5-2019

A Mixed Methods Exploration of East Tennessee Early Childhood Teachers' Perceptions, Knowledge, Practices, and Resources of Critical Literacy

Rebekah Taylor
East Tennessee State University

A Mixed Methods Exploration of East Tennessee Early Childhood Teachers' Perceptions,

Knowledge, Practices, and Resources of Critical Literacy

_____

A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Early Childhood Education

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Early Childhood Education

_____

by

Rebekah Kinnard Taylor

May 2019

_____

Dr. Kathryn Sharp, Chair

Dr. Carol Trivette

Dr. Rosemary Geiken

Keywords: Critical Literacy, Teacher Perceptions, Knowledge, Practices, Resources

ABSTRACT

A Mixed Methods Exploration of East Tennessee Early Childhood Teachers' Perceptions,

Knowledge, Practices, and Resources of Critical Literacy

by

Rebekah Taylor

America has no majority race in the population of five-year-olds and younger (Wazwaz, 2015). Our society struggles to manage the changing face of America as seen in riots, protests, racially-motivated comments, and bullying to name a few examples. Students also face great difficulty reading and discerning what is factual and determining credible sources in the digital age. Critical literacy has the potential to teach students about their changing world, tolerance and acceptance of others, and how to read critically through literature with controversial topics. This explanatory sequential mixed-methods research examined 156 East Tennessee early childhood teachers' (ECED) perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy, differences between ECED majors and elementary education majors, and lower ECED (Pre-K-1) and higher ECED (2nd-3rd grade) teachers in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy.. A four-point Likert scale survey was emailed to early childhood teachers in six upper East Tennessee school districts to collect quantitative data. Comparisons were made between the ECED and elementary education majors and the lower and higher ECED groups using MANOVAS, ANOVAS, and t tests. No statistically significant differences were found. The survey was followed by qualitative interviews with 5 volunteers from the quantitative study who answered specific protocol questions regarding critical literacy. Grounded theory also determined emergent themes of environment, parent support, ranking of topics, personal beliefs, and contradictions. This research found that although some teachers are unfamiliar with critical literacy, there is a desire to implement some of its practices. However, more book resources are needed as well as support from parents and administration. Teachers in this sample demonstrated that they are not comfortable with disrupting the commonplace thinking which includes topics such as same-sex relationships. Suggestions for future research, potential training, and professional development are included.

2

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family. To my husband, Jeff, who has supported me throughout this process, my children Lincoln, Eliza, and Will Grant who have taught me to love in a way I never thought possible and who inspire me to be my best every day, my mother Frankie Hagan who instilled the value of hard work and education in me and also proof read a few papers along the way, my father James H. Kinnard who told me to see my gifts and talents as an obligation and to attempt to make the world a better place by using them, my sister and brother in law who have wined and dined my family and provided a home for Will Grant when I was not available, and Lulu, our dachshund, who spent countless hours beside me in the wee hours of the morning and late night and was my constant companion throughout my writing and the entire doctoral process.

I also dedicate this to the many children I have taught over the years; I undoubtedly have learned as much from you, as you have learned from me. I am inspired daily by the 5 year old spirit. Besides teaching you to read and add and subtract, I have laughed with you, cried with you, wiped your tears, wiped your noses, tied your shoes, changed your clothes, danced on tables, and have loved you. I also hope I have demonstrated John Lennon's words above my board that read: "You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one" and that I have helped encourage you to dream big. This doctoral dream has been a 4 ½ year journey. Although I do not know what doors will open for me now, I simply hope that it will honor my parents, inspire my children, glorify God, and benefit young children in some way.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6

LIST OF TABLES

9

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

<u>Critical Literacy</u>

If critical literacy could be summed in a cliché, it might be, you can't believe everything you read. In general, most people, especially poor readers (Gunning, 2015), do in fact believe that if it is in print, it must be true. Critical literacy poses to dismantle this by examining text in a deeper way in order to teach students how to discern truth and determine to whom the author has allotted power and to whom the power has not been bestowed. Coffey (2008) defined critical literacy as "the ability to read texts in an active, reflective manner in order to better understand power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships" (para.1). The process of teaching students to read texts in this manner is the first step in critical literacy. However, it is difficult since there is not one specific template for implementing critical literacy. Because of this, critical literacy remains elusive to many teachers and therefore their students. First coined *critical literacy* in 1968 by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, it has shown varied interpretations and implementations in its history.

Critical literacy is often used synonymously with critical thinking and critical reading. However, the three are not synonymous. According to Temple, Ogle, Crawford, and Freppon (2014), critical thinking is a process of reasoning and reflecting in order to decide what to believe or what the next step is when the information is processed. Fisher (2001) contended that critical thinking is usually done in response to something read or something heard such as an argument or a real life experience. It involves comprehending the situation and making connections to other known information.

Critical reading is a more active way of reading. It involves determining what a text says and does, as well as what it means. In critical reading the author and the text may both be critiqued by attempting to determine why the author used certain words and why certain pictures and colors were used in the illustrations. The critical reader develops perspectives and understanding and does not just accept the text. This is different than critical literacy where society and power are critiqued (McVerry, 2017).

Critical literacy contains these important steps of critical thinking and critical reading, but goes beyond the analytical comprehension. Critical literacy requires the reader to not only determine the next step and what to believe, but examines the text or conversation to determine whose voice is being heard and whose voice is not being heard that deems one powerless. Reflection (often through conversation in the classroom) then takes place and the reader forms an opinion and casts judgment. The final step in critical literacy is that the reader takes a stance and takes action in some way against a text that may be viewed as wrong or causing oppression to someone or something in some way. This action may be small such as writing a letter to an organization or an author, or on a larger scale such as forming a committee to help make change or a protest of some kind. Although taking action to create change is the one defining characteristic of critical literacy, the action performed is done in a peaceful way.

<u>History of Critical Literacy</u>

Paulo Freire first coined the term critical literacy in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* originally published in Portuguese in 1968. Later translated and published in English in 1970, Freire dedicated the work to the oppressed Brazilians he was teaching. He determined that there exists a mutual understanding of the oppressor and the oppressed and that the oppression seems to become justified overtime. He called for a change in education where the teacher encouraged

students to challenge text rather than accepting information as justified truth. He encouraged the

Brazilian peasants to challenge what they were taught and what they read by thinking of its

purpose; he felt the purpose of the writings they were exposed to, was meant to keep them

oppressed. Furthermore, research indicates that the way children see themselves in books affects

how they view their own identity (Hurley, 2005). Not having books of marginalized races

available in the classrooms continues the process of oppression. Teaching students to actively

engage in the process of reading instead of passively accepting everything in the text as truth was

considered radical; Paulo Freire was even jailed at one time because of his insistence of

recognizing bias in text and to then take action if something was wrong.

Although critical literacy was first coined by Freire, it has an even longer history and can

be traced back to ancient times when Plato challenged and questioned Homer's writings of *The

Iliad* and *The Odyssey* which were heavily influencing the lifestyle, the priorities, and mindset of

the Greek people (Benjamin, 2014). Homer was considered to be insightful and competent in his

ability to write epic poetry which reflected some historical truth, tragedy, heroic figures, and

grand events (Cannatella, 2006). Plato expressed his disagreement with Homer through critical

analysis and refusing justification of the Greek current events in his *Republic*. Plato critically

analyzed Homer's writings, disagreed, and then took social action by writing *Republic* which

called for justice, order, and character in order to be a responsible member of the democratic

society.

Critical literacy has continued to be used by some educators and has been a focus area in

education in Australia for many years. The central focus is to recognize that all texts have bias;

students need to be taught to determine the author's purpose in the writing that sets the bias,

recognize the discourse used, and determine who has been granted power and why in text. In

doing this, students will be able to determine truth and accept or reject the writing similarly to how Plato and Freire did. If rejected, then action can occur for social change that influenced the writing. If we desire our students to be able to discern truth and be productive members of the democratic society in which we live and make social changes for the betterment of society, then it is imperative that critical literacy be integrated into the classrooms.

The importance of critical literacy can be seen in the changing face of America. According to US News, the 2014 US Census report showed that there will be no majority race in America in 2044. In fact, there is currently no majority race in our children under five (Wazwaz, 2015). Yet many children's books used in schools often reflect the discourse and values of the white middle class, marginalizing much of the population (Horning, Lindgren, & Schliesman, 2013). America continues to have pressing social issues that could be partially attributed to this exemplifying Freire's concern that schools and print actually keep the oppressed people oppressed by not recognizing, including, and teaching texts that include the culture of others. In Freire's words, "Washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" (Freire, 1985, p.122). Critical literacy has been shown to be effective in promoting social justice where it identifies "the interests of the least advantaged" (Connell, 1993, p. 43). This might include the economically disadvantaged, women, and ethnicities other than the white middle class to name a few. Including literature about underrepresented citizens can create a curricular justice (Connell, 1993), thus beginning social justice.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

Critical literacy is in the spotlight as there is a renewed focus on comprehension and students are now using digital media. Today's literacy includes more than learning to decode

words and story comprehension of the past. Emphasis on skill-based learning (a bottom up phonics approach which often teaches skills out of context) rather than meaning based learning may have exacerbated the inability to analyze texts. Although these skills are important in reading, literacy encompasses much more than this (Ewing, 2016). Critical literacy can be difficult not only for readers as they begin the process of "…a way of thinking and a way of being that challenges texts and life, as we know it" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p.4), but can also be difficult for teachers to implement. "In every classroom, teachers make decisions about how to shape the attitudes and stances that kids will learn to take towards the writing, the images, the narratives, and the media that make up the fabric of everyday life in information and text-saturated societies and cultures" (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004, p. 4). Critical literacy is often just seen with highly skilled teachers and/or those with a desire to shape the attitudes of their students. According to Wolfe (2010), most teachers have not been trained how to create and implement critical units. Although a plethora of literature demonstrating the worthiness of critical literacy in classrooms exist (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Vasques 2004), for many teachers, information on how to implement critical literacy was learned from reading a book or attending a conference. According to Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002), many teachers do not truly know what critical literacy means and how it will be meaningful in their own classrooms.

According to Fioriello (2017), one of the biggest issues in education right now is the inability of students to read analytically to determine what is real and what is fake from the internet. How to determine credible sources and credible websites are skills that can be taught through critical literacy.

The application of this process is far reaching. For example, Biltekoff (2012) wrote in

"Critical Nutrition Studies" that critical literacy is necessary as a health tool as well. She

claimed that "critical dietary literacy" should be used when reading food labels to determine who

benefits, who is potentially harmed from the food, and determining the discourse used in

nutrition labels. As consumers of information, it is imperative that citizens be informed in order

to be the productive members of society that Plato called for in his *Republic* (Plato & Lee, 1974)

whether it be in the form of health labels or informational news.

Although critical literacy's roots are tied to social change through literacy, the process of

analyzing texts for bias, power, and benefit are useful and necessary for digital and traditional

print and for all age groups. Although critical literacy has proven to be effective in improving

literacy, effective in improving analyzation skills, and effective in improving social justice, this

powerful literacy approach is not utilized as it could and should be.

Importance in Digital Media with Children

Students often only receive a certain angle of the news as the search engines and websites

track users and offer similar searches. The more a reader is exposed to the same type of

information, the easier it is to believe it is true as it continues to appear. Moreover, the

Department of Education funded 1.8-million-dollar study (Leu, 2006) that found when 7th

graders labeled as proficient readers were asked to help evaluate whether a source was reliable or

not, they found the site describing the fictional tree octopus to be very reliable (Krane, 2006). In

fact, all but one rated the website as very credible. This demonstrates that even though these

students were good readers and were thought to be "tech savvy," they were unable to distinguish

the difference between real and fake information and produce clues or proof that the website was

false. It is for reasons such as this that Mikkelson developed www.snopes.com, a website

dedicated to dispelling fake news, myths, and urban legends in the news. According to Leu,

Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, and Henry (2013), much of the problem is derived from schools teaching

for high standardized test performances, emphasizing skill-based instruction rather than

meaning-based, and not teaching critical evaluation skills, including online evaluation. Sadly,

the problem continues with high school and college students.

Importance in Digital Media with High School Students

It is often believed that critical literacy is only for high school students with higher

abilities. However, Lee (2010) stated this to be a myth. Freire taught peasants using words and

subjects that were meaningful to them. He wanted to educate them using their words and their

interests in order to "read, write, listen, view, and speak in order to recognize and confront

inequities in their lives" (Wood, Soares, & Watson, 2006, p. 57). By using this philosophy, high

school students have the potential to begin understanding how to analyze texts which impact

them and then transfer those skills to other texts such as digital media.

A study conducted by Stanford History Education Group left researchers "dismayed" at

the inability of high school students to distinguish between real and false information and to

judge the quality of the website. The study began during the 2016 Presidential Election when

debates of fake news were permeating the media. Researchers were concerned with "civic

online reasoning" because understanding how high school students determine credible sources

and determine real news, is still often unknown (Donald, 2016, para.5). The researchers had

concerns that democracy could be threatened by the ease of how wrong and untruthful

information about civic issues can spread and thrive. This is another example of how critical

literacy pertains to one's civic responsibility of a democratic society.

<u>Importance of Critical Literacy for College Students</u>

The need for critical literacy skills has been identified as a need for college students as well. Hermida (2009) found that college teachers and professors wrongly assume that students entering college have critical analysis skills. In reality, most were labeled as surface readers. That is, the reader was not able to determine and transfer the author's message on the ideas being advocated nor the argument. A critical reader makes connections to already known concepts, uses this understanding for problem solving in new contexts, determines who has the power, formulates an opinion, and then takes a stand as critical literacy entails (Atwell & Atwell Merkel, 2016). It is clear that critical evaluation needs to begin in the early years as the aforementioned studies demonstrate that older, readers who are deemed proficient, are not in fact, proficient in critically evaluating both traditional print and digital media. The examples demonstrate the emphasis on "new literacies" which includes digital literacy.

Although students today are tech savvy for the most part, Arafeh, Levin, & Lenhart (2002), reported in *The Digital Disconnect: The Widening Gap between Internet-Savvy Students and Their Schools* the disconnect between what students are doing at home as opposed to what they are doing while at school. Although today's students may be digital natives and may be tech savvy, most do not know how to think critically about the information they use. Critical literacy provides the guidance needed to locate and evaluate information for reliability and distinguish truth from fiction which is currently not occurring enough in schools (Miners & Pascopella, 2007).

If critical literacy were begun in early childhood education (ECED), the ability to evaluate and analyze information could become second nature by college age. Early childhood students have been found to be successful at critical literacy when given the opportunity and

support needed to experience the process (Comber, 2001; Vasques, 2010). It is the thought of many early childhood educators that every child should have exposure to high quality, diverse texts and the opportunity to think critically about the texts' representations (Bourke, 2008; Meller, Richardson, & Hatch, 2009). These opportunities will begin the process of critical literacy which will provide the building blocks for future critical analysis.

<div align="center">Critical Literacy in Traditional Texts</div>

Besides digital media, critical literacy of traditionally published text as originally intended by Freire challenges the reader to question the purpose of the text and the author's intent, as well as the truth of the text; the reader should not assume that the text is true nor should he accept the text. All texts have bias which distributes power to a particular person or group, often the majority race. Although a majority race is nonexistent in the current five and under generation and it is predicted that there will be no majority race in the year 2044, there exists a strong presence and emphasis on white middle class in texts today (Wood, 2005). There appears to be little emphasis in American schools on texts that include diverse populations continuing the marginalization of minority groups and providing opportunity to challenge and change the beliefs spread from the text (Ferroni, 2012). Giarrizzo (2012) found that lack of information concerning minorities in textbooks creates the need for teachers to provide more information "through multiple perspectives and that accurate portrayals of minorities allowed students to form deeper connections and understandings" (p.1).

Critical Literacy Promotes Social Action

Critical literacy has no one single definition, and is implemented in various ways. However, one shared component is the emphasis on social action. Critical literacy calls for action to occur once information is critically analyzed. This action has the potential to make

changes, even though some may be small, to help stop injustices that occur. These actions may be as simple as to write a letter or rank a website. The process of critical literacy is to teach students the responsibility of not only critically analyzing text, but to also take responsibility to be an active member of our democratic society. Currently, this is rarely visible in schools today, although the importance of these actions has been documented by Marie Montessori (1976) who stated:

> Education must no longer be regarded only as a matter of teaching children but as a social question of the highest importance, because it is the one question that concerns all mankind. The many other social questions have to do with one group or another of adults with relatively small numbers of human beings, the social question of the child, however, has to do with all men everywhere. (p. 84)

If social change is desired, then critical literacy must be implemented by teachers to evaluate and discern truth from not only traditionally written texts, but also internet source texts as well as other new literacies.

<u>Critical Literacy as a Social Tool</u>

Bullying in schools seems to be receiving increased attention worldwide (Carney & Merrell, 2001). The statistics involved with bullying are staggering. According to Stand with the Silent organization on bullying, 60% of fourth-eighth graders reported having been a victim of bullying, whereas 86% of kids said that other kids making fun of them, picking on them, and bullying them makes them more likely to resort to violence in schools, and lastly victims of bullying are more likely to commit suicide than non-victims. Children who are different in some way are more likely to be bullied, with overweight children being the most likely to be bullied (Jansen et al., 2014). The National Education Association reported that 160,000 children a day

do not attend school for fear of being bullied. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2010) recognized the impact bullying can have on students and their education when he stated:

> Every child is entitled to feel safe in the classroom, in the hallways of school, and on the playground. Children go to school to learn, and educational opportunity must be the great equalizer in America. No matter what your race, sex, or zip code, every child is entitled to a quality education and no child can get a quality education if they don't first feel safe at school. (para. 12)

Critical literacy has the ability to decrease bullying as it teaches social awareness of others and views other than one's own. It is a tool to teach acceptance of others that have different backgrounds and ethnicities thus promoting social justice. The discussions that occur within the critical literacy lesson allow and call for students to discuss perceived injustices and solutions. Bourke (2008) determined that by encouraging a critical perspective, issues of identity, rules, and power can be exposed to the students. His study also demonstrated that instilling critical habits "is tantamount to changing the way children view the world" (p.1). However, critical literacy is often not the focus in education as preparations for high-stakes testing is emphasized.

Purpose of This Study

Fortunately, the need for critical literacy has been recognized by some educational leaders. It is rare to find a literacy instruction book that does not include critical literacy. Examples include works by DeVries (2015), Vazquez (2010), Gunning (2014), and McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2005). Critical literacy is often presented at educational conferences as well. Although its roots are grounded in literacy education, it appears that critical literacy is becoming a "hot topic" or "buzz word" in education. However, as currently stated, there is not one

universal definition of critical literacy, nor one universal way of implementing critical literacy. Without knowledge and training on the topic for teachers, it will be difficult for teachers to implement critical literacy confidently, effectively, and at all for some. The Tennessee Department of Education has recognized the need for enhanced literacy development in early grades and has launched the *Read to Be Ready* initiative. Critical literacy is embedded into the rationale stating, "Teachers have the same responsibility to students who are typically underserved, including those living in high-poverty urban and rural areas, and those that may come to school with very different literacy experiences than their peers" ("Early Literacy Matters," 2017 para.2).

Allington (2010), stated the effects of quality, specific professional development in a particular area of literacy can have strong results. Teaching Tolerance re-iterates this by stating that teachers can significantly change their practices by participating in professional development, but surprisingly, found that most teachers spent one day or less a year in professional development in a specific content area (Teaching Tolerance, n.d.). This demonstrates that professional development geared specifically toward critical literacy training can educate teachers on its implementation, purpose, and importance; however, it also indicates that teachers might be left to figure it out on their own.

This study aims to discover what the current perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources are among East Tennessee teachers. Critical literacy is valuable in creating the educated, responsible citizens needed for a democracy. However, since it is not currently a prevalent implementation amongst educators, it is imperative to know these perceptions, knowledge, practices and resources if critical literacy is to be introduced, implemented and to create professional development on critical literacy.

Significance of This Study

Because critical literacy is not a prevalent practice in most classrooms, this study sought to determine what, if any, aspects of critical literacy teachers in the upper East Tennessee districts employ and why or why not. Although ECED includes pre-kindergarten through third grade, some teachers are elementary education majors and some are early childhood majors, having completed particular requirements at their chosen place of higher education. This study sought to determine any differences between the two majors. This would possibly indicate differences in the training and philosophies teachers had in their teacher preparation. File and Gullo (2002) found that early childhood teachers "favored practices more consistent with the constructivist nature of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines in several areas, including teaching strategies, expectations of the children, assessment strategies, and teacher- and child-directed activities" (p. 1). Differences could impact future teacher training in order to educate teachers about critical literacy and its importance while also providing a current understanding of perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy.

An understanding of teacher perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy can help indicate where training needs to begin and possibly determine which teachers might be successful at implementing critical literacy. Howard (2007) found that some teachers had dispositions that made them more likely to succeed in areas such as critical literacy. They include: disposition of difference, disposition of dialogue, disposition of disillusionment, and disposition of democracy.

Although NAEYC does superficially promote the premise of critical literacy in the early years, Stipek and Byler (1997) found that early childhood teachers often do not teach the way they feel is developmentally appropriate, opting for a more skill-based instruction. Because

early childhood encompasses Pre-K –3rd grade, it is also important to determine if teachers in particular grades have differences in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy or if they lean toward critical-literacy practices rather than skill-based instruction as suggested by Stipek and Byler (1997). With these facts in mind, determining perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources as well as the possible differences in the two teacher education majors and the differences in the lower (Pre-k-1) and higher (2nd-3rd) levels of ECED taught may be helpful in demonstrating the best critical-literacy training and practices for teachers.

Not only is it important to determine existing perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources between the two majors and the lower and higher grade levels of ECED and their differences, it is also necessary to know why teachers have their perceptions, knowledge, practices and resources. This information can help determine where specific training and professional development for teachers needs to occur as well as provide support in particular areas indicated by teachers as to why they feel and think the way they do.

<u>Limitations and Delimitations</u>

The study was limited to the perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of regular early childhood education teachers and did not take into account the perceptions of other educational stakeholders such as special education teachers and school administrators. Pre-kindergarten through third grade are the only teachers that were surveyed. Participants of the study were from Carter County Schools, Greene County Schools, Greeneville City Schools, Hamblen County Schools, Johnson City Schools, and Kingsport City Schools in East Tennessee. This region of East Tennessee hosts a population that has traditionally been majority white. It has a rapidly growing Hispanic population with 28.6% of residents from the combined systems

24

being Hispanic. This population of traditionally white residents with a rapidly increasing

Hispanic population is similar to other areas of the United States, increasing generalizable

results. A limitation of the study is the number of teachers who responded to the survey (169) as

compared to the number of surveys which were emailed to teachers (648). The survey was

localized to the early childhood teachers, Pre-K through 3rd grade, in the East Tennessee counties

previously listed. The major limitation is the scale of the survey. Because this study is largely

based on perceptions, the scale choices were not formatted in exact quantitative measures. This

allowed participants to select choices based on their perceptions.

Definitions

Critical lens: the ability to look at texts from a different view, or lens. It is a way of thinking

> that challenges texts, as well as mainstream viewpoints on the world often highlighting

> the marginalized.

Critical literacy: the ability to read texts analytically. It includes reading in an active, reflective

> manner in order to recognize power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships. It

> includes challenging presented viewpoints while determining why text was written, who

> is included and who is excluded.

*Critical thinki*ng: a process of reasoning and reflecting that is done in order to decide what to

> believe or what course of action to take. Critical thinking is usually done in response to

> something--a problem in real experience, something we read, or an argument we hear.

Discourse: ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts,

> values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions,

> and clothes" (Gee, 2014, p. 6-7). This definition differs from "discourse," in which there

> is a lower case "d" The lower case "d" refers to "connected stretches of language that

make sense" (Gee, 2014, p. 6). Discourse is everywhere, meaning that it is not something

that can be taught to someone. It is acquired in "social practice" and everyday life.

Meaning-based instruction: a top-down method that emphasizes reading comprehension, or

deciphering meanings of words based on context.   This is often referred to as whole

language.

Mindfulness: a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while

calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used

as a therapeutic technique.

New literacies: generally are new forms of literacy made possible by digital technology

developments.

Rhetoric: language designed to have a persuasive or impressive effect on its audience, but often

regarded as lacking in sincerity or meaningful content.

Skill-based instruction: a bottom up phonics approach where skills are taught out of context of

meaning.

Surface reader: the inability to determine and transfer the author's message on the ideas being

advocated nor the argument.

<p align="center">Overview of the Study</p>

This mixed methods study used quantitative data to determine perceptions, knowledge,

practices, and resources of critical literacy in a localized group of early childhood teachers in

East Tennessee. It was followed with qualitative data from teacher interviews to further

understand why some teachers do or do not utilize critical literacy as well as their perceptions,

knowledge practices, and resources of critical literacy. It is organized into five chapters.

Chapter 1 contains history of the issue, the statement of the problem including research

questions, the significance of the study, definitions of the terms of the study, limitations, and

delimitations, and a summary overview. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature regarding a

brief history of critical literacy, components of critical literacy, the social aspects of critical

literacy, the importance of critical literacy and its place in early childhood. Chapter 3 describes

the methodology, qualitative and quantitative research designs, population, data collection,

research questions, data analysis, validity, and reliability. Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the

qualitative research questions and the quantitative research questions. Chapter 5 concludes the

study with a discussion and conclusion of the findings; implications for practice and

recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Aristotle said, "For the educated person seeks exactness in each area to the extent that the nature of the subject allows" (Aristotole, Ross, & Brown, 2009, p. 2). This is a premise of critical literacy. The ability to discern truth and evaluate rhetoric has been a concern since the ancient times of Greek philosophers and teachers such as Plato. Plato realized that the rhetoric and discourse used by those exhibiting power was an attempt to persuade and convince those without power to conform to social and political agendas (Morrel, 2008). Plato sought to reveal power by questioning Homer's words and discourse that heavily influenced the Greek lifestyle; this questioning is now one of the characteristics of critical literacy (Yoon & Sharif, 2015). This critical analysis is important in order to create educated and aware citizens who are concerned with social justice. Not only is this necessary for a functioning democratic society, but it is also necessary on a global scale as global migration and oppressed people from war-torn countries seeking refuge and solace continue to enter America.

Those who agree with Plato realize the importance of critical literacy and feel it should be an integral piece of literacy taught in schools. This includes not only students' ability to comprehend what they are reading, but to go beyond comprehension and determine characteristics through critical analysis of text such as: the author's purpose, the "voice" of the writing, the intended audience, the discourse, and to question what is written for truth and fairness (Vasquez, 2014). Although the practice of critical analysis of text has been in existence since ancient times, it was the work of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) that again brought this critical analysis back to the forefront. Influenced by Freire's work and philosophy, Luke and Freebody (1999) included critical analysis as the last step in their Four Resource Model of literacy widely used by literacy teachers.

28

Freire's Framework

Freire's critical framework began as he worked with illiterate adults in Brazil. He realized that the oppressed would remain oppressed until the source of liberation was taught to them; this liberation would be derived in the form of critical awareness. Other leaders who strived for liberation from oppression include Martin Luther King, Jr. who helped raise the awareness of inequalities in the American southern states, and more recently, Malala Yousafzai who raised awareness of the Taliban's oppression of women by denial of education in Afghanistan. According to Freire (1970), this critical awareness should be taught by the teacher not in the traditional methods of teaching he referred to as "banking" where teachers deposit information into the students, but as students were active participants and challenged the rhetoric and discourse that kept the oppressed without power, similarly to how Plato had challenged the rhetoric and discourse in ancient times.

Harrison (2007) questioned whether there is a right or wrong way to present ideas in text recognizing that there can be "no such thing as a neutral account" (p. 29) of the world found in text. When students are able to realize that no text is neutral, but that all texts convey the voice of the author and what he or she is trying to impart, then they will be able to discern truth, question the ideology of the text, and cast judgment on the text (Luke, 2012). This process embodies critical literacy; it is taking meaning from the text which is different than just comprehending the text with the defining characteristic of critical literacy being to take peaceful action against the determined oppression.

Defining Critical Literacy

Because critical literacy is a framework (Vasquez, 2010), it is often difficult to explain and to grasp. Many states have standards that require teachers to incorporate critical thinking and critical reading into the curriculum; teachers often mistakenly think critical literacy to be

synonymous with critical thinking (Clarke & Whitney, 2009) and critical reading. It therefore is

helpful in determining what critical literacy is, by also determining what it is not.

Critical reading is a strategy for determining information and ideas within a text. In

critical reading, the reader considers and evaluates the reading, recognizes the strengths,

weaknesses, failings, and implications. Beyond this, a critical reader may also decide where the

writing fits in the 'big picture' in relation to other texts. Critical thinking is a strategy

for evaluating information and ideas and involves deciding what to accept and believe in a text.

An example of this is when a critical reader thinks "this is ridiculous" while reading. The text

has been evaluated based on prior knowledge and the reading; the reader has deemed it untrue

and rejects it (Kurland, 2000).

Because of the confusion between critical reading and critical thinking, many remain

uneducated about the practices of critical literacy. According to Ramirez-Nava (2013), many

teachers are unaware of critical literacy ideology and stated "Simply reading articles and books

about critical literacy will not necessarily lead to a critical stance, pedagogical revolution, or

engaging learning for students" (p. 7). There is little existing research concerning teachers

learning about critical literacy to improve their professional practices. However, the lack of one

true definition is the empowerment of critical literacy as the lack of one definition and one

method allows critical literacy to be implemented in the manner that is best suited for a particular

situation and group. The critical literacy framework authorizes users to determine how it should

look, sound, and feel based on a particular text, the audience discerning the text, and the opinions

of those reading the texts (Luke, 2012). This is proven in the vast array of critical literacy books

emerging to help educate teachers on the practice of critical literacy. Many of these books give

examples of a text to use and ways to guide discussion to help students begin the process of

critical literacy. McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) stated that there is no one method to best teach critical literacy. Instead, best methods are determined by the text and the students' abilities that allow them to engage in a dialogue that questions the text. The text should also reflect the current social and political contexts. By this, critical literacy can be defined as the ability to read texts in an active, reflective manner in order to better understand power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships (Coffey, 2017). When this analysis of text is performed, critical literacy has the potential to promote social justice by providing opportunities to evaluate and question text. Examples of books (Appendix A) that are well suited for critical literacy in early childhood include *The Rainbow Fish, The Other Side, The Lady in the Box,* and *No David!* These books introduce manipulation, race, homelessness, and power. Students can then evaluate truth and bias in text, cast judgment, and ultimately take a stance on issues that promote inequality. These are a few examples of books used in the components of critical literacy. The texts for critical literacy continue to develop as the need is recognized.

<div align="center">Components of Critical Literacy</div>

Critical literacy consists of four focus areas that are not necessarily sequential nor mandatory, and not all four components must be implemented in each critical literacy experience. They are:

- "disrupting a common situation or understanding;

- interrogating multiple viewpoints;

- focus on sociopolitical issues;

- taking action and promoting social justice" (Lewison et al., 2002, p.383).

The first aspect is disrupting a common situation or understanding. Here, students can gain perspective by understanding a text or situation in a different way; students are encouraged

to stand in the shoes of others. This may include, but is not limited to, role of race and gender in the text. Here, teachers would guide students to think about the text outcome if the main character were female instead of male, or white instead of black. In doing this, students are able to better understand the perspective of the author by examining the text from a different standpoint (Lewison et al., 2002). Critical literacy requires a change in thinking (Comber, 2001). According to Vasquez (2007) young children are both capable and willing to participate in difficult conversations which may change their viewpoints when the subject affects their lives and is meaningful to them. Thus, critical literacy texts can increase learning opportunities for young children (Meller et al., 2009) as they learn to see viewpoints other than their own.

The second component is interrogating multiple viewpoints. According to Fisher and Frey (2009), this may include research on a particular time period where the text takes place. In doing this, students are better capable of understanding the perspective of the character that may be different from their own perspective and time period. An example of this includes *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Cole, 1995) which depicts the true story of Ruby Bridges as she entered the school for white children during the 1960 school desegregations in Louisiana. This allows children to experience the perspective of not only Ruby Bridges, but also the angry crowd, the teacher, and her mother. However, multiple perspective does not have to transport readers back in time to teach students about the process. Story books such as *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs* (Scieszka & Smith, 1989) which retells the children's classic from the wolf's perspective and *They All Saw a Cat (*Wenzel, (2016) which portrays sightings and feelings of a boy, a dog, a fox, and a flea among the characters that saw the cat demonstrating multiple perspectives.

The third component of critical literacy is the focus on sociopolitical issues. This pertains to issues of power, class, and privilege. This is often difficult for students as their identity is embedded within the power, class, or privilege they may or may not have. It is often difficult for them to relate to others who have different characteristics in this realm. The need to understand social and political incongruences in order to liberate one's self of oppressive elements is what Freire (1970) referred to as "conscientização" in Portuguese, translated "conscientization" in English. This area of critical literacy often causes students to become reactionary. Students are then encouraged to come to terms with their own ideologies through discussions and explorations of how others feel and why some people seem to have more power than others. From this point, students are encouraged to take action that might lead to change.

Taking a stance is the fourth component of the critical literacy process. It is acting upon the inequality that is found during the critical literacy process. Freire believed that education was more than giving information to develop a skill; he believed it unjust to not teach about the favelas, or slums, why they existed, why it was so difficult to leave them, and who benefitted from them. He referred to this as "reading the world before reading the word" and would teach students to read the word favela, or slum, after they had critically analyzed the meaning (Freire, 1970). He felt if students understood their world including its possible inequities, then learning to challenge and change that world would be a priority. Therefore, experts of critical literacy avow that it is not enough to simply engage in the process of critical literacy, but real-world reading and action must ensue (Comber, Thompson, Wells, & Wood, 2005). Social action can be big or small, but the processes of taking a stance and acting upon it can greatly influence students and potentially the community (Clarke & Whitney, 2009). Bronfenbrenner's (1977)

bioecological theory demonstrates how the community in the exosystem tier is connected and influences an individual's mesosysytem and microsystem tiers. This belief that the community is influenced by social factors is not a new idea (Morrow, 2014). In fact, this belief that social factors and altering social factors can positively impact children is the premise behind the Head Start program enacted in 1964 that provided free education to children in low socio economic settings.

<div align="center">Social Aspects of Critical Literacy</div>

Critical literacy examines the social world. Often, the social world of the students is the context for critical literacy (Vasquez, 2004). This includes the examination of discourses used within texts. Rhetoric is often referred to as discourse, but discourse is much more. Rhetoric is defined as "the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques" (Dictionary.com, 2017). Gee (2014) claimed that Discourse with a capital "D" is more than rhetoric; Discourses are "ways of being in the world; they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (p. 6). Discourse is saying, doing, being, believing, and valuing. It is these five traits derived from social experiences within the culture that determines one's personal discourse. However, people constantly move from one discourse to another.

The discourse used at a school is typically derived from the white and middle class (Landons-Billings, 1995). This may be a different discourse used by a student from a lower socio economic background; lower socio economic students may have a different discourse than the typical white middle class discourse used at school. These students learn to go in and out of their discourse and therefore are often required to move from one to another.

Discourse is important in teaching critical literacy as authors often assume their audiences have cultural knowledge of that particular discourse (Simpson, 1996). Critical literacy encompasses teaching students to appreciate the discourse and to know what to do with the background knowledge they may have. According to Fisher and Frey (2009), the knowledge is changed from just facts to something that is operational and then can be used to problem solve.

Recently, emphasis on social awareness and action has been reflected in the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness is an approach that teaches students to be mindful of how they are feeling at a particular moment and bring awareness to that situation. It is often reflected in the exercise of meditation, yoga, and breathing exercises. Educators have found these mindfulness techniques especially beneficial to students who experience high stress due to circumstances beyond their control (Killoran & Bliss, 2017). This timely emphasis on self-awareness and self-action reflect the same mindset as critical literacy that change is possible when awareness and reflection are present. Teachers that currently utilize mindfulness may find the same self-awareness benefits of critical literacy.

Students bullying other students has been a concern in schools for some time. The renaissance of character education in the last two decades has attempted to teach moral character to students in schools and was even included in legislation such as No Child Left Behind (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). The anticipation has been for a decline in bullying incidents in schools. Social media has made it virtually impossible for students to escape bullying as students are still able to be in contact with each other and can often hide behind the screens of social media devices. This is known as cyberbullying and there appears to be a link between it and traditional bullying (Kowalski & Limber, 2012). Critical literacy often focuses on who has

power when power is present and acknowledged. Critical literacy has the potential to help combat some bullying as it emphasizes acceptance and understanding.

According to Gray (2009), character should be just as important as teaching academics in order to prevent chaos in society. Critical literacy is a way to teach character while also focusing on academics. Martin Luther King (1947) expressed this when he wrote "We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education" (para 6). Critical literacy supports Martin Luther King's opinion as it strives to teach character through literature and critical analysis.

<div align="center">Importance of Critical Literacy</div>

The United States continues to become more diverse. According to US News, the 2014 US Census report showed that there will be no majority race in America in 2044. In fact, there is currently no majority race in our children under five (Wazwaz, 2015). These are important statistics to contemplate as schools attempt to keep up with the changing face of America. According to Wood (2005), schools have historically consisted of print and text that are biased toward white, middle class students; this is still the case today in most American schools. Critical literacy allows students to engage in a wide variety of texts and enables them to determine their meanings and purposes (Moss & Lapp, 2010). According to Lee (2017), critical literacy creates an opportunity for deep comprehension as students reflect and relate to the text. This enables them to diversify their perspectives for viewing textual messages and beliefs. This is in contrast to traditional methods where students are told what is meant by the text. This is particularly important due to the increasing marginalization of American students who are not part of the white, middle-class youth even though they will soon no longer be the minority (Osborne, 1996). Pewewardy (1994) claimed that educators have attempted to put education into

the culture, rather than the culture into education with little academic success for these students. Sociolinguists suggest that if the home language, or discourse, is used in the schools, students would have more success (Ladsen-Billings, 1995). Critical literacy puts culture into education by providing a "sociocultural lens" for all students. It includes texts of multiple cultures and exposes students to text from cultures different than their own. This exposure and critical thinking of the text is not only a "new" literacy, but is also a necessary life skill (Allan, 2012). This "life skill" can create compassionate, empathic, and educated students who can experience cultures in education.

It is necessary for students to learn to discern truth in text. "A free press is supposed to function as our democracy's immune system against... gross errors of fact and understanding," (Gore, 2008, p.26). However, we are presently immersed in a media, including social media, where the guidelines for publishing are lax and the availability to publish incorrect or untrue texts is accepted as the norm. We are also surrounded by biased texts in magazines, newspapers, and television advertisements that are often just taken as status quo with no consideration to the contrary. An example includes perfume and cologne advertisements that suggest beauty and companionship will occur if one uses the product. According to Gunning (2013), poor readers generally believe if something is in print, then it must be true. Moreover, Donald (2016) reported that members of the Stanford Higher Education Group (SHEG) were "dismayed" by the results of a recent study that revealed the inabilities of students nationwide, including good readers, to ascertain the difference between real news and fake news. Children of the 21st century are engrossed in a digital age where they are exposed to information that children of former generations were not. Critical literacy teaches how to use the information they find with a critical, sociocultural lens in order to determine perspective and purpose, but also truth from

the text. It may be fair to wonder if young children possess the capabilities or experiences of performing critical-literacy skills.

<center>Critical Literacy in Early Childhood</center>

Literacy in early childhood normally conjures visions of story read-alouds, along with the procedures that teach young children to read such as word recognition, word decoding, and story discussion to assess for comprehension. These procedures have been labeled The Four Resource Models (Freebody & Luke, 2003; Luke & Freebody, 1990). Luke and Freebody's (2003) Four Resource Models include: code breaking, text participation, text use, and text analysis. However, the last piece of text analysis, which embodies critical literacy, is often omitted. This omission places emphasis on the other three components of the models. This disregards the far reaching and flexible practices of sociocultural experiences present in society and educational institutions (Freebody & Luke, 2003). It is possible that some feel that young children cannot or should not engage in this critical analysis.

Whether engaging young children in critical literacy practices is developmentally appropriate is a concern that numerous teachers may have. The notion that young children should remain innocent and simple (Dresang, 2003) is a conception shared by many and can be traced back to Jean-Jacques Rosseau's (2013) feelings as he wrote about how children should be protected and shielded in *Emile* . This concern was echoed by a small percentage of preservice students in a study performed by Norris, Lucas, and Prudhoe (2012). However, children are not totally shielded and bring four to five years of experiences with them when they enter school. Teachers have reported that students know much more than they anticipated about current events and issues of justice and were curious about social topics such as race and poverty. Bourke (2008) found that first graders were able to use their background knowledge and information

they entered school with to participate in critical literacy through the reading of fairy tales. They were able to use a critical lens to determine the power distributed to the characters, disrupt the common thinking by seeing the characters in a new light, while using their own discourse.

Meller et al. (2009) stated that young children can and should participate in critical literacy discussions. The discussions should follow a teacher read-aloud of a high quality book that emphasizes social concerns. Discussions are common place in early childhood as they help develop comprehension and vocabulary. This demonstrates the concept that knowledge is powerful for children. Furthermore, Chafel, Flint, Hammel, and Pomeroy (2007) stated that young children are capable of answering and discussing teacher questions about the text such as, "What do you think that author wants us to think about their text?" exemplifying teaching author's purpose as part of critical literacy. This type of question requires more than a "yes/no" response and enables students to learn to develop thinking skills and provide a voice in the story rather than just providing one correct answer (Vasquez, 2004). This voice enables them to begin an understanding of how texts work and ultimately form their views of the world around them (Chafel et al., 2007). In fact, it is often believed that it is the right of children to be exposed to existing social problems that allow them to conceive new possibilities for society (Chafel et al., 2007). Democracy demands that citizens be aware and care about issues surrounding themselves; complacency and apathy are potentially dangerous to the democracy. Children need to learn the importance of caring and taking action as a member of a democratic society (Comber, 2001). The importance of being a responsible member of a democratic society has also been emphasized in the works of Dewey and Vygosky, (Glassman, 2001). Bloom also supported this idea with his "mastery learning" theory. This theory stated that all students are capable of learning if the material is presented to them in a logical, systematic way (Honan,

1999). Critical literacy provides everyone a voice and fosters the concept of democracy.

However, we now contend with global issues such as migration and refugees seeking solace

(Callow, 2017). Global responsibilities of citizens are expressed in the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, article 15).

Another concern often associated with critical literacy in early childhood is the idea that

reading and literature will not be fun or pleasurable for young children (Comber, 2001). This

can be far from the truth as critical literacy enables children to discuss and reflect on topics that

they often already have knowledge about or desire knowledge about. Critical literacy experts

recommend practices which include a high quality book which leads to engaging discussion

(Luke, 2012; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2005; Vasquez, 2010). Leland, Harste, and Huber

(2005) found that first graders normally exposed to "happy books," were able to connect to

stories with topics often viewed as controversial such as homelessness, racism, and war; this was

evidenced by their discussions and journal writings. Wood (2005) found that critical literacy

practices engage children in conversations that affect them in their communities.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory termed the mesosystem as the tier in which

children's families, communities, peers, and schools exist as the primary influence on a child; it

is the things in this ecological system that influence their interests, knowledge, and experiences

which will fuel the discussions (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It is the existing connections to

children's lives and the new information learned from the connections that make critical literacy

so powerful for young children. Furthermore, it was noted that students appeared to become

more compassionate and understanding of each other after participating in critical-literacy

experiences (Leland et al., 2005).

Motivation is another key component of literacy. According to Irvin, Meltzer, and Dukes (2007) students must be motivated in order to achieve competence in literacy tasks. Students are motivated to read when they feel there is a purpose to do so and they think they can (DeVries, 2015). Lee (2017) found that young children who were labeled as resistant to reading became motivated when engaged in critical reading text analysis, thus demonstrating the potential and power critical literacy has to motivate even young children to participate and perform better in literacy.

Young children are also able to learn about inaccurate information in text (James & McVay, 2009) and potentially why the author chose to present the information in this manner. Loewen's *Lies my Teacher Told Me* (2008) recounts some of these inaccurate writings of America's history in text books. Critically-minded citizens are in tune with the four aspects of historical thinking: identification, attribution, judging perspective, and reliability assessment (Vansledright, 2004). These aspects enable students to reflect on the meaning of text that will forever determine how they view history and how it has been presented in some text books. Examples of this kind of critical literacy are demonstrated in the historically incorrect teachings of the first Thanksgiving and Columbus's explorations (James & McVay, 2009; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004).

Critical literacy instruction requires teachers to be knowledgeable about critical literacy practices. Because a majority of teachers did not experience critical literacy in their own experience as learners, the practices of critical literacy must be learned by teachers before they will be able to effectively implement it.

Teacher Knowledge About Critical Literacy

Dunn and Dunn (1979) avowed that "Teachers teach how they learned" (p.4) because they believe this is the best and easiest way for their students to learn. If this is true, then many teachers are uneducated in the practices of critical literacy as they most likely did not have experiences utilizing it. Although critical literacy has existed in some forms since Plato, it is in opposition of students traditionally believing and trusting text and the author. The normal emphasis provided by commercial curricula includes decoding and comprehension of the information read, but does not focus on analyzing the text to take meaning from it that critical literacy provides. According to Owens and Fiala (2011), these curricula do not engage students in the liberating effects of meaningful literacy that critical literacy evokes. If teachers were not taught to question text and the author's perspective, it is likely that they are not implementing the processes in their teaching.

Although a plethora of literature demonstrating the worthiness of critical literacy in classrooms exists (McLaughlin & DeVries, 2005; Vasques 2004), for many teachers, information on how to implement critical literacy was learned from reading a book or attending a conference. According to Lewison et al. (2002), many teachers do not truly know what critical literacy means and how it will be meaningful in their own classrooms.

Critical literacy practices can be taught at the preservice teacher level. Norris et al. (2012), found that the majority of preservice teachers responded positively to learning about and engaging in critical-literacy practices. This training is important as Beck (2005) speculated that teachers, particularly new teachers without critical-literacy training, face difficulties in implementing critical literacy practices in the classroom. This is in part because there is not one single definition of critical literacy and a critical literacy template does not exist. Nevertheless, it is possible that learning about the pedagogies of critical literacy is not enough to entice teachers

to implement the practices. Jones and Enriquez (2009) found that although teachers may receive the same training in critical literacy, some may not employ the practices. This raises the question as to what leads some teachers to implement critical literacy and not others.

Stribling (2014) reported that teachers who implement critical literacy lessons in the classroom virtually create a milieu that helps support students to consider multiple viewpoints and openly discuss issues and events that revolved around differences. This milieu may be a setting that teachers are not comfortable with; the classroom management of this type of setting requires classroom management techniques that teachers may feel they cannot employ or do not want to employ (Beck, 2005).

Teachers are often tied to curricula and may feel they cannot stray from the curriculum in order to implement the dimensions of critical literacy, whereas others may not have the desire to disrupt the commonplace as the first dimension of critical literacy suggests. According to Luke, Freebody, Shun, and Gopinathan (2005), teachers make conscious choices every day about how to teach and shape the attitudes and stances students have and learn to take. The decision to use critical literacy may be in their hands. Implementing critical literacy goes above and beyond standards and requirements already in place for teachers. According to Retallick (2015) a philosophy of teaching can serve as a guide for decision making about curriculum, learning objectives, and instructional methods. He recommended that teachers ask themselves "why?" before they ask "how?" He also notes that there is often a difference in what educators say they believe and what they actually practice.

McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2005) offer reflections for teachers who have implemented critical literacy. These positive experiences of teachers avowing that the student/teacher relationship became more of a partnership along with the students comprehending at a deeper

level could perhaps entice teachers to try critical literacy. Thinking back and asking oneself, "Did I believe everything I read when I was a student?" may also be beneficial. If the answer is yes, then the importance of critical literacy and the power teachers have to change how students view text, should resonate with teachers.

Teachers have the power to help create acceptance of others by implementing critical literacy with their students. The literature also demonstrates that critical literacy can be implemented even in early childhood classes. However, in order to provide training and professional development for teachers on critical literacy, it is important to first understand what their own critical lens is, that is, how they view particular topics based on their own experiences and beliefs. Thus, the research questions will help determine this critical lens and will provide a starting place for professional development and training.

What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers?

1a. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of critical literacy?

1b. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' knowledge of critical literacy?

1c. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' practices of critical literacy?

1d. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' resources for teaching critical literacy?

The literature has shown that young children can learn and benefit from critical literacy. Although the literature also shows that teachers often teach how they were taught (Dunn & Dunn, 1979), Cox (2014) found that teachers teach the way they themselves prefer to be taught or how they think students learn best. This research supports National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) position statement and Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) where guidelines are given for practices believed to the best way for children to learn (NAEYC, 2009). NAEYC (2108) has also written a draft of a new position statement

"Advancing Equity and Diversity in Early Childhood Education" which embodies critical literacy. Elementary education majors also seek best practices within their universities which fall under the umbrella of the National Council Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) which seeks to ensure "Student learning must mean not only basic skills but also the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed as a responsible citizen and contributor to an information economy" (NCATE, 2008 p.8). Early childhood teachers can enter the profession from college majors of early childhood education, elementary education, and other majors depending on the university they attended. This raises the question if the teacher major in college, which may be influenced by certain pedagogies and training, influences teachers to implement critical literacy more than another major. Research question 2 sought to discover differences in the majors of early childhood and elementary education:

How do teachers with early childhood majors compare to teachers with elementary education majors in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy?

2a. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their perceptions of critical literacy?

2b. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their knowledge of critical literacy?

2c. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their practices of critical literacy?

2d. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare elementary education majors in their resources of critical literacy?

Because critical literacy often involves a controversial topic, it is often thought to be more appropriate in older grades. However, the literature shows (Luke et al., 2005; Vasquez,

2010) that young children can engage in conversations and relate to many topics associated with critical literacy. Research question 3 sought to discover if aspects of critical literacy occurred more in lower (Pre-K-1) early childhood or higher (2nd-3rd) early childhood:

How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

   3a. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East
   Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in perceptions of critical literacy?

   3b. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of early ECED (Pre-K-1) compare
   to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in knowledge of critical
   literacy?

   3c. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East
   Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in practices of critical literacy?

   3d. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East
   Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in practices of critical literacy?

   The need for students to learn to critically analyze text in both traditional and digital forms, and to ease social unrest in our constantly changing ethnic makeup of America is evident. Critical literacy teaches students that no text is neutral and they do not have to accept text, but have the power and choice to reject it. This, along with the opportunity to learn of a different perspective from their own, can lead to social and political changes. However, teachers must first know about critical literacy and its implementation. The research questions were intended to provide the current perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of upper East Tennessee early childhood teachers in order to contribute to the field of critical literacy. Chapter three

explains both the quantitative and qualitative methodology used in the research of determining

these perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

As demonstrated in the literature review, the need for critical literacy as well as teacher knowledge and desire to implement it are imperative. The purpose of this study was to examine and explore East Tennessee early childhood teachers' knowledge, perceptions, practices, and resources of critical literacy. In school settings, early childhood is considered to be pre-kindergarten through third grade and this was also the area of participant consideration in this study. The study specifically provided information on the differences in teachers' educational majors, elementary education and early childhood, as well as grade level taught. This chapter provides a description of the research design, participants, data collection analysis, and research questions from this study.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) stated, "All studies include assumptions about the world and knowledge that informs the inquiries" (p.20). The overarching philosophical worldview proffered in this study was constructivism-interpretivism. This worldview shaped the research because multiple interpretations and approaches were used to understand the problem (Decuir-Gunby & Schutz., 2017). There are potentially multiple reasons that teachers do or do not implement critical literacy and aspects of critical literacy in their classrooms supporting this worldview. This research included interviews that emphasized the importance of the qualitative phase. The interviews limited the research to small, but informative cases, as is recommended for the constructivism-interpretivism view (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Also, constructivists/interpretivists have stated "truths and human processes are contextual and can be understood only from particular contexts" (Decuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017, p. 20). Because of this, mixed methods influenced by the constructivist/interpretivism worldview was the best way for answering the research questions. The quantitative data determined East Tennessee early

childhood teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy first, and then an additional phase explained why teachers may or may not implement critical literacy. This determined the contexts of the teachers' responses supporting this worldview. The study used Lewison et al.'s (2002, p. 383) dimensions of critical literacy discussed in the literature review of:

- "disrupting a common situation or understanding;

- interrogating multiple viewpoints;

- focusing on sociopolitical issues;

- taking action and promoting social justice" (Lewison et al., 2002, p.383).

These dimensions guided the study by providing critical literacy alignment for each survey question. The survey then sought to answer the following questions concerning critical literacy:

Quantitative Questions

Research Question 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers?

1a. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of critical literacy?

1b. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' knowledge of critical literacy?

1c. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' practices of critical literacy?

1d. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' resources for teaching critical literacy?

Research Question 2. How do teachers with early childhood majors compare to teachers with elementary education backgrounds/majors in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy?

2a. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their perceptions of critical literacy?

2b. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their knowledge of critical literacy?

2c. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their practices of critical literacy?

2d. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare elementary education majors in their resources of critical literacy?

Research Question 3. How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

3a. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in perceptions of critical literacy?

3b. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in knowledge of critical literacy?

3c. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in practices of critical literacy?

3d. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in resources of critical literacy?

Qualitative Questions

Research Question 4. Why do teachers implement some elements of critical literacy in their classrooms? Why some and not others?

Research Question 5. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of the

usefulness of critical literacy?

Research Question 6. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of limitations or

needs in order to implement critical literacy?

Research Question 7. On what are these perceptions based?

Research Question 8. Why do East Tennessee ECED teachers feel confident or unconfident in

implementing critical literacy?

<u>Rationale and Definition of Design</u>

This study examined East Tennessee early childhood teachers' perceptions, knowledge,

practices, and resources of critical literacy. Although critical literacy is not a new teaching

method, it is not implemented by many teachers and is often considered higher-level teaching.

Nevertheless, the role that critical literacy plays in promoting social justice has brought it into the

spotlight. As America becomes more diverse, social issues have risen, and the need for critical

literacy has risen as well. As stated earlier, the fact that there is not a universal definition of

critical literacy and that it may be carried out in multiple ways, makes it elusive to some

teachers. This was a challenging area of research due to these facts. However, because there are

multiple ways to implement critical literacy and because there are certain characteristics and

aspects of critical literacy, it was thought that it might exist in some classrooms to different

extents. Therefore, this study lent itself well to a mixed methods design of two distinct phases

offered by mixed methods research: the quantitative survey helped determine which aspects of

critical literacy were occurring in the classrooms, while the qualitative interviews explained why

teachers do or do not implement critical literacy. One method alone was not sufficient to fully

understand the phenomena.

In order to answer the research questions, it was necessary to have a mixed-methods design defined as, "research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry" (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p. 4). According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2004), mixed-methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative methods and data, using both to inform one another combining the "monomethod counterparts" (p.771). Furthermore, mixed-methods research is an effective way to understand multifaceted phenomenon more fully and to create a clearer picture (Greene, 2007). This research lent itself well to mixed-methods design with two distinct phases; the quantitative phase followed with qualitative questions coded into emergent themes. It was the intention that the data from the first phase influence the selection of participants in the second phase; data was then merged, which according to Greene (2007), creates a more complete picture of the phenomenon.

Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) acknowledged five specific purposes and justifications for implementing a mixed-methods design: triangulation, complementary, development, initiation, and expansion. This study relied on triangulation where data from both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to demonstrate convergence or a lack thereof (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, (2017). Should the results from the different methods agree, the researcher can be more confident in the results, whereas a disagreement indicates further research and clarification will be needed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016).

According to Creswell (2009), mixed-methods involves philosophical assumptions, both quantitative and qualitative data, and the mixing of the two approaches. Because the worldview of constructivism/interpretism was the philosophical assumption, mixed methods containing both

a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase was used; this was followed by a mixing of the two as suggested. This was done using a sequential explanatory mixed methods design.

<u>Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods</u>

This study consisted of a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, meaning it consisted of "a two-phase research design where quantitative data are collected initially and is used to identify the qualitative to be collected" (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017, p. 86). The first phase consisted of quantitative data collected by an electronic survey (Appendix B). According to Creswell, "A survey provides a quantitative, or numeric description of trends, attitudes or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (Creswell, 2015, p. 145). The intent of the survey in this study was to discover the trends, attitudes, and opinions of East Tennessee early childhood teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy. A survey was an appropriate tool to collect data since it could reach a large number of participants quickly and it could potentially identify varied responses of the participants. In schools, early childhood refers to Pre-K through third grade. While the participants were all early childhood teachers Pre-K through third grade, some had college majors in elementary education while others had college majors in early childhood. This may indicate different responses from the two groups of elementary education majors and the early childhood majors. Furthermore, although the participants were from neighboring East Tennessee counties, some teach in city systems while others teach in county systems which may indicate varied responses. Although the survey will provide information about the perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy by these teachers, a second qualitative phase was necessary since surveys "…cannot explain cause and effect…" nor "…offer rigorous explanations" (Creswell, 2015, p. 379). It is important to determine why teachers responded as they did in order to

provide possible future training, support, materials, and other possible tools in order to be confident and competent in critical literacy. It is for these reasons that qualitative interviews were conducted following the quantitative survey making up the second phase of the sequential explanatory mixed-methods study.

<div align="center">Context</div>

Because the worldview of constructivism/interprevitism recommends "a small number of informative-rich cases," (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016, p. 199) participants included East Tennessee early childhood teachers (pre-kindergarten-third grade) from specifically chosen districts within close proximity to make qualitative interviews more easily accessible. Because this worldview recommends a small group for study, the obtained research results are often not generalizable (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017). However, according to the websites of the selected districts, the population of the schools in these East Tennessee districts consists of a dominant Hispanic minority group, which is also the largest minority group in America (Baral, 2014). This potentially makes the results more generalizable to other parts of the country.

As previously stated, critical literacy is not new, but has recently been in the spotlight in education as a way to not only teach students to critically analyze text for truth, but also as a tool for social justice. And although critical literacy is not new, many teachers may be unfamiliar with it or only know limited information about it if they have not been exposed to it in training or on their own. It is also possible that there are some teachers implementing critical literacy or aspects of it in their classrooms without knowing that these are aspects of critical literacy.

Because of the commonality of the aforementioned participants and the newness of critical literacy which is deeper comprehension than decoding and skill based instruction that is often emphasized in schools, these East Tennessee teachers are well suited for this study.

<center>Pilot Study 1</center>

Pilot studies are recommended in conducting research because they may determine flaws and weaknesses in the research instrument and possibly show where research could fail (De Vaus, 1993). Two pilot studies were conducted to test the survey instrument. The first pilot was conducted with the hard-copy version.

Pilot Study 1 Participants

The participants for this first pilot consisted of five white, female teachers from a school district not involved with the research. There were four kindergarten teachers and one first grade teacher. Three were ECED majors and two were elementary education majors. Four of the participants had more than ten years of experience and one had seven years.

Pilot Study 1 Instrument

As previously mentioned, the first survey was piloted in its first hard-copy form (Appendix B) by a group of five teachers whose district was not included in the research. The participants were asked to give feedback on the clarity of the questions, the answer choices, wording on the survey, and to provide any feedback they thought would make the survey better. All five said they understood the questions and the answer choices, all wording, and had no suggestions for improvement.

Pilot Study 1 Procedures

The actual pilot survey was given at the end of the school day at the teacher participants' school. Participants were asked to read each question and each answer choice before choosing the best answer for them. They were asked to report any wording from the questions and answers they did not understand. This first pilot took participants approximately 15 minutes to take. No recommendations were given by the participants to improve the survey and participants reported they understood the questions and had no difficulties selecting answer choices.

<center>55</center>

Pilot Study 2

The second pilot study was conducted with the electronic survey. Since no recommendations for changes were made by the first pilot study participants, no wording, questions, or answers were changed on the survey instrument. However, it was important to test the electronic version in different browsers and on different devices to determine the survey displayed properly. It was also important to make sure the survey complied with information in the invitation letter to participants. That is, it took less than 20 minutes, the link in the invitation letter actually took participants to the survey, and survey answers were anonymous.

Pilot Study 2 Participants

The second set of participants consisted of four teachers known by the researcher and were from districts not included in the research. The demographic information included: four female teachers of which, two were black and two were white, one ECED major and three elementary education majors. One was a preschool teacher, one had just been assigned as a principal, but formerly taught kindergarten, and two taught second grade. The years of experience included two years, seven years, and one had more than ten years.

Pilot Study 2 Instrument

The survey was developed through SurveyMonkey online survey company. SurveyMonkey was chosen because it is a known and respected survey company that does not store nor share IP addresses. This insures confidentiality with participants. The survey followed the same format as the hard copy version, although the paper version had demographic questions numbered 1-6, with the actual survey questions starting over with question 1. The electronic format did not allow for numbers to start over, so the survey questions began at number 7 after the six demographic questions. Therefore, the electronic survey went to 30 rather than ending at 23 as the hard-copy version.

<u>Pilot Study 2 Procedures</u>

An initial email was sent to the four participants asking if they would be willing to participate in the electronic pilot study. All four agreed and the survey link was then emailed to each of them. The participants were asked to give feedback on: the display of the survey, if the survey link worked properly, the amount of time it took to take the survey, and the clarity of the questions, the answer choices, and wording of the survey.

Two participants stated they understood the questions, answer choices, and wording with one participant reporting, "The questions were very clear and concise, as well, were the question answer options. I had no problems with understanding what they were asking, or how to answer them." However, two participants had recommendations for the survey.

One participant questioned the word controversial in the survey questions and suggested it be omitted and stated," I think these issues can be *uncomfortable* for some people to discuss, but not for others… For some, it (race, homelessness, same sex relationships, diversity) may not be controversial, but just a part of life and life experiences." This suggestion was considered. However, because Freire emphasized discussing and taking action on topics considered controversial to the general population, and because critical literacy consistently uses the word controversial, no changes were made.

A second participant who piloted the electronic survey stated she felt that some of the information provided was personal and sensitive. This participant had just been assigned as a principal and pointed out that some teachers might be hesitant to answer about administrative support and their personal feelings (perceptions) if participants were associated with their answers. Although the surveys were anonymous, this participant found that when she entered for the gift card, the personal information for the gift card drawing stayed on the page with the survey answers, thus identifying the participants and their answers. This suggestion was

recognized and the format of entering for the gift card and giving contact information for an interview was changed. The changed process of entering for the gift card and volunteering for the interview took participants to separate links to leave their contact information which disassociated them from their responses. Because of this, the responses of the participants were unknown and interviews were conducted with the participants who volunteered while their survey answers remained unknown to the researcher.

<div align="center">Quantitative Phase</div>

The quantitative phase of this study included an electronic survey (Appendix B) delivered via email. "Survey research is a highly effective method of measurement in social and behavioral science research" (Ruel, Wagner, & Gillespie, 2016, p. 2). A survey has the potential to reach numerous people and measure the trends and attitudes of various people in academia.

Participants

The participants involved in this study consisted of early childhood, pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade, regular education, public school teachers from the following East Tennessee school districts: Carter County, Greene County Schools, Greeneville City Schools, Hamblen County, Johnson City Schools, and Kingsport City Schools. These districts were chosen as a sample of convenience in order to access teachers for qualitative interviews as well as being a small informative group as recommended (Plano et al., 2016). Johnson City and Kingsport are the 9th and 12th largest cities in Tennessee respectively, whereas Greeneville is listed as a municipality with 15,000 people in the city limits. Johnson City and Kingsport are the largest cities within the local East Tennessee area, whereas Greeneville represents a smaller town. As previously mentioned, the districts chosen represent both city systems and county systems within the region that might provide a more rural perspective as well as a metropolitan perspective as

much as possible in the area. Also, larger cities meant larger school systems with more early

childhood teachers to provide a larger sample from within the six districts. This participant

selection supports the constructivism-interpretivism view that "… human processes are

situational and therefore are best investigated at the local level" (DeCuir-Gunby & Schuyz, 2017,

2017).

   According to each of the six aforementioned school district websites, the six districts

employed 659 regular education early childhood teachers: Greene County Schools (111),

Greeneville City Schools (43), Carter County (94), Hamblen County (157), Johnson City

Schools (148), and Kingsport City (106) make up the 659 total early childhood teachers.

   These participants represented a unique, yet prevalent, population representative of other

parts of the country (United States Census Bureau Quickfacts, 2017). East Tennessee has

traditionally consisted of a predominantly white population; this is still the case, but the Hispanic

population is the largest minority group in the East Tennessee area as well as in the country

(Baral, 2014). This specific population represents a growing amount of diversity in the

classrooms. Although generalization of results from a local sample to a larger population is

often limited (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2017), this specific trend in demographics existing in

multiple areas of the United States (Flores, 2017) may make the results more generalizable than

if this were not a current demographic trend.

Quantitative Measure

   The quantitative measure was an electronic survey conducted through SurveyMonkey. The

survey consisted of six demographic questions and 23 survey questions for a total of 30

questions. Based on the review of the literature, this survey instrument was developed

(Appendix B) with Lewison et al.'s (2002) four components, or focus areas, that are

implemented in critical literacy experiences. There are four separate components and all four do

not necessarily occur in each experience. The survey questions were aligned to these

components (Table 1). These components are:

- "disrupting a common situation or understanding;

- interrogating multiple viewpoints;

- focusing on sociopolitical issues;

- taking action and promoting social justice" (Lewison et al., 2002, p.383).

For the purpose of this research, these components influenced and were used as a guide in

the survey questions to determine what the current state of critical literacy is in East Tennessee

concerning early childhood teachers. However, because many teachers were unfamiliar with

critical literacy and were unfamiliar with the aforementioned terms. Lewison et al.'s (2002)

wording and phrases were not used in the survey. Instead the survey questions asked about

aspects of critical literacy in wording that was easily understood. The survey questions were

divided into the four components based on the researcher's interpretation of the component.

Table 1 displays the alignment.

Table 1

Dissertation Survey Component Alignment

Survey Question/ Topic	Specification	Component Alignment	Rationale
1.Books on race	resource	Multiple perspective	Upper East Tennessee is predominantly white. Any other race is multiple perspective. (Content of book

			could determine this or not).
2. Frequency of reading books on race	practice	Multiple perspective/social action	Could be considered multiple perspective or a social action by some.
3. Books on homelessness	resource	Sociopolitical	Homelessness is often affected by social and political issues and events.
4. Frequency of reading books on homelessness	practice	Multiple perspective/social action	Could be considered multiple perspective or a social action by some.
5. Books on same sex parents or relationships	resource	Disrupting the common thinking	Same-sex marriage and relationships are not as "common" in upper East Tennessee and therefore disrupts the common thinking.
6. Frequency of reading books on same sex parents or relationships	practice	Disrupting the common thinking /social action	Could be considered disrupting the common situation since same-sex relationships are not the "common" thinking, or a social action by some.
7. Controversial conversations	practice	Disrupting the common thinking	Controversial by nature is against the common thinking.
8. Importance of controversial conversations	perception	Disrupting the common thinking/multiple perspective /social action/	Depends on context of conversations.

9.Comfortable with controversial conversations	perception	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and view of person having discussion. Many consider conversations as first step in social acceptance, so it may be perceived as an action, while others may view controversial conversations as disruption or multiple perspective or sociopolitical.
10. Importance of controversial conversations perception	perception	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and view of person having discussion. Many consider conversations as first step in social acceptance, so it may be perceived as an action, while others may view controversial conversations as disruption or multiple perspective or sociopolitical.
11. Administratively supported	perception	Disrupting common thinking	If controversial, and support needed, most likely disrupting common thinking
12. Parentally supported	perception	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	If controversial, and support needed, most likely disrupting common thinking, but may be perceived as other.
13. Books with diverse characters	resource	Multiple perspective	Diverse characters is multiple perspective

14. Frequency of reading diverse character books	practice	Multiple perspective	Diverse characters is multiple perspective.
15. Frequency of responding to book	practice	Multiple perspective	Perspective of student writing or drawing.
16. Frequency of writing about concern	practice	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and perception of those involved.
17. Importance of writing about concerns	perception	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and perception of those involved.
18. Writing as platform for social justice	perception	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and perception of those involved.
19. Social justice responsibility	perception	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and perception of those involved.
20. Desire to teach social justice	perception	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking, sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and perception of those involved.
21. Critical literacy	knowledge	Multiple perspective/disrupting common thinking/ sociopolitical/social action	Depends on context and perception of those involved. May know parts or think they know.
22. Multiple perspective	knowledge	Multiple perspective	Specifically refers to multiple perspective.

23. Disrupting common knowledge thinking	disrupting common thinking	Specifically refers to disrupting common knowledge.

After each survey item was aligned with a critical literacy component, each item was then aligned to answer one of the research question constructs (see Table 2).

Table 2

Survey Question Alignment

Survey Question Numbers/Research Question	Variable Measured	Analysis
8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers?	Perceptions	Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this subscale group of perceptions.
1. a. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of critical literacy?		
8, 9, 10, 17	Perceptions of critical literacy content	Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this subscale group of critical literacy content perceptions.
11, 12	Perceptions of critical literacy support	Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this subscale group of critical literacy support perceptions.
18, 19, 20	Perceptions of desire	Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this

		subscale group of critical literacy desire perceptions.
21, 22, 23 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers? 1. b. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' knowledge of critical literacy?	Knowledge	These items (survey answers) will be added as a subscale (group) of critical literacy resources. It is a sum of each persons' answers to these survey questions. Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this subscale group of items related to knowledge.
21, 22, 23	Knowledge-individual analysis • Critical literacy • Multiple perspective • Disrupting common situation or thinking	These questions can also be analyzed individually with separate analysis of each. Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range to determine the knowledge responses of: (question 21) critical literacy, (question 22) multiple perspective, and (question 23) disrupting common situation or thinking. Frequency of distribution can also be run.
2, 4, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers? 1. c. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' practices of critical literacy?	Practices	These items (survey answers) will be added as a subscale (group) of critical literacy practices. It is a sum of each persons' answers to these survey questions. Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this subscale group of items related to resources.
2, 4, 6, 14	Practices Reading books	Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this

		subscale group of practices which include reading books.
7, 15, 16	Practices Discussion and writing	Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this.
1, 3, 5, 13 Research question: 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers? 1. d. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' resources for teaching critical literacy?	Resources	These items (survey answers) will be added as a subscale (group) of critical literacy resources. It is a sum of each persons' answers to these survey questions. Descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range will be performed on this subscale group of items related to resources.
1, 3, 5, 13	Resources-Individual analysis of Race, Homelessness, Same sex relationships, Diverse characters	A sum will be determined and descriptive statistics analysis of mean standard deviation, and range will be found within each area of resources: (question 1) race, (question 3) homelessness, (question 5) same sex relationships, and (question 13) diverse characters. Frequency of distribution will also be determined. Each resource area will be analyzed separately.

The construct of perceptions was survey questions 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20 and answered research question 1a: What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of critical literacy? These nine perceptions were then divided into three subscales There were nine survey items that constituted the three subscales of perceptions; perceptions of content (8, 9, 10, 17), perceptions of support (11, 12), and perceptions of desire to teach social justice (18, 19, 20).

The construct of knowledge was survey questions 21, 22, 23 and answered research question 1b: What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' knowledge of critical literacy? These three survey items (21, 22, 23) were combined to make one knowledge subscale.

The construct of practices was survey questions 2, 4, 6, 7, 14, 15, 16 and answered research question 1c: What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' practices of critical literacy? Seven items from the survey made up the two practice subscales of reading books (2, 4, 6, 14), and discussion and writing (7, 15, 16).

The construct of resources was survey questions 1, 3, 5, 13 and answered research question 1d: What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' resources of critical literacy? The four survey items made up the resource subscale (1, 3, 5, 13). Descriptive statistics including mean, standard deviation, and range were determined for each subscale. For the subscales of resources and knowledge, the frequency of distribution was also determined in order to fully understand which resources and which knowledge components East Tennessee early childhood teachers use.

The 23-item survey (Appendix B) asked the participants to indicate their degree of agreement on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from terms which ordered responses 0-3. Because critical literacy has just recently emerged as a hot topic in education, it was thought that many teachers may not know what it is or how it is implemented. As stated earlier, the term is often confused with critical reading and critical thinking. Therefore, this survey was designed to capture aspects of critical literacy that may be done in the classroom while also asking about certain critical literacy practices and teacher attitudes towards critical literacy. The term critical literacy was not used at the beginning of the survey to avoid potentially excluding teachers who do not know what critical literacy is. This was important in order for teachers who might not have been familiar with the term critical literacy, but implement aspects of critical literacy, to be

able to complete the survey questions. A survey was developed by the researcher to incorporate aspects of critical literacy that teachers may or may not be doing in their classrooms already.

Survey answers were anonymous. Each participant was given an identification number as recommended by (Ruel et al., 2016), "When conducting anonymous research, it is important to create a unique identifier, such as identification number, for each respondent that is anonymous" (p. 26). The identification allowed participants to be counted, but not identified.

Confidentiality was maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used, meaning the survey company (SurveyMonkey) does not share IP addresses and that a name was not connected with the responses unless provided by the participants who wished to be a part of the qualitative portion of the research. Although rights and privacy were maintained, the ETSU IRB and personnel particular to this research had access to the study records. The procedures and confidentiality of the study are listed in the internet consent form (Appendix G).

Validity of the Quantitative Instrument

Validity was also a consideration. The researcher took precautions that the instrument was valid, meaning the survey instrument demonstrated, "sound evidence to demonstrate that the test interpretation matches its proposed use" (Creswell, 2015, p. 158). There were three different groups that looked at the instrument to establish face validity: The first was academic literacy coaches from the Greeneville City Schools and the Greene County Schools systems who said they were familiar with critical literacy. They were asked to read the survey questions, the research questions, and Lewison et al.'s (2002) critical-literacy components to see if they agreed that the questions correlated to the critical literacy components and if they did in fact answer the research questions. The second group asked was ETSU professors seasoned in research to verify

that the questions were aligned to the research questions and the critical-literacy components. After the first two face validity checks were made, two pilot tests were administered to teachers who were not participating in the research. The pilot tests allowed for suggestions and recommendations to improve the survey instrument and determine if scientific explanations matched the reality (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) before it was developed into an electronic form. The survey was one part of the methodology triangulation where two different forms of data were used, survey and interviews to obtain the third point as described by Patton (2014). This was important as multiple sources provided verification and validity while complementing similar data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

.   The survey instrument did not identify participants maintaining anonymity. The survey gave the participant the opportunity to enter into a $50 Amazon gift card drawing at the end of the survey. If they entered the drawing, the survey took them to another link to enter their name. This link disassociated them from their survey answers. Their name was needed in order to contact them if they won the optional gift card drawing. A second option allowed participants to sign up for the qualitative interview and be placed in the $50 Amazon gift card drawing. This option also took the participants to a separate link in order to disassociate them from their survey answers. Their identity was not known unless they agreed to be part of the qualitative phase of the research.

Quantitative Procedures

Prior to beginning this research study, permission to conduct research was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of East Tennessee State University. The IRB required district permission from the six school districts before granting approval. Permission to conduct research was sought from each of the districts' superintendents' offices. Permission was sought

by emailing the districts' superintendents (Appendix C) and by following the protocol to conduct research of the six districts. Some districts had specific requirements and forms that were submitted by the researcher for final district approval. When these requirements were met, approval letters were granted by the districts. These approval letters were then submitted to IRB as part of the approval process. Once IRB granted final approval, the superintendents' offices were contacted to determine their specific procedures for distributing the survey. Although the districts had different procedures, the principals of each school were sent an email informing them of the upcoming research.

Four of the participating districts' superintendents' personnel, Carter County, Greeneville City, Greene County and Kingsport City sent the survey information with the link to the principals in their districts. The principals then disseminated the survey to their teachers. The principals of the remaining two districts of Hamblen County and Johnson City were contacted by the researcher and provided both district and ETSU IRB approval forms. The principals were told of the research and asked for teacher email verification from the websites. Some principals emailed back that they preferred to send the survey information and link themselves to their teachers. Others provided email verification, and some did not respond at all. A teacher introductory (Appendix D) information email and link were sent to the principals who expressed they preferred to send it themselves. The emails that were verified by the principals were used by the researcher and the introductory teacher email (Appendix C) was sent and followed by the actual survey link two to three days later. Emails for teachers that were not verified by the principals were obtained from the school websites. An introductory email (Appendix C) was sent to these teachers and was followed by the survey link two or three days later. The principals were copied on theses emails.

The survey link was emailed and administered through the electronic survey company SurveyMonkey which does not store, nor share, email addresses to help ensure confidentiality.

<div align="center">Qualitative Phase</div>

The qualitative interviews were necessary as according to Creswell (2009), they can help determine the cause and effect that quantitative alone cannot achieve. Understanding what teachers know about critical literacy and what aspects they are currently comfortable and confident implementing can help determine future training needs for teachers.

<u>Qualitative Participants</u>

There were five participants in the qualitative phase. These participants indicated on the electronic survey that they would participate in an interview. Although there were originally six who volunteered, one participant from Carter County declined when contacted by the researcher. The demographics for the qualitative participants included: four from Greene County and one from Hamblen County, four female and one male, all four were white, three taught kindergarten, one taught first grade, and one taught third grade, all four were elementary education majors, one had five years of experience, one had nine, and the other two had more than ten.

Although it was intended that statistical analysis be conducted from the initial quantitative survey in order to gather information and answer the research questions about perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy, another purpose of the initial quantitative phase was to originally determine a rank of critical literacy scores from high to low from the quantitative data. This would have allowed participants who indicated a willingness to be interviewed to be chosen from both the high critical literacy scores and the low critical literacy scores from the survey providing a purposeful sampling. Onwuegie and Collins (2007) recommended at least three participants from each subgroup be used when using a nested

sampling design. Therefore, it was the intention to interview at least three willing participants from each subgroup of high and low scores from the quantitative survey data. However, it was decided after the second pilot study, to provide links for those volunteering for the interviews that dissociated participants from their answers. Because of this, the responses of the participants were unknown and interviews were conducted with the participants who volunteered without any possible high or low critical literacy ranking known.

Qualitative Measure

A semi-structured interview (Appendix F) was used to interview the participants. According to Creswell (2009), the interview protocol should include instructions for the interviewer to ensure standard procedures are used for all interviewees, as well as, four or five questions which often relate to the qualitative research sub questions. Further probes to elicit elaboration are always recommended. According to Goodwin and Goodwin (1996), a semi-structured process allows the researcher to understand perspectives and insights about the research and is useful for determining respondents' ideas, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and past experiences of events. This enables the conversations to vary and change between the different participants.

The interview protocol included eight open-ended questions addressing participants' views on aspects of critical literacy such as multiple perspective, confidence and comfort level in having controversial discussions, and the usefulness of critical literacy aspects in promoting social justice. As previously mentioned for the survey, the term critical literacy was not used in case participants were unfamiliar with the term. The final question asked if participants had anything they wanted to add or if they thought I should have asked anything else either on the survey or in the interview. While the interview protocol allowed all participants to be asked the

same initial questions, follow-up questions and probes varied based on the participants' responses.

<u>Qualitative Procedures</u>

The quantitative survey asked participants if they would be willing to participate in an interview to further discuss their responses, and provide more information about their perceptions, knowledge, practices and resources of critical literacy. The interviews were necessary because while quantitative data can determine how many people exemplify certain behaviors, but qualitative data can help researchers understand how and why the behaviors take place (Sutton, 2015). This qualitative piece was also intended to fill in the gap if there was a low response rate from the survey, while also providing detailed information on teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy.

In order to examine participants' perceptions, knowledge, practices and resources of critical literacy, individual interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with five participants who volunteered to take the survey. It was hoped to obtain six to ten interviews, but only six participants volunteered to participate with one later declining. Thus, five interviews were conducted.

Interviews were conducted individually and took place at the participants' convenience at their place of employment or their choice of meeting place as a natural setting for the interviewee as recommended (Creswell, 2009). Two interviews took place after school hours at the sites where two of the participants were employed. The interviewer and the participant were the only ones in the teachers' classrooms during the interview. Two interviews took place at the participants' houses after the regular school day. Both were conducted outside on patios. Again, the participants and the interviewers were the only ones present during the interview. The last

interview was scheduled at a coffee shop. The interview occurred in a small meeting room at the coffee shop. Again, the participant and the researcher were the only ones in the room during the interview. The participants signed the Oral Consent Form (Appendix F) after introductions and small talk, and just before the interview began. Each interview lasted between 15-20 minutes.

All participant interviews were recorded with a Lgsixe Digital Voice Recorder 8GB 1536Kbps Voice Recording device purchased from Amazon and approved by IRB. It was a small, unobtrusive device that was placed on the table as the interviewees spoke. Besides the recordings, the researcher took field notes to ensure that all data was gathered as the interviewee answered questions and spoke. This was important so data could accurately reflect the views of the participants in order to derive a "…general, abstract theory of a process…" (Creswell, 2009, p. 13) as described by grounded theory.

Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by establishing a key code. Each participant was given a fictitious name and a number. These were used in the key code which allowed the researcher to identify the participant, but did not disclose the identity of the participant.

Qualitative data was coded following a verbatim transcription of all interview audio tapes of the participants' words. This allowed for the participant's voice to be honored, which according to Saldaña, (2009) is an important element in understanding the experience. Coding is another essential element of qualitative research and is defined as "the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text in order to develop a general meaning of each segment" (Creswell, 2009). Transcripts were read thoroughly to obtain "preliminary explanatory analysis" to establish a general feeling about the data from the first reading (Creswell, 2015, p.142). The coding was manually performed by the researcher to determine common themes that occurred

from the participants' answers. A code "…is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2009, p.3). The data was then organized into themes enabling a broad theory to be generated that was "grounded" in the data; it then was connected to the research literature. The interviews were specifically analyzed using thematic content analysis through the use of grounded theory. The researcher was one of the coders along with a doctoral candidate experienced in the coding process to provide a cross-check. This was performed on passages and text from the interviews for reliability as recommended by Creswell (2009).

Golafshani, (2003) described qualitative research with the terms credibility and trustworthiness. From the perspective of the qualitative researcher, "the credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). All efforts were made during every phase of this research to establish trustworthiness. The peer coder coded all five transcripts as did the researcher. The transcripts and codes were compared between the two. It was predetermined that if disagreement occurred between the coders, they would discuss the interpretations and come to agreement. If unresolved, it would be the researcher's responsibility to determine the code. However, there were no unresolved disagreements between the coders. The researcher considered all information and strived for credibility and trustworthiness as decisions were made concerning the data. However, the researcher coded the transcripts multiple times and did determine themes that were not initially found by the peer coder or the researcher the first time transcripts were coded.

After data was read and coded, emerging themes were determined. Validity for qualitative data was determined by two strategies recommend by Creswell (2009). The first

strategy includes presenting "negative or discrepant information" that is contradictory to the themes (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). Most evidence fit into a theme, but presenting information that is contradictory to the themes will continue to establish trustworthiness and credibility and make the data more valid. The second method that was used to determine validity was the use of peer debriefing. A peer who was knowledgeable in the concepts of qualitative research read, reviewed, and coded the data. This helped ensure that someone else detected the same themes. This continued to provide credibility and trustworthiness while providing an interpretation besides that of the researcher. These multiple strategies are recommended and "should enhance the researcher's ability to assess the accuracy of findings as well as convince readers of that accuracy" (Creswell, 2009, p. 191).

The data underwent constant comparison with emerging themes to exhaust the similarities and differences of information (Creswell, 2009). As stated earlier, interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher. The notes and recordings were in the possession of the researcher during transport. All notes were taken and kept on a password- protected computer. These participants were contacted by the researcher via email by the address provided by the participants on the electronic survey.

The two stages of this study had unique needs. The quantitative survey informed to what degree teachers understand, value, and practice critical literacy within the Lewison et al's. (2002) critical framework while it also provided a purposeful sample for the interviews. The qualitative stage was necessary to discover why teachers do or do not implement critical literacy within their knowledge base, as it is possible to implement aspects of critical literacy without knowing exactly what it is. The combination and merging of this data had the potential to produce a grounded theory as to what East Tennessee early childhood teachers' attitudes are towards

certain aspects and why." Grounded theory is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of the participants" (Creswell, 2009, p.13). The use of grounded theory enabled a broad theory to be generated that is "grounded" in the data. The emerging design of grounded theory was used as it allowed views of the interviewees to emerge along with the pre-determined questions and answers into categories. This design emphasizes the importance of a theory to emerge from the data (Creswell, 2015). This was important in this study as teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy and their implementations of critical literacy were explored to determine categories that might be used for future research.

<div align="center">Role of Researcher</div>

"In early childhood education, we have our own personal and professional blurring of experience, knowledge, and competence" (Hatch, 2007, p. 209). As an early childhood teacher for 29 years, it is necessary to recognize, acknowledge, and understand how my experiences and beliefs could impact my role as a researcher. Although I have certain expectations and feelings about teaching acceptance of others based on my beliefs, and also I find little greater joy than teaching literacy to children, I realized that I do not necessarily have the same views, experiences, or feelings as other teachers. It was also essential that I recognize how my biases and values could impact my role as researcher. This was especially true during the interview stage of the study; my role at this time was not to share my own beliefs and opinions, but to listen and record the participants' beliefs and values shared through their own words in order to collect accurate data. It was also that essential I interpreted data while striving to keep "personal values, assumptions, and biases at the outset of the study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 196) for this data was the participants' story, not mine.

Summary

Chapter 3 included the research methodology and procedures for this study. The study purpose, research design, participants, data collection procedures, and research questions were explained in this chapter. Chapter 4 includes the results and chapter 5 includes findings and recommendations for future research such as potential professional development, supplies or books to assist teachers in critical-literacy implementation, support groups for teachers, and teachers' desires to implement critical literacy in the classroom.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The need for critical literacy is evident: In order to teach students that text reflects a particular ideology and is not neutral, to teach text analysis in both traditional and digital text, to teach students to discern truth and formulate opinions, and to teach tolerance and acceptance of others in order to provide social justice, critical literacy needs to occur in schools more prevalently than it currently does. This chapter will provide the findings from this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study that sought to discover the perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy of East Tennessee early childhood teachers.

This research synopsis was assembled from analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data. The study sought to answer the following quantitative questions:

Quantitative Questions

Research Question 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers?

      1a. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of critical literacy?

      1b. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' knowledge of critical literacy?

      1c. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' practices of critical literacy?

      1d. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' resources for teaching critical literacy?

Research Question 2. How do teachers with early childhood majors compare to teachers with elementary education backgrounds/majors in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy?

      2a. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their perceptions of critical literacy?

2b. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their knowledge of critical literacy?

2c. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their practices of critical literacy?

2d. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their resources of critical literacy?

Research Question 3. How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

3a. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in perceptions of critical literacy?

3b. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in knowledge of critical literacy?

3c. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in practices of critical literacy?

3d. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in resources of critical literacy?

The findings are from six upper East Tennessee school districts of Carter County, Greene County, Greeneville City, Hamblen County, Johnson City, and Kingsport City. The population included approximately 650 Pre-K through 3rd regular education teachers from the six school districts. The voluntary survey was returned by 169 (26%) participants. After examining the data, 13 surveys were eliminated. Those eliminated included one survey that was marked "other" rather than indicating a Pre-K-3rd grade teaching level; this survey was eliminated due to the fact that it should not have been sent, nor taken, by teachers other than Pre-K-3rd grade early

childhood teachers. Four surveys were eliminated because participants had not consented to the

survey and eight were eliminated because they were not completed or less than three items were

answered. The final total of surveys used was 156.

The survey included an item which asked the participants to identify the district in which

they teach. The survey was intended for early childhood teachers, Pre-K- 3rd grade. Table 3

displays the known participation from each of the districts, the grade level taught, and the years

of teaching experience by the participants.

Table 3

Frequency and Percentage of System, Grade Level Taught, Years of Experience

Demographic Item	Number of Participants	Percentage
School District		
Carter County Schools	25	15.92
Greene County Schools	52	33.12
Greeneville City Schools	18	11.46
Hamblen County Schools	21	15.29
Johnson City Schools	21	13.38
Kingsport City Schools	17	10.83
Not Answered	12	7.69
Grade Taught		
Pre-K	17	10.89
Kindergarten	33	21.15
1st Grade	39	25.00
2nd Grade	34	21.79
3rd Grade	30	19.23
Years of Experience		
Less and 1 year-3	21	13.46
4-7	27	17.30
8-10	13	7.69
More than 10	93	59.61

Note. Demographic data is for all participants whose surveys were used. Frequency (*N*) =156

The teaching profession is dominated by women (Drudy, 2008). This study's demographic participant make-up did not negate this with 145 (92.9%) participants answering female with only 3 (1.9%) answering male. Although "other" was an option, no one chose this answer. Eight (5.1%) participants did not answer this question. The ethnicity question was a write in answer on the survey. No ethnic groups were defined to enable participants to choose how they wanted this to be counted. Table 4 displays the gender and ethnicity of the teachers in this sample.

Table 4

Frequency and Percentage of Participant Gender and Ethnicity

Demographic Item	Frequency ($N = 156$)	Percentage
Gender		
Female	145	92.9
Male	3	1.92
Other	0	0
Did Not Answer	8	5.12
Ethnicity		
Black/African American	5	3.20
Half Hispanic	1	.64
White/Caucasian	144	92.30
Did not answer	6	3.84

Discussion of Quantitative Findings

In order to adhere to the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, the data analysis occurred in two phases. The quantitative data was analyzed first, and then the qualitative data.

After the two separate data were analyzed, the findings were integrated in order to draw relevant conclusions.

<u>Quantitative</u>

Quantitative data was analyzed using non-experimental quantitative methodology meaning the variables were not manipulated nor altered by the researcher, but "… instead relies on interpretation, observation, or interactions to come to a conclusion" (Kowalczyk, n.d., para. 5). Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform the statistical analysis of the survey data. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the demographic information as well as answer research question one.

<u>Research Question 1</u>

Question 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers?

    1a. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of critical literacy?

    1b. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' knowledge of critical literacy?

    1c. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' practices of critical literacy?

    1d. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' resources for teaching critical literacy?

This question was answered by descriptive statistics including the mean, standard deviation, and range for each of the four constructs of perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources.

The survey consisted of nine total perception questions which answered Research Question1.

These nine perceptions were divided into three subscales that reflected teachers'
perceptions of content, support, and desire in regards to aspects of critical literacy. The
perceptions of content included questions that reflected the participants' responses towards
importance, comfort level, and appropriateness of holding discussions, and writing about
concerns and controversial topics. The results of the four questions pertaining to content
perceptions follow.

Research Question Sub Question 1a Perceptions of Content

One of the main elements of critical literacy is to discuss controversial topics so students
can hear different opinions from their own. There were four perception questions on the survey:
perception of importance of controversial conversations, comfort in holding controversial
conversations, perception of appropriateness to hold controversial conversations, and importance
of writing about concerns.

Participants' (n=150) mean content perception in regards to the importance of discussions
concerning controversial topics was 1.52, (SD = .78). The 150 n indicates that six participants
did not answer this question. Scores varied across the full 0-3 scale where 0 aligns with "not
important" and 3 aligns with "very important." The 1.52 mean falls between "somewhat
important" and "important." Because the scale is only 4 points, the range of the scores was
limited.

The sample (n=148) mean content perception in regards to the comfort level of having
controversial topic conversations was 1.60 (SD=.81).   The 148 n indicates that eight participants
did not answer this question. This falls between the 1 which aligns with "somewhat comfortable"
and 2 which aligns with "comfortable."

The sample (*n*=149) mean of content in regards to the age appropriateness of controversial topic conversations was 1.34 (*SD*=.83).   The 149 *n* indicates that seven participants did not answer this question. The 1.34 falls between 1 which aligns with "somewhat appropriate" and 2 which aligns with "appropriate."

The sample mean of content in regards to the importance of writing about concerns was 1.94 (*SD*=.74). Participants' (*n*=145) scores varied from 0-3 on the 4- point Likert scale.   The 145 *n* indicates that 11 participants did not answer this question. The 1.94 falls between the 1 aligned with "somewhat important" and 2 aligned with "important."

The results of the subscale content perceptions are displayed below in Table 5.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Measures of Perception of the Importance, Comfortability, and Appropriateness of Controversial Discussions, and Writings

Perception	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Importance of controversial conversations	150	1.52	.78	0	3
Comfortable having controversial conversations	148	1.60	.81	0	3
Appropriateness of controversial conversations for age group taught	149	1.34	.83	0	3
Importance of writing about concerns	145	1.94	.74	0	3

Conversations concerning controversial topics are an integral aspect of critical literacy. Therefore, the perception of support to have these conversations is imperative to know; teachers may not hold them if they do not feel supported. The survey included questions that reflected both the participants' perceptions of support from administration and support from parents to

hold discussions on controversial topics. The following findings are from the subscale support perceptions.

Research Question Sub Question 1a Perceptions of Support

The sample (*n*=149) mean of the perception of administration support was 1.70 (*SD*=.84). The 149 *n* indicates that seven participants did not answer this question. This falls between 1 and 2 indicating that the overall perception of administration support aligned between "somewhat supported" and "supported."

The participants' (*n*=148) mean perception of parental support to hold discussions concerning controversial conversations was 1.01 *SD*=.69). This is aligned with "somewhat supported," but is lower than the administration support perception.   The 148 *n* indicates that eight participants did not answer this question.

Table 6 demonstrates perception results of administration support and parental support.

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations on the Measure Perceptions of Administration Support and Parental Support

Perception	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Perception of administration support to hold controversial conversations	149	1.70	.84	0	3
Perception of parental support to hold controversial conversations	148	1.01	.69	0	3

The perceptions of desire subscale included questions that reflected the participants' perceptions on their responsibility, desire, and literacy as an appropriate platform to teach social justice. It is important to know if teachers desire to teach critical literacy; they may not teach it if

they have no desire to do so. It is also important to know if teachers feel that social justice is

their responsibility. If they do not have this inclination, professional development may need to

occur to demonstrate the power critical literacy has in the classroom. It is also important to

know if teachers feel that literacy is an appropriate platform for teaching social justice since the

back bone of critical literacy resides in literacy practices of reading books, writing, and

discussing.

<u>Research Question Subscale Question 1a Perceptions of Desire to Teach Social Justice</u>

Participants' (*n*=145) mean score in regards to literacy as a platform to teach social

justice was 2.17 (*SD*=.60). This is the largest mean of the nine perceptions. The scores varied

from 0-3 on the 4- point Likert scale where 0 aligned with" not at all," 1 aligned with "rarely," 2

aligned with "sometimes," and 3 aligned with "frequently." This 2.17 mean falls between

"sometimes" and "frequently" as a platform to teach literacy. The 145 *n* indicates that 11

participants did not answer this question.

The sample mean of desire in regards to responsibility to teach social justice was 1.92

(*SD*=.75). Participants' (*n*=145) scores varied from 0-3 on the 4- point Likert scale with 3

aligned to "frequently." The 1.92 mean falls between 1 which aligns with "rarely" and 2 which

aligns with "sometimes" as a teacher responsibility. However, the 1.92 mean is on the high end

of 1 and is almost a 2 which aligns with "sometimes." The 145 *n* indicates that 11 participants

did not answer this question.

The sample mean in regards of desire to teach social justice was 1.71 (*SD*=.76).

Participants' (*n*=146) scores varied from 0-3 on the 4-point Likert scale with 3 aligned with

"frequently." The 1.71 mean falls between 1 which is aligned with "rarely" and 2 which aligns

with "sometimes" as teacher desire to teach social justice. The 146 *n* indicates that ten

participants did not answer this question. Table 7 displays the results of the subscale desire results.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Measures of Perception of Literacy as a Platform, Responsibility, and Desire to Teach Social Justice

Perception	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Literacy as a platform	145	2.07	.60	0	3
Responsibility to teach social justice	145	1.92	.75	0	3
Desire to teach social justice	146	1.71	.76	0	3

In order to answer Research Question 1b, descriptive statistics of mean, standard deviation, and range were determined to analyze the construct of knowledge. There were three survey questions which asked if participants knew what critical literacy, multiple perspective, and disrupting the common place thinking were.

Research Question Subscale Question 1b Knowledge

The sample mean in regards to knowledge of critical-literacy was 1.10, (*SD*=.96). Participants' (*n*=145) scores ranged from 0 which aligned with "no, I do not" to 3 which aligned with "yes, I do." The standard deviation was .96. The 1.10 mean aligns with "I have heard of it." The 145 *n* indicates that 11 participants did not answer this question.

The second survey question related to critical literacy knowledge asked participants about their knowledge of providing a multiple perspective in literature, an essential component of critical literacy. The participants' (*n*=145) mean score was 1.97 with .88 standard deviation. This mean falls between 1, which is aligned with "I have heard of it" and 2, "I am familiar with it." The 145 *n* indicates that 11 participants did not answer this question.

The third critical-literacy knowledge question asked participants if they knew what disrupting the common place thinking meant, another integral component of critical literacy. The participants' (*n*=145) mean score was 1.37 (*SD*=1.0) which is the largest standard deviation of the knowledge responses. The 1.37 mean falls between 1 which is aligned with "I have heard of it" and 2 which is "I am familiar with it." The 145 *n* indicates that 11 participants did not answer this question.

Table 8 displays the results from the three knowledge questions.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics for Measures of Knowledge of Critical Literacy

Knowledge Item	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Knowledge of critical literacy	145	1.10	.96	0	3
Knowledge of multiple perspectives	145	1.97	.88	0	3
Knowledge of disrupting commonplace	145	1.37	1.0	0	3

Research Question 1c reflected two subscales of: 1. book reading, and 2. discussion and writing practices associated with critical literacy. These practices are aspects of critical literacy. It is important to know which practices teachers may be currently implementing in order to develop professional development to introduce new topics and ways to introduce them.

Research Question Subscale Question 1c Book and Discussion and Writing Practices

The practice of reading controversial topic books was reflected in the first subscale and was reflected in four survey questions. There were four book topics in the book reading subscale: race, homelessness, same-sex relationships, and diversity.

Reading books on the controversial topic of race was the first practice. The sample's (*n*=136) mean was 1.58 *(SD*=.65). This mean falls between 1 which is "seldom" and 2 which is "sometimes" in regards to the frequency of reading books dealing with race. A 3 is aligned with "frequently." This 136 n was low due to the fact that 20 (12.82%) of the participants responded that they had no books concerning race. Therefore, they were unable to answer this question.

The second practice represented the frequency of reading books on the controversial topic of homelessness. The mean of the participants (*n*=39) was 1.05 (*SD*=.65). This n was low due to the fact that 112 (74.17%) of the participants had responded that they had no books concerning homelessness. Therefore, they were unable to answer this question on. Because "none" was an answer choice on the number of books teachers had on the topic of homelessness, and because n was 151 for the number of homelessness books teachers had, the 39 n for practice of reading homelessness books indicated that five participants did not answer the homelessness resource question. This will be further discussed in Research Question 1d concerning resources.

The third practice refers to participants' (*n*=17) practices of reading controversial books on same-sex relationships. Again, this n was low due to the fact that 54 (76.10%) of the participants reported they did not have any books on this topic. Therefore, they could not answer this question concerning practice. The mean was .94 (*SD*=.97). This is aligned with "never" in the frequency of topic of same sex relationships. Because "none" was an answer choice on the number of books teachers had on the topic of same-sex relationships, and because n was 71 for the number of same sex relationship books teachers had question, the 71 n for practice of reading same-sex relationship books indicated that 85 (45.51%) participants did not answer the same sex relationship resource question. This means that 112 participants indicated they did not have

books on homelessness. This will be further discussed in Research Question 1d concerning

resources.

The sample (*n*=145) mean of practices in regards to the frequency that books with diverse

characters were read was 1.50. The term *diverse characters* was left for the participants'

interpretation. Examples might include books with a female antagonist or books with Hispanic

characters for some. This was left open for interpretation purposely in order not to

compartmentalize each type of diverse character book; this would have required multiple survey

questions and some diverse character books might have inadvertently been omitted by the

researcher. The sample mean was 1.80 (*SD*=.78) and falls between 1 which is aligned with

"seldom" and 2 which is aligned with "occasionally." The n for diverse character resources was

151. This indicated that six (32.15%) could not answer the question because they had no books

on diverse characters. Because "none" was an answer choice for the diverse character resource

question, this indicated that five participants did not answer this question.

The practice subscale of reading books on controversial topics and with diverse

characters is listed below. Table 9 displays the results from the subscale practices of book

reading.

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics for Measures of Practices of Reading Books on Controversial and Diverse

Character Books

Practice Item	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Reading books on race	136	1.58	.65	0	3
Reading books on homelessness	39	1.05	.65	0	3
Reading books on same-sex relationships	17	.94	.97	0	3

Reading books with diverse characters	145	1.8	.78	0	3

The practices of class discussions and writing about controversial topics makes up the second practice subscale. The questions on the survey in regards to practices asked about frequency of having controversial conversations as well as frequency of writing about books and writing about concerns. All of these are standard aspects of critical literacy.

The sample (*n*=147) mean for frequency of controversial discussions was 1.08 and the standard deviation was .70. This aligns with "seldom" whereas 0 aligns with "never" and 3 aligns with "frequently." The 147 *n* indicates that nine participants did not answer this question.

The sample (*n*=145) mean for frequency of writing about a book was 2.54 and the standard deviation was .74. This mean falls between a 2 and 3 where 2 is "sometimes" and 3 is "frequently." The 145 *n* indicated that 11 participants did not answer this question.

The sample (*n*=143) mean for frequency of writing about concerns was 1.24 and the standard deviation was .91. This mean falls between a 1 and 2 where 1 aligns with "rarely" and 2 aligns with "sometimes." The 145 *n* indicated that 11 participants did not answer this question. Table 10 displays the results of the subscale.

Table 10

Frequency of Having Controversial Conversations, Writing About Books, and Writing About Concerns

Practice Item	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Frequency of controversial discussions	147	1.08	.70	0	3
Frequency of book writing	145	2.54	.74	0	3

Frequency of writing about concerns	143	1.24	.91	0	3

Research Question 1d. reflected the participants' book resources on controversial topics of race, homelessness, same-sex relationships, and diverse characters. Literature is the foundational aspect of critical literacy and it is imperative to know if teachers even have the appropriate resources to teach critical literacy.

Research Question Subscale Question 1d Book Resources

The scale for the resource construct consisted of the following alignment: 0 with "none," 1 "some," 2 "a few," and 3, "a lot." Although the answer choices may seem ambiguous, they were chosen purposely and represent the participant perception rather than a specific quantitative number. Even though resources is its own construct, the survey heavily relied on perceptions of the participants. This wording allowed participants to formulate what they thought "some," "a few," and "a lot" were.

The survey first asked if participants had books on race. The sample (n=156) mean was 1.07 (SD=.67). The participant answers varied on the 4-point Likert scale with 0 aligned with "none" and 3 aligned with "a lot." The 1.07 mean is aligned with "some." The 156 n indicated that all 156 participants answered this question.

The participants' (n=151) mean score was .25 in regards to homelessness. This low mean reflects that very few teachers in this sample have books on homelessness. The standard deviation was 67. This response is between "none" and "some" on the scale. This lack of homelessness books in this resource construct was also reflected in the low reading practice construct (n=39) and the low mean of 1.01 in the reading practice construct on homelessness.

There were 112 teachers who could not answer the question about reading homelessness books. The 151 *n* indicated that five (3.21%) participants did not answer this question.

The sample mean of participants (*n*=71) was .18 (*SD*=.57) in regards to resources on same-sex relationships. The .18 mean is the lowest of the resources and is the lowest mean of the entire survey. The .18 falls in between "none" and "some." The low n (71) demonstrates that 85 teachers in this sample did not answer this question; the low mean (.18) demonstrates that many teachers in this sample do not have books on same-sex relationships. The mean was also low for books on homelessness (*M*=.25), but the n was 151 demonstrating although the teacher sample had few books on the topic of homelessness, all but six of the teachers in the sample answered the question on homelessness whereas 85(54.49%) did not answer the same-sex relationships resource question.

The participants' (*N*=151) mean score was 1.70 (*SD*=.83) in regards to books on diverse characters. Diverse was not defined in order to not compartmentalize perceptions of diverse characters. It was instead, left open for the participants to determine what they considered diverse without the researcher possibly omitting one of their choices. The sample (*N*=151) mean was 1.70 (*SD*=.83). The 1.70 mean falls between "some" and "quite a few," but is closer to "quite a few." This is, however, a higher mean than the other resources. The 151 n indicated that five (3.21%) did not answer this question. Table 11 displays the resources.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics for Measures of Resources of on Controversial and Diverse

Character Books

Perception	*N*	*M*	*SD*	Min	Max
Race books resource	156	1.07	.67	0	3
Homelessness books resource	151	1.01	.25	0	3

Same sex relationships books resource	71	.18	.57	0	3
Diverse characters books resource	151	1.70	.83	0	3

Figure 1 displays the books by subject and means.
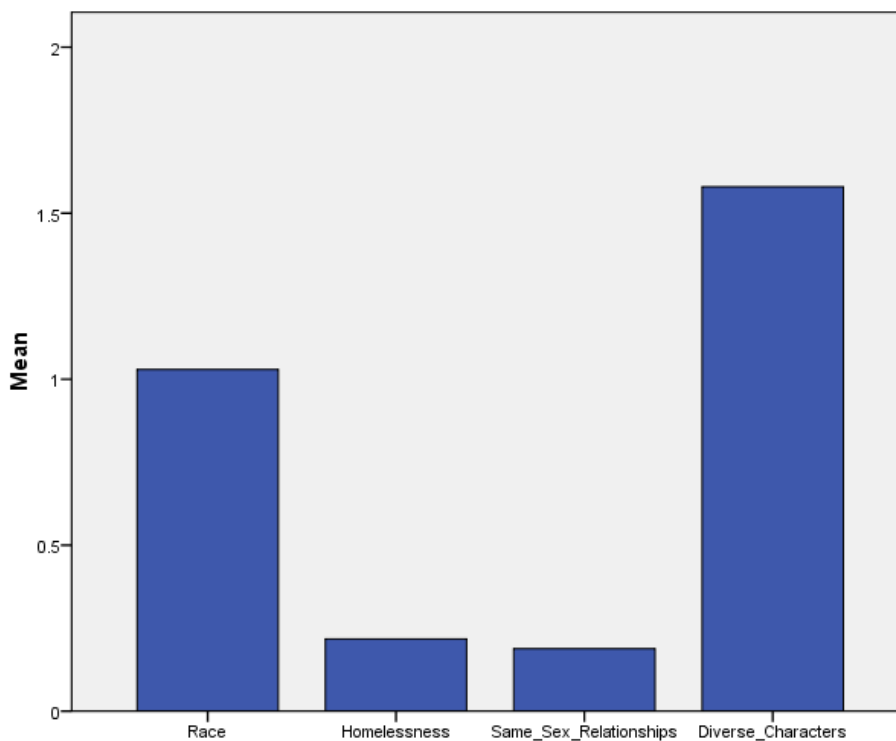
Figure 1. Comparison of race, homelessness, same sex relationships, and diversity books

<u>Research Question 2</u>

Research question 2 consisted of an overarching question followed by four sub-questions that measure the dependent variables of perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy as did research question 1. It is as follows:

Research Question 2: How do teachers with early childhood majors compare to teachers with elementary education majors in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy?

Question 2 was statistically answered with two multi-variate analysis of variances (MANOVAS) and 2 univariate analysis of variance (ANOVAS). The comparison group of major included three levels of early childhood, elementary education, and other. The four constructs of perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources were the dependent variables.

Research Question Subscale Question 2a. Perceptions

How do teachers with early childhood majors compare to teachers with elementary education majors in their perceptions of critical literacy?

Ho2a: There are no significant differences in the majors of early childhood and elementary education majors in their perceptions of critical literacy.

A MANOVA was used in order to answer research question 2a, "How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their perceptions of critical literacy?" The survey reflected nine total perception items that were divided into three subscales that reflected teachers' perceptions of content, support, and desire in regards to aspects of critical literacy. The perceptions of content included questions that reflected the participants' responses towards importance, comfort level, and appropriateness of holding discussions, and writing about concerns and controversial topics. The subscale of support included perceptions of administration support as well as parental support to hold controversial conversations. The subscale of desire included perceptions on literacy as a social justice platform, teacher responsibility to teach social justice, and desire to teach social justice.

The mean was computed for the four perceptions of content items to make one scaled variable of content perceptions. The same was done with the two support perception items, as well as the three desire to teach social justice perceptions. The means of each subscale total were averaged because the constructs measured multiple dependent variables. Computing the mean

has the advantages of keeping the construct on the same 0-3 scale as the survey questions (Green & Salkind, 2014).

A MANOVA was used for analysis because the major factor had three levels including "other" along with the two levels of early childhood and elementary education. The "other" level included 20 participants which was too large to eliminate from the data. Therefore, keeping the "other" level created three levels for the independent variable of major. Because there were three levels and three scaled variables that were labeled content perceptions, support perceptions, and desire perceptions after computation, a MANOVA was used for analysis.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between major and perceptions of critical literacy. The factor variable, the major, included three levels of early childhood, elemenatry education, and other. The dependent variable was the computed means of the three perception subscales: perception of content, perception of support, and perception of desire to teach social justice. No significant differences were found among the three majors on the dependent measures. Wilke's λ = .957, F (6,280) =1.02, p=.409, ns. The multivariate η^2 based Wilke's λ was not strong, .021. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Because there was no significant difference between the three majors of early childhood, elementary education, and other, in regards to the sub scaled dependent variables of perception of content, perception support, and perception to teach social justice, no post hoc tests were done. In summary, the perceptions among the 3 levels of major were approximately equal. The means for perception of content among the three groups of early childhood, elementary education, and other were 1.66 (SD=51), 1.59 (SD=62), and 1.47 (SD=47) respectively; the means for perception of support among the three groups of early childhood, elementary education were 1.30 (SD=.66), 1.42 (SD=.66), and 1.17 (SD=.47) respectively; the means for

perception of desire to teach social justice among the three groups of early childhood, elementary

education, and other were 2.02 (*SD*=.67), 1.93 (*SD*=.58), and 171 (*SD*=.60). Figure 2 shows the

distribution of the results.

Figure 2. Distribution of scores for perceptions among early childhood, elementary education,
and other levels

Research Question Subscale Question 2b Knowledge

    Research Sub-question 2b: How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to

elementary education majors in their knowledge of critical literacy?

Ho2b: There are no significant difference in the majors of early childhood and elementary education in their knowledge of critical literacy?

Although there was a factor with three levels of early childhood, elementary education, and other as in question 2a, there was only one scaled dependent variable computed from the means of the three survey questions for knowledge. Thus, an ANOVA was used for analysis.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between the three majors and knowledge of critical literacy. The factor variable, the major, included three levels of early childhood, elemenatry education, and other. The dependent variable was the computed mean of critical literacy knowledge, multiple perspective knowledge, and disrupting the common place thinking knowledge scores. The ANOVA was not significant, $F(2, 14)=.718$, $p=.6489$ ns, $\eta^2 =.010$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The strength of the relationship between major and critical literacy knowledge, as assessed by η^2, was small (.010). These results indicate that ciritcal literacy knowledge was approximately equal among the three levels of early childhood, elementary education, and the other levels. The means for critical literacy knowledge were 1.5 (*SD*=93), 1.5 (*SD*=78), and 1.3 (*SD*=63) respectively for the three levels of major. Figure 3 shows the distribution of the results.
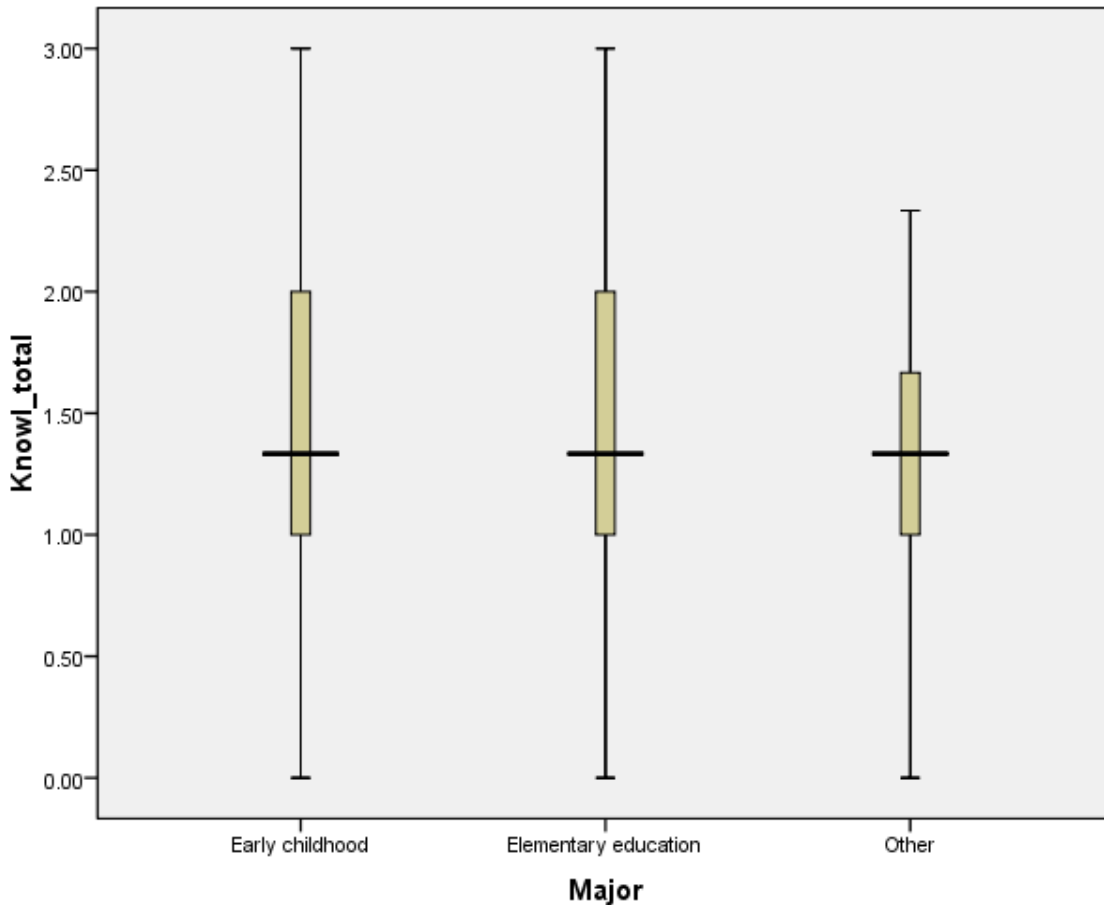
Figure 3. Distribution of scores for knowledge among early childhood, elementary education, and other levels

Research Question Subscale Question 2c of Knowledge

Research sub question 2c : How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their practices of critical literacy?

Ho2c: There are no significant differences in early childhood majors and elementary education majors in their practices of critical literacy.

As in Research Subscale Question 2a, a MANOVA was used for analysis because there were three levels of early childhood, elementary education, and other in the factor of major, and two sub scaled dependent variables of .reading books, and discussion and writing in practices.

The means of these subscales were computed which formed two dependent variables of reading practices and discussion/writing practices.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine the effect of three majors (early childhood, elementary education, and other) on the two dependent variables, reading practices and discussion and writing practices. No significant differences were found among the three majors on the dependent measures. Wilke's λ, = .961, F (4, 288) =1.46, p=.213, ns. The multivariate η^2 based Wilke's λ was not strong, .020. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Since there was no significant difference, no post hoc tests were performed. In summary, the practices among the three levels of early childhood, elementary education, and other majors was approximately equal. The means for book reading practices among the three levels of early childhood, elementary education, and other were 1.6 (SD=.59), 1.6 (SD=.65), and 1.4 (SD=.56) respectively. The means for discussion and writing practices among the three levels of early childhood, elementary education, and other were 1.6 (SD=.59), 1.7 (SD=.59), 1.4 (SD=.65) respectively. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the results.
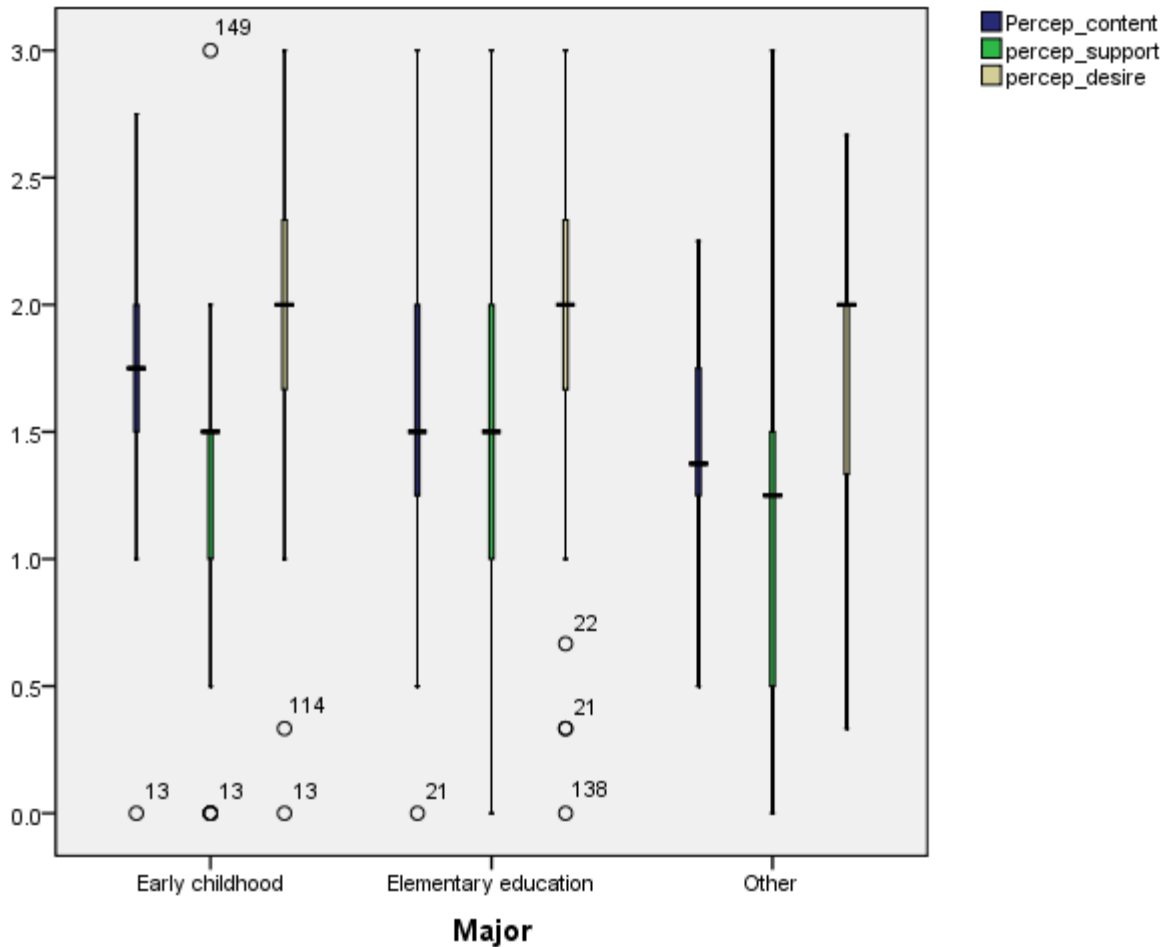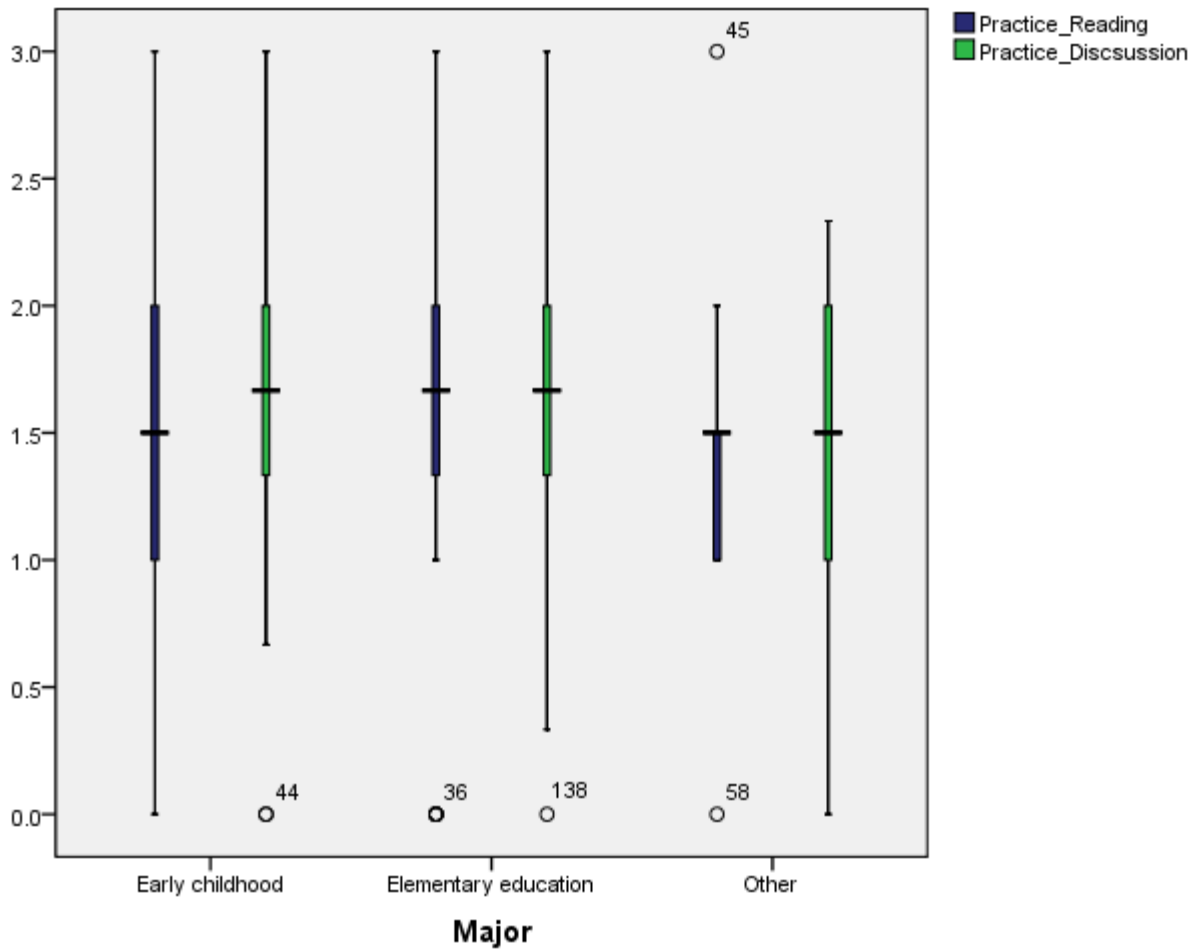
Figure 4. Distribution of scores for practices among early childhood, elementary education, and other levels

Research Question Subscale Question 2d of Resources

Research question 2d: How do East Tennessee early childhood majors compare with

elementary education majors in their resources of critical literacy?

Ho2d: There are no significant differences in East Tennessee early childhood majors and

elementary education majors in their resources of critical literacy.

Question 2d was analyzed by an ANOVA. The question consisted of the same three

levels of early childhood, elementary education, and other as the previous sub-questions 2a, 2b,

2c. However, this sub-question sought to determine any differences in resources between the

three levels. The responses to the four resource questions pertaining to book resources on race, homelessness, same-sex relationships, and diversity were computed to find the means, then combined into one scaled dependent variable.

A one-way analysis of variance was conducted to evaluate the relationship between majors and resources of critical literacy. The factor variable, the major, included three levels of early childhood, elemenatry education, and other. The dependent variable was the computed mean of the resource book scores associated with majors of early childhood, elementary education, and other. The ANOVA was not significant, $F(2,153)=.2.07$, $p=.129$, $\eta^2 =.026$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. The strength of the relationship between major and critical-literacy knowledge, as assessed by $\eta^{2,}$ was small (.010). In summary, the resources between the three levels were approximately the same. The means among the three majors of early childhood, elementary education, and other were .98 (*SD* =.56), .92 (*SD* =.50), and .71 (*SD* =.41) respectively. Figure 5 shows the distribution of the results.
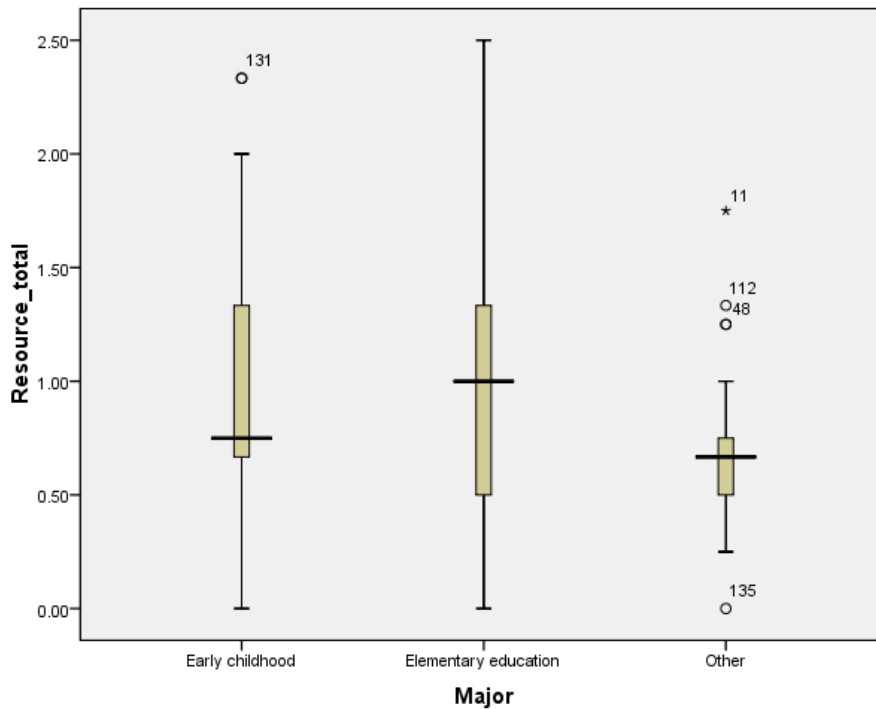
Figure 5. Distribution of scores for resources among early childhood, elementary education, and other levels

In summary, there were no significant differences among the three majors of early childhood, elementary education, and other in regards to their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy. The means of the four dependent variables were approximately equal.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 sought to determine if any differences in perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy exsited in lower grade levels as compared to higher grade levels. Early childhood generally consists of grades Pre-K-3rd grade and these grades were used in this study. The independent variable of level taught was divided into two levels of a lower level that consisted of Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade and a higher level that consisted of second grade and third grade.

Research question 3 consisted of the overarching question, "How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy?" and comprised four sub-questions that sought to determine differences in the dependent variable of perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources between the lower and higher levels of early childhood teachers.

Research Question Subscale Question 3a Perceptions

How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their perceptions of critical literacy?

H03a: There is no significant differences in teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) and teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their perceptions of critical literacy.

A MANOVA was chosen to analyze question 3a concerning perceptions. The same subscales that were used in question 2, perceptions of content, perceptions of support, and perceptions of desire to teach critical literacy were used again. However, the factor was comprised of two levels, lower (Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade) and higher (second and third grade) of early childhood. Since there were three dependent variables, a MANOVA was chosen.

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine the relationships between the two levels of the factor variable, lower ECED and higher ECED, on the three dependent variables of perceptions. Wilke's λ =99, F (3, 133) =.155, p=.927. The multivariate η^2 based Wilke's λ was not strong, .003. Therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted. Since there were was no significant difference between the three majors of early childhood, elementary education, and the third level of other in regards to perceptions, no post hoc tests were done. The

null hypothesis was retained. In summary, the perceptions between the two levels were approximately equal. The means for perception of content between the two groups of lower ECED and higher ECED were 1.60 (*SD*=60) and 1.57 (*SD*=56) respectively; the means for perception of support between the two groups of lower ECED and higher ECED were 1.32 (*SD*=.61), 1.57 and (*SD*=.56) respectively; the means for perception of desire to teach social justice between the two levels of lower ECED and higher ECED were 1.93 (*SD*=.55) and 1.90 (*SD*=.66) respectively. Figure 6 shows the distribution of the results.

Figure 6. Distribution of scores for perceptions between lower early childhood and higher early childhood grades

Research Question Subscale Question 3b on Knowledge

How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their knowledge of critical literacy?

Ho3b: There are no significant differences in teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K1) and teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their knowledge of critical literacy?

Because there were two levels of lower ECED and higher ECED, and one scaled dependent variable of knowledge, an independent sample t-test was used to analyze this question.

An independent samples *t* test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that there are no differences between lower early childhood and higher early childhood teachers in regards to their knowledge of critical literacy. An independent *t* test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean amount of knowledge differed in the two levels of lower early childhood and higher early childhood. The test was not significant, $t(134) = 1.22$, $p=.439$, ns. Therefore, the null-hypothis was retained. The means and standard deviations of the two levels of lower ECED and higher ECED are 1.58 ($SD=.83$) and 1.41 ($SD=.80$) respectively. Figure 7 displays the results of the distribution.
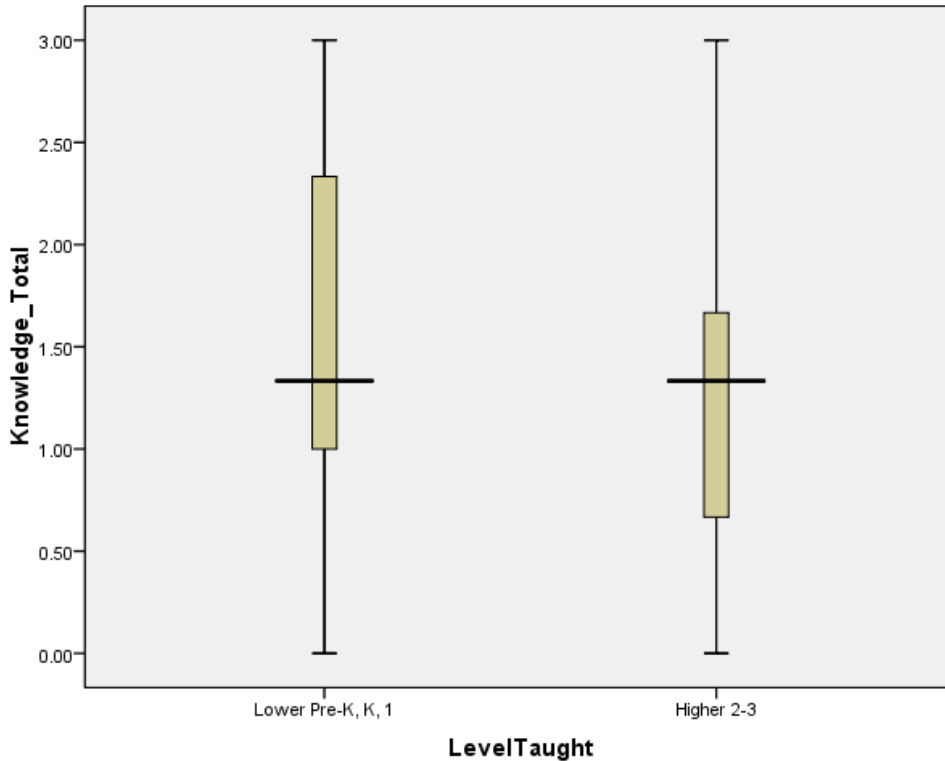
Figure 7. Distribution of scores for knowledge between lower early childhood and higher early childhood grades

Research Question Sub Question 3c Practices

How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

Ho3c: There are no significant differences in teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) and teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

A one-way multivariate analysis of variance was conducted to determine the effect of two level groups of lower ECED teachers and higher ECED teachers on the two dependent variables of 1.reading books, and 2.discussion and writing practices. Wilke's Λ=98, F (2, 137) =1.71 $p=.186.$ The multivariate η^2 based Wilke's Λ was not strong, .024. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained. Since there were was no significant difference between the two levels

of early childhood, lower and higher, in regards to practices, no post hoc tests were done. The means for practices of reading books between the two groups of lower ECED and higher ECED were 1.64 (*SD*=59) and 1.46 (*SD*=.63) respectively; the means for discussion and writing practices between lower ECED and higher ECED were 1.61 (*SD*=59) and 1.61 (*SD*=64) respectively. Figure 8 demonstrates the distribution of the results.
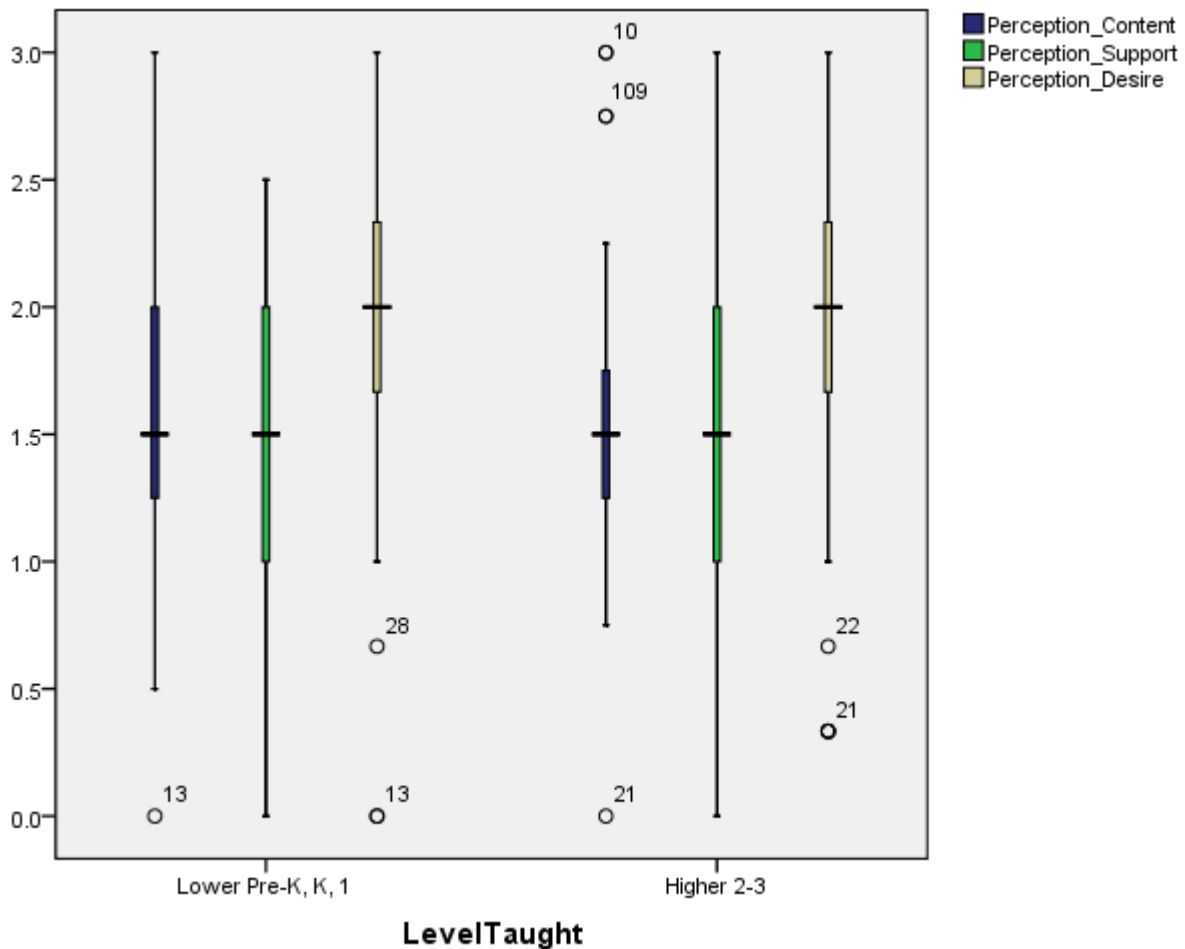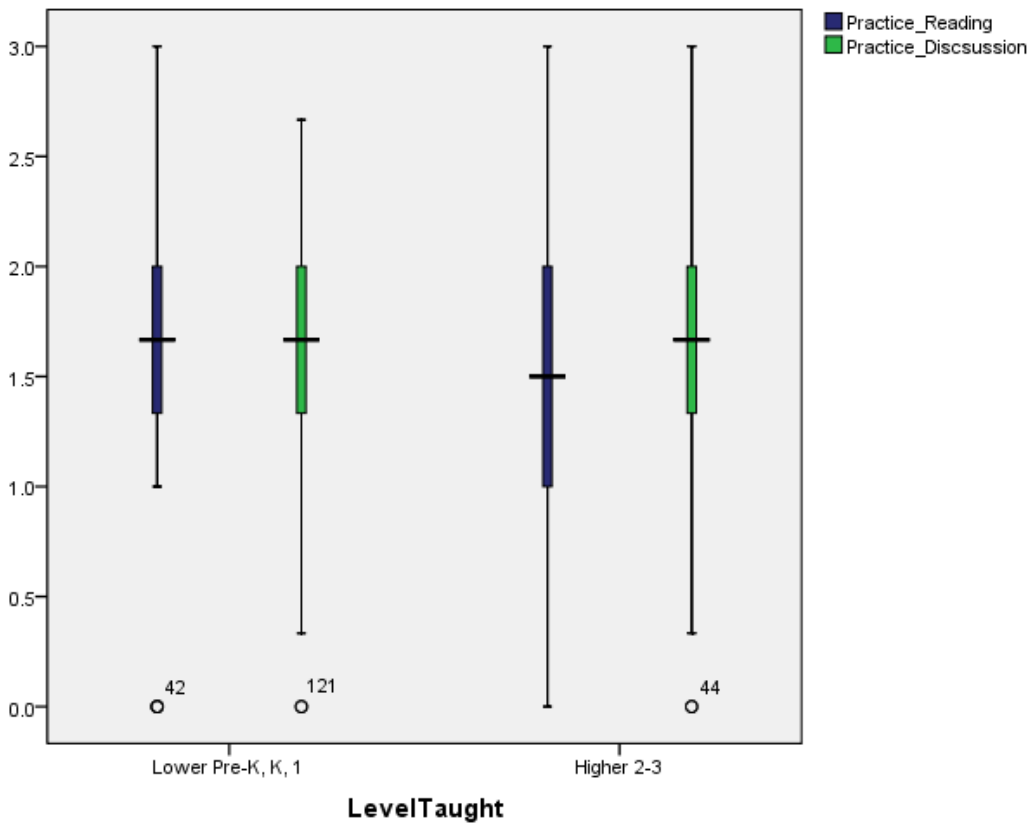

Figure 8. Distribution of scores for practices between lower early childhood and higher early childhood grades

Research Question Subscale Question 3d Resources

How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

Ho3d: There are no significant differences in teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) and teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

As in question 3b, there are two levels of lower early childhood and higher early childhood with one scaled dependent variable; here, the dependent variable is resources. Because of this, another independent t test was used to analyze the differences between lower and early childhood levels in regards to resources.

An independent–samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean amount of resources differed between the two levels of lower early childhood and higher early childhood grade teachers. The test was not significant, t (144) =.266, p =.638, ns. Therefore, the null hypotheses was retained. The means and standard deviations of the two levels of lower ECED and higher ECED are .93 (*SD*=.50) and .90 (*SD*=.50) respectively. Figure 9 displays the distribution of the results.
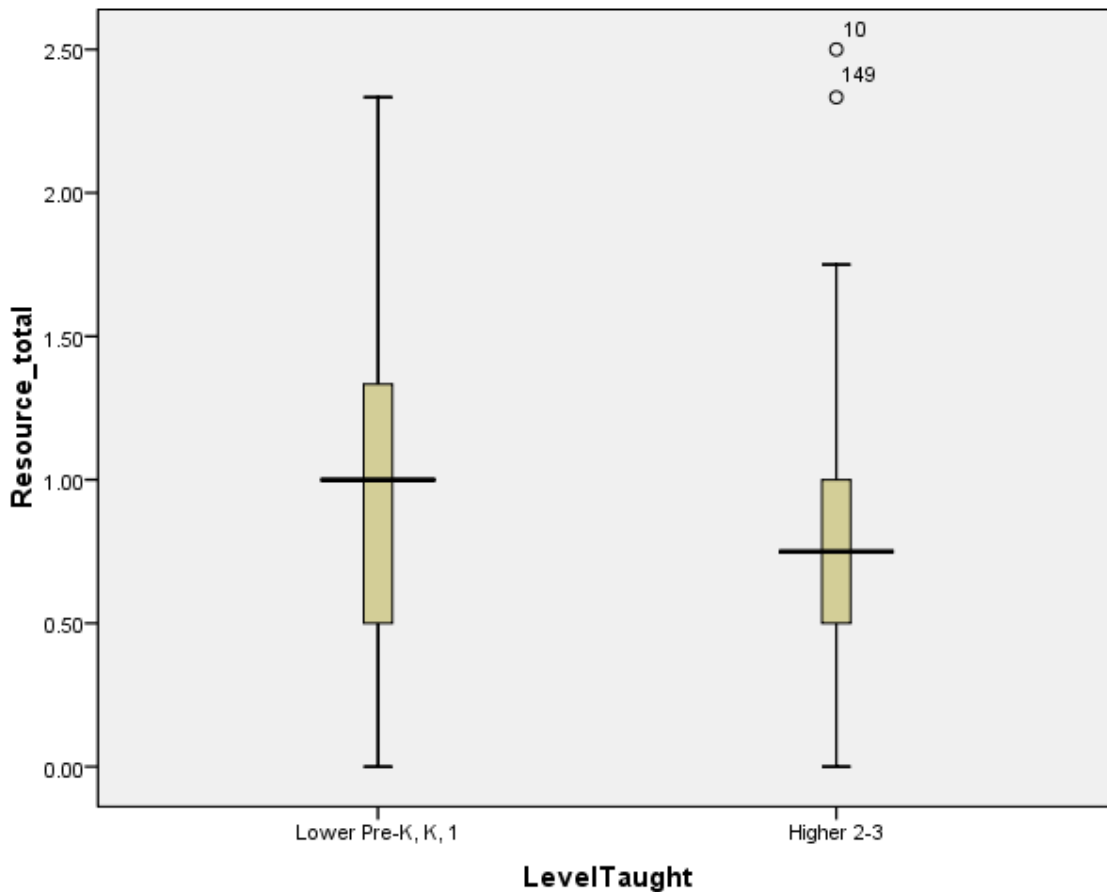
Figure 9. Distribution of scores for resources between lower early childhood and higher early childhood grades

In summary, there were no significant differences found among the perceptions,

knowledge, practices, and resources in regards to the level of ECED taught.

This quantitative analysis findings are followed by the qualitative findings of this

sequential mixed-methods study.

Discussion of Qualitative Findings

Individual interviews were conducted in order to answer the following research

questions:

Qualitative Questions:

Research Question 4. Why do teachers implement some elements of critical literacy in their

      classrooms? Why some and not others?

Research Question 5. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of the

      usefulness of critical literacy?

Research Question 6. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of limitations or

      needs in order to implement critical literacy?

Research Question 7. On what are these perceptions based?

Research Question 8. Why do East Tennessee ECED teachers feel confident or unconfident in

      implementing critical literacy?

Individual interviews were conducted with five participants who indicated on the survey they would participate in an interview. The quantitative survey asked participants if they would like to participate in a qualitative interview to discuss their survey answers and critical literacy further. If they chose to participate, they were taken to a different link where they could leave their name and email address in order to be contacted. This link also allowed them to be entered into a $50 Amazon gift card drawing. As previously explained, this link disassociated the participants from their survey answers in order to assure anonymity and to adhere to a recommendation made from the pilot survey.

Although six participants volunteered for the interview, one declined the opportunity when contacted. Therefore, interviews were conducted with the five participants who gave their contact information and agreed when contacted. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed by the researcher in order to guide the interviews (Appendix F). The interview protocol included four open-ended questions addressing participants' views on critical literacy in the early childhood classroom; these included questions that allowed participants' to express and

explain their thoughts, their comfort level, their knowledge, their current practices, and their

resources on critical literacy. The interviewees were given pseudonyms (Richard, Molly,

Veronica, Cecilia, and Claire) by the researcher in order to protect their identities. Their

responses not only were designed to answer the research questions, but to also provide the

opportunity for participants to share information that may not have been included or expected.

One last question asked participants if there were anything else they would like to add or if there

was something else they thought should have been asked.

The First Cycle strategy of coding was in-vivo coding and descriptive coding, which

were manually completed. In-vivo coding was chosen because, "… it is championed by many

for its usefulness in highlighting the voices of participants and for its reliance on the participants

themselves for giving meaning to the data" (Manning, 2017, p.1). This was a suitable coding

method for this research because it allowed the participants' views, experiences, and perceptions

to be better understood as they described them. Additionally, descriptive codes were used; the

use of such a code "summarizes the primary topic of the excerpt" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3).

The interview protocol provided predetermined questions to assure that all interviewees

were asked the same questions, in the same order, to establish consistency. However, codes

were allowed to emerge through prompts of elaboration and questions that asked, "Why do you

think this?" These emerged codes are the basis for grounded theory and were constantly

compared during analysis. Throughout the research process, each future step was determined by

what was discovered in the data. The codes were constantly compared and analyzed in search of

connecting data and concepts, and concepts that were possibly connected to other concepts.

Initial codes connected to the research questions were identified and reviewed for

repetitions and overlaps within and between participants. This allowed similarities to emerge,

which became the basis for secondary coding (Saldaña, 2009). Following in-vivo and descriptive coding, pattern coding was then manually performed (Appendix G) as part of the Second Cycle coding.

The purpose of Second Cycle coding is that it "…further manages, filters, highlights, and focuses the salient features of the qualitative data record for generating categories, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and/or building theory" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 8). Pattern coding was used to specifically locate repetitive patterns that were documented in the data as recommended by Saldaña (2009). As stated earlier, coding is a constant comparison and continuous process. Thus, some First Cycle codes were relabeled, incorporated into other codes, and some were discarded altogether which created the secondary codes. These secondary codes helped to reduce the initial codes by sorting and relabeling them into categories, which in turn allowed subsequent themes (Saldaña, 2009). Theses codes were then used to determine categories and sub-categories. These categories were compared to one another which allowed "progress toward the thematic, conceptual, and theoretical" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 11). Through these repetitions, similarities, and differences within the data, themes could be construed (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). A theme is the outcome of the coding and includes the categorization and analytic reflection. It "is a meaningful 'essence' that runs through the data" (Morse, 2008, p. 727).

Each participant's interview responses were coded by the interviewer as well as a peer reviewer to determine themes associated with the responses and to provide reliability checks. The peer reviewer was a doctoral graduate assistant experienced in coding data for other dissertations and professors. Codes were developed by each, then compared and agreed upon by both the researcher and the peer reviewer. By coding the participants' interviews, key findings emerged from the qualitative data collected in this study.

The interviews sought to answer the qualitative research questions while also providing other pertinent information on critical literacy. As stated earlier, there were predetermined questions, but codes were allowed to emerge.

Research Question 4. Why do teachers implement some elements of critical literacy in their classrooms? Why some and not others?

The survey specifically asked participants if they had books on race, homelessness, same-sex relationships, and diversity. Because the qualitative interview reflected participants' answers to the survey, these resources were used in identifying why they implement these specific topics while allowing them to tell of any other books they might have on other subjects.

<u>Resources</u>

All five interviewees stated that they have the most books on race and diversity. Only one teacher reported having books on same-sex relationships and one other reported having books on homelessness. These answers reflected the survey answers as well, as race and diversity were shown to have the largest amounts on the survey also. No one spoke of any books on different topics other than the ones asked.

<u>Obtaining Resources</u>

Obtaining books in order to implement aspects of critical literacy was spoken about in some way by all five interviewees. Three teachers reported difficulty in getting books on controversial topics due to the fact that they order books through a company that caters to teachers and students and it does not have controversial topic books. One teacher commented that this company does have specials each month and she has noticed that they have diverse character books. Two of the teachers stated that they actually seek books on different topics and implied they enjoy looking for different books. Contrary to this, another teacher stated, "I would

have to get online and really search if I wanted to find books on a specific topic." Her comment signified an opposite view of the teachers who actually wanted to search for books.

The two teachers who said they search for books on different topics for their classrooms also had books on either homelessness or same-sex relationships. Books are essential in supporting critical literacy as the read aloud of a good quality book is the anchor of the critical literacy process (Meller et al., 2009). Understandably, teachers cannot begin to implement critical literacy if they do not have the books.

Richard stated that he chooses his books because he has "…heard of them or they are important; they're important. I am interested in digging deeper…" His desire to "dig deeper" influences his book selection and process of finding books.

Research Question 5. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of critical literacy?

The literature gave several examples of the usefulness of critical literacy including decreasing bullying, compassion towards others, and an understanding of others' plights. Interviewees were asked if they thought critical-literacy aspects of discussions on controversial topics and providing multiple perspectives were useful in promoting social justice. The survey results revealed that teachers in this sample felt discussions were "somewhat important" and they were "somewhat comfortable" having them.

<u>Discussions</u>

All five interviewees stated that holding discussions on controversial topics were useful, although two said they do not have them. Three of the teachers stated that most children have only heard the views of their parents or the adults that they live with and therefore share those views; discussions provide the opportunity for children to hear the views and opinions of others on topics where they may have only heard one side. Two teachers indicated that these

116

discussions are building blocks to the students' future thoughts on subjects. Veronica stated, "It gives them the ability to start thinking about things that are going to be controversial to them as adults." Richard described the importance of discussions as "If nothing else, it just provides a framework for students that even when things are weird or different or we don't know about them, that we sit down and we ask questions and we talk." The survey responses reflected that teachers in the sample felt that classroom discussions were "somewhat important."

<div align="center">Multiple Perspective</div>

Interviewees also agreed that presenting multiple perspectives was useful in promoting social justice as well. One example was given by an interviewee that included reading books on family diversity. According to Molly, this allows children to understand that their family dynamics are not necessarily those of another student and begins the process of understanding others. This supports the literature that the social world of the students is the context for critical literacy (Vasquez, 2004). Another interviewee gave an example of how a unit was implemented that traced African-American history from slavery, through the civil-rights movement, and concluded with Barrack Obama as the first African-American president. This unit was planned after a student made a disparaging remark towards an African-American person. This is an example of the "sociocultural lens" that critical literacy provides referred to by Luke (2012) previously mentioned in the literature. This "lens" includes texts of multiple cultures and exposes students to text from cultures different than their own. Creswell (2015) stated that qualitative research uses open-ended questions that allow the participants to shape their responses. These two interviewees gave different examples of their multiple perspective experiences which demonstrate this response shaping. The survey reflected (*M*=1.97, *SD* .88)

that teachers "had heard" of multiple perspective and many were" familiar with it" as demonstrated by the 1.97 mean.

A third interviewee stated that providing multiple perspective allows children to begin transferring others perspectives into everyday life. Cecelia gave the example of students beginning to understand that sometimes when the children are tripped or pushed, that it is an accidental act rather than an intentional act. Cecilia stated, "I think it's them understanding where that person is coming from. It starts that feeling or that thought process of how someone else sees or feels." This supports Luke's (2012) views that exposure and critical analysis of a text is not only a literacy, but a necessary life skill. These three multiple perspective experiences demonstrate the comparative analysis made as recommended by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Research Question 6. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of limitations or needs in order to implement critical literacy?

Participants were asked if there was anything that kept them from doing this type of literacy. As previously mentioned, not having books on controversial topics was an issue for one teacher. One participant mentioned time, and all participants mentioned curriculum in some format, some as an inhibiter, and some not. However, parent support, or lack thereof, was the reason given by all participants as a limitation.

<u>Curriculum</u>

All participants spoke of curriculum in some way as an inhibitor or not. Molly stated that she can "barely fit in everything that I'm doing already" because of the requirements of the curriculum. In contrast to this, two participants indicated they felt they have leniency in their curriculum to include topics that may not be specifically listed, but "…we are given somewhat a free choice in how we meet those standards…" Richard stated. Another example is Veronica as she spoke of a unit she planned on tracing African-American history from slavery to the present

time, "This unit is not part of our curriculum, but the diversity part is." These two teachers feel that curriculum is not an inhibitor or limitation as they determine ways to teach about social issues while tying it to a standard in some way. This demonstrates Chafel et al. (2007) example that young children are capable of answering and discussing teacher questions about text such as, "What do you think that author wants us to think about their text?" This exemplifies author's purpose, which is a curriculum standard, as part of critical literacy.

The other three participants indicated that they stick to their curriculums more closely. Claire stated that multiple perspective is actually a third grade Tennessee State Standard. Because of this, she stated she is following the curriculum by teaching about multiple perspective.

Two teachers indicated that they are inhibited by the curriculum. Molly stated that if lessons dealing with controversial topics were part of the curriculum, then she would plan "good lessons" on it. Cecilia also signified that curriculum is an inhibitor and limitation. She stated, "I don't want to teach them that (controversial topics) because it's not in our curriculum, so I feel like that would be something that I would steer away from totally."

Parent/Community Support

"The work that teachers do is critical to the success of society, whether or not parents understand or acknowledge it" (Worzel, n.d.). All five participants spoke openly about their concerns that parents are not, may not be, or will not be supportive of lessons, discussions, or books read on some controversial topics. The initial code for this was "fear" when determining why teachers may not want to discuss controversial topics. Upon the second coding, it became clear, that the "fear" was the same for all participants; parent/ community support. Thus, the code was changed from fear to parent/community support in order to describe the fear more

specifically. Survey results indicated that parent support was (M=1.01) which is the low end of "somewhat supported" and just above "not supported."

Richard stated that he does discussions when he feels they are warranted, regardless of the topic, because he feels they are important. However, he does not allow his students free access to the books he uses for the controversial topics as he does his other books. He feels the need to guide any discussion that occurs with these topics to lesson any misinterpretations that may occur if students tell parents about the books. He stated, "I am ever conscious of my role firstly as their educator" indicating that although he will read a controversial book and hold a discussion if he feels it is warranted, he does follow rules and is concerned about parent and community support. He stated he does not want to be "run out of town with pitch forks" indicating he is fearful of parents, the community, and potentially losing his job.

When asked if there was anything keeping her from doing this type of literacy, Molly spoke of how controversial topics are indeed that-controversial-and are "touchy subjects" with the parents. She stated she feels "some parents would be upset." She too is cognitive of the feelings of the parents and the community and expressed these feelings, "I guess it's the fear of lashing out at the teacher...but a lot of it is just fear of our community I guess."

Veronica stated she feels that parents would not want certain topics discussed. She does not feel they would be supportive of all controversial topics. When asked about reasons that keep her from this type of literacy, "parent support" was the only reason given.

Cecilia expressed the same sentiments with, "I think parents would be upset. I know as a parent, I would be upset." She continued to discuss support stating that a parent could go to the administration and then she would be questioned about "Why are you reading this controversial

information or these books to these children." Her words indicate fear of parents, but her words went beyond parents to community when she spoke of the school district administration.

Claire reiterated the fears of the first four participants. She stated that she feels she "tiptoes around" some controversial topics because she is afraid of angering the parents. She thinks literacy discussions are helpful because many parents do not have conversations at their homes. However, she is fearful and stated, "I feel like they need to be educated to a certain point-to a point where I'm not crossing any boundaries as far as what parents want to tell them."

Contrary to the interviewees' perceptions of parent support, the interviewees stated they feel somewhat supported by their administrations to hold controversial conversations and read controversial books. Richard stated that he feels very supported at the school level, but not at the central office administration level. Claire too, said she felt supported, "As long as I have a reason for discussing what I did. I would definitely feel supported." Cecilia indicated she did not feel as supported as Richard and Claire and stated she thinks, "That the administration or the administrators at central office would be supportive if I were following the curriculum." These results were similar to the survey where the administration support mean was 1.70 which fell between "somewhat supported" and "supported."

Research Question 7. On what are these perceptions based?

When asked why they think what they think concerning critical-literacy aspects, participant answers varied. The top coded answers included multicultural experiences, providing views other than those at their home, presenting exposure to topics that students in larger and multicultural areas are exposed to, and it is how the world exists.

<u>Multicultural Experiences</u>

As previously stated, upper East Tennessee has traditionally consisted of a majority white population. Although the survey consisted of Kingsport City Schools and Johnson City Schools which are districts in the largest cities in this upper East Tennessee area, the area is considered rural. Because of this, two participants stated they feel that critical literacy aspects can provide exposure and opportunities to learn about topics that students in larger, multicultural areas receive. Richard stated that he wanted to "provide that background for my students that some students are getting in larger areas. I want to present all of those things to them." Thus, these teachers' perceptions are based on the idea that students living in a rural area should be exposed to the same topics in which children in larger, multicultural areas are exposed.

Four of the five participants stated they feel critical literacy aspects provide students with a different viewpoint than what they have probably heard and experienced at home. Richard feels that students "typically are just little tape recorders of what they've heard at home." This thought was reiterated by Molly who agreed that a lot of the opinions of children are based on what they have overheard adults at their home say; she feels this type of literacy allows them to potentially hear "both sides." In addition, Claire added the same sentiments that children do not always get all sides at home. Cecilia agreed that children's thoughts and attitudes are based on what they may hear at home, but she added "what they have witnessed" indicating that children form opinions in other ways than just hearing words of others.

<u>Real World</u>

Two participants said that the aspects of critical literacy represent the world as it is. Molly feels that exposing students to these topics help them realize, "that's the world we live in." Richard reiterated this with similar words, "Because that is how the world exists around us." These teachers' perceptions are based on the feeling that children should be exposed to worldly

topics. Chafel et al. (2007) stated some people believe that it is the right of children to be exposed to existing social problems in the world that allow them to conceive new possibilities for society. In contrast, Cecilia feels that much of the real-world information is "too vivid" for young children. She feels the need to "water down" material and to not include some topics.

Research Question 8. Why do East Tennessee ECED teachers feel confident or unconfident in implementing critical literacy?

Participants gave two main reasons as to why they are confident and comfortable or not in implementing aspects of critical literacy: parent support and desire. Resurfacing again, was parent support. Two teachers stated that they are not comfortable because they feel the parents would be upset if they introduced or discussed some controversial topics. Richard stated that he is confident and comfortable and he thinks "…you have to be in order to have those good discussions." Veronica stated that it depends on the topic and explained, "It just depends on what it is. It's not that I am uncomfortable, I just don't want to discuss some topics."

<div align="center">Emerged Data</div>

Grounded theory is the discovery of emerging patterns in data (Glaser, 2015). Although the research questions were answered from the data, other information emerged from the participants' words that is useful in understanding teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices and resources concerning critical literacy. Transcripts were read numbered line by line and read again and labeled for codes. These labels were then placed on a master graph in order to compare and analyze the codes between and within interviewees. The following information emerged from the data as the commonality, repetitiveness, and patterns became evident.

Environment

The first theme that emerged was the teachers' perception of the role of the classroom environment. This environment was not of a physical nature as in chairs and tables, but an

environment of climate. The three participants who stated they were comfortable having

discussions and reading books of controversial nature used words that reflected a safe

environment. Veronica stated, "It allows us to already start having those conversations in a safe

environment where they are not going to be judged for what they think yet." Richard who also

stated he is comfortable engaging in critical-literacy aspects also spoke of the environment,

"…just creating that place where we can talk about really anything in the world and it's ok to ask

those kinds of question and I'm not going to reprimand them for the things they have to say."

These teachers' perceptions of their environments are safe havens where controversial issues can

be discussed and questions can be asked and where students are encouraged to ask and say what

they think, regardless of what it is. Cecilia also stated she was confident and comfortable having

controversial discussions, but she stated she prefers to "kind of G rate it." Her previous

comments of "watering down" information and that some information is "too vivid"

demonstrates that she creates a climate she feels is safe as well, although it differs from the

climate described by the first two teachers where topics and words, "G rated" or not, are

acceptable.

<u>Personal Beliefs</u>

A second pattern and theme that emerged was personal beliefs. The teachers in this study

expressed strong personal beliefs; their beliefs represented more than one view, but were

compelling on all sides and cannot be ignored. Although their book resources, discussions, and

environments are integral aspects of critical literacy, their personal beliefs drive the efforts in

these matters. Richard began to suggest this when he was speaking of confidence and comfort in

classroom discussions. He stated, "…if the instructor has their own certain feelings that kind of

lead into their educator life, then they're probably not doing that (presenting all topics) because it

doesn't feel right…" Claire alluded to the same thoughts as Richard as she too spoke of educators, "… but we all do have our own points of view on things. I may think something is fine, and you know I don't have the same opinion as the next teacher and I don't think we should force our opinions onto the kids."

Personal beliefs were demonstrated through Veronica and Cecilia's words as they spoke openly throughout the interview. Veronica's statement of, "I do not want to talk about same sex marriages because I personally disagree with it if you just want the honest truth," reflects her beliefs. Cecilia also shared her personal beliefs as she stated, "Well like same-sex marriage… I don't want to introduce that idea to them--that it was even a possibility of being happening in the world." Both interviewees stated, "I do not want to…" These personal beliefs reflect their lack of desire to implement critical-literacy aspects on this topic.

Contradictions

The third theme that emerged from the data was contradictory statements. Some of the teachers interviewed made a statement that seemed to explain a view, and then later made a statement in contradiction to it.

Veronica stated that she is comfortable and confident in having controversial discussions and creates a safe environment where they can occur. She stated that she likes "…giving them the opportunity to have discussions that exclude what I think and what I feel." However, in contradiction, she stated, "I just don't want to discuss some topics" indicating that what she thinks is not excluded.

Cecilia also said she was confident and comfortable in holding controversial discussions. She also commented that multiple perspectives were important because children need to hear more than one side. These are two crucial aspects of critical literacy. She went on to say that

children often just hear the views of their parents and stated, "Some parents are very closed minded and only think one way." In contradiction, there are certain topics that she "does not want to introduce that idea to them" even though it is multiple perspective and open minded. Introducing controversial topics is the essence of critical literacy.

Molly stated that she believes controversial conversations are beneficial because it gives students an opportunity to hear others opinions and views, the critical-literacy aspect of multiple perspective. She also related the conversations as being part of the "social lens" to see things in the world as they exist. She stated that these discussions may be, "…a hard pill to swallow, but in today's society, they (children) need to understand that's the world we live in and they need to deal with that when they become an adult." However, Molly's actions are in contradiction to her words; she stated she has never had a class discussion on a controversial topic.

Fears

Another theme that emerged was that of fear. Fear was initially a largely coded theme which included parent support. As previously stated the parent support was removed from the fear code and became its own code. However, even after parent support was removed, the data showed some teachers had fears of implementing aspects of critical literacy.

Richard and Claire both spoke that they are afraid misunderstandings will occur when they have discussions or read controversial books. Richard stated that he has an open classroom where it is easy to hear what he is teaching. He is fearful that someone walking by might hear just part of a conversation or book and that it could be misconstrued. Claire spoke of similar situations, where she is afraid students will go home and tell parents what she read or said; her fear is that the words spoken to the parents are inaccurate words. She stated, "Sometimes what they tell the parents is not what we tell them."

126

Although the interviewees' personal beliefs were identified and coded, Cecilia expressed that she is afraid of teaching something that might be against the parents' personal beliefs. She stated that she tells students, "This is what my family believes, but you need to ask mommy and daddy because your family may have, believe something different." This was not coded under parent support because she did not indicate that parents would be upset; a subtheme emerged as she indicated that she "would be afraid" if she cast her personal beliefs onto students.

Claire expounded this fear of overstepping her boundaries. She stated although, "You're just telling the facts sometimes, parents want to have those conversations themselves, but when these issues come up at school, it's hard not to have that discussion because clearly it needs to be addressed." Her comments indicate that she is afraid of sharing information that parents would prefer to share themselves. Again, although this fear included parents, it was coded differently because it reflected her fear of her actions, not fear of parent support.

Frequency

The amount of controversial conversations and controversial books read was coded as frequency. Interviewees all spoke of when they use some of their books and two spoke of how frequently they have conversations.

Four interviewees stated that they read books about race seasonably around Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January and during Black History Month in February. Two interviewees described their discussions, other than those associated with Martin Luther King Jr., Day and Black History Month, as not actually planned. They alluded that they conducted conversations when they felt they were necessary either by a comment made or a question asked. Examples include Veronica who held a discussion after a student made a disparaging remark about a guest reader in her classroom. She stated, "So, that lead into a very good discussion on skin color and

then, it went into a good classroom discussion of what they think, what they've heard, is it right? Should we think this way? Does this matter?" Richard too, spoke of a discussion in his classroom that evolved from a remark made by a student, "We had a discussion in my room because a student called another student an inappropriate racial slur name. We talked about why it was inappropriate and how it made that student feel."

Age Appropriateness

Two teachers demonstrated concern with age appropriateness of conversations, but with opposite perspectives. Cecilia was concerned that information for her kindergarten students should be "watered down" and stated, "Obviously as they get older, their teachers will be able to do a little better job with that (information)." This indicated that she feels controversial information should be taught in older grades. On the other hand, Richard indicated he feels conversations with his kindergarteners should be factual and authentic. He commented, "I mean it has to be age appropriate. It's not a college level course where you would really be dissecting something like this every day. You know it comes up as needed... I find it best when it's organic...and just to be open and honest." Participants were asked about age appropriateness on the survey. The mean was 1.34 which fell between "somewhat appropriate" and "appropriate." These results were indicative of the interview comments about support with one stating he felt topics were age appropriate and with another who stated that topics are not age appropriate and should be taught when children are older.

Ranking

The last code was that of ranking controversial topics. Two interviewees specifically indicated that they felt certain topics were easier to address than others. Claire demonstrated this when she stated, "There's some things that are a lot easier (to teach). I think race is something

128

easy to talk to kids about." Veronica expressed the same sentiments when she talked about controversial topics, "… (do not) have a problem with things such as race, homelessness, or diversity. I don't think it's as controversial as a same-sex marriage." These comments demonstrate that interviewees think some topics are more controversial than others. As previously stated, Lewison et al.'s (2002) components of critical literacy were used as a framework for this study; survey questions were aligned with one of the four components. Race and diversity were considered multiple perspective in these components, whereas same sex relationships were aligned with disrupting the common place thinking. These rankings demonstrated that these interviewees were more comfortable with multiple perspective than disrupting the commonplace thinking. There was no survey question that asked participants to rank topics or which topics they felt were more controversial.

Integrated Findings

This chapter discussed both the distinct quantitative and qualitative findings. The quantitative survey was used to gather data on what perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources exist in the upper East Tennessee school districts of participants, as well as, to identify participants for the qualitative interviews. The results from the quantitative research piece were presented with the qualitative questions to help elaborate upon and explain how the data relates and is integrated. More discussion of the integration will occur in chapter 5.

Conclusion

Results from the quantitative survey showed that there are no significant differences in early childhood, elementary education, and those with other majors in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy. The results also show that there are no significant differences in the lower level of early childhood Pre-K-1st grade and the higher level

of early childhood 2nd-3rd grade in regards to perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy.

The quantitative survey data did reveal the mean responses of participants to the overarching question of: What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED teachers? This information set the ground work for the expansion of the information through the qualitative piece of this study.

The six themes that emerged from the data were environment, personal beliefs, contradictions, fears, age appropriateness, and rankings of topics. This information emerged from the data as interviewees spoke and answered predetermined questions. This data was not answers to pre-determined questions, but words expressed by the interviewees throughout the interviews.

The theme of environment emerged as interviewees described the importance of classroom discussions. The three interviewees that stated they were confident and comfortable having controversial discussions were the same three who spoke of environment. This environment was not a surprise as it supports the literature. However, this possible connection between environment and comfort and confidence in relation to critical literacy is subject to future study and will discussed more thoroughly in chapter 5.

The theme of personal beliefs emerged and was prevalently dispersed in the data. The connection of teacher personal beliefs and what they teach is also supported by the literature, this study becomes a supportive piece to this body of knowledge.

The third theme that emerged was contradictions made by the teachers in relation to how they speak of critical-literacy aspects and then how they actually act on these aspects.

Contradictions was a surprise emergence, but it was difficult to ignore and was coded by the researcher and the peer reviewer.

Fears was the fourth emergent theme. Although parent support was the most recurring fear, it was removed from the fear code and made its own. Therefore, other fears began to emerge from the data and became a separate subtheme of fear. These fears consisted of misunderstandings, sharing information that parents preferred to share with their children, and fear of casting personal beliefs onto children.

Frequency of controversial topic books and discussions also emerged from the data. Interviewees expressed that they use their race books seasonably and the two participants who stated they have discussions expressed that these discussions are not necessarily planned, but are "organic: and occur when inspired by a student's question or comment.

Age appropriateness of discussions and controversial topics was spoken of by two participants with opposing sentiments: Cecelia felt topics "too vivid" for kindergarteners and stated they could be talked about when students were older. Richard, on the other hand, believes that conversations should occur and questions should be answered when they arise with openness and honesty.

Ranking of controversial topics emerged from the data and was somewhat of a surprise. There was no survey question that asked participants to rank topics in order of controversy, nor rank which they were more comfortable teaching. However, two of the participants specifically mentioned that race and diversity were less controversial. Buchanan (2015) maintained that race is controversial and documented avoidance of race or perceived colorblindness among teachers further complicates racial issues. Two of these participants gave examples of discussions dealing

specifically with race. This demonstrates that some teachers are considering race controversial and discussing it. Four teachers read racial books seasonably, conceivably avoiding the issue.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the data analysis of this study. It opened with the demographics, proceeded to the quantitative survey results, and was completed with the qualitative interview results. The final chapter will continue with further discussion of the findings which includes teacher professional development and training. Connections to the literature along with limitations and reflections on the study will be shared. Recommendations for practice and further research will culminate the chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

<u>Introduction</u>

This chapter includes a summary of the sequential explanatory mixed-methods study and

the findings. It includes a discussion of how the findings contribute to the existing literature as

well as provides specific recommendations for professional development and practices.

Limitations are also included.

<u>Purpose of This Study</u>

Critical literacy has been defined as the ability to read texts in an active, reflective

manner in order to better understand power, inequality, and injustice in human relationships

(Coffey, 2008). Its premise is that no text is neutral, but reflects a particular ideology. In order

to teach text analysis in both traditional and digital text, to teach students to discern truth and

formulate opinions, and to teach tolerance and acceptance of others in order to provide social

justice, critical literacy needs to occur in schools more prevalently than it currently does.

The purpose of this sequential mixed-methods study was to explore critical literacy of

upper East Tennessee early childhood teachers. The quantitative phase consisted of a Likert-

scale electronic survey sent to teachers in six East Tennessee school districts. The survey helped

identify the perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of the teachers in the sample as

well as identify participants for interviews. It specifically sought to see if there were any

differences in the majors of the teachers, as well as, the level of early childhood taught

concerning their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy.

The second phase of the research consisted of qualitative interviews with five volunteer

participants to obtain a deeper understanding of what their current perceptions, knowledge,

practices, and resources are concerning critical literacy. The quantitative data was collected

through an electronic 4 point Likert scale survey from 156 upper East Tennessee Pre-K-3rd grade

teachers. The collected data included: perceptions of critical literacy content, support, and desire

to teach social justice; knowledge of the term critical literacy, multiple perspective, and

disrupting the common place thinking; practices of book reading, and discussion and writing;

and resources of controversial topic books. Qualitative data was collected through interviews

with five participants who agreed to interview on the quantitative survey. Interviews were coded

by the researcher and compared with a peer reviewer. Each transcript was read and coded line

by line to find repetitions and patterns in the data. This qualitative phase added a valuable

dimension to the research as it included explanations for why some teachers do and do not

implement critical literacy and which aspects they are comfortable and confident in

implementing.

Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the findings from this study.

Research Question 1. What aspects of critical literacy are recognized by East Tennessee ECED

teachers?

1a. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' perceptions of critical literacy?

1b. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' knowledge of critical literacy?

1c. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' practices of critical literacy?

1d. What are East Tennessee ECED teachers' resources for teaching critical literacy?

Research question one was answered by running descriptive statistics of mean and range.

The higher means of the teachers' perceptions included writing about books read and using

literacy as a platform to teach social justice. Using literature across the curriculum is a standard

literacy practice; it is a way to present material while tying the subject to literacy. Writing about books is a standard practice as well and allows students to reflect, formulate an opinion, and express themselves in writing (International Reading Association, 2012). These higher means correlated with these standard literacy practices implemented by teachers.

Teachers in this sample conveyed that teaching social justice was more of a responsibility than the desire to teach social justice, although the means were similar with 1.92 and 1.71 respectively. Howard (2007) found that some teachers had dispositions that made them more likely to succeed in areas such as critical literacy. Perhaps it is the dispositions of some teachers that reflect their feelings of responsibility and desire. Two interviewees spoke of a desire to teach social justice which corroborates the survey.

The two lowest means of the survey included age appropriateness and parent support. These means were 1.34 and 1.01 respectively. The sample included teachers of early childhood Pre-K -3rd grade. Although some teachers may feel that these students are too young for controversial topics, Meller et al. (2009) stated that young children can and should participate in critical-literacy discussions that follow a teacher read-aloud of a high-quality book that emphasizes social concerns. The lowest mean of the entire survey was parent support indicating that teachers in this sample felt that parents would not be supportive of their efforts to engage in critical-literacy implementation. This mean corresponds with the qualitative interviews where all five interviewees stated they were inhibited by parent support.

The highest knowledge mean of critical literacy was multiple perspective. One possible explanation for this is that multiple perspective is Tennessee 3rd grade state standard. More teachers indicated they were familiar with disrupting the common place thinking than the term critical literacy, although both means were low, 1.10 and 1.37 respectively. This demonstrates

that professional development will be needed in order to educate and train teachers on critical literacy. "Studies suggest that the more time teachers spend on professional development, the more significantly they change their practices and that participating in professional learning communities optimizes the time spent on professional development" (Teaching Tolerance, n.d., para. 14).

The highest means for resources and practices of book reading were diverse characters, followed by race. Same-sex relationships was the lowest mean for resources and practices of book reading followed by homelessness. This correlates with the interviewees' remarks that they have more books on diversity and race than books on homelessness and same sex relationships. The low means of 1.05 and .94 respectively could possibly indicate that teachers are not as comfortable with the disrupting the commonplace thinking aspect of critical literacy; homelessness and same sex relationships were both aligned with the disrupting commonplace thinking aspect of critical literacy on the survey. It could also indicate that these topics are not appropriate to their teaching context or that they do feel support from the administration or parents.

Research question 2 did a comparison between majors to determine if any possible training in their major impacted teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and desire to teach critical literacy.

Research Question 2. How do teachers with early childhood majors compare to teachers with elementary education backgrounds/majors in their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources of critical literacy?

2a. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their perceptions of critical literacy?

136

2b. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their knowledge of critical literacy?

2c. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare to elementary education majors in their practices of critical literacy?

2d. How do East Tennessee ECED majors compare elementary education majors in their resources of critical literacy?

No significant differences were found among the three majors of early childhood, elementary education, and other. Although the literature demonstrates that NAEYC has a position statement in draft specifically for diversity and equality along with their position statement concerning developmentally appropriate practices for early childhood educators, there were no significant differences found between the two majors of early childhood education and elementary education majors.

Research question 3 did a comparison of the four constructs of perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources between the lower ECED (Pre-K-1) and higher ECED (2nd-3rd).

Research Question 3. How do teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) differ from teachers from higher ECED grades (2-3) in their practices of critical literacy?

3a. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in perceptions of critical literacy?

3b. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in knowledge of critical literacy?

3c. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in practices of critical literacy?

3d. How do East Tennessee teachers of lower grades of ECED (Pre-K-1) compare to East Tennessee teachers of higher grades ECED (2-3) in resources of critical literacy?

No significant differences were found between the two levels. Although some aspects of critical literacy such as multiple perspective are currently a part of Tennessee state curriculum standards for 3rd grade, there were no significant differences between the two groups.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Future Research</div>

The results of the study led to many possible avenues for future research. Although same-sex relationships and homelessness were not topics that East Tennessee teachers in the participating districts felt warranted practices and resources possibly because of personal beliefs or parent support, they possibly are warranted topics in other more urban areas. This demonstrates how specific critical literacy can be--it can reflect the social issues most prevalent to a particular group of students. This area of research could be on-going as social issues continue to arise in America. Other implications for future study include gender identity, poverty, and specific concerns named by the interviewees such as curricula and training. These implications are as follows.

Gender Identity

One topic not covered in this research, but certainly relevant in the field of social justice is self-gender identification. The United States has seen a rise in self-gender identification (also known as transgender) in both children (Olson, Durwood, DeMeules, & McLaughlin, 2016) and teens (Tanner, 2018). Miriam Webster defined gender identity as "a person's internal sense of being male, female, some combination of male and female, or neither male nor female" (Gender Identity, n.d.). Gender identity restrooms have been added in many public places and have appeared in some schools. Children's literature should reflect societal and cultural changes;

topics do and should evolve over time. Literature that could possibly support this critical literacy

topic in the early childhood classrooms includes *Morris Micclewhite and the Tangerine Dress*

(Baldacchino & Malenfant, 2014). This book challenges gender stereotype; the main character

wears the dress-up clothes intended for girls, but he does not indicate that he wants to be a girl

nor identifies himself as a girl. Contrary to this, is the story "Coy Matthis" in *Good Night Stories*

for Rebel Girls (Favilli & Cavallo, 2016). This depicts the true story of Coy Matthis who

considered himself a girl, although his biological sex gender was male. He dressed as a girl and

identified himself as a girl. He was told by school officials he would either have to use the boys'

bathroom or the bathroom for children with disabilities. He wanted neither, and a judge ruled in

his favor; he could use the girls' bathroom at his school. Because gender identity is more openly

discussed than in previous times, teacher perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources

towards this topic is another area recommended for future research. The demographic question

of gender on this survey was optional, however it did include "other" and "I do not choose to

answer" as possible choices to stay relevant with gender preferences.

Poverty

According to Gorksi (2018), 22 % of American children are living in poverty when

measured with the United States government poverty line. The percentage of children qualifying

for free and reduced lunch has increased from 32% in 2013 to 52% in 2016 (Suitts, 2016). This

demonstrates a rise in childhood poverty. Poverty is often correlational with poor school

expectations and poor school performance. Critical literacy is a recommendation for teaching

children in poverty as it uses literature to which children in poverty can relate. As previously

stated, the literature confirms that few children's books exist that reflects the lifestyles other than

that of the white middle class. According to Fine, Green, & Sanchez (2016), children in poverty

are anxious for literature that allows them to critique their current situation and possibly provide solutions for a brighter future. Gorski (2018), recommended that teachers in high-poverty schools allow children opportunities to rewrite and retell stories that match their circumstances if literature with characters and situations depicting poverty is not available. Adding questions to this survey about poverty can individualize the perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources concerning this relevant topic.

Participant Desires

The survey asked participants if there was anything they would like to add or thought the researcher should have added to the survey or interview. It would be remiss not to speak of their additions and concerns. These are areas of future study as they reflect what teachers are actually wanting, not speculations of others.

During a participant interview, Richard spoke of his comfort and confidence in having discussions. It seemed almost a plea for other teachers to understand that "it's not like a college course where we are dissecting this every day." He feels that these discussions are best when they are "organic" and happen in an "age-appropriate" manner to address a situation that has occurred. He has the resources available and is ready to guide the narrative. He advised others to be open and honest with answers. He stated that if teachers let their personal feelings penetrate their educator life, this could impact the confidence and comfort level of having discussions.

Another participant, Veronica, stated that she felt where teachers get their books should have been asked. She indicated that she orders her books through a company designed for students and teachers and does not "search for them." She stated,"…most teachers get their books from Scholastic because it's really the best program to get books and often they refrain

from books that might be controversial." Therefore, although she stated she holds discussions in her classroom, she might feel less prepared because she does not have all the resources she feels she needs. Availability of controversial books and how teachers could more easily assess them is an area of future study. This concern has been recognized by "Teaching for Change, Building Social Justice in the Classroom," an organization whose mission is to get more diverse and factual books for teachers and students in the classroom. This organization corroborated Veronica's concerns that Scholastic Book Company does not have controversial books and has begun a "#Step up Scholastic" (Teaching for Change, 2017) campaign. This campaign has concerned students, teachers, and parents writing letters to the company asking for more diverse character books as well as more accurate informational books.

To add to Veronica's concern, the text complexity of the books used should also be considered. According to Luke (2000), the text should allow the reader to interpret text of different cultures and environments and not just focus on literature that represent themselves. This type of interpretation requires certain text complexity and demonstrates how critical literacy and text complexity overlap. The #StepUpScholastic (Teaching for Change, 2017) campaign includes text complexity as Scholastic is asked to give factual, non-mollified information about topics. Not only are available resources a future area of study, but also the text complexity of the resources available.

Molly spoke of current events and how these could be valuable lessons to children. Although she indicated a strong desire to have controversial conversations, she does not actually have them. She stated that she definitely would if they were part of the curriculum indicating her discomfort and fear in having them. By her words, she would welcome a curriculum that includes more controversial topics and books and would feel more confident to lead

controversial discussions if there were such a curriculum. Curricula that reflect issues current to the times is an area of future study.

Claire stated in her interview that she has some conversations, but would like to have more. When asked if she would like to add anything she said she thought, "Would you be interested in training about this?" should have been asked. She stated that she would like to know what she can say and cannot say and with training, she would be more comfortable. This training would potentially help Molly become more confident in holding conversations and reading controversial books as well since she is demonstrating a desire to do so. Training on topics, books, and words that could be used is an area of future study and practice.

<u>Recommendations for Future Training</u>

As previously stated, the literature confirms that many teachers do not know what critical literacy is and how it will be meaningful in their own classrooms (Dozier, Johnston, & Rogers, 2006; Lee, 2001; Lewison et al, 2002). This indicates that professional development on critical literacy and how it can be meaningful to teachers in the classroom needs to occur to expose teachers to the elements and the importance of critical literacy. Teachers in the interviews showed a desire to be trained and obtain more resources. Allington (2010), stated the effects of quality, specific professional development in a particular area of literacy can have strong results. Teaching Tolerance re-iterates this by affirming that teachers can significantly change their practices by participating in professional development, but surprisingly, found that most teachers spent one day or less a year in professional development in a specific content area (Teaching Tolerance, n.d.). Besides teacher training on how to lead a critical-literacy lesson, professional development should also include book suggestions with appropriate topics and complexity, where to find the books, and administration training. For the most part, teachers in this sample

felt supported by their administration to have controversial discussions. However, another area for research and professional development is training on critical literacy for administration. This would allow them to then support teachers in their efforts to implement critical literacy, including the area of parent support where teachers in this sample felt low support.

Because critical literacy deals with real life and relevant issues, it can be personalized to meet the needs and interests of specific populations. For example, literature that relates to poverty could be emphasized in areas where poverty is pervasive. This is not to say that it could not and should not be emphasized in more affluent areas to increase awareness and compassion towards those living in poverty. This could include politics and involve "new literacies" which have arisen from technology and digital media, blogs, texts, podcasting, videos, and other forms of technology. These literacies rely on "offline" literacies of the past, but make literacy relevant; students can evaluate and synthesize information from a number of sources in order to problem solve and can communicate with others about problems and potential solutions (Watters, 2014). Because we continue to be a technology-dependent society, it is important that we develop these literacies of the past and incorporate them into the new literacies of the present and the future.

All citizens would benefit from a focus on racial issues. An example of success in this area is teacher Erin Gruwell. She intercepted a student note with a racial slur and related it to the type of thing that instigated the Holocaust. When she realized students had no idea what she was referring to, she began a literacy study of Anne Frank. She had students write in diaries about their own concerns, fears, hopes, and general feelings about themselves, others, and their own plights. These students became known as "The Freedom Writers." The writings were published into a book and a movie was made detailing their story. Although students were in a low-

performing class, they all graduated high school and most attended college. This demonstrates the power that critical literacy can have.

The idea of controversy steers many people away including teachers. Race is a controversial topic many teachers do not want or feel the need to discuss. Some teachers state they do not see color as they desire to treat all students the same. Therefore, they do not feel they need to talk about race and diversity (Howard, 2010). As previously stated in the literature, the majority of teachers in the United States are white (Sleeter, 2001), which further divides the racial identity gap between the growing amount of diverse students and their teachers. This attitude of not seeing color and addressing race can actually make race controversial (Buchanan, 2015). When conversations about race do occur, they often do not meet the expectations of teachers to hold deep, meaningful, and problem-solving discussions that teachers had in mind (Kumar & Hamer, 2013). Thus, the need for training in addressing literature and discussions concerning race are needed. Because these discussions can help promote understanding of those different from one's self, the discussions can decrease bullying as understanding others and compassion are developed.

Based on this study, disrupting the commonplace thinking is the component of critical literacy that established more training is needed. The quantitative survey demonstrated that teachers in this sample had the fewest book resources on same-sex relationships and homelessness; both of these were aligned with Lewison et al.'s (2001) component of critical literacy disrupting the commonplace thinking. These topics, therefore, had the least amount of practices; practices cannot occur if there are no resources. Families with same-sex relationships was also the topic that two interviewees specifically stated they did not want to talk or teach

144

about. Training on the importance of literature and discussions on topics that are not commonplace nor the majority centered is an area for future training.

With the lack of understanding of how critical literacy is implemented and the fears and uncertainties that some teachers have towards critical literacy, another recommendation is the development of unit starters with critical literacy imbedded into the units. An example of an existing book with ideas is *Getting beyond "I like the book": Creating space for critical literacy in K-6 classrooms* (Vasques, 2010). Although these ideas are valid and helpful, there needs to be more recommendations to demonstrate how certain books can be embedded into units, meet state standards, and provide the needed critical-literacy "social lens." This would empower unconfident and uncomfortable teachers who are concerned with "what I can say and what I can't say" and provide a "curriculum" to guide the narrative for teachers such as the ones in this study who expressed their desires to implement critical literacy.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Although there are numerous strengths in using the sequential mixed-methods design, there were some limitations; one was time. Creswell and Clark (2011) advised this type of design could present itself as a challenge and that it is more time consuming than other studies. Time was definitely a limitation as this study came to a complete standstill in June and July when teachers were not in school to receive the survey. Conducting the interviews also became a time challenge as the teachers were not available until after their school hours to meet and interview.

Another limitation was the scale of the survey. Because the researcher found no other quantitative tool for critical literacy, one was developed. Because the essence of perceptions influenced the study, the scale of the survey did not measure in an exact quantitative way, but

left the participants to their own interpretations. An example of this is the resources construct.

The survey asked how many books teachers had on a particular controversial topic, but the

answer choices were not quantitative with numbers such as 1-3, 4-7, 8-10, and "more than 10."

Instead the scale said "none," "some," "quite a few," and "a lot." What one person deems "a lot"

may not be what another deems "a lot." Therefore, the answer choices were a quantitative

limitation.

A third limitation was that the survey consisted of only a 4-point scale. Although many

Likert scales state responses in 5-points with equal varying degrees of disagreeability and

agreeability, these terms did not fit what was trying to be determined in this study. This study

sought to discover what the teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources actually

were, not what teachers thought about them or if they agreed with them. Because of the wording

of the scale, a 5-point scale did not work. However, the 4-point scale limited the range of the

responses.

Another limitation concerning the survey was the researcher's dependence on someone

else to email the survey to the teacher participants. Three of the school districts sent either the

invitation letter with the survey, or a summary of the research attached to the survey, to the

principals. The principals then in turn disseminated it to the teachers. This made the process

impersonal and there was no way to determine if the survey was actually sent to all the principals

and teachers.

Qualitative research is inherently susceptible to researcher bias. However, throughout

this study, impartiality and objectivity were paramount in preventing bias from influencing the

responses and results. The qualitative data were coded by both the researcher and a peer

reviewer for cycle 1 codes. The peer reviewer codes were compared and verified with the

researcher's codes for agreement. Cycle 2 codes were made after the researcher meticulously read and numbered each line of each transcript. This allowed for codes and patterns to emerge from the data. At this point, some codes were separated such as parent support and fears, whereas, some codes were dropped altogether when they appeared to be unrelated to any other codes or aspect of the study. An example is parent support was originally coded as fear, but separated into its own code when the magnitude of it was seen. All cycle 2 codes were then put on a master list for constant comparison.

To enhance validation, member checking was performed to ensure that the researcher's interpretation was truly the sentiments of the interviewees. Creswell (2015) recommended, "the researcher asks one or more participants in the study to check the accuracy of the account" (p.259). In this study, the interview summarized accounts were given to the interviewees to determine the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations of their words.

Triangulation of two data sources was also performed by merging the quantitative data, the survey answers, and the qualitative data, the interviews, to make comparisons and search for consistencies within the two data sources (Patton, 2015). "This ensures that the study will be accurate because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes" (Creswell, 2015, p. 259).

<u>Conclusions</u>

Throughout this study, it was encouraging to experience so many dedicated educators. The number of returned surveys was not expected when the research was first begun. Besides Creswell's warning that response rates from surveys vary and are not as high as interview questionnaires (Creswell, 2015), the survey was also distributed at the beginning of the school year when teachers are busy with summer in-service meetings and getting their classrooms

ready. However, in spite of this, there were originally 169 surveys returned with 156 used for analysis. This demonstrates a willingness of these teachers to give of their free time, as well as, an interest in the topic and a desire to learn more about the topic.

Interviewing the participants was an honor. Again, these teachers were willing to give their time in order to express views and concerns they believe will better the teaching profession and the lives of young children. Their commitment to their profession and their students, regardless of their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources is paramount.

Although no statistical significance was found in the quantitative analysis, this does not downplay the other significant results of this research. After all, non-significant and insignificant are not necessarily synonymous words (Montgomery, 2018). Although "articles that do not reject the null hypothesis tend to go unpublished" (Gerber, Green, & Nickerson, 2001, p. 385), the discovery of the teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices and resources in this sample does have a place in the body of critical literacy.

This research demonstrated the hopes and desires of teachers to continue to learn themselves as training and resources were indicated as concerns. This research also showed teachers' concerns and hopes for humanity as some indicated their desires to teach social justice. It also demonstrated areas where improvements can occur such as disrupting the common-place thinking. This critical-literacy component is where teachers in this sample showed the least amount of resources, the least amount of desire, the least amount of parental support, and the most fear. This is an area where growth can occur. According to Van Sluys (2005), "everyday politics, sociopolitical systems, power relationships, and language are intertwined and inseparable from teaching and learning" (p. 17). Although race and school integration are no longer considered disrupting the commonplace thinking, there was a time when they were part of

the everyday politics to which Van Sluys (2005) referred. Teachers in this sample believed that race was easier to teach and felt supported by parents and administration to teach about racial issues. Perhaps with the passage of time, teacher training, and administrative training, disrupting the common-place thinking issues such as same-sex relationships and homelessness will no longer be considered as such and teachers will find them easy to teach as well. As previously mentioned in chapter 3, a suggestion about the word choice on the survey was made. One pilot survey participant recommended the word controversial not be used on the survey, but uncomfortable instead. She felt none of the survey topics were controversial, but felt some may be uncomfortable. Because Freire's and critical-literacy writings consistently used the term controversial, it was maintained on the survey and throughout this work. At some point in time, maybe more will find none of the material controversial. As our lives change, so must education evolve to meet the needs of all.

Although these results may not be applicable to each and every teacher, this research shows the desire that teachers have to improve the lives and education of students. The research corroborates the literature that too many teachers are unfamiliar with critical literacy and therefore do not know the value of it and are not implementing it (Lewison et al., 2002; McLaughlin & DeVries, 2005; Vasques 2004). In spite of this, teachers in this study demonstrated a desire for new curricula and training in order to learn more and implement aspects of critical literacy.

The best teachers are identified by their enthusiasm and interest in pedagogy, as well as their passion and yearning to pass on the benefits of education (Tait, 2018). One of the top reasons for becoming a teacher is to make a difference; it is the desire to encourage, inspire, and have a positive impact on students. This is demonstrated every day by teachers everywhere.

Teaching is a profession dominated by educators who find teaching to be a passion, who believe that all children can and will learn, who believe that all children regardless of a minority race deserve representation, who truly want to make the world a better place one day at a time, one student at a time, who seek social justice, and who believe that education is the great equalizer. Critical literacy has the power to bring these convictions to fruition and create change for the common good. It is these convictions that create the yearning to educate more teachers on critical literacy in order to assist them in their passions. It is this yearning that has driven this research in hopes to contribute to the field of critical-literacy research in order to make the world a better place one day at a time, one student at a time, and one teacher at a time.

REFERENCES

Allington, R. (2010, April 9). Responding to RTI/A. Personal interview with Rebora

   [Transcript]. *Education Week 3*(2), 20.

Arefeh, S., Levin, D., & Lenhart, A. (2002). *The Digital Disconnect: The Widening Gap between*

   Internet-Savvy Students and Their Schools. (pp. 1-38, Rep.). Washington, DC: Pew

   Internet & American Life Project. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No.

   ED471133)

Aristotle, Brown, L., & Ross, W. D. (2009). *The nicomachean ethics*. Oxford: England: OUP

   Oxford.

Atwell, N. & Atwell Merkel, A. (2016). *The reading zone, 2nd edition: How to help kids*

   become skilled, passionate, habitual, critical readers. NY: Scholastic

Baral, S. (2014, June 26). Latinos are the fastest-growing minority group? Census data finds

   asians surpassing hispanics in 2013. *Latin Times.* Retrieved November 12, 2017, from

   http://www.latintimes.com/latinos-are-fastest-growing-minority-group-census-data-finds-

   asians-surpassing-hispanics-186077

Beck, A. S. (2005). A place for critical literacy. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *48*(5),

   392-400.

Benjamin, M. (2014). *Plato vs. Homer: The battle for Greece.* Retrieved March 17, 2016, from:

   https://matthewbenjaminblog.wordpress.com/2014/01/02/plato-vs-homer-the-battle-for-

   greece/

Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2007). What works in character education. *Journal of*

   Research in Character Education, *5*(1), 29.

Biltke, C. (2012). Critical nutrition studies. In Jeffrey M. Pilcher (Ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Food History* (1-23)*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bishop, E. (2014). Critical literacy: Bringing theory to Praxis. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing 30*(1), 51.

Bourke, R. T. (2008). First graders and fairy tales: One teacher's action research of critical literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, *62*(4), 304-312.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1977). Toward an experimental ecology of human development. *American Psychologist, 32*(7), 513-531. doi:10.1037//0003-066x.32.7.513

Buchanan, L. (2015). "We make it controversial" Elementary preservice teachers' beliefs about race. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 1-24.

Callow, J. (2017). "Nobody spoke like I did": Picture books, critical literacy, and global contexts. *The Reading Teacher 71*(2), 231-237.

Cannatella, H. J. (2006). Plato and Aristotle's educational lessons from the Iliad. *Philosophical Inquiry in Education*, *15*(2), 5-13.

Carney, A. G., & Merrell, K. W. (2001). Bullying in schools. *School Psychology International, 22*(3), 364-382. doi:10.1177/0143034301223011

Chafel, J. A., Flint, A. S., Hammel, J., & Pomeroy, K. H. (2007). Young children, social issues, and critical literacy stories of teachers and researchers. *Young Children*, *62*(1), 73.

Clarke, L. W., & Whitney, E. (2009). Walking in their shoes: Using multiple-perspectives texts as a bridge to critical literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, *62*(6), 530-534.

Coffey, H. (2008). Critical literacy. Retrieved February 18, 2017, from http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4437?ref=search

Comber, B. (2001). Critical literacy: Power and pleasure with language in the early

years. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 24(3), 168.

Comber, B., Thomson, P., & Wells, M. (2001). Critical literacy finds a "place": Writing and

social action in a low-income Australian grade 2/3 classroom." *The Elementary School*

Journal 101(4), 453-457.

Connell, R.W. (1993). *Our schools ourselves, Schools and social justice.* Philadelphia, PA:

Temple University Press

Cox, S. E. (2014). *Perceptions and influences behind teaching practices: Do teachers teach as*

they were taught?(Unpublished master's thesis). Brigham Young University, Provo,

Utah.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*

Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative*

and qualitative research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods*

research. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage.

DeCuir-Gunby, J., & Schutz, P (2017). *Developing a mixed methods proposal: A practical guide*

for beginning researchers. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

De Vaus, D.A. (1993), *Surveys in social research* (3rd ed.). London: UCL Press.

DeVries, B. A. (2015). *Literacy assessment & intervention for classroom teachers*. Scottsdale,

AZ: Holcomb Hathaway.

Donald, B. (2016, December 15). Stanford researchers find students have trouble judging the

credibility of information online. Retrieved March 09, 2017, from

https://ed.stanford.edu/news/stanford-researchers-find-students-have-trouble-judging-credibility-information-online

Dozier, C., Johnston, P., & Rogers, R. (2006). *Critical literacy critical teaching: Tools for preparing responsive teachers*. NY: Teachers College Press

Dresang, E. (2003). Controversial books and contemporary children. *Journal of Children's Literature*. *29*(1), 20–31.

Drudy, S. (2008). Gender balance/gender bias: The teaching profession and the impact of feminisation. *Gender and Education, 20*(4), 309-323. doi:10.1080/09540250802190156

Duncan, A. (2010, August 11). The myths about bullying: Secretary Arne Duncan's remarks at the Bullying Prevention Summit. Retrieved July 5, 2017, from https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/myths-about-bullying-secretary-arne-duncans-remarks-bullying-prevention-summit

Dunn, R. (1984). Learning style: State of the science. *Theory Into Practice, 23*(1), 10-19. doi:10.1080/00405848409543084

Ewing, R. (2016, November 24). Teaching literacy is more than teaching simple reading skills: It can't be done in five easy steps. Retrieved September 30, 2017, from https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=1532

Ferroni, N. (2012, August 24). We teach racism, sexism and discrimination in schools. Retrieved September 9, 2017, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nicholas-ferroni/teaching-education-discrimination_b_1826113.html

File, N., & Gullo, D. F. (2002). A comparison of early childhood and elementary education students' beliefs about primary classroom teaching practices. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *17*(1), 126-137.

Fioriello, D. P. (2017, March 12). *Critical issues in education: Fake news.* Retrieved March 18,

    2017, from http://drpfconsults.com/critical-issues-in-education-fake-news/

Fisher, A. (2001). *Critical thinking: An introduction.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge

    University Press.

Fisher D., & Frey, N. (2009). *Background knowledge: The missing piece of the comprehension*

    puzzle. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Frey, W. H. (2015, March 6). *In the U.S., diversity is the new majority.* Retrieved February 18,

    2017 from, https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0310-frey-no-racial-majority-

    america-20150310-story.html

Freebody P., & Luke, A. (1990). 'Literacies' programs: Debates and demands. *Prospect:*

    Australian Journal of TESOL, 5(7), 7-16.

Freebody, P., & Luke, A. (1999). Further notes on the four resources model. *Reading Online*,

    Retrieved February 18, 2017 from:

    https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a916/0ce3d5e75744de3d0ddacfaf6861fe928b9e.pdf

Freire, P. (1973). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books.

Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation.* South Hadley,

    MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Gee, J. P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method.* New York:

    Routledge.

Gerber, A., Green, D., & Nickerson, D. (2001),Testing for publication bias in political science

    [abstract], *Political Analysis, 9*(4), 385-392. Retrieved from:

    https://www.jstor.org/stable/25791658?read-now=1&seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents.

Giarrizzo, T. (2012). *History losing its value: Representation of minorities within high school*

history texts (Unpublished master's thesis). St John Fisher College, Pittsford, New York.

Glaser, B. (2015). *Choosing classic grounded theory: A grounded theory reader of expert advice.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Glassman, M. (2001). Dewey and Vygotsky: Society, experience, and inquiry in educational practice. *Educational Researcher*, *30*(4), 3-14.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8(*4), 597-607.

Goodwin, W. L., & Goodwin, L. D. (1996). *Understanding quantitative and qualitative research in early childhood education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Gore, A. (2007). *The assault on reason.* London: Bloomsbury.

Gorski, P.C. (2018). *Reaching and teaching students in poverty; Strategies for erasing the opportunity gap*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gray, T. (2010). Character education in schools. *ESSAI*, *7*(1), 21.

Green, S. B., & Salkind, N. J. (2014). *Using SPSS for Windows and Macintosh: Analyzing and understanding data*. Hoboken, NJ: Pearson.

Greene, J. C. (2007). *Mixed methods in social inquiry*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. D. (1989). *Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), 255-274

Grissom, S. (2012, October 8). Nation's educators continue push for safe, bully-free environments. Retrieved July 6, 2017, from http://www.nea.org/home/53298.htm

Gunning, T. (2014) *Creating literacy instruction: for all students*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Hatch, J. A. (2007). *Early childhood qualitative research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Honan, W. H. (1999, September 14). *Benjamin Bloom, 86, a leader in the creation of Head
      Start*. Retrieved July 6, 2017, from http://www.nytimes.com/1999/09/15/us/benjamin-
      bloom-86-a-leader-in-the-creation-of-head-start.html?mcubz=1

Horning, K., Lindgren, M., & Schliesman, M. (2013). *A few observations on publishing in
      2012. Retrieved October 15, 2018, from
      http://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/books/choiceintro13.asp

Howard, G.R. (2007, Summer). Dispositions for good teaching. *Journal of Educational
      Controversy.* Retrieved March 29, 2017, from http://cedar.wwu.edu/jec/vol2/iss2/2/

Howard, T. C. (2010). Why race and culture matters in schools: Closing the achievement gap in
      America's classrooms. New York: Teachers College Press

Hurley, D. (2005). Seeing white: Children of color and the Disney fairy tale princesses. *The
      Journal of Negro Education*, 74 (3), 221-232

International Reading Association Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Committee. (2012).
      Literacy implementation guidance for the ELA Common Core State Standards [White
      paper]. Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/Libraries/association-
      documents/ira_ccss_guidelines.pdf

Irvin, A. J., Meltzer J., & Dukes M. (2007). Chapter 1. Student motivation, engagement, and
      achievement. *ASCD*. Retrieved March 28, from:
      http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/107034/chapters/Student-Motivation,-
      Engagement,-and-Achievement.aspx

James, J.H., & McVay, M. (2009). Critical literacy for young citizens: First graders investigate

    the first Thanksgiving. *Early Childhood Education Journal (36),* 347-354.

Jansen, P., Verlinden, M., Berkel, A., Mieloo, C., Raat, H., Hofman, A. …, Tiemeier,

    H. (2014). Teacher and peer reports of overweight and bullying among young primary

    school children. *Pediatrics*. *134*(3), 473-480. doi:10.1542/peds.2013-3274

Jones, S., & Enriquez, G. (2009). Engaging the intellectual and the moral in critical literacy

    education: The four-year journeys of two teachers from teacher education to

    classroom practice. *Reading Research Quarterly, 44*(2), 145-168. doi:10.1598/rrq.44.2.3.

Killoran, I., & Bliss, S, (2017). Mindfulness in education: Using and teaching mindfulness in

    Schools *Childhood Education*, *93*(2), 99.

King, M. L., Jr. (1947). The purpose of education. *The Maroon Tiger.* Retrieved from

    http://www.mlkonline.net/the-purpose-of-education.html

Kowalczyk, D. (n.d.). Non-experimental & experimental research. Retrieved November 13,

    2018, from https://study.com/academy/lesson/non-experimental-and-experimental-

    research-differences-advantages-disadvantages.html

Kowalski, C. A., Limber M. & Limber S. (2012). Traditional bullying as a potential warning

    sign of cyberbullying. *School Psychology International (33*)5, 505-519.

    doi:10.1177/0143034312445244

Krane, B. (2006, November 13). Researchers find kids need better online academic skills.

    Retrieved February 18, 2017, from

    http://www.advance.uconn.edu/2006/061113/06111308.htm

Kumar, R., & Hamer, L. (2012). Preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward student

    diversity and proposed instructional practices. *Journal of Teacher Education, 64*(2), 162-

    177. doi:10.1177/0022487112466899

Kurland, D. (2000). *Critical reading Vs, critical thinking*. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from

    http://www.criticalreading.com/critical_reading.htm

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant

    pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, *34*(3), 159-165.

Laerd Statistics (2013). *Hypothesis testing*. Retrieved February 10, 2018 from:

    Https://statistics.laerd.com/statistical-guides/hypothesis-testing.php

Lee, J. L. (2017). First steps toward critical literacy: Interactions with an English narrative text

    among three English as a foreign language readers in South Korea. *Journal of Early*

    Childhood Literacy. 17(1) 26–46.

Leland, C. H., Harste, J. C., & Huber, R. (2005). Out of the box: Critical literacy in a first-grade

    classroom. *Language Arts*. *82*(4), 257.

Leu, D., Kinzer, C., Coiro, J., Castek, J., & Henry, L. (2013). New literacies: A dual-level theory

    of the changing nature of literacy, instruction, and assessment. *Theoretical Models and*

    Processes of Reading, 1150-1181. doi:10.1598/0710

Lewison, M., Flint, A. S., & Van Sluys, K. (2002). Taking on critical literacy: The journey of

    newcomers and novices. *Language Arts*. *79*(5), 382-392.

Literacy Implementation Guidance for the ELA. (2013, November 07). Retrieved December 19,

    2018, from http://www.readingrockets.org/article/literacy-implementation-guidance-ela

Loewen, J. W. (2008). *Lies my teacher told me: Everything your American history textbook got*

    wrong. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Luke, A. (2012) Critical literacy: Foundational notes. *Theory into Practice, 51(*1), 4-

      11, DOI: 10.1080/00405841.2012.636324

Luke, A., Freebody, P., Shun, L., & Gopinathan, S. (2005). Towards research-based innovation

      and reform: Singapore schooling in transition. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *25*(1),

      5-28.

Manning, J. (2017). In vivo coding. In Matthes, J. (Ed.), The international encyclopedia of

      communication research methods. Retrieved October 7, 2018, from

      https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118901731.iecrm0270 *(PDF) In Vivo Coding*. Available

      from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320928370_In_Vivo_Coding

Marvin. (2006, May 6). *Insignificant vs. non-significant* [Web log post]. Retrieved October 30,

      2018, from https://scienceblogs.com/mixingmemory/2008/05/06/insignificant-vs-

      nonsignifican

masterpain56. (2014, January 2). Plato vs. Homer: The battle for Greece [Blog post]. Retrieved

      March 23, 2017, from https://matthewbenjaminblog.wordpress.com/2014/01/02/plato-vs-

      homer-the-battle-for-greece/

McLaughlin, M., & DeVoogd, G. L. (2004). *Critical literacy: Enhancing students'*

      comprehension of text. New York: Scholastic.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry*.

      Boston, MA: Pearson.

McVerry, G. (2017, February 01). The difference between critical literacy and critical reading in

      children's literature. Retrieved March 09, 2018, from

      https://archive.jgregorymcverry.com/the-difference-between-critical-literacy-and-critical-

      reading-in-childrens-literature/

Meller, W. B., Richardson, D., & Hatch, J. A. (2009). Using read-alouds with critical literacy literature in K–3 classrooms. *Young Children. 64*(6), 76-78.

Miners, Z., & Angela, P. (2013, December 23). The new literacies. Retrieved March 28, 2017, from http://www.readingrockets.org/article/new-literacies

Montessori, M. (1976). *From childhood to adolescence including "Erdkinder" and the function of the university*. New York: Schocken Books.

Morrell, E. (2015). *Critical literacy and urban youth pedagogies of access, dissent, and liberation*. Florence: Taylor and Francis.

Morrow, L. M. (2014). *Literacy development in the early years.* Boston: Pearson.

Morse, J. M. (2008). Confusing Categories and Themes. *Qualitative Health Research, 18*(6), 727-728. doi:10.1177/1049732308314930

Moss, B., & Lapp, D. (2010). *Teaching new literacies in grades 4-6: Resources for 21st-century classrooms*. New York, NY. Guilford Press.

National Association of the Education of Young Children (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8* [Policy Statement]. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/equity-draft

NCATE (2008). Professional standards for the accreditation of teacher preparation institution. Retrieved November 26, 2018 from:http://www.ncate.org/~/media/Files/caep/accreditation-resources/ncate-standards-2008.pdf?la=en

Norris, K., Lucas, L., & Prudhoe, C. (2012). Examining critical literacy: Preparing preservice

    teachers to use critical literacy in the early childhood classroom. *Multicultural Education*

    *(9)*2, 59-62.

Oleson, A., & Hora, M. T. (2014). Teaching the way they were taught? Revisiting the sources of

    teaching knowledge and the role of prior experience in shaping faculty teaching

    practices. *Higher Education*. *68*(1), 29-45.

Olson, K. R., Durwood, L., Demeules, M., & Mclaughlin, K. A. (2016). Mental health of

    transgender children who are supported in their identities. *Pediatrics, 137*(3).

    doi:10.1542/peds.2015-3223

Onwuegbuzie, A.J., & Collins, K.M.T. (2007). A typology of mixed methods sampling design

    In social science research. *The Qualitative Report, 12*(2), 281- 316.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2004). Enhancing the interpretation of "significant"

    findings: The role of mixed methods research. *The Qualitative Report*, *9*(4), 770-792.

Osborne, A. B. (1996). Practice into theory into practice: Culturally relevant pedagogy for

    students we have marginalized and normalized. *Anthropology & Education*

    quarterly. *27*(3), 285-314.

Owens, D., & Falia, T. (2011, April/May). *Overcoming the bifurcation of reading instruction:*

    Critical literacy in the classroom and the liberatory power of language. Lecture

    presented at 21st Annual Conference of the European Teacher Education Network

    (ETEN in University of Helsinki, Helsinki. Retrieved May/June, 2017, from

    https://sites.google.com/site/criticalliteracyandchildren/home/critical-literacy-and-

    bifurcation-of-reading

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and*

practice. Los Angeles, CA. Sage.

Pewewardy, C. D. (1994). Culturally responsible pedagogy in action: An American Indian

magnet school. In Hollins, King, & Haymon (Eds*.), Teaching diverse populations:*

Formulating a knowledge base. Buffalo: State University of New York Press.

Pewewardy, D., C. (1992, April 30). "practice into theory" journey to the year 2000: Culturally

responsible pedagogy in action...The American Indian Magnet School. Retrieved,

September 19, 2017, from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED355079

Plano Clark, V., & Ivankova, N. (2016). *Mixed methods research: A guide to the field.* Los

Angeles, CA. Sage.

Plato & Lee, H. (1974). *The republic*. Harmondsworth, England. Penguin.

Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation Institutes. (2008). Retrieved,

November 9, 2018, from http://www.ncate.org/~/media/Files/caep/accreditation-

resources/ncate-standards-2008.pdf?la=en

Ramirez-Nava, C. M. (2013). Exploring critical literacy through teachers' professional learning

(Doctoral dissertation). Boise State, Boise, Idaho.

Rebora, A. (2010). Responding to RTI. Retrieved April 29, 2017, from

http://www.edweek.org/tsb/articles/2010/04/12/02allington.h03.html

Retallick, M. (n.d.). *What do you believe about teaching and learning*? Retrieved October 12,

2018, from https://pbea.agron.iastate.edu/plc/adult-education/what-do-you-believe-about-

teaching-and-learning

Rousseau, J. (2013). *Emile*. Meniola, NY. Dover.

Ruel, E. E., Wagner, W. E., & Gillespie, B. J. (2016). *The practice of survey research: Theory*

and applications. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ryan, G. & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. Field Methods, 15(1), 85-109.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual qualitative researchers for qualitative research.*

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Scieszka, J., & Smith, L. (2014). *The true story of the 3 little pigs!* New York: Viking.

Sleeter, C. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the

overwhelming presence of whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *52*, 94-106.

Stipek, D. J., & Byler, P. (1997). Early childhood education teachers: Do they practice what they

preach? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly. 12*(3), 305-325.

Stribling, S. M. (2014). Creating a critical literacy milieu in a kindergarten classroom. *Journal

of Language and Literacy Education*. *10*(1), 45-64.

Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and

management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy*, *68*(3), 226-31.

Tait, P. (2016, March 22). *'The importance of great teaching on children's success'.* Retrieved

November 21, 2018, from

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationopinion/12201014/The-importance-of-

great-teaching-on-childrens-success.html

Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W., (2007). The new era of mixed methods [editorial]. *Journal

of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(1), 3-7.

Tanner, L. (2018, February 05). *More U.S. teens identify as transgender, survey finds*.

Retrieved October 30, 2018, from

https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/02/05/more-u-s-teens-identify-

transgender-survey-finds/306357002/

Teaching for Change. (2017, August 31). *#StepUpScholastic*. Retrieved November 29, 2018, from https://www.teachingforchange.org/critical-literacy

Teaching Tolerance. (n.d.). *Teaching teachers: PD to improve student achievement.* Retrieved February 9, 2017, from https://www.tolerance.org/login?destination=/magazine/teaching-teachers-professional-development-to-improve-student-achievement

Temple, C.D., Ogle, A., Crawford, & Freppon, P. ((2014). *All children read* (4th ed.). New York, NY. Pearson.

Tobin, R. (2005). *Feeding the monster: The true threat to American education*. Victoria, B.C.: Trafford.

Van Sluys, K. (2005). *What if and why Literacy invitations for multilingual classrooms?* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

VanSledright, B. (2004).What does it mean to think historically… and how do you do it? *Research and Practice (68)*3, 230-233.

Vasquez, V. M. (2004). *Negotiating critical literacies with young children*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Vasquez, V. M. (2010). *Getting beyond "I like the book": Creating space for critical literacy in K-6 classrooms*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Watters, A. (2014). *New literacies in the classroom.* Retrieved November 21, 2018, from http://hackeducation.com/2014/11/11/new-literacies-in-the-classroom

Wazwaz, N. (2015, July 06). It's Official: The U.S. is Becoming a Minority-Majority Nation. Retrieved February 18, 2017, from https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/07/06/its-official-the-us-is-becoming-a-minority-majority-nation

Wenzel, B. (2016). *They all saw a cat*. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.

Wolfe, P. (2010). Preservice teachers planning for critical literacy teaching. *English Education. Urbana 42*(4), 368-390.

Wood, Jeffrey W. (2005). Moses's story: Critical literacy and social justice in an urban kindergarten program. *Voices of Practitioners.* National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved February 10. 2017, from: https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/vop/VoicesWood.pdf

Wood, K. D., Soares, L., & Watson, P. (2006). Empowering adolescents through critical literacy. *Middle School Journal, 37*(3), 53-59.

Worzel, R. (n.d.). *Why parents don't respect teachers*. Retrieved October 18, 2018, from http://teachmag.com/archives/128

Yoon, B., & Sharif, R. (2015). *Critical literacy practice: Applications of critical theory in diverse settings*. Singapore: Springer.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Books for Critical Literacy

The Rainbow Fish

Jack and the Beanstalk

Bishop, G. (1989). *The three little pigs.* New York, NY: Scholastic.

Biltekoff, C. (2017). Critical Nutrition Studies. In J. M. Pilcher (Author), *The Oxford handbook*

    of food history. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:DOI:

    10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199729937.013.0010

Celsi, T. N., & Cushman, D. (1999). *The fourth little pig*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Teaching

    and Learning.

Diaz, D., & Bunting, E. (1994). *Smoky night*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace.

McGovern, A., & Backer, M. (1999). *The lady in the box*. New York: Turtle Books.

Pfister, M., & James, J. A. (1998). *The Rainbow fish*. New York: North-South Books.

Scieszka, J., & Smith, L. (2014). *The true story of the 3 little pigs*. NY, NY: Viking, an imprint

    of Penguin Group (USA).

Shannon, D. (2006). *No, David!* London: Scholastic.

Woodson, J. (2014). *The other side*. Weston Woods Studios.

1. What grade do you teach?
    Pre-K   k   1st   2nd   3rd   Other

2. What is your gender?
    Male   Female   Other   I do not wish to answer this question

3. What was your major in college?
    Elementary education   Early childhood education   Other

4. How many years have you taught?
    Less than a year ____   6 years__
    1 year____   7 years__
    2 years__   8 years___
    3 years__   9 years___
    4 years__   10years___
    5 years__   more than 10 years___

5. What is your ethnicity?
    _____ I do not want to answer this _____

6. How would you describe the amount of diversity amongst your students in your present classroom?
    No diversity   A little diversity   Some diversity   A lot of diversity

Questionnaire

1. How many books do you have dealing with the controversial topic such as race? If the answer to this question is none, the survey will skip to question 3.
    None   Some   Quite a few   A lot

2. If you have these books, how often do you read them to your class or with your class?
    Never   Seldom   Occasionally   Frequently

3. How many books do you have dealing with the controversial topic such as homelessness? If the answer to this question is none, the survey will skip to question 5.
    None   Some   Quite a few   A lot

4. If you have these books, how often do you read them to your class or with your class?
    Never   Seldom   Occasionally   Frequently

5. How many books do you have dealing the controversial topic such as same sex parents or relationships? If the answer to this question is none, the survey will skip to question 7.
    None   Some   Quite a few   A lot

6. If you have these books, how often do you read them to your class or with your class?
    Never   Seldom   Occasionally   Frequently

7. How often do you have discussions about controversial topics in your classroom?
   Never   Seldom   Occasionally   Frequently

8. How important do you think controversial conversations are?
   Not important   Somewhat important   Important   Very important

9. Are you comfortable discussing controversial topics such as race?
   No, I'm not   Sometimes   Comfortable   Very comfortable

10. How appropriate do you think teaching controversial topics such as race is for the age of children you teach?
    Not appropriate   Somewhat appropriate   Appropriate   Very appropriate

11. How supported do you feel by the school administration to have discussions on or about controversial topics such as race?
    Not at all supported   Somewhat supported   Supported   Very supported

12. How supported do you feel by parents to have discussions on controversial topics?
    Not at all supported   Somewhat supported   Supported   Very supported

13. How many books do you have which display diverse characters in your room? If the answer to this question is none, the survey will skip to question 15.
    None   Some   Quite a few   A lot

14. If you have these books, how frequently do you read these books?
    Never   Seldom   Occasionally   Frequently

15. How often do your students reflect by writing or drawing about the story or book that is being focused in your classroom?
    Not at all   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

16. How often do students write about concerns they have with a book or story?
    Not at all   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

17. How important is it for students to write about their concerns?
    Not important   Somewhat important   Important   Very important

18.   Do you think literacy is an appropriate platform for teaching social justice?
    Not at all   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

19.   Do you feel it is your responsibility to teach about social justice in your classroom?
    Not at all   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

20.   Do you want to teach about social justice issues in your classroom?
    Not at all   Rarely   Sometimes   Frequently

21. Do you know what critical literacy is?
    No, I do not   I have heard of it   I am familiar with it   Yes, I do

22.   Do you know what is meant by providing multiple perspectives in literature?
    No, I do not   I have heard of it   I am familiar with it   Yes, I do

23. Do you know what is meant by disrupting the common situation or thinking through literature?
    No, I do not   I have heard of it   I am familiar with it   Yes, I do

Please check the box below if you are willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. This is purely voluntary.

Superintendent's name

Superintendent of Name of School District

Address of Superintendent's Office here

Dear _____,

My name is Rebekah Taylor and I am a doctoral student at ETSU. My program requires that I conduct research in the field of early childhood. I am writing to see if I can ask your early childhood teachers to take part in my research if they desire.

My research involves a survey implemented through Monkey Survey which will not reveal identity or store email addresses. The survey is concerning their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources concerning literacy and addressing social justice. It should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete. Upon completion, teachers will have the opportunity to indicate if they would like to speak with me further about their answers. If they do, they will then list their contact information and their identity will be disclosed to me in order for me to contact and speak with them.

I hope that you will consider allowing me to send the survey to your regular education early childhood teachers Pre-K-3rd grade. There is no right or wrong answer to be given on the survey; the answers will just simple tell me what their perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources on the subject.

Thank you in advance for allowing me to include some of your teachers in this research project,

Sincerely,
Rebekah Taylor

<u>Appendix D: Letter to Teachers</u>

Dear Early Childhood Teacher,

   My name is Rebekah Taylor and I am currently a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University. I too am an early childhood teacher and know how rewarding, yet how exhausting teaching can be, so I appreciate your time in reading this letter and hope you will consider helping me with my research.

     I am currently doing research concerning East Tennessee early childhood teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources concerning addressing social topics and literacy. There is no right or wrong answer to be given; I am just trying to find out what early childhood teachers in East Tennessee feel about the topics. I am using Monkey Survey, a trusted and known survey company to assure that respondents remain anonymous. However, if you are willing to talk to me about your survey answers in further detail after the survey has been taken, please indicate so on the survey and I will contact you to make an appointment to talk with you. This will help better explain why the survey answers were chosen. Again, there is no "right" answer as I am just trying to better understand East Tennessee teachers' perceptions, knowledge, practices, and resources towards certain social topics.

     Please consider filling out the survey and possibly allowing me to talk with you. The survey should not take more than 15 minutes and again, your identity will not be known unless you choose to talk with further.

     Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

   Rebekah Taylor

Interview Questions:

1. Which areas of controversial topics such as race, homelessness, same sex relationships do

    you have books for and use? (R4)

2. Why do you choose these resources if you have them? (R4)

3. Do you feel using literacy and holding discussions about controversial subjects is useful in

    promoting social justice? (R5)

4. Why do you think this? (R7)

5. Do you feel discussing multiple perspectives with literature is useful in promoting social

    justice? (R5) Example: Reading The Three Little Pigs followed by a discussion of

    wolves and how they hunt and eat to survive.

6. Are there reasons that keep you from doing this type of literacy and holding these

    discussions? (Support, mandated curricula, time, etc) (R6)

7. Why do you think this? (R7)

8. Are you confident reading books with controversial themes and discussing them? Why or

Why not? (R8)

 9. Now that you know the focus of my study, are there any questions that you think I should

have asked? Or is there anything you would like to add?

    Probes to be used as needed:

    • Can you provide an example?

    • Can you tell me more?

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSTIY
Department of Early Childhood Education

ORAL OR INTERNET BASED INFORMED CONSENT SCRIPT

Title of Research Study: Student- East Tennessee Early Childhood Teachers' Knowledge and Perceptions of Critical Literacy

 Principal Investigator: Rebekah Kinnard Taylor, MA, Ed. S, & Doctoral Candidate

 You are being asked to participate in a research study because you are currently employed as an early childhood teacher in a selected school district in East Tennessee.

Purpose: The purpose of this research study is to examine the knowledge and perceptions East Tennessee early childhood teachers have about critical literacy and its implementations and usefulness. The data from this study will be analyzed and used to inform the researcher's teaching practice and for a dissertation.

Procedures:
If you agree to participate, we will ask you to we will ask you to do the following:
 • Complete a survey:
   o You will complete a short survey that asks for demographic information and asks you to respond to statements about classroom practice by checking a box that most accurately represents your personal beliefs. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

   o The survey will be completed at your convenience during the 2 week time frame and will take
      approximately 15 minutes of your time.
   o Survey responses will be kept confidential.
 • Participate in an interview:
   o If you indicate on your survey that you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, you may   be contacted to meet with the researcher to be interviewed.
   o You will be asked approximately ten questions by the interviewer about your teaching beliefs concerning literacy and teaching social issues.
   o You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.
   o The interview will be conducted at your work place or another agreed upon location at your convenience, and will take approximately 45 minutes of your time.
   o Interview responses will be kept confidential.
   O Interviews will be audio-recorded so that the researcher can transcribe your responses.
Only the researcher will have access to the audiotapes. You have the right to review the

recording of your interview to determine whether they should be edited or erased in whole or in part. Upon completion of this study, the audio recordings will be erased.

Time Commitment:
Your participation in this research study is expected to last for a total of 15 minutes during your chosen time if you just complete the survey. If you participate in a follow-up interview you will also participate on one additional day, for approximately another 35 minutes.

Potential Risks or Discomforts:
 If you do not wish to answer any survey or interview questions because they make you uncomfortable or for any other reason, you may refuse to answer and still remain in the study.

Potential Benefits:
This study can benefit those who prepare teachers through teacher education programs. This study may help guide future professional development opportunities for teachers in the area of literacy as well as social issue. Furthermore, this study may contribute to the knowledge base of teacher perceptions and can influence teacher preparation programs to effectively prepare their students for their work as teachers.

Confidentiality:
We will make our best efforts to maintain confidentiality of any information that is collected during this research study, and that can identify you. We will disclose this information only with your permission or as required by law.
We will protect your confidentiality by using a coding mechanism. Each participant will be assigned a code (number) before completing the survey. The electronic survey company will assign a number to each participant which will not be known to the researcher or (A list linking these codes to a participant by name will be kept in a different location with restricted access. Only the researcher will have access to this list and the data. After the research is completed, the researcher will destroy the list that links the codes to participants' name.)

Interviewees will be identified by their code during the interview process and on the transcriptions created from the audio-recordings. Participants' responses will never be cited by name or linked to any unique identifying information. Furthermore, all data, including the completed surveys, interview recordings, and interview transcriptions will be stored in a locked cabinet with restricted access.

The research team, authorized ETSU, and government agencies that oversee this type of research may have access to research data and records in order to monitor the research. Research records provided to authorized, non-ETSU individuals will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you have any questions, you can contact Rebekah Taylor (Taylorrk3@etsu.edu, (423)883-0533). If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researchers, you can contact ETSU Research.

Transcript 3

T-3=Veronica

Question 1. Which areas of controversial topics such as race, homelessness, same sex relationships, diversity do you have books for and use? (R4)

> I don't think I have any books on homelessness. I may actually have one book on same sex relationships, but I may not because I don't read that frequently enough to know the answer to that. I do have a lot of books on race and diversity. A lot of books with diverse characters. I have several books because we have just recently spoken about slavery and race. I have a lot of books on slavery.

Question 2. Why do you choose these resources if you have them?

> I think it's just more what's available to have in your classroom. I don't think there are maybe not in like our scholastic catalogs and stuff like that, they just don't have a lot to offer in those subjects. I don't think I've ever really seen a book as far as homelessness is concerned in a scholastic catalog so it's not something I would really just go out and purchase. Most of my books come from scholastic. I think more when I choose my books, I choose the content of the book and just what happens to be the color of the character's skin color is just what it is. I know I have several books on black history and why we celebrate this and that, and then wars and slavery and things like that. So it's more like the content of the book. Does that make sense? They (my students) have access to everything over there that I have. The only restricted books are the higher level chapter books for higher readers that most aren't ready for those books, That section right there, only certain kids can go there, but like all the books on black history, all on slavery and all the books on family. I have never read the same sex book. I think it is about diverse families but I have never really included that as a topic of discussion, but I have talked about diversity in families.

Question 3. Do you feel using literacy and holding discussions about controversial subjects is useful in promoting social justice? (R5)

Transcript 3

Books/resources 1-7

Books/Resources/ obtaining 2

Desire 13

Contradiction? content 15

homelessness is content

Selection-not deliberate? 1-16

Free choice-restrictions 20

Importance Good readers over content? 23-24

I do. I think not only does it give them the ability to start thinking about things that are going to be controversial to them as adults, it allows us to already start having those conversations in a safe environment where they are not going to be judged for what they think yet. I also like giving them the opportunity to have discussions that exclude what I think and what I feel that way they can kind of respond to each other's thoughts and opinions

Question 4. Why do you think this? (R7)

Well, like I said I like giving them the opportunity to have discussions that exclude what I think and what I feel that way they can kind of respond to each other's thoughts and opinions. They talk. We've learned and are still learning how to say, "somebody's name, I see what you're saying, but I think….And then add something" or "I don't agree with you because…" Since this is my second year since I looped with this class, they have done this type conversation before. This is second year.

Question 5. Do you feel discussing multiple perspectives with literature is useful in promoting social justice? (R5)

I do. This is just an example from the other day. Some Tusculum College students came over to read to us and the first young man that came over was black. And the response from one of my students, the first thing that came out of her mouth was "My daddy says you can't trust a black man" so that lead into a very good discussion on skin color and then we, it went into a good classroom discussion of what they think, what they've heard, is it right?, should we think this way?, does this matter? This is what brought about the slavery issue too. This unit is not part of our curriculum, but the diversity part is. They needed to understand why this was not an appropriate comment at that time. We will talk more about it around MLK day.

Contradiction-haven't read same sex book to class, says its family diversity, teaches family diversity25-28

No inhibitors 52
Parent support 52-53
Personal beliefs 54

Personal beliefs 56-58

Personal beliefs 59
Parents 60

Ranks controversial topics 64-65

Question 6. Are there reasons that keep you from doing this type of literacy and holding these discussions? (Support, mandated curricula, time, etc) (R6)

No not really. I pretty much do what I want. (Laughs) Parent support maybe. I do not want to talk about same sex marriages because I personally disagree with it if you just want the honest truth. I do believe there is diversity in families, but there is an extent to where I am not going to allow them to think it is the correct necessarily thing to do, but that's my opinion.

Question 7. Why do you think this? (R7)

Well, I told you my opinion and I know that parents, my parents, would not want certain topics discussed yet I don't think and that's one of them they would not want discussed from what I've noticed about them so far. They would not support that topic. I don't think they would have a problem with things such as race, homelessness, or diversity. I don't think it's as controversial as a same sex marriage book.

Question 8. Are you confident reading books with controversial themes and discussing them? Why or Why not? (R8)

Some I am, and some I'm not. I explained that a little bit already. It just depends on what it is. It's not that I am uncomfortable, I just don't want to discuss some topics.

Question 9. Now that you know took the survey and you've answered my questions, you know what my research deals with. Is there anything else you would like to add?

I think just maybe the one thing I would add is "where do teachers actually get their books?" because most teachers get their books from scholastic because it's really the best program to get books. And often they refrain from books that might be controversial just due to that because parents might not necessarily buy those kind of books and then school systems might have an issue with those books too, I would really have to get on line and search if I wanted to find books on a specific topic.

Code	Words from transcripts
Books resources 1-5	1.I don't think I have any books on homelessness. I may actually 2.have one book on same sex relationships, but I may not because 3.I don't read that frequently enough to know the answer to that. I 4.do have a lot of books on race and diversity. A lot of books with 5.diverse characters. I have several books
Desire 11-13 Selection-not deliberate? 11-16	11.subjects. I don't think I've ever really seen a book as far as 12.homelessness is concerned in a scholastic catalog so it's not 13.something I would really just go out and purchase. Most of my 16.to be the color of the character's skin color is just what it is.
Contradiction?-content 15 homelessness is content	15.books, I choose the content of the book and just what happens
Selection-not deliberate? 11-16	11.subjects. I don't think I've ever really seen a book as far as 12.homelessness is concerned in a scholastic catalog so it's not 13.something I would really just go out and purchase. Most of my 16.to be the color of the character's skin color is just what it is. I
Free choice-restrictions 20	20.make sense? They (my students) have access to everything over
Good readers over content?	23.for those books, That section right there, only certain kids can 24.go there, but like all the books on black history, all on slavery
Contradiction-haven't read same sex book to class, says its family diversity, teaches family diversity25-28	25.and all the books on family. I have never read the same sex 26.book. I think it is about diverse families but I have never really 27.included that as a topic of discussion, but I have talked about 28.diversity in families.

Importance-29	*29.I do. I think not only does it give them the ability to start* *32.conversations in a safe environment where they are not going*
Environment 32	*32.conversations in a safe environment where they are not going*
Personal beliefs 34-35	*34.opportunity to have discussions that exclude what I think and* *35.what I feel that way they can kind of respond to each other's*
Personal beliefs 38 Important-teaches rules of discussion 40-42	*38.discussions that exclude what I think and what I feel that way*
Important-teaches rules of discussion 40-42	*40. They talk. We've learned and are still learning how to say,* *41. "somebody's name, I see what you're saying, but I think….* *42.And then add something" or "I don't agree with you*
Important/agrees 46	*52. we, it went into a good classroom discussion of what they 57.an appropriate comment at that time. We will talk more about 58.it around MLK day.*
Importance- good discussion 51	*51.that lead into a very good discussion on skin color and then*
Curriculum 55-56	*55. issue too. This unit is not part of our curriculum, but the* *56diversity part is. They needed to understand why this was not appropriate*
Social justice 56	*56 diversity part is. They needed to understand why this was not* *57.an appropriate comment at that time.*
Frequency	*58. We will talk more about it around MLK day.*
No inhibitors 52	*52.No not really. I pretty much do what I want. Parent*

	53. *support maybe. I do not want to talk about same sex marriages*
	54.because I personally disagree with it if you just want the
Parent support 52-53	*52.No not really. I pretty much do what I want. Parent*
	53.support maybe. I do not want to talk about same sex marriages
Personal beliefs 54	*54.because I personally disagree with it if you just want the*
Personal beliefs 56-58	*56.there is an extent to where I am not going to allow them to*
	57.think it is the correct necessarily thing to do, but that's my
	58.opinion.
Personal beliefs 59	*59.Well, I told you my opinion and I know that parents, my t*
Parent support 60	*60. parents, would not want certain topics discussed yet I*
Ranks controversial topics 64-65	*64.with things such as race, homelessness, or diversity. I don't*
	65.think it's as controversial as a same sex marriage book.
Comfort able 66.-67	*66.Some I am, and some I'm not. I explained that a little bit*
	67.already. It just depends on what it is. It's not that I am.
Desire 68	*68.uncomfortable, I just don't want to discuss some topics.*
Books/resources importance 69-77	*69. I think just maybe the one thing I would add is "where do 70teachers actually get their books?" because most teachers get 76to get on line and search if I wanted to find books on a specific 77topic.*
Avoidance 72-75	*72. to get books. And often they refrain from books that might be*

	73. controversial just due to that because parents might not
	74. necessarily buy those kind of books and then school systems
	75. might have an issue with those books too, I would really have
Desire 76	76. to get on line and search if I wanted to find books on a specific 77topic.

VITA

REBEKAH KINNARD TAYLOR

Education: Ph.D. Early Childhood Education, East Tennessee State
                                    University, Johnson City, TN 2019
                                    Ed.S. Education Specialist in Curriculum and Instruction,
                                    Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, TN 2012
                                    Pre-K Endorsement Tennessee Wesleyan College, Athens, TN
                                    2008
                                    M.A. Teaching and Curriculum and Instruction
                                    +6 hours: Teaching and Reading in Elementary K-3
                                    Cumberland University Lebanon, TN 1991
                                    B.S. Elementary Education, University of Tennessee, Knoxville,
                                    TN 1989

Professional Experience: Kindergarten Teacher: Greene County Schools, Doak
                                    Elementary, Greeneville, Tennessee. 2010-Present
                                    Response to Intervention Teacher: Greeneville City
                                    Schools, Greeneville, Tennessee. 2009-2010
                                    2nd Grade Teacher: Hamilton County Schools, Chattanooga,
                                    Tennessee, Lookout Valley Elementary. 2007-2008
                                    Preschool Teacher: Missoula, Montana, University Congregational
                                    Children's Center. 2000-2005
                                    Preschool Teacher: Greeneville, Tennessee, YMCA. 1997-2000
                                    Kindergarten, Second Grade, and 7th and 8th Grade Teacher:
                                    Greene County Schools, Greeneville, Tennessee. Chuckey
                                    Elementary. 1995-1996

Kindergarten and Third Grade Teacher: Newport News Public

Schools: Newport, New, Virginia, Palmer Elementary.

1991-1993

5th Grade and Kindergarten Teacher: Wilson County Schools,

Lebanon, Tennessee, Tuckers Crossroads Elementary.

1989-1991

Presentations:　　　　　　**Taylor, R.** (July 2015). *Integrating literacy into kindergarten*

mathematics. Annual Early Childhood Conference, at East

Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee.

Honors and Awards:　　　ETSU Student Teacher Mentor of the Year 2016-2017

DOAK Elementary School Teacher of the Year 2016

Greene County Life Changer of the Year 2016