves framing opportunities to experience

culturally relevant pedagogy actively. It is important to remember, as Ladson-Billings (1994) explains, culturally relevant teaching is a “pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 17-18). Efforts to increase awareness of their teacher identities as they proceed through education programs requires acknowledging beliefs that all students can succeed and preparing lessons for students to learn how to navigate social, cultural, and historical contexts in diverse school environments.

The need for individuals to reach the level of “critical consciousness” is attributed to the work of Brazilian scholar Paulo Freire (2005), who explains that this type of self-awareness begins by identifying personal beliefs and values which reflect the political, economic, and social contexts of teaching in their classrooms. The personal identity is merged with the collective identity, so becoming more aware of how this affects their own pedagogy is crucial for individuals to progress toward “transitivity of consciousness” and examine personal responsibility of understanding society at large. Gaining a sense of “agency” occurs as individuals move toward “critical transitivity” and can engage at a deeper level of introspection to act purposely upon issues related to oppression. It is the state of “critical consciousness” that aids teachers in utilizing their increased awareness to take action and consciously embrace culturally relevant pedagogy, minimize oppressive elements in their classrooms, and advocate for liberatory and just environments.

Research Questions

The study examined perceptions of students in three separate courses and was guided by the following research questions: (1) How do students perceive culturally

responsive pedagogy? (2) In what ways do instructional approaches influence students' understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy?

Methodology

We designed the study to explore students' perceptions related to culturally responsive pedagogy and how it can be implemented in different contexts. As instructors of three separate courses, we collaborated to design a learning unit to implement in each of our courses that lasted approximately one month. The selected courses included (1) an undergraduate class related to teaching for social justice, (2) a graduate class in a secondary education program related to teaching methods, and (3) a graduate class in a teacher leadership program related to school climate. Students in the undergraduate course were students who had not yet earned a degree. Students in the secondary education program had earned a bachelor's degree and were pursuing a master's degree in secondary education; these students were teacher candidates. Students in the teacher leadership program were classroom teachers with a minimum of five years of experience who were pursuing an educational specialist degree in teacher leadership.

Students worked to complete the thematic unit as part of their course work. We designed the unit to promote the following learning objectives: (1) examine the theoretical framework of culturally responsive pedagogy as outlined in seminal works and recent literature, (2) identify best practices for fostering culturally responsive pedagogy in the K-12 classroom, and (3) evaluate the potential impact of culturally responsive pedagogy on school climate and culture. The objectives encouraged us, as researchers, to consider further how to employ pedagogical strategies to foster

culturally responsive pedagogy as well as analyze students' perceptions of cultural responsiveness.

In an effort to promote inquiry-based learning, we designed the learning unit so students read select articles (Jordan Irvine, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2007), watched select videos (Ladson-Billings, 2012; Nieto, 2014), and completed webquests by exploring sites focused on equity and culturally responsive teaching. Students were prompted to process their learning by engaging in a virtual collaborative discussion as well as an active learning project.

For the virtual collaborative discussion, students were expected to select a current news article or political cartoon of interest and write a reflective narrative that addressed the following prompts: (1) provide a personal reaction to the material/content, (2) explicitly connect the material to standards/characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy, and (3) discuss how the material could be applied practically to the classroom to foster cultural responsiveness. Students attached a copy of the original article or political cartoon to their reflective narrative. After posting their original response, students read their peers' posts and replied to at least two of the posts. In their responses, they were urged to ask a question as well as compose a statement related to culturally responsive pedagogy. We established guidelines and expectations for the virtual discussion regarding both the reflective narrative and students' responses to their peers.

The purpose of the active learning project was to examine students' perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy and its application in the classroom context. For the task, students were expected to develop a form of expression to process their learning and apply their understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. Examples of forms of expression included, but were not limited to,

poems, paintings, photographs, musical selections, metaphorical essays, and personal narratives. Along with the form of expression, students submitted a paragraph to explain their project and provide an interpretation of their work. We created a rubric to assess the active learning projects that evaluated an evolving understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy with both the artifact and the written explanation.

Additionally, before beginning the learning unit, we asked students to complete an anonymous pre-survey to examine their understandings and perceptions of culturally responsive pedagogy. After completing the learning activities (articles, videos, webquests), virtual collaborative discussion, and active learning project, students completed a post-survey. We administered both surveys online. Questions on the pre- and post-surveys included the following: (1) How would you define culturally responsive pedagogy? (2) Discuss the value of facilitating culturally responsive pedagogy. (3) In what ways can teachers use strategies that encompass culturally responsive pedagogy? (4) Discuss potential challenges of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. (5) Discuss potential benefits of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. (6) Discuss personal and/or professional advantages and disadvantages of using culturally responsive pedagogy. (7) On a scale of 1-4, how would you rate your current understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy? (not familiar, limited knowledge, familiar, very familiar).

Participants and Setting.

Participants ($N=27$) were members of three courses at a small public liberal arts school in the South. Although the undergraduate social justice course was an elective, both the literacy and school climate graduate courses were required of students in their respective programs. Students represented a wide continuum in age, ranging from 18 to 45. Of

the participants, 21 were female and six were male. In regard to race, 23 of the students were White and four were Black. Nine students were pursuing an undergraduate degree, nine were pursuing a master's degree in secondary education, and nine were pursuing an educational specialist degree in teacher leadership.

Data Collection. We collected and examined data from the pre- and post-surveys along with data from the virtual collaborative discussions and active learning projects. Quantitative data were represented through the pre- and post-surveys and qualitative data were collected via the virtual collaborative discussions, active learning projects, and open-ended response questions on the pre- and post-surveys. We administered the surveys, discussions, and learning projects as part of regular class instruction in the three respective courses and collected data over a one-month period during a regular academic term.

Data Analysis. The multi-tiered design of the research included analysis of the data within all forms of collected information (pre- and post-surveys, virtual discussion submissions, and active learning projects). We aimed the analysis to inform the research questions and explore the purpose of the study in its given context. For the quantitative data, we used descriptive statistics to analyze students' perceived familiarity with culturally responsive pedagogy over the course of the month-long learning unit. For the qualitative data, we employed coding procedures to determine themes from surveys, discussions, and learning projects. To transition from raw data to emerging themes, we incorporated Rubin and Rubin's (2005) steps of data analysis. The process involved (1) recognition, (2) examination, (3) coding, (4) sorting, and (5) synthesis. All data were reviewed multiple times to further aid in analysis, develop themes, and promote accuracy. We met

throughout the data analysis process to triangulate, sort, and synthesize the data, discuss findings related to emerging themes, and reflect on the research process.

Results. We analyzed data to explore the research questions: (1) How do students perceive culturally responsive pedagogy? and (2) In what ways do instructional approaches influence students' understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy? The analysis further examined potential differences among undergraduate, master's, and educational specialist students' perceptions and experiences; additionally, we found the resulting themes were consistent across each of the three courses.

Understanding of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

First, quantitative results were examined to analyze students' self-reported familiarity with culturally responsive pedagogy. Prior to engaging in the learning unit, students were asked to assess their understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy: Fifteen percent of students reported they were not familiar; 63 percent reported limited knowledge; 22 percent reported familiarity, and zero percent reported being very familiar with the teaching approach. After completing the learning unit, zero percent of students reported they were not familiar; six percent reported limited knowledge; 56 percent reported familiarity, and 39 percent reported being very familiar with the teaching approach.

Next, we examined qualitative data to evaluate students' understanding of the framework. We found that it also suggests an increased understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. Prior to the learning unit, students were directed to define culturally responsive pedagogy. They offered vague responses such as "designing lessons

and teaching methods to attend to the culture of the classroom." After engaging in the learning unit, students' responses were more detailed and complex such as "a way to educate students about the societal structure, systemic racism, and acceptance and understanding of other cultures" and "active instruction that emerges and empowers students in multicultural learning environments. It is the merging of comprehensive content knowledge with the real-life experiences that students bring to the educational process."

Perceived Value of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Findings also indicate students agree about the perceived value of facilitating a culturally responsive approach to teaching and learning. Students consistently highlighted advantages in the approach and the belief that it holds teachers responsible and accountable to ensure they are appealing to all learners by incorporating inclusive materials, resources, and content. Participants appreciate how the framework celebrates difference, values diversity, employs an assets-based lens to approach difference, and promotes understanding of students, their backgrounds, and their experiences. Through facilitation of meaningful and authentic learning experiences, participants emphasized that learning can serve as a bridge and encourage both students and teachers to learn from one another. Participants also reported perceived value in culturally responsive pedagogy because they believe it fosters positive relationships, empathy, care and trust, empowers students, offers voice to all populations, and promotes understanding of multiple truths, understandings, and ways of knowing.

Struggle with Implementation. Despite the perceived value, our findings

suggest students are uncertain how to apply culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom context. Although they were able to highlight multiple advantages, they struggled to imagine how culturally responsive teaching could be employed on a consistent basis. When we asked them to explain how they would facilitate culturally responsive instruction in their classrooms, participants were able to highlight overarching characteristics, but they struggled to explain detailed approaches or specific content-based strategies. For example, they explained how they would incorporate work that is engaging, interactive, and reflective as well as work that promotes critical thinking and analysis. When we asked them to present specific strategies about how to facilitate related skills, their responses were limited to reflective journals, student surveys, and assignments that provide choice.

Evidence from the narratives accompanying current news articles or political cartoons of interest suggests that students recognize their responsibilities for trying to learn about the lives of their own students. One student stated, “If we dare to take on the challenge of learning about our students and truly caring about the information they choose to share, we have the chance to create a classroom culture that inspires growth and higher order thinking.” The student’s comments reflect the disconnected stance that many teachers unconsciously convey about their students’ lives outside of the classroom and project the type of attitude that Emdin (2016) addresses, “Many have come to view school as a discrete space, as if what happens outside school has little to no impact on what happens inside school” (p. 20). For many teachers trying to implement instructional strategies learned in their education programs, it *is* a challenge to consider trying to learn

something unique about roughly 150 students during one academic year.

Another student asserts, “Knowing that I am different than some of my students is one of the first steps I would need to make in order to be aware of the cultural differences in my room.” This statement reflects the need for prospective and practicing teachers to understand their own identities, particularly how they position themselves as well as how they perceive others in their world. Many students in our study were cognizant of the need to learn about their students, but this mindset is not the norm. According to Emdin (2016), “The reality is that we privilege people who look and act like us, and perceive those who don’t as different and, frequently, inferior” (p. 19). Even though this may be difficult for some teachers to avoid, others challenge this notion. One of the pre-service teachers stated, “Valuing all opinions and making all students feel welcome leads to an atmosphere of cultural responsiveness and learning, where students can grow into mature and informed individuals.” It may not be a concrete method for assuring that this happens in the classroom, but the student’s positive attitude is a good start to challenging the prevalent paradigm that perpetuates privilege.

Pervasiveness of Deficit Thinking. Regardless of the perceived value of culturally responsive pedagogy, emerging themes from our study posit that deficit thinking continues to be prevalent in the mindsets of many teachers and teacher candidates. Several participants struggled to separate race and socioeconomic status (SES). Multiple examples throughout data sources highlight that participants perceived an automatic intersection of race with SES. As such, participants frequently characterized students of color as students from low SES communities. In addition, they regularly used phrases such as “at risk” and “the hood” to depict or refer to students of

color and their communities. One participant asserted that students of color “struggle with the traditional school setting.” Themes also emerged that suggest participants were inclined to devalue the importance of race, culture, and language by promoting colorblindness and homogeneity. For example, rather than discussing how to embrace and celebrate diversity, ideas of equality and the notion that “we’re all the same” were frequently reported.

However, one student exhibited agency about the role he envisioned for himself in the classroom in his narrative:

Teachers must adapt to the needs of society. One of these needs is the facilitation of education rooted in cultural awareness. Reaching as many students as possible and ensuring success is something that I find extremely valuable. An overall awareness of where your students come from can greatly improve the effectiveness of your teaching due to being more able to relate material to your students on a personal level.

Need for Increased Exposure.

Teacher preparation programs carry a large responsibility to equip appropriately teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to appeal to diverse learners, promote diversity, and advocate for equity in the classroom. Taking into account participants’ minimal understanding of cultural responsiveness prior to the project, it is imperative that teacher educators directly address matters of diversity and promote explicit opportunities for student learning related to creating inclusive and responsive classrooms. Although familiarity of the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy increased throughout the learning unit, participants continued to struggle to imagine how the framework can be regularly incorporated in the classroom context and reported ideas that aligned with deficit

thinking regarding students of color. Consequently, it is critical to reflect on strategies to promote empowering learning experiences, provide increased exposure to pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of diverse learners, and advocate for inclusive classrooms.

While the learning unit was well-received by students, educators still have much work to do. Most teacher preparation and teacher leadership programs specifically designate a course related to diversity; however, diversity is not a concept that can be taught in isolation or neatly constrained by the walls of one semester of learning. Teacher educators often reflect on strategies to incorporate technology and literacy across the content, but many fail to recognize that such inclusive and comprehensive approaches must also apply to diversity. If student exposure to diversity and approaches for educational equity is already limited, restricting the learning to one course in a program serves to further isolate ideas and makes it challenging to imagine how related strategies can be embraced in regular teaching practices. In order to promote change, teacher education programs should consciously increase candidates’ exposure to diversity and social justice by purposely weaving related learning and discourse throughout program courses and experiences.

Since many participants aligned their thoughts regarding students of color with a deficit paradigm, increased exposure to diverse experiences and critical dialogue must be promoted. Teachers and teacher candidates must be provided opportunities to self-assess, explore their awareness related to culture, and transform their consciousness. Opportunities should be provided for them to develop a deeper level of introspection by examining their own culture, experiences, values, beliefs, and biases as well as exploring how these beliefs transpire into action (or inaction). In addition, they need

more opportunities to learn that culture, language, and race are important not only to the students in their classrooms but also how these identifying factors serve to influence heavily the way they see, interpret, and understand the world. As a result, they must actively engage with tools to validate students' lived experiences.

Implications and Recommendations

Increasing teachers' awareness of the cultural implications for positive educational experiences is a multidimensional endeavor, but it is not an impossible concept. Our data exhibit students' desires to become more mindful of other cultures, indicative of Goodman's (2001) suggestion that "People from privileged groups tend to have little awareness of their own dominant identity, of the privilege it affords them, of the oppression suffered by the corresponding disadvantaged group, and of how they perpetuate it" (p. 24). The need exists for intentionally creating opportunities for prospective as well as practicing teachers to "think through their own motivations for wanting to work on behalf of others, their position in that work, and the far-reaching effects of the social and political structures that support inequality" (McDermott, 2017, p. 5). Purposely configuring segments of all professional studies courses to integrate reading and class assignments which require students to engage in a critical study of social justice can be the beginning of their own quest for strengthening their awareness and mindfulness.

The findings from our study suggest the following approaches for teacher education programs:

1. *Design an instructional assignment that requires students to research individually various fundamental terms associated with culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice.*

Teacher educators realize the depth of learning that occurs when purposeful research occurs, so the first step is important for students to realize the magnitude of information connected to this type of focused investigation and wonder "What else might be out there?"

2. *Discuss the implications of becoming an ally for their own students by providing opportunities for individual scenarios to be pondered.* Personal experiences often provoke rich conversations about injustices and how poorly these are handled.
3. *Facilitate an assignment that requires students to explore intensely their own beliefs, which often involve social and psychological influences, so they can think deeply about their own positioning in the world.* As honesty and humility begin to emerge, discussions can be created for a genuine exchange of ideas. McDermott (2017) summarizes six developmental stages that preservice teachers go through as they begin to understand diversity (Cruz et al., 2014).
 - a. **Naiveté/Pre-Awareness**, which would be roughly equivalent to being enclosed in a fog of privilege.
 - b. **Bombardment**, which is often the feeling those emerging from this stage feel when equity-minded instructors demand that they confront what is on the other side of the fog.
 - c. **Dissonance and Resistance**, which arise when new information does not match with long-held beliefs and defense mechanisms are erected. Yearning for a return to the fog

of privilege is strong but not possible.

- d. **Adjustment and Redefinition**, which is the accommodation-making stage, the stage of attempting to incorporate new knowledge into their existing belief systems, their first real attempt at seeing beyond the fog of privilege.
- e. **Acceptance and Internalization**, which is the reward for those who persevere. It is the stage that moves them out of the fog of privilege so that they see more clearly and can acknowledge how discriminatory practice plays out in the lives of those who do not look or act like them (p. 69).

Conclusion

Findings of the study offer insight into the continued need for teacher education programs to integrate strategically and explicitly cultural responsiveness and diversity-related content throughout their courses and program experiences. Rather than isolating content to one specific diversity class, teacher educators should advocate to increase exposure purposefully and incorporate such content throughout the program. Increased exposure will serve to scaffold learning and better prepare students to identify inequities and biases, promote diversity effectively, foster inclusive strategies in their daily teaching practices, and promote advocacy for socially just educational practices. Given the changing demographics and continued perpetuation of achievement gaps as well as decreased access and opportunity for many historically marginalized populations, it is critical for teacher educators, teachers, and teacher candidates to equip themselves adequately

for meeting the needs of diverse learners. While striving to counter deficit thinking, disrupt existing inequities, and challenge biases are considerable challenges, these cannot be ignored. In order to teach against oppression, teachers and teacher educators must be willing to rethink possibilities and commit to teaching that fosters and influences change.

Inherently, teachers are continually finessing their teaching skills and envisioning the day-to-day classroom environments where they are exercising culturally relevant teaching practices. Teacher educators should recognize the powerful effect their own practices ultimately have on all students, so transitions from education preparation programs to learning spaces that espouse culturally responsive teaching environments can be as natural as the work in which they have been engaging throughout their academic careers.

References

- Beauboeuf-Lafontant, T. (1999). The movement against and beyond boundaries. Politically relevant teaching among African American teachers. *The Teachers College Record*, 100(4), 702-723.
- Cruz, B. C., Ellerbrock, C. R., Vasquez, A., & Howes, E. V. (Eds.). (2014). *Talking diversity with teachers and teacher educators: Exercises and critical conversations across the curriculum*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College.
- Durden, T. R., & Truscott, D. M. (2013). Critical reflectivity and the development of new

- culturally relevant teachers. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 15(2), 73-80.
- Emdin, C. (2016). *For white folks who teach in the hood...and the rest of y'all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education*. Boston, MA: Beacon.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of indignation*. Herndon, VA: Paradigm.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.), New York, NY: Teachers College.
- Gay, G. (2015, October 3). *Reflections and Projections on Multicultural Education*. Speech presented at National Association of Multicultural Education Annual Conference, New Orleans.
- Jordan Irvine, J. (2010). Culturally relevant pedagogy. *The Education Digest*, 75(8), 57-61.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2000). Fighting for our lives preparing teachers to teach African American students. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 51(3), 206-214.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). Yes, but how do we do it? Practicing culturally relevant pedagogy.
- In J. Landsman & C.W. Lewis (Eds.), *White teachers, diverse classrooms: A guide to building inclusive schools, promoting high expectations, and eliminating racism* (pp. 29-42). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2012). Gloria Ladson-Billings Cultural Competency. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSE8nxxZN5s>
- McDermott, V. (2017). *We must say not to the status quo: Educators as allies in the battle for social justice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2016). *The condition of education 2016*. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2016/2016144.pdf>
- Nieto, S. (2014). 2014 ASCD annual conference: Presenter Sonia Nieto. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3IORaz1TkGs>
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93-97.
- Paris, D. & Alim, H. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 85-100.
- Rubin, H., & Rubin, I. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sugarman, S. (2010). Seeing past the fences: Finding funds of knowledge for ethical teaching. *New Educator*, 6(2), 96-117.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2007). The culturally responsive teacher. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 28-33.
- Amy Samuels** is an assistant professor at the University of Montevallo. Her research interests include application of Critical Race Theory, critical pedagogy, and culturally responsive teaching in educational practices.
- Gregory Samuels** is an assistant professor at the University of Montevallo. His research interests include teaching for social justice, social studies education, and critical pedagogy.
- Tammy Cook** is an associate professor at the University of Montevallo. Her research interests include exploring effective

pedagogical perspectives and methods, context for developing literacies, and culturally responsive teaching practices.