

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION:** Teacher Preparation for a Diverse Society: Immersive Learning Experiences Within the Context of Community as a Means of Strengthening Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Cultural Competence in Preservice Teachers

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This study examined how preservice teachers engaged in an immersive learning experience, implemented culturally relevant pedagogical practices in elementary classrooms. The study also sought to learn how interacting with the greater community strengthened the preservice teachers' abilities to implement culturally relevant pedagogy. Two research questions guided this study. To explore the concept of CRP in the elementary classroom, and how preservice teachers learn to include CRP, the following research questions were posed: 1) How does an immersive learning experience with culturally and linguistically diverse learners affect the preservice teacher's understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy? 2) In what ways does purposeful and meaningful engagement in the local community impact the preservice teacher's ability to implement culturally relevant pedagogy?

The research study was qualitative and utilized case studies. Cases were analyzed within and across to discover how they were similar and how they were unique. Data was analyzed using qualitative methods, including open coding, to identify themes. The findings from the study are presented, along with implications for teacher preparation, and recommendations for further research.