Article

When School Wasn't "School": Developing Culturally Responsive Practice during the COVID-19 Lockdowns

Jonathan Baize

Director of Education, Clover Learning, Louisville, KY 40205, USA; jonathanbaize1@gmail.com

Abstract: This article emerged from my study of three alternative-certification teachers, or teacher learners as they tried to enact culturally responsive practices while navigating their first year of teaching and taking graduate courses for initial certification. These teacher learners worked to develop their understanding and capacities to enact a culturally responsive pedagogy but found that standardization of content and conceptions of what constitutes "good students", appropriate classroom conduct, and micro-managed professional learning communities all created environments hostile to their attempts to develop as equity-minded educators and culturally responsive practitioners. However, their experiences changed once the COVID-19 pandemic closed these teacher learners' schools to in-person instruction and sent them home to instruct online for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester. Free from the constrictive macro-structures and socio-political contexts in their physical workplaces, their planning showed them employing more culturally responsive practices and considering those practices more deeply. Once outside the cultures of practice, formed around neoliberal conceptions of success and measuring learning, these teacher learners became the sole mediators of the conflicting knowledge sources of their jobs and their university methods courses. On their own they began to confront the ways educational institutions stubbornly cling to hegemonic concepts of their communities and valorize work centered on concepts of knowledge and ways of knowing that bear little resemblance to society's current reality. Away from the wider cultures of their schools during the COVID-19 lockdown and aided in mediating their own development using a dialogically structured lesson planning template inspired by—the Heuristic for Thinking About Culturally Responsive Teaching (HiTCRiT)—the teacher learners focused their instruction on their students making both their students' learning and their own conceptions of CRP more real and their students' learning more equitable.

Keywords: culturally relevant pedagogy; culturally relevant pedagogy; multiliteracy; democratic education; educational reform; educational equality

1. Introduction

Janet: Students aren't weird robots that you just put numbers into to hit the standard.

Samantha: They escort that student to the bathroom...It's tough for them [students] "cause they feel like they're in a prison".

Jennifer: ...treating them like animals, or [like] they should be disciplined in a different way. "I don't believe that; I believe that we're working with human beings".

These quotes from the participants in the study explored here chronicle how quickly new teachers perceive the dominant view their colleagues and the wider cultures of practice in their schools have of students or how they cause students to view themselves. They likewise highlight the way the two aspects of public education—discipline and testing—foregrounded by K-12 schools distract these institutions from seeing students as real human beings and educating them to participate in the real societies in which they exist.

The lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused American school buildings to be closed in March 2020, stripped a number of the facades dictating

what school "has to be". As Love [1] says the pandemic, "caused them [American society's centers of control] to tip their hand" about what has always been presented as "the reality" of public education.

For going on a century, the word "school" equaled students, grouped almost exclusively by age, inside a school building. It equaled dress codes, and discipline policies, with schedules and curricula essentially unchanged since the second world war, and for the past thirty years or more, it equaled large-scale, high-stakes testing [2] While these ideas are what had "equaled" school for generations of Americans, many scholars, (e.g., [3,4]) have pointed out that opportunities for students to learn within this conception of "school" was far from equal for many children.

But with the pandemic, these tenets of what constituted "school", long-held sacrosanct, no longer had to be followed because they were either rendered unnecessary or had become issues where there was some flexibility. Because many schools originally shut down with hopes of a quick return, students often did not have textbooks or novels with them at home, and computer resources and internet access varied greatly according to socio-economic level. Because of these things, the switch to online learning led to significant "learning loss" and unequal access for students of color and students of poverty [5].

However, for many aspects of our society, and specifically for schools, the pandemic served to create conditions where the accepted norms of our society were upended, creating space for heretofore suppressed ideas and often oppressed people to question and imagine replacing outdated practices and collectively reiterated matters of course.

One of the most notable of these abandoned rites, across the country, large-scale, state standardized testing went on hiatus. Yet even without high-stakes assessments, and all the other upheavals schools experienced in the pandemic, in many cases student learning continued and the world did not end. This should cause us to question whether the structural environments, curricula, and assessment models defining our ideas of what equals "school" are not themselves contrivances and divorced from our larger reality. It compels us to question whether schools should have pursued every avenue to return to the "normal" represented by pre-pandemic schools or consider the promise of creating greater educational equity by embracing how the pandemic, "offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves...[because] Nothing could be worse than a return to normality" [6].

For over two decades, culturally responsive pedagogists and education literacy scholars (e.g., [4,7–11]) have called for public schools to abandon their devotion to narrowed curricula, formed around replicating the values of White, middle-class American culture [11,12] and meant to produce workers for economies recognized by that culture. Kalantzis, et al. [9] argue, "Education always creates 'kinds of persons'" (p. 23); it would follow then that public schools, created by and for a perceived majority culture, would bias teaching the students from those cultures. Obviously problematic, this way of thinking also reveals the bedrock of contrivance in which public schools ground their foundations: that it serves as the great social equalizer.

I used the phrase above "perceived majority" to acknowledge the fact that more than 50% of U.S. public school students identify as a student of color [13], but since these students are seen as representing several distinct groups, "white" students and the larger, white-identifying society thinks they remain a majority. To perceive U.S. public schools' student bodies as still being majority Caucasian is to not understand the reality.

It follows then that the real "majority" of public-school students might question why its schools cultivate cultural environments that undervalue its "already mastered cultural skills and ways of knowing" [14] (p. 213) and in doing so fail to build on a real foundation from which these students could experience academic success [14]. Paris and Alim [11] call out these K-12 spaces as privileging "...explicit assimilationist and antidemocratic monolingual/monocultural educational practices" (p. 88). Both the valorized culture and approaches to learning unequally favor White, middle-class students. Public schools primarily are market-driven, focused on tightly narrowed, standards-based curricula [2]

and do not resemble their students' real world or the ways of knowing and demonstrating knowledge common to their communities. Ladson-Billings [4] and Gay [14] argue, through their concepts of culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), that it is exactly these things—relationships and uncomfortable realities—which must be addressed if schools are to be inclusive spaces, recognizable to all students as places knowledge is valued and added to.

I focus in this article on data from three teacher learners [15] whose first-year teaching transformed to fully online during the last quarter in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The original goals of this study were to see the effect of the dialogic planning tool, the HiTCRiT lesson planning template [16] on the new teachers' capacity to enact culturally responsive practices.

The HiTCRiT is a teacher planning tool evolved from work initiated by Dr. Michèle Foster on developing the Heuristic for Thinking about Culturally Responsive Teaching [16]. This heuristic was initially meant to provide a framework for recognizing and discussing practices that typify the work of culturally responsive teachers in research. The lesson plan I created operationalizes the realms of the HiTCRiT—text, style, socio-emotional connections, and institutional bridge—through a series of prompting questions related to each realm teacher-learners should consider as they plan. Though the HiTCRiT lesson plan retained some elements of standard planning templates (e.g., identifying standards and objectives, procedure) it sought to foreground students in the process and guide teacher-learners to consider all aspects of planning with their students in mind.

With the onset of the pandemic and the move to virtual learning, I was able to study these effects outside of the cultures of practice inherent in the teacher-learners' school assignments. In this paper I explore how, removed from the daily contexts of their school buildings and meetings with colleagues, they were able to enact the culturally responsive practices they had found were undermined and unsupported by their classroom contexts. I discuss how they found ways to provide more equitable learning opportunities and give students a more equal voice in their learning. Additionally, I will discuss how they found, with the help of the HiTCRiT lesson planning template (Appendix A), that it was the constructs within our traditional school practices themselves that undermined any attempts at equality they claim to pursue.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and the Contrivance of "School"

Beyond the delusion of who is attending public schools in America is the less quantifiable, but more insidious, cognitive dissonance on the role and purpose of education. Those "types of persons" Kalantzis et al. [9] refered to were modeled on the "old basics" and aimed at producing: "people who learnt rules and obeyed them; people who would take answers to the world rather than regard the world as many problems to be solved" (p. 23). However, this "kind of person" no longer describes the modern learner, the contemporary worker, or the skills required by modern society [8,10,17].

Transitioning though has proven difficult because inherent in the "old basics" paradigm are transactional instructional models, centering on the memorization of facts and rules and assessment tools seeking to judge individual performances and reify those models [9,10,18]. These scholars argue that a new paradigm for school curriculums based on teaching multiliteracies also means considering how students' competency with these more realistic literacies will be assessed

Several scholars (e.g., [8,17,19–21]) suggest that offering multiple forms of assessment, a focus on the process of composing responses, and multimodal assessments are answers to this need. Rethinking the "old basics" [9], scholars (e.g., [19–21]) argue that it is essential to move away from the types of written-language-only texts that insufficiently represent the complex expressions of students' thinking inherent in multiliteracy approaches.

2.2. CRP Making It "Equal" for Everyone

Culturally responsive pedagogy or CRP (used here because it is the term most recognizable among this study's participants and many K-12 organizations) while focused on interrogating teaching for how to create more inclusiveness practices for minoritized groups, includes within its pedagogy many aspects of multiliteracies theory. CRP and multiliteracies practices address some of the most pernicious challenges of educating an increasingly multicultural society and making schools more relevant to the larger world context in which they operate.

CRP, whose lineage of scholarly thinking extends far past that of exploring 21st-century learning skills, refers generally to asset pedagogies aimed at creating inclusive classrooms and questioning the proposed outcomes and purposes of schools [11]. Ladson-Billings [4] chronicles several of these theories of practice—*cultural compatibility* [22,23], *culturally appropriate* [24], and *culturally responsive* [25].

Building on earlier scholars [3,26,27] who wrote about the ways educational institutions' privileged cultures felt like alternate worlds to those outside that culture, Emdin [12] asserts this inequity of school for students persists, "As long as white middle-class teachers are recruited to schools occupied by urban youth of color, without any consideration of how they affirm and reestablish power dynamics that silence students, issues that plague urban education will persist" (p. 9).

Part of these power dynamics is schools' age-old reliance on written, verbocentric texts as assessments that privilege the language of the dominant, white culture, but are also necessitated by the "old basics". Ladson-Billings [4] lists among her key attributes of culturally relevant pedagogy, that assessments, "must be multifaceted, incorporating multiple forms of excellence" (p. 481). Emdin [12] envisions this by suggesting students communicate in ways familiar to their communities: debates and presentations as rap battles, exploring the math present in creating graffiti, etc. Smitherman [28] recognized prosody as an element of AAE, arguing that language is unique in the way rhythm affects meaning-making, something Lee [29] and Gutiérrez et al. [30] suggest can be captured in modes not traditionally valorized in school assessment practices and used to evaluate student understanding.

Arguing for a constructivist view of learning, one where knowledge is understood to be ever-changing and co-constructed among participants, is another area of overlap for CRP and multiliteracies theorists: classrooms be seen as "a community of learners…encouraged to learn collaboratively and be responsible for one another" (p. 480). This view is echoed by [11] who agree that a critical view of knowledge is essential as it connects their theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy through, "…a focus on sustaining pluralism through education to challenges of social justice and change…" (p. 88).

2.3. What Is Stopping the "Equality"?

However, moving culturally responsive teaching pedagogy from discussion and study in teacher education programs to practicing in K-12 schools has proven challenging. Darling-Hammond [31] and Zeichner et al. [32] argue that an increased prevalence of "early-entry" programs (e.g., Teach for America) has caused larger numbers of teachers to be under-skilled for the complexity of teaching. Studies looking at the experiences of teachers enacting CRP [33–37] suggest this gap is due to the structural obstacles of schools, and the "two worlds" problem [38,39] they create, hindering new teachers' ability to translate their learning into practice.

For Darling-Hammond [31] and Zeichner et al. [32] this difficulty of applying learning *about* teaching to the act *of* teaching is exacerbated in early-entry programs which give college graduates full-time teaching positions after 3–8 weeks of training courses. Zeichner suggests these programs serve only to create, "teachers who can implement teaching scripts, but who have not developed the professional vision, cultural competence, and adaptive expertise" (p. 124). Darling-Hammond [31] agreed that many teaching programs, even those situated in university colleges of education, foregrounded narrow, specific sets of

teachers' actions instead of teaching the complex knowledge of "…how people learn, and how different people learn differently, teachers lack the foundation that can help them figure out what to do when a given technique or text is not effective with all students" (p. 303).

These underdeveloped social foundations, theories of learning, and cultural competencies, Samgorinsky et al. [39] argued, hinder new teachers' ability to internalize fully formed theories of practice. Smagorinsky et al. [39] examined this challenge of new teachers enacting their university training as practices through the lens of sociocultural theory [40] and "Vygotsky's notion of concepts, in which abstract principles are interwoven with worldly experience" (p. 1399). Part of this notion is that *concepts* are informed understandings (e.g., those associated with a particular pedagogy) that allow for those understandings to be generalized and enacted with fidelity in various contexts. When teachers learned their respective teaching theories only through instruction and in abstraction, without practicing them, the new teachers in the case study were seen to have developed *complexes*—an understanding that associates individual elements of a theory of practice but not understanding those elements thematic connection or intent—or *pseudoconcepts*—"an understanding that appears to be unified but with internal consistencies" [39] (p. 1402).

New teachers working to develop fully formed concepts of practice to guide their classroom teaching, given often insufficient teacher education programs and the absence of hybrid spaces, might logically look to their first classrooms and colleagues to hone their craft. However, several studies (e.g., [33–35,37]) of culturally responsive pedagogy enactment in schools indicate they find little support for deepening their understanding of CRP there and, more often, their efforts hindered, if not completely squashed.

Brown et al.'s [33] study of nine K-5 STEM elementary teachers found the teachers had "a tenuous awareness of CRE as a construct" (p. 798) and they did not seem to understand how to enact the theory in practice. After a year of training, the teachers showed significant improvement in conceptualizing and implementing CRE "practices". Similarly, Young [37] found that new teachers often grasp onto singular elements of the identifying cultural competence, but ignore other key aspects, like academic success and sociopolitical consciousness, of CRP. Young [37] concluded that "structural complexities" and "issues of cultural bias among educators, the persistence and prevalence of racism in school settings" (p. 258) made holistic understanding of CRP by teachers difficult.

Daniel's [34] findings corroborate these findings and connect them to Smagorinsky et al.'s [39] and Zeichner et al.'s [32] discussion of teachers' need to mediate understanding through practice. She noted that significant in affecting the teacher learners' ability to enact CRP was the "two-worlds" problem, which describes the gap between ingrained traditions guiding the work in many public schools—banking model, transmission-based instruction—and the constructivist philosophies often valorized in university coursework. Daniel [34] found that though these teacher-learners had an ideational understanding and acceptance of CRP, the effects of host teachers pushing for direct instruction and pushing curriculum toolkits and accepted, transmission-style classroom practices undermined her participants' efforts to enact more culturally responsive practices. Additionally, practicing teachers are unlikely to change their reactions to new pedagogical approaches as Hinton's [35] findings in a case study of eleven high school teachers indicated that teachers were resistant to change teaching approaches with which they were comfortable, particularly without some extrinsic motivation.

3. Methods

3.1. Methodology and Guiding Theories

Data examined in this paper was gathered as part of a constructivist, qualitative study of three teacher learners' experiences attempting to enact a culturally responsive pedagogy in their K-12 classrooms with the hope of understanding its persistent absence in those spaces.

I conducted this study from a progressivist philosophical stance drawing to varying degrees on two different but related theories: critical consciousness theory and sociocultural theory. Critical consciousness rejects social inequities as morally wrong and argues the need to create a space for students to confront "what is taken for granted" and "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions" [41] (p. 35) where they exist in curricula. Grounding the study in this theory was natural since, critical consciousness recognizes that once identified, these "contradictions" can only be rectified by including those they harm [41]; success with moving school culture toward being more culturally multivariate will then be through the constructed knowledge of a community of learners CRP requires.

This led to the second guiding theory of the study, Vygotsky's [40] sociocultural theory. He argued that the social nature of humans drives them to make sense of their environment and through interaction with their environment, both the person and environment are changed, or "mediated". Also key in Vygotsky's theory is that sign systems (i.e., language) provide the site for people's internal change as speech creates a possibility separate from an action, which allows for variation and planning. In this way, whether intra- or interpersonal, speech works with material practice to conceptualize and inform the work of constructing their world. As this study focuses on the way CRP is enacted in secondary ELA classrooms and the effect on students of inclusive cultural spaces, sociocultural theory aids in the understanding of the role of language in creating those spaces and the focus of my analysis on the language of the teacher-learners being studied.

This constructivist, qualitative methodology, what I chose to gather as data, and how I approach the analysis of those data sources are all guided by my researcher identity—progressivist, constructivist philosophy, a long career as a classroom teacher (most of which was spent in classrooms where students of color were the majority)—and the theories grounding the work.

3.2. Site and Participants

For this study I purposefully selected three "teacher learners" from an English teaching methods course for prospective middle and secondary ELA teachers seeking initial certification at a mid-size, urban university in the southern United States. I was guided in my study with the three participants by a constructivist methodology in the role of participant observer as both researcher and the English methods instructor for the participants: Jennifer, Janet, and Samantha (pseudonyms). The university provides the main teacher education programs supplying teachers for its state's largest school district which encompasses the largest and most diverse urban area in the state, and 53% of the district's school population identify as students of color.

The participants were all "alternative certification" students (or "alt-certs") and already working as full-time teachers through an "early-entry" program that recruited students who had related undergraduate degrees to begin teaching without a teaching certificate, provided they enroll in a university to complete the requirements for certification. These teachers were chosen from the larger pool of students in the methods courses based on their willingness to participate and a demonstrated interest—based on their submitted coursework—in practices that addressed issues of race in interaction and socio-political consciousness. They represent a range of experiences—younger and older participants (ages ranging from 42–24), ethnic representation (white, bi-racial African American and white; second-generation Filipino immigrant), and working as English/Language Arts teachers at both middle and high schools in three distinct geographic areas of the district. Additionally, their selection made sense because these teacher-learners—simultaneously working as full-time teachers and completing teacher education courses—represented the shortest bridge between the academies where CRP is more widely embraced, and the public schools where it remains more aspirational than realized, [16].

3.3. Procedures

The above participants were contacted through purposeful selection from an English teaching methods course I taught during the spring semester of 2020. Participants received invitations to participate in the study after the semester had ended and all grades had been officially filed. The first phase, the collection and review of artifacts, occurred during the University's spring 2020 semester and consisted of various examples of student coursework. The second phase was conducted through interviews with participants at the beginning of June 2020 and in late July and August 2020, prior to the beginning of the next school year. The essential questions driving this research were as follows: What are new teachers' experiences enacting culturally responsive pedagogies in K-12 Schools and what effect might an instructional planning tool with CRP-focused guiding questions have on teacher-learners' perceptions of their practice?

These questions were explored through two primary sources of inquiry: artifacts from the participants' English methods coursework, specifically their submitted HiTCRiT lesson plan templates (Appendix A), and two rounds of semi-structured interviews.

3.4. HiTCRiT Lesson Plan

During the methods course, teacher-learners were required to have their classes observed three times by their principals and an observer from the university and have written lesson plans for those observed classes. For this course, students were asked to employ the HiTCRiT Lesson Planning Template (Appendix A). The HiTCRiT template incorporates the realms articulated in the Heuristic for Thinking about Culturally Responsive Teaching [16] by asking a series of questions about each. The questions are meant to direct the teacher-learners to consider "what" they are teaching through the lens of "to whom" they are teaching.

3.5. Interviews

I conducted two rounds of interviews with the participants: (a) the first set of interviews fairly soon after their school-year teaching had ended; (b) the second set of interviews after my initial coding of the data from the participants' coursework and their initial interviews. The interviews garnered information about the lived experiences of the participants in their workplaces to which I was otherwise not privy, and particularly in the second interviews, served as a check on my analysis of the artifacts and first interviews.

I formed the semi-structured interview protocols for this study along Kvale's [42] *traveler metaphor* which positions the interviewer as a traveler who, "wanders along with the local inhabitants [and] asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world" (p. 4). As part of keeping a check on my positionality and avoiding participants searching for "an answer", I tried to keep the interviews conversational and allow the participants to speak about their experiences at length without interruption.

The second round of interviews included having the participants review their lesson plans that they had not seen in several months. As suggested by Mannay [43], using an artifact to elicit participant responses allows them time to reflect and generate thoughts not directly in response to the researcher, "which can be advantageous when the researcher is an insider who aspires to make the familiar strange" (p. 107). Analysis of both the interviews and HiTCRiT templates was guided by Gee's [18] broad conception of language as what "we are saying, doing, and being" (p. 17).

3.6. Positionality

The HiTCRiT lesson planning template is ultimately a document of my own creation which came out of my collaboration with other researchers in Foster et al. [16]. While this fact was never overtly expressed in the course of our time together in their methods course, through formal and casual discussions, it is likely the study participants were aware of the role I played in forming the lesson plan template.

It was essential then that I attended to the issue of reflexivity, in general, but specifically in how it influenced the work around the HiCRiT template as I analyzed and interpreted the data. Reflexivity can be seen "as awareness of the influence the researcher has on what is being studied and, simultaneously, of how the research process affects the researcher" [44] (p. 814), which serves as an apt description for my work here. I considered how the participants' responses in the template and about it in the interviews might be colored or tempered by knowing that I had created it. Likewise, I worked to explore their thinking about their practice by having most interview questions not directly related to the template and allowing them to reference the template primarily as evidence of their work. I employed the second round of interviews as a method of member checking and worked to have any evaluative comments regarding the HiTCRiT occur more organically from those discussions.

I acknowledge, as part of a constructivist framework, my cultural and historical background and social positionality, for my perspectives may have guided my attention [45] during this study. I am a white, male, middle-aged teacher from a middle-class background. More specific to my positionality in this study relative to my participants is my gender and role as their instructor and experienced teacher, experience directly relevant to the central focus of this study. I considered and worked to counteract through acknowledging and dialoguing openly with participants the unequal power relationship based on cultural traditions around sex, race, and age, but more tangibly as it related to my position as their instructor and potential colleague.

3.7. Data Analysis

Once I had gathered the artifacts and transcribed the interviews as a script, with each line going from margin to margin of the page, I initially analyzed with line-by-line coding. I employed gerund coding [46] as it "preserves the fluidity of their [participants'] experience and gives you new ways of looking at it" [45] (p. 121). Gerund coding is a qualitative coding method that starts each code with a gerund in order to focus on the actions of study participants. This approach to coding accommodated my positionality as a researcher and mirrored a stated focus of the study—to study the teacher-learners enacting CRP. Each line of the transcripts or the relevant sections of the templates served as the unit of analysis.

This approach to open coding was most appropriate to my goals because my research questions sought to understand the participants' experiences with enacting CRP and using the HiTCRiT template in their planning, and beginning with my own preconceived codes would not have supported that. Gerund coding, at face value, encouraged a close connection to the data as I was required to read carefully to determine how best I could describe what I saw occurring.

Once the initial coding was complete, I revisited the coded data and began to work back through the data with a set of focused codes, codes that categorized and encapsulated emerging themes from the line-by-line coding, structured around the research questions and informed by the scholarship [4,11,12,14] on the central tenets of CRP to create categories. The choice to code for categories was guided by Saldaña's (2016) insistence that themes arise from or are outcomes of data analysis, not something that can be coded for. I recognized the following categories: Enacting/Understanding CRP; Obstacles to CRP; HiTCRiT template. I organized the initial gerund codes into these larger categories, which, as I recognized recurring gerund codes like "Seeing relationships as important", "Learning about students", etc., I generated the sub-category "Student/Teacher relationships" (See Table 1 below). Understanding this to be a phrase that likewise categorized a set of culturally responsive practices, I returned to the literature cited above and created four additional sub-categories around phrases related to my research questions [47].

Table 1. Sub-categories for data related to "Understanding CRP".

Category Code: Enacting/Understanding CRP	
Initial Code (Examples)	**Sub-Category Codes**
"Showing skepticism of 'standard language'" "Identifying white gaze in curriculum"	Culture Competence
"Acknowledging desire to change to facilitator role" "Positioning students as teachers" "Validating student language"	Co-constructed learning
"Learning about students" "Creating relationships"	Student/teacher Relationships
"Acknowledging systems of oppression to students" "Helping students see themselves in classroom/world"	Sociopolitical Consciousness
"Conflating 'academic language' w/'how to write'"	Academic Development

3.8. Credibility

Throughout my discourse analysis, I sought to attend to "Convergence," the degree to which my analysis of the discourse is echoed in my analysis of other data, and "Agreement", whether other readers, in this case, the participants themselves, came to similar conclusions on the data [18] (p. 142) as a means of maintaining its validity.

As mentioned in my approach to the data analysis, gerund-coding [45,46], artifact elicitation [43], and member-checking through my second interviews were intentionally employed to mitigate issues with my positionality and improve the credibility of my analysis. Additionally, I employed analytic memoing, which as a researcher, helps to "develop your ideas in narrative form and fullness" [45] (pg. 171) and capture themes emerging in the data of how participants saw the contrived structures and ritualized practices of their workplaces separating them from the real, live students in front of them.

Throughout this work, it was essential then that I attended to the issue of reflexivity [44]. Reflexivity is seen "as awareness of the influence the researcher has on what is being studied and, simultaneously, of how the research process affects the researcher" [44], (p. 814) which serves as an apt description for my work here. My involvement, as the participants' instructor for the course where the artifact data were collected and the researcher analyzing that data and the data from their interviews necessitated close, critical attention to the issues of positionality and reflexivity.

A significant amount of the data collected for this study, and my analysis of that data, is centered on the HiTCRiT lesson planning template. The HiTCRiT template is ultimately of my own creation, which came out of my collaboration with the other researchers in Foster et al. [16]. As I considered the data related to the template, I needed to think about how the participants' responses about it in the interviews might be colored or tempered by knowing the role I played in forming the lesson plan template. Additionally, in my data analysis, I needed to check my internal processes of sense-making for how they might be leading my relationship to the HiTCRiT lesson plan and not to the data. My approaches to preforming this are discussed above in the comments on credibility.

4. Findings/Discussion

What I found during my analysis of the teacher-learners' data in this study was how the perennial routines and concepts of what constitutes "schoolwork" obdurately against change and how only in a moment of socially perceived chaos could they progress toward more inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy.

4.1. The Curse of Colleagues

Most prominent among the obstacles identified by Janet, Samantha, and Jennifer were their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) [48]. The PLCs are organized by grade

and course level groups and are meant to provide teachers teaching the same classes a group with whom to collaborate and share materials and expertise. Within the schools, these groups are typically required to meet weekly or biweekly, almost always outside of the workday, and report out their work to administrators.

In theory, meant as a support mechanism for teachers [48] and a method for achieving more consistent teaching and "equal" experience for students, participant interview data indicated that, in practice, PLCs worked only to standardize instruction and assessment and were aimed at generating student data to supply administration and the district. Samantha reported that her supervising administrator attended her PLC which "made the whole thing a hot mess" and suggested that, more than anything, her PLC subverted her academic freedom:

> They will always be like, "Oh we can never tell you what to teach", but it's implied that 'we are telling you what to teach'...and that's just an obstacle in that...if I don't agree with that, I can teach something else, but I'm also on my own little island.

Samantha learned in deciding on a common text or common assessment, "even if I voiced, maybe a disagreement or I pushed back a little bit, it wasn't really received or reconciled". In a space where her developing knowledge of CRP might be able to influence pedagogical choices or where more experienced teachers might help refine her knowledge and practice, Samantha found her voice was not heard, and the group defaulted to replicating instruction with which they were more comfortable. She even found the guidance from her PLC colleagues was often not helpful, "I'm trying to trust teachers who have taught a whole lot, but I'm learning that is not always good because even those teachers don't really know how to teach sometimes".

Janet spoke in her interviews about how, along with stifling her input on text or instructional choices, how her PLC made seeing students from an assets-based perspective difficult and how the structure of the group drew her into established ways of thinking. Dismayed, she recalled:

> When I go home, I'm like did I really say that, do I actually think that? It's just a weird like hive mind that kind of happens, and I just don't even realize that I've adopted that weird mentality about my kids. It's just it's so weird to not think what everyone around you thinks, if everyone is thinking that.

Her PLC operated as a tangible physical structure in her school and as agent of the unofficial school culture developed through practice. She saw herself internalizing a conception of her students she knew was inaccurate, not seeing the students as "real" individuals. Janet saw the PLC as forcing her to collaborate with a group meant to her aid growth as a practitioner, but which for her only served as an obstacle to that growth.

Jennifer and Janet also reported in their interviews that PLCs served not to create more equitable learning opportunities, but primarily served the wider school focus on testing and homogenous assessment practices, which they saw as de-centering students in the instruction for the sake of improved scores. They indicated these demands circumvented their efforts toward creating a community of learners and offering multifaceted assessments, commonly agreed-upon facets of CRP [4,14]. Jennifer lamented, "I understand that they need numbers and data...but for learning, it's just to meet students where they are..." and noted the pace and demands for these numbers hindered her efforts to connect with and include students in their learning by, "...asking them where they are coming from, hearing their stories".

Janet similarly noted how the school's desire—informed by district and state expectations—moved students at a pace impeding her ability to accommodate students' socio-emotional needs and their inclusion in the work: "I wish there was more time in the day for students and not just focus on hitting a standard; there's just not enough time in the day to get kids what they need and get them [administration] what the State needs".

4.2. Cultures of Control

Data contributing to the identified theme of "Obstacles to CRP" showed it went beyond the obvious hurdle of entrenched curricula and texts to teacher attitudes and perceptions of the students. A prevalent obstacle the teacher learners identified to enacting culturally responsive practices were the school discipline policies and cultures of control in their school buildings. They acknowledged, like so many scholars (e.g., [49–52]) who have researched the "school-to-prison-pipeline" and zero-tolerance discipline policies, that the discipline codes in their school disproportionately affected African Americans and other students of color. In addition to this though, they revealed in our interviews how the discipline structures in their schools implicitly promoted seeing students as subjects to which curriculum is administered, in controlled environments, rather than as active co-learners with teachers.

Janet discussed how the prevailing school culture directed teachers to see students, and students to see themselves, not as equal partners in co-constructing learning but instead: "weird robots [referring to students] that you just put numbers into to hit the standard…it's all control, control, control".

This echoes Samantha's quote from the introduction of this article in which she acknowledged that many students feel "like they're in a prison" when they are in class, and she recognized how positioning the students in these ways undermined their ability to see themselves as equal partners in their learning [4,12]. She recalled her personal experience in high school, where if she were struggling to focus in class, she could ask to leave class for a few minutes to stretch and return more focused. However, she said her students, "…don't really have that option at our school" to which she made the statement, "So the structure of school, I think really impacts their behavior, their ability to learn". However, she noted that she was loathed to try more inclusive class management approaches that might reposition her and her students in their relationship because "…we get yelled at for not following instructions": a tool of the culture of control extending to the teachers and echoed in Janet's data where she noted, "I feel like the way the behavior stuff is approached is as, if we don't all do it, then it doesn't work".

Jennifer's comment featured in the introduction spoke to this skewed, unreal, way students are seen through the lens of these discipline policies—suggesting they dehumanize the students, choosing ways for them to act. Beyond responses to the more typically identified behavioral issues—cutting class, verbal altercations, etc.—Jennifer raised another way in which students are seen to have less than human agency when she noted, "…the 'children are seen and not heard' mentality is still pervasive in our education system" adding, "…I think everyone would just benefit from just sitting and listening to these students".

This theme was common in her and the other participant's data, that students were never really permitted spaces for self-expression and the codified policies on behavior targeted the cultural interaction styles of students of color, refuting calls by CPR scholars [11,12] to honor them. In addition to not honoring interaction styles, Janet and Samantha questioned how these silence policies lowered students' ability to invest in school since their voices did not exist there and hindered their efforts to have students see themselves as contributors to their learning. It would be a fair conclusion for the students to draw given Janet's description of her school's policy, "They're supposed to be level zero [silent] in the hallway, and they're at level zero in the classroom" and Samantha's recognition that "they're sitting down at desks all day and asked to be silent is a huge factor in how they act in my class".

4.3. Learning Normal Was the Problem All Along

The obstacles enumerated above unfortunately constitute the reality of so many teachers across the country and the profession. What passes for "real" in too many institutional education spaces is a foregrounded emphasis on control [49,51], testing and narrowed curriculums [2], and using scripted instructional maps as defense measures [12]. Essentially "school" as conceptualized by the white, privileged class when its exclusivity limited it

to them has been perpetuated, largely unchanged, into the macro-institution of American public education.

However, the lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 virus, particularly during the first spring semester they were in effect, required a re-conceptualization of what school would look like. The PLCs, which the discussion above showed as tangible obstacles to the participant's attempts to enact culturally responsive actions, were abandoned. So too were high-stakes, state testing, and previously planned lessons that required students to have access to school texts.

What my analysis of the participants' lesson plans revealed was that their teaching changed outside of their classrooms in culturally responsive ways that call into question whether it was the idea we collectively acknowledge as "school" or the teaching these teacher-learners did during the COVID-19 lockdowns that constitute "real" teaching and learning. The first lesson plans were submitted when they were still teaching in their classrooms, without any idea they would ultimately teach the second half of the semester online. Their last lesson plans would have been created and implemented after having moved strictly to online teaching.

An analysis of Samantha's lesson plans reveals not only shifts during the pandemic shutdowns toward more constructivist interaction styles, student choice, and alternative/individualized assessment approaches, all more culturally responsive practices [4,12,14], but discourse analysis of her descriptions on these plans shows the learning, and in some ways, herself becoming more real in the work.

More equitable and more culturally responsive 21st-century teaching practices mean recognizing the interconnectedness of content and pedagogy. Whether it be Kalantzis's et al. [9] rejection of a focus on discrete skills, Ladson-Billings's [4] assertion of the need for constructivist pedagogy creating a community of learners, or Emdin's [12] and Lee's 36 calls to incorporate culturally familiar expressions of learned institutional knowledge, "real" school necessitates a consideration of how content and teaching practice work together. My analysis of Samantha's lesson plans shows her growth understanding this connection and her developing concept of CRP as a theory of practice.

Analysis of her initial lesson plan (see Table 2) written during in-person teaching—showed an absence of this connection between content and learners so acute it seemed as though the two were completely alienated from each other. In her response to prompts about the structure and activities of the lessons, there is an almost complete absence of pronouns or references to the students and what they will be doing outside of being recipients of the information. In fact, she only includes herself in the learning process to say, "I'll teach them to evaluate arguments". Ironically, the texts for this lesson were chosen because they were written by teens and on issues of social justice in which Samantha indicated her students had shown interest.

Table 2. Samantha's first lesson plan.

First Lesson Plan: Style
How will the instruction in this lesson be structured? Why does this structure make sense for its content and objectives?
Instruction will be structured in an "I do, we do, you do" format. **<u>Our</u>** unit has focused on argument, but this will be the first time so far that **<u>we've</u>** explicitly used the techniques that **<u>I'll</u>** *teach* them to evaluate the arguments they're hearing.
What classroom practices or activities are tailored with the students *in mind?*
The texts are both speeches given by high school students, both of which may be familiar to the students. Additionally, the topics ~~they're~~ considering in the speeches are things the students expressed interest in...

Conversely, the work in the final lesson plan (see Table 3)—conducted virtually during lockdowns–feels more real for Samantha and her students and creates a shared, more

equal space for learning. It indicates a shift toward more agency for those involved in the learning in the classroom, most importantly, inclusion of the students. The assignment asked students to create a short comic and then ask them to identify and explain one compositional choice they made to create meaning for their readers.

Table 3. Samantha's final lesson plan.

Final Lesson Plan: Style
How will the instruction in this lesson be structured? Why does this structure make sense for its content and objectives?
The core instruction is structured through the slideshow <u>**I**</u> <u>*created*</u> in which <u>**I**</u> <u>*use*</u> Screencastify to look for and analyze an author's choices in a text. For obvious reasons, this makes a lot of sense for NTI. I think this is a good way to structure the instruction for this lesson particularly because <u>**I'm**</u> <u>*able*</u> to show the students where in the graphic novel <u>**I'm**</u> <u>*seeing*</u> the author make specific choices and then verbally process how those choices add deeper meaning and impact readers.
What classroom practices or activities are tailored with the students in mind?
The formative assessment <u>**I'm**</u> *using* for this lesson asks students to design a short comic themselves. <u>**I've**</u> <u>*allowed*</u> a lot of flexibility in this assignment and outlined that what <u>**I'm**</u> *looking* for is that **they**, as the author of their comic, <u>*can*</u> make one specific choice that will add deeper meaning for <u>**their**</u> readers. The students are then asked to describe <u>**their**</u> <u>*choice*</u>, why **they** *made* it, and what impact it had.
<u>**I**</u> had the students in mind *allowing* <u>**them**</u> to get as creative as **they** *wanted*.

In the language ("I created", "I'm seeing", "...they made...", "...their choice...") of Samantha's second lesson plan, created outside of "schooling", there is shared agency with the students. This is a key condition of more equitable and inclusive school spaces, and culturally responsive and 21st century teaching practices. It was Samantha who noted her students likened being in school to "prison", and she herself expressed a prevailing sense of being imprisoned by the choices and culture of practice of her peers. Being removed from those physical and intellectual spaces allowed both Samantha and her students to express creativity and flexibility in terms of assessment. This subtle shift in thinking outside the context of school led this teacher-learner to think about assessment in a way that equalized students' access to think deeply through modes other than the specialized, school-endorsed terminology of literary analysis.

Comparison of the language across Jennifer's two lesson plans (see Table 4) also reveals how she rethought the conditions presented by the pandemic to capitalize on her students' assets. It shows her contending with how the real daily lived experiences of students bear little resemblance to what school's checked boxes aver to be "real" in our educational institutions, and it is these boxes, created to valorize white, middle-class culture, that perpetuates so much of the cultural inequity in K-12 classrooms.

Table 4. Jennifer's first lesson plan.

First Lesson Plan: Style
• *Students' Baseline Knowledge and Skills*
(PGES 1B, 1F) Prior to this lesson, students were provided with a pre-assessment. The pre-assessment asked that students create level two and level three questions, based on informational student presentations, and the required fictional text.
• *Formative/Summative or Summary*
Assessment(s) (PGES 1F) Formative assessment will include the following: Student Socratic seminar self-assessment/instructor assessment: Students will have a Socratic seminar about the required reading in the fictional text and student presentations about specific #BlackLivesMatter cases. Students will self-assess using the embedded form. The instructor will also use the same form to assess each student.

Jennifer demonstrated this, accessing the idea of "box checking"—a term for completing tasks or responsibilities handed down by superiors with the least amount of effort and fidelity to their original intent to avoid reprimand—in her critique that teaching online during the lockdowns was more real for her and her students. Like Samantha's data, Jennifer's two lesson plans confirmed her perception that outside of the context of the macro-structures and codified or perceived limitations of her school building, she was able to "feel safe" to focus her instruction on what she saw as more student-focused culturally responsive ways. The language in her first lesson plan (see Table 4) was technical and institutionally focused—"pre-assessment, formative assessment"—as were the assessments, with specifically scaled rubrics and pre-planned responses: standard elements to be checked off in planning.

Looking at the data from the final lesson plan from Jennifer, and the other participants, there emerged the category "HiTCRiT template". It became clear in the analysis that outside of the context of in-person teaching, the teacher-learners leaned more heavily on the dialogic guidance of the template and enacted more culturally responsive practices.

Her responses on her final, HiTCRiT lesson plan demonstrated an acknowledgment of her students in the context of their current situations during the pandemic and in terms of response modes they are familiar with.

Her lesson from the online portion of the class shows her in tune with how her students' home responsibilities changed and increased during the COVID-19 lockdown (see Table 5) and the need to accommodate different response modes. Though she was available during school hours for written electronic contact and virtual meetings, Jennifer posted assignments with explicit directions and her videoed commentary and instruction, so students could access their work asynchronously whenever their schedules allowed them to focus on schoolwork, giving them equitable access to learning irrespective of how unequal the spaces from which they were accessing it might be.

Table 5. Jennifer's final lesson plan.

Final Lesson Plan: Style
• *What opportunities does the lesson provide for student agency or spaces does it create for student voice?*
This lesson(s) gives students choice in which assignments they would like to complete. This lesson is asynchronous, allowing students to choose when they would like to complete the assignments within a range of dates.
- This lesson also gives students a choice in how they would like to express their learning (Google Docs, Photos, Google Slides, Music)

Jennifer's students were "…permitted to express their understanding of the content by creating Instagram posts and videos, or they could submit with paper/pencil if digital capabilities are limited". This captures the depth of her statement of feeling "safe" away from her school and free to be responsive to her students. The district where she works prohibits access to Instagram through their internet servers. Though she knew her students used this platform more than any other to communicate and create content, within the context of her school, its use was technologically undermined and culturally frowned upon.

During online teaching during the pandemic, Jennifer was able to permit modes of interaction common to the students' lives outside of school and by allowing them to "…express their learning in many ways (Google Docs, Photos, Google Slides, Music)" which encouraged multifaceted modes of demonstrating learning—both hallmarks of culturally relevant pedagogy [4]). The freedom and sense of safety from the judgment of, and obstacles erected by, the cultures of practice in her school building allowed Jennifer to make her students' learning more realistic to their contexts and mediated her understanding of CRP through real practice.

Similarly, Janet's lesson plans (see Table 6) revealed shifts toward a more realistic view of "texts," long one of the tools of discrimination in institutional learning. Her choices of

text and assessments challenged this persistent definition of "text" as being solely linguistic-based compositions, which, for her, implied more culturally responsive thinking for both her students and her. She mentioned in her discussion of the HiTCRiT template that she saw it as a valuable reflective tool that "had me thinking about what I could do in the future to do it better". Her lesson plan submissions suggested one way she had improved at incorporating culturally responsive practices and making learning more relevant and accessible during her online teaching was by widening her and her students' understanding of what constitutes a "text".

Table 6. Janet's first and final lesson plans (side-by-side).

First Lesson Plan: Style	Final Lesson Plan: Style
	How will the instruction in this lesson be structured?
	We only have a short amount of time together in video lessons, since students have other lessons to attend. We check in with each other and how we're doing as we take role, I will briefly revisit the Harlem Renaissance information they've done work on to lend context today's lesson, I will tell them what the lesson is focusing on, then we will get as far into the slideshow as we can together before our time runs out, then they will finish on their own.
How will the instruction in this lesson be structured? Why does this structure make sense for its content and objectives?	*Why does this structure make sense for its content and objectives?*
Students have a graphic organizer on their iPads with different persuasive techniques with boxes for them to type examples they glean from the speech as we watch it. Also, the speech will be paused periodically to allow students to write and discuss their observations of which persuasive techniques they believe Dr. King is using inhis speech.	The structure is meant to emulate a gradual release of responsibility, the I do, we do, you do-esque model. Though, the I do portion is significantly reduced considering the content. I don't want to lead students into any one direction when interpreting the art pieces, I've selected for them. I want their opinions, free of teacher influence. After all, the objective is to have them communicate their observations and what aspects of the paintings led them to those conclusions, similar to citing textual evidence to support analysis of the text.

Janet's first lesson focused on MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech: one she would see as addressing tenets of CRP by including a text by an African American author. However, her lesson plan revealed that much of the value of this text choice was negated by the predictability of the text and how she was directed by her PLC to have her students respond on a graphic organizer, specifically looking at a predetermined set of literary devices. She was not meant to have them engage on the ideas—systemic racism, America's failure to make good on the promise of its founding documents, etc.—but merely to help students identify rhetorical devices by their technical names. The tool, a graphic organizer, itself serves as a metaphorical box to contain the ideas lest they spill over into realizations beyond what the students were meant to learn. Likewise, in the template, she specifically noted that the text was chosen because it fit the calendar, near Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and its familiarity and predictability—none of which indicated relevance to students.

In contrast, her final lesson plan showed choices of texts specifically centered on student needs both in terms of offering models for a new understanding of what constitutes

a text and in recognition of the virtual format now required for instruction. In response to another prompt in the Style realm of the HiTCRiT, she added.

Also, not everyone reads physical books for fun in their spare time at home. . . it is a reality of the digital age that we are in. So, presenting students with something other than print felt like an acknowledgment of that reality and a means of expanding the horizons of how we interact with what is perceived as texts (LP2).

These comments indicated a culturally inclusive response to who her students are and the media forms with which they interact. Additionally, the way Janet discussed her intentions with the assessment format of her students' responses to their "readings" of the paintings, indicated creating a space for those responses to better represent the real thinking and understanding of her students and not contrived answers trying to get at what a teacher wanted them to say.

The second lesson plan showed movement toward more culturally responsive pedagogy, and Janet working with it as a theory of practice. Whereas the first lesson plan included teacher defined goals (e.g., identify literary devices, within a structured instrument; use a graphic organizer), she articulated her intent for the second lesson of leaving student responses open to their interpretations. Janet's response recognized the tendency of traditional instruction to direct student responses, and she specifically indicated her attempt to steer away from this, "I don't want to lead students into any one direction when interpreting the art pieces, I've selected for them. I want their opinions, free of teacher influence" (LP2). Her intention here indicated expanding of options for students to respond and the removal of the teacher as an arbiter of the correctness of those responses—both practices consistent with CRP.

5. Conclusions

The pandemic and associated lockdowns created a number of hardships for students, and student experiences certainly varied widely. However, in many ways, being away from the school building meant being away from the white, middle-class default of schooling. It meant being away from oppressive and archaic structures that stifle equitable pedagogies and maintain public schools as factories of dominant cultural replication instead of liberated landscapes of learning. It allowed teachers like those in this study to explore how they mediated their understanding of these culturally responsive pedagogies and increased their capacity to better enact more equitable and culturally inclusive practices.

The research presented here explores the potential of resisting a myopic return to "normal" for K-12 schools through its dive into these participants' experiences teaching during the hectic first months of online school during the pandemic. The teacher learners' responses to their work with students, and the HiTCRiT template, highlight another aspect of COVID-19's chaos, that it brought a previously missing "realness" to these teachers' work. Looking at their revelations about how the effect of the HiTCRiT's dialogic nature, the data suggest the pandemic not only created a space for their instruction to be more relevant and equitable for their students but it made culturally responsive pedagogy more "real" to them as a theory of practice. Mediated not by their district's narrow and contrived ideas of text, literacy, and response modes nor their colleagues' and administrations' insisted adherence to standardized curricula and oppressive discipline codes, but by their own inner dialogue, mediated by the HiTCRiT, the teacher-learners were prompted to consider their real focus in and reason for teaching the students.

Further, my analysis of teacher learners' data offers new insight into how the theories learned in teacher education programs become subsumed by the cultures of practice in schools and the pervasive, hegemonic views of the larger society. At the time, and in the state of this article's writing, laws have been enacted prohibiting any public-school teaching that could be seen as "racial divisive". This context emphasizes how the hybrid space of teaching online allowed these teacher learners to hone their practice and deepen their understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy. While in-person at their schools and lacking support for CRP, they found themselves adopting the practices and attitudes of their

colleagues, which Smagorinsky et al. [28] and Zeichner et al. [32] have shown is common among new teachers. Therefore, even when they chose texts with cultural connections or the potential to raise cultural consciousness, that potential was undermined by assessments focused solely on institutionally endorsed knowledge.

Since CRP is a transformative pedagogy [4,7,11] touching on every aspect of the educational dynamic—content, discourse, power relations, concepts of knowledge, approaches to assessment, etc.—internal inconsistencies between any two of these aspects threatens them all. While in-person with students and colleagues, "at school", teacher-learners struggled to develop as culturally responsive teachers, and when they sought guidance, they found PLCs inexperienced in CRP and colleagues committed to the existing cultures of practice. However, their HiTCRiT lesson plans and interviews revealed that, outside of the "macro-structures and sociopolitical contexts" [32] in their physical workplaces, the teacher learners' planning showed them employing more culturally responsive practices and considering those practices more deeply. Each of the participants indicated they took their freedom from these structures to try something they previously had not considered doing.

I characterize the teacher learners' experiences teaching from their homes during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as "hybrid spaces" to acknowledge their similarity to the spaces Smagorinsky et al. [39] and Grossman et al. [53] discuss as necessary for components for workers' fields of "human improvement" (e.g., teachers and psychologists). These researchers eschew the existence of a dichotomy between theory and practice in these fields because competent practice in them "depends heavily on the quality of human relationships between practitioners and their clients" [53] (p. 2057). Because this quality comes from having fully formed theories of practice or concepts, and those are achieved by mediating theory through practice [39]. Grossman [53] proposes practitioners participate in "approximations" or opportunities to engage in practices that are more or less proximal to the practices of a profession" (p. 2056) in these hybrid spaces. The irony of this term for the teacher learners' teaching experiences during the pandemic is that while "hybrid" is a fair term since this version of "school" was stripped of so many markers for what "school" means in our collective consciousness, the version of school they were enacting was far closer to the reality decades of education scholars (e.g., [4,9,10,14]) have pushed for schools to resemble.

Limitations and Implications

There are clear limitations to the study I discuss here. The data looked at a singularly unique moment in our country's history and the history of school in the United States—the COVID-19 lockdowns. Additionally, even though the teacher learners' experiences show a geographical range and student population variety, they all still taught in the same school district.

These limitations notwithstanding, I would argue that the range represented in the participants (though there are only three) argue the study's importance. That the participants range from 24 to 45 years of age, are from varied backgrounds, and all committed to enacting culturally responsive practices, only to find their attempts undermined or thwarted by the cultures of practice in their schools, argue the need for intentional and wide-spread efforts to increase the presence of CRP informed instruction in K-12 classrooms.

The data discussed here suggest the cognitive dissonance new teachers feel with the "two worlds problem" [31,34]—the perceived disconnect between university training and the communities of practice in schools—only widens with the interrogation of systemic race issues inherent to culturally responsive pedagogy. The experiences of the participants suggest that the cultures of practice awaiting teacher education students in their first placements are usually entrenched in traditional practices and wholly unequipped to engage on issues of racial equity. So, new teachers who want to develop as culturally responsive practitioners have little hope of mediating their understanding of the theory and finding support in honing their craft.

The teacher population in America is disproportionately white, female, and middle-class [54]. Study participant, Samantha, who graduated from high school only six years before the study, attested to the fact that her experience in high school English and as a college English major gave her so little contact with the writers of color that she could not come up with a single substitute title she felt prepared to teach for her students. This suggests that in order for teacher education programs to work, specifically in regard to CRP, more opportunities for their teacher education students to develop a culturally diverse repertoire of knowledge and interactional skills must be created.

As study participants noted, and researchers [39,53] agree, teaching is a complex enterprise that cannot be learned, it must be mediated through practice. This suggests then that teacher education programs should work to create hybrid spaces, as suggested in [32], between university teacher learners and K-12 practitioners, especially those who teach in schools with large populations of students of color. Within these hybrid spaces the teacher learners could "approximate" culturally responsive practices [53].

Additionally, teacher education programs need to be intentional about having teacher learners read texts and examples in the literature that depict culturally responsive teaching practices or provide guides to understanding the funds of knowledge students from different cultural backgrounds bring with them to class. For programs in which teacher learners will enter schools with significant African American populations, increasing familiarity with texts [12,16,28,55], interaction styles [56] and scholarship on AAE would be advisable.

Appendix A. HiTCRiT Lesson Template

Teacher:

Content Area:

Unit Compelling Question:

Lesson Topic: E

Describe the students in the classroom:
(for example—cultural and ethnic diversity, religious diversity, number of students who receive free/reduced lunch, are gifted, are ELL, have an IEP, and/or a 504 plan, have varied learning styles, etc…)

Student Demographics

Lesson Guiding Question:
Standards:

Materials for Lesson:

Intentional Instructional Plan:

Text	
The texts, materials, or activity is used in teaching this content	What features of this text/material/activity make it a good choice for learning the content? Are they/it chosen with the intent to connect to the classroom community and honor student socio-emotional needs? Are How do they/does it fit with the style of instruction or teaching in your class?

Style	
The ways of interacting that would be familiar to particular communities	How will the instruction in this lesson be structured? Why does this structure make sense for its content and objectives? What classroom practices or activities are tailored with the students in mind? In what ways are your practices guided by who your students are and honor ways of interacting familiar to their communities?

Socio-Emotional Considerations	
My instruction of this lesson is attuned to students' emotions and identities in this way:	How does this lesson value or access the funds of knowledge your students bring to the classroom? What opportunities does the lesson provide for student agency or spaces does it create for student voice? How does the lesson offer connection between school and your students' home life?

Institutional Bridge	
Focus Standard(s): 1. 2. Other standards addressed: 1. 2.	On what specific, required content is this lesson focused? What other content is related to this topic? Will be reviewed in teaching it? Is there related knowledge students need to grasp the new content? How will you assess students' understanding of the content?

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