

**BEYOND LIP SERVICE: HOW TEACHERS IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL UTILIZE
MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE**

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
of Doctor of Education

by
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May 2012

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative dissertation is an investigation of the experiences of four middle grade teachers, three female and one male, three Caucasian and one African American who use multicultural literature in their language arts classrooms and the responses of the students of color they teach. The teaching experience of the teacher participants ranged from nine to twenty-five years. This bounded case study was investigated through the interpretivist paradigm over a seven-month period during the 2009–2010 school year. The teaching of six texts defined by the school as multicultural (one of the texts would not be viewed as multicultural by other definitions), *Esperanza Rising* and *Journey to the River Sea* were the fifth grade texts, *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry* was the sixth grade text, *The House on Mango Street* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* were the seventh grade texts and *A Raisin in the Sun* was the eighth grade text.

Through the lens of multiculturalism, specifically Banks' (1994) dimensions of multicultural education and Groban's (2007) tenets of critical multiculturalism, and the participant teachers, enactments were explored. The data gathered over the seven-month investigation included audiotaped classroom observations, focus groups, and two types of teacher interviews, faculty interviews, observational field notes, and teacher pedagogical artifacts. The interpretivist paradigm was utilized to coded and analyzed the data using modified analytic induction, descriptive activity codes (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003), and cross case analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Enactments of multiculturalism, relationship between philosophy and pedagogy, and experiences of the teaching of multicultural literature were the three groups of thematic findings related to the teachers. The thematic findings related to the students of color who participated include: pondering

pedagogy, multicultural literature mindsets, and dealing with diversity. This investigation concludes that teacher pedagogy, peer response, and literature discussion appear to influence the student participants' cultural understandings. Implications for practice and further research are included.

DEDICATION

For my grandparents—

Peter J. Chisolm, Horace D. Payne, Sr. and Viola C. Payne

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I began this journey the College of Education's Curriculum, Instruction and Technology in Education department was in flux. The restructuring of the program and addition of new faculty afforded me the opportunity to sit under the capable teaching of the members of my committee, Marc Hill, Erin Horvat, and Catherine Schifter. One of the first new faculty members I met during the transition was my advisor, Michael W. Smith. He guided and pushed through course completion and the early stages of topic selection. I am grateful for his quiet wisdom.

Wanda Brooks' joining the faculty gave me the opportunity to sit at the feet of an accomplished researcher who became my mentor, friend, and committee chair. I admire her intelligence, focus, and willingness to mentor novice researchers like me. Without her supportive guidance and firm yet gentle nudges, I would not have grown as a researcher.

I would like to thank Jaymin Sanford-Deshields for her service on my committee and introduction to multicultural education, which became one of the underpinnings of this work. I wish you all the best!

I am grateful for my circle of supporters, some of whom I met along this journey and others who have been a part of my life: Evelyn Barnes, Cassandra Jones, my sister, Robyn Murphy, and Lorraine Savage. Each one of them played a significant part in getting me to this point.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge those at the Lynn Morgan School where I conducted the research. My sincere gratitude is extended to the student, teacher, and parent participants in this study. I learned much from them beyond the scope of this research.

When things seemed impossible, I relied upon the remembrances of my childhood and the words of my parents, Robert Arthur and Ellen Gloria Payne, which continuously gave me the confidence to believe that all things were possible for me.

Finally, the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the loving support of my husband, Alyn, and our gifts, Morgan and Eryka. I am indebted to them for their understanding when I sequestered myself in my office and the way they encouraged me to breathe during my moments of doubt. I am most grateful for the way that He kept us throughout this journey!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION – THE STORY BEHIND THE STUDY

Since I grew up in one of the largest, most diverse cities in the world, my educational experiences were equally diverse. When I was due to enter the third grade, my parents chose to participate in the “busing” opportunity that was available in the mid-1970s. Their choice was based upon the supposed rigor of the curriculum and first-rate reputation of the entering school cluster. My academic experience from middle elementary through high school was grouped by academic performance and standardized test scores; I was placed in the advanced track. This placement afforded me the opportunity to participate in programming designed to enrich my academic progress. However, it also led to ridicule and disdain from some of my African-American peers who were not placed in the advanced track. The benefits of the academic opportunities outweighed the social ramifications and helped solidify the continually stressed importance of education in my upbringing. Peer pressure was not absent, but learning with my intellectual peers fostered the development of new and diverse relationships with students from varied backgrounds. Many of the relationships formed during that time have lasted many years. My academic experience in a diverse environment informed my perspective as a parent on ideal educational experiences for my daughters.

When thinking about those years in school, I recall some of the characters in books that I encountered in my school-sanctioned reading that influenced my thoughts about my culturally diverse peers and myself. I remember having discussions with my peers and significant adults in my life that assisted in the filtering of my thoughts and the shaping of some conclusions. While I recall a few discussions related to school-

sanctioned texts, I do not recall teacher-led classroom discussions about issues of power, race, gender, or social justice that I encountered, with the exception of Holocaust-related discussions. Unfortunately, my schooling occurred prior to significant thought being given to the importance of discussion.

We need to talk about it [racism] at home, at school, in our houses of worship, in our work places, in our community groups. But talk does not mean idle chatter. It means meaningful, productive dialogue to raise consciousness and lead to effective action and social change. (Tatum, 1997, p. 193)

I found Tatum's discussion to be a personal truth; some of the texts that I was exposed to in my schooling raised issues that were overlooked and therefore never discussed in the classroom context. Discussion was minimal in the language arts classrooms of my youth; the language arts pedagogy was traditional in nature. I recall wondering about the characters I read about on levels never broached in assignments.

Because of my educational experiences and beliefs, my daughters attended private schools from pre-kindergarten through high school. They benefited from stellar academic programs with reasonably progressive educators. In my opinion, however, they too suffered from the lack of diversity in their schools' curriculum. Neither of my daughters read a significant amount of multicultural literature as a part of their school assignments or their school-sanctioned summer reading. Much of their multicultural reading in school occurred during the month of February, or was relegated to brief units, including short stories or poetry sandwiched between major assignments or school breaks. The experiences (or lack thereof) of my daughters throughout their middle and high school years piqued my interest in examining how private school teachers use multicultural literature and the experiences of the students of color in their classrooms.

Statement of the Problem

According to the NCES (2010), white students account for the greater part of enrollment in private schools. In public schools, the opposite is true: African-American and Hispanic students account for the majority enrollment. Additionally, Asian/Pacific Islanders account for five percent and American Indian/Alaskan Natives make up one percent of both public and private schools. Consequently, the numbers of students of color in private schools remains low.

Despite the academic advantages, students in private schools face various challenges, and students of color face particular challenges. These challenges include: “fitting in,” being ostracized by their peers for allegedly “acting white,” and often-low expectations of their abilities by teachers, have been studied (Bassett, 2003). One of the topics that I believe has not been given much attention in private schools is research related to curriculum, specifically multicultural literature. Bishop (1997) defined multicultural literature as literature “that reflects the racial, ethnic and social diversity that is characteristic of our pluralistic society and of the world” (p. 3). The canon is often replete with literature focused on and written by deceased white males. In the curricula my daughters were exposed to, non-dominant cultural representation in the language arts classroom was minimal, if present at all and often ancillary to the primary focus.

One important question to ask of our educational institutions is whether the diverse students in today’s classrooms encounter school-sanctioned literature that is reflective of who they are. All students benefit from diverse literature; the research of numerous scholars (Bishop, 1997; Harris, 1993; Norton, 2001; Sims, 1982) has stressed the significance of including diverse literature in schools’ reading curriculums. Literature

representing all occupations, lifestyles, cultures, religions, ethnicities, and abilities should be utilized in today's classrooms. Anderson (2006) agreed, suggesting that multicultural literature increases the appreciation students can develop for various cultures and that it combats stereotyping.

According to the mission statements of several elite private schools (as witnessed on their websites), preparing their students to excel academically and developing inclusively minded leaders with global perspectives is paramount. More specifically, statements include language such as "committed to being a diverse community that fosters self-confidence and respect for others, the school prepares each student to lead and to enrich the world," "upholds and promotes moral integrity, a sense of personal achievement and worth, and concern for others at school and in the larger community," and "strive to increase our students' awareness of the need for responsible membership and leadership in the global family." Since the population of students of color in such schools remains low, how do these lofty goals come to fruition?

One way to address lack of exposure to people of color and assist schools in developing inclusively minded leaders would be to include multicultural literature thoughtfully in private school classrooms. In addition to exposing dominant culture students to a variety of cultures, quality multicultural literature can assist in overcoming stereotypes (Anderson, 2006). Moreover, such books give implicit messages to children about their world. Therefore, positive exposure to multicultural literature advances affirmative experiences that can assist in identification of cultural heritages and understanding of sociological change, develop respect for the cultural values of others, and provoke and broaden imagination and creativity (Norton, 2001). Since literature has

the potential to influence the lives of its readers on many levels the messages can be nuanced by teachers through classroom discussions and assignments designed to promote equality and social justice.

Issues of power have existed throughout history and are repeatedly enacted in classrooms. Therefore, teachers must be aware of the social construction of their own identities and make multicultural concepts part of them (Noel, 2000). According to Delpit (1995), teachers must recognize issues of power at play in their teaching and in the way that they view their students. “Furthermore, teachers need to be cognizant of these issues in order to provide books with culturally accurate and authentic images which serve a large role in educating and informing students about the variety of cultures they inevitably will encounter” (Johnstone & McKenzie, 1998, p. 4). Hence, careful selection of classroom literature is imperative, whether the literature is multicultural or from the traditional canon.

In some cases, students of color enrolled in private schools are expected to carry the burden of “speaking for their culture.” This places an undue burden upon them as they navigate their often-isolating educational experiences. The National Association of Independent Schools 2007–2008 reported that the number of teachers of color in member schools was small, only 12.3%. People of color are not largely represented in private schools as faculty, students, or teachers. According to Benson (1995), reading and responding to multicultural literature affects students’ attitudes and views of racial groups other than their own. Additionally, Rosenblatt (1982) argued that literature has the potential to aid in the understanding of self and others. It can also widen temperament and cultural horizons as well as clarify value conflicts that may exist.

Because of the usually low enrollment of students of color in private schools, student exposure to non-dominant cultures through personal interaction is minimal. Additionally, portrayal of people of color in the media can support stereotypes that fuel the negative view of those with whom these students have little contact. Unfortunately, this can reinforce dominant ideals and beliefs based upon the meaning derived from the texts read. Since meaning is not simply made from text but from activities and events in the social and cultural environments that individuals experience, classroom use of multicultural literature warrants examination. Meaning is dynamic and changes as interaction occurs. Thus, teachers play a significant role in assisting the construction of meaning as they interact with students during reading (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994).

This present study examines the teaching of multicultural literature in a private school. The questions that guided this study include:

1. How do private school teachers conceive and incorporate multicultural literature into their language arts classrooms?
 - a. What pedagogical practices emerge from the multicultural literature?
 - b. What perspective(s)/beliefs about multiculturalism undergird the teaching of multicultural literature?
 - c. How do teachers experience the teaching of multicultural texts?
2. What are the experiences of middle grade private school students of color who read multicultural literature in their language arts class?
 - a. How do focal students react to their teacher's multicultural literature pedagogical practices?
 - b. In what ways do focal students experience multicultural literature?

Significance of the Study

A teacher's words and actions have the potential to make lasting impressions in the lives of their students. Therefore, examination of teachers' actions and attitudes is essential, as well as their selection of books used in class for assignments, those recommended for leisure reading, and those placed in the classroom library. This is particularly important in the middle grades. Gay (1994) stated,

Most middle school students are very much aware of inter-intra-group differences, and are in the midst of trying to make sense of them for their own personal identities, values and choices, they should not be left to their own devices to negotiate and resolve these conflicts. (p. 154)

Accordingly, middle grades teachers have an additional burden because of the impressionability of their adolescent students. Therefore, discussions, particularly those related to literature, in middle grades classrooms must be viewed as important.

“What makes a book ‘multicultural’ depends largely on how it is used with children and perceived by children - two conditions that teachers are in a position to influence” (Wan, 2006, pp. 141-142). Thus, definitions and interpretations of multicultural literature vary greatly. The teaching of multicultural literature has been a part of contemporary research studies (Benson, 1995; DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2005; Dong, 2005; Landt, 2006; Louie, 2006). Many school districts have incorporated the use of multicultural literature into their curriculum; and private schools have embraced the inclusion of multicultural literature as well. In this age of advanced technology, which lessens the divide between cultures, it remains important that issues of culture and difference be explored and discussed in all classrooms, particularly the language arts classroom. According to Landt (2007), a literature scholar:

In recent decades much emphasis has been placed on using a diversity of high-quality literature for students to read. Previous decades offered students a limited fare of overwhelmingly white male authors for reading. The slow progress of incorporating a richer, broader range of literature into curriculum required focusing on "alternate" (non-mainstream) authors. (p. 1)

In light of the diverse issues affecting our global climate; gender difference, racial discord, and terrorist activity, today's teachers are tasked with making pedagogical decisions that lead their students toward understandings that will result in peace and harmony in the world. The manner in which today's teachers address multicultural literature and multicultural education are important factors in how children will learn to accept and appreciate difference in the classroom and in society (Wan, 2006). This study will contribute to the fields of teacher pedagogy, curriculum, and multicultural literature.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Through a review of four bodies of literature, this chapter provides the foundation for the present research study. Each body of literature is examined through theoretical discussions and research. Beginning with the definition of related terms, this chapter then examines critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007), and Banks' (1994) dimensions of multicultural education and reader response theory (Rosenblatt, 1976). Following the aforementioned theories, I present extant literature related to 1) critical multiculturalism and multicultural education, 2) multicultural literature, and 3) students of color in private schools. It is important to note that competing understandings of multicultural education and multicultural literature exist.

Following the definition of terms, I begin with the underpinnings of critical multiculturalism and Banks' (1994) dimensions of multicultural education as the frames for the present study. The two frames were selected because of their compatibility; critical multiculturalism proposes multicultural education for every student and both shed light upon the ways teachers in a private school use multicultural literature in their middle grade classrooms. Both seek to transform spaces in which meaning is generated; social, cultural, and institutional. Furthermore, both are concerned with teaching the necessary skills for living in our culturally diverse world. Critical multiculturalists reject neutrality and the stability of difference; they also question the existence of disparity among different groups as well as the ways that these types of difference are produced, legitimated, and eliminated within unequal relations of power. Additionally, it addresses issues of whiteness (Kubota, 2004). Multicultural education has been a part of the

educational discussion for more than a decade. Multicultural education scholars advocate its incorporation into educational systems in the United States. Acknowledging that equity and equality are non-synonymous terms, multicultural education scholars agree that there is no guarantee of fairness in that which is considered equal.

The use of multicultural literature in schools is the next area reviewed in this chapter. Multicultural education scholars posit multicultural literature be integrated into curricula toward authentic multicultural education which supports cultural pluralism (Banks, 2001; Grant & Sleeter, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2008). According to Colby and Lyon (2004), “multicultural literature helps children identify with their own culture, exposes children to other cultures, and opens the dialogue on issues regarding diversity.” Additionally, multicultural literature provides opportunities for exposure to various perspectives, assists in the valuing of contributions and experiences of others, and aids in creating a sense of community in the classroom as well as teaching students to broaden their worldviews. Therefore, students of all ethnicities, races, religions, and creeds benefit from multicultural material. According to Dowd (1992), “from reading, hearing, and using culturally diverse materials, young people learn that beneath surface differences of color, culture or ethnicity, all people experience universal feelings of love, sadness, self-worth, justice and kindness” (p. 220). This body of literature informs the present research as the texts read are considered by the school to be multicultural literature.

I follow with an examination of students’ responses to the teaching of multicultural literature as the next area of focus. Reading can be defined as a meaning-making process that is a transaction between the reader and the text being read. The teacher and the classroom context also influence the way students make meaning from

text (Rosenblatt, 1976; Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). The reading of multicultural literature produces occasions for individual reflection and identification with diverse cultures. The language arts classroom should be a place where students are encouraged to make connections to literature. Therefore, instruction should not be limited to literary elements; emphasis should also be placed upon personal response from truly experiencing the literature (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). The pedagogical decisions and strategies employed by teachers determine what students learn from the texts they read (Dressel, 2005).

The dynamics of the reader's stance are particularly significant in a classroom situation. Indirectly or directly, the teacher can markedly affect the stance that predominates in the transaction of student readers with texts through classroom atmosphere, questions, and assignments. (Karolides, 2000, p.11)

Hence, it is reasonable to propose that response comes not from the reader and text alone but from the teacher and the classroom context. The research examined related to student response directly informs the present study's aim to understand how students of color respond to the teaching of multicultural literature.

The final area to be examined is the presence of students of color in private/independent schools. The United States is becoming increasingly diverse and the number of students of color in schools (both public and private) is growing. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2009), 10.5 percent of children in the United States are enrolled in private schools. Over the past twenty years, private and independent schools have placed significant emphasis on becoming more diverse and have admitted more students of color (Thompson & Shultz, 2003). While the number of students of color in private schools remains small, their experiences are significant. Essentially, a great deal of the research related to students of color in private schools is focused on their social experiences and their academic achievement. Studies have found

that students of color at predominantly white private/independent schools frequently experience marginalization, feel unrepresented in the school culture, including the curriculum, and feel alienated from their peers outside of the private/independent school context (Ascher, 1986; Cookson & Persell, 1991; Cooper & Datnow, 2000; Datnow & Cooper, 1998; Herr, 1999; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Proweller, 1999). However, few studies exist examining the experiences of students of color related to curricula. The articles and books reviewed in this section shed additional light upon the academic and personal experiences of students of color in private schools.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following definitions will be applied:

Reading is defined as a meaning construction process involving a reader, the text being read, the teacher, and the classroom context. The set purpose and type of text influence the individual's comprehension and interpretation (Rosenblatt, 1982; Ruddell & Unrau, 1994; Tompkins, 2010).

The definition of multicultural literature as defined by the Lynn Morgan School's language arts/English department chair is literature that is representative of "any other experience outside the mainstream white Anglo Saxon Protestant canon" (Cindy, personal communication, April 16, 2010). This definition is being used for the present study because one of the texts included in the Lynn Morgan School's middle grade curriculum as multicultural would not meet the criteria for multicultural literature as defined by others.

A student of color refers to one of African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American descent; these persons are often labeled minority (Nieto & Bode, 2008). A private school

is one that is established, conducted, and primarily supported by a non-governmental agency (Merriam-Webster, 2010).

Research Focus

The central focus of this research addresses the ways middle grade private school teachers utilize multicultural literature and how the students of color they teach respond to the instruction and the literature. Teachers play a central role in facilitating the literacy understandings of their students. The classroom context set by a teacher influences the way students engage, interpret, and discuss text. Consequently, teachers significantly influence students' thoughts about their school reading (Baines, 2004; Matsumura, Slate & Crossman, 2008; Ruddell & Unrau, 1994). Consequently, it is critical that teachers carefully consider the instructional practices employed related to literature. Teachers must be willing to examine their behaviors, goals, and decisions as well as the way in which they model text engagement in order to create classroom climates that value all types of literature.

The use of multicultural literature in today's classrooms has increased over the past two decades. Multicultural literature is often the door to the experiences of "others" for contemporary students. Characters educate; encountering "others" in text can enhance text engagement (Marshall, 2004). Cultural consciousness is developed as students encounter "others" in text. Therefore, accurate representation of people of color in texts is important and benefits all students. In addition, it is important for teachers to consider carefully the pedagogical decisions they make about the teaching of multicultural literature. According to Rhoads & Valdez (1996):

Multiculturalists stress education as the process of engaging in critical thought and discussion about the construction of knowledge. Knowledge is seen as

dynamic. From such a perspective, the teacher is viewed no longer as the keeper of relevant facts and information but as the facilitator of student inquiry and debate about what gets defined as knowledge. (p.16)

Multiculturalism has been examined, debated, and investigated over the years. However, in order to understand adequately the role of multiculturalism in the teaching of literature, it is necessary to theorize the term. There is not one agreed-upon way to understand multiculturalism. Numerous manifestations of the term exist; the various characteristics tend to blend (McLaren, 1995; Steinberg, 2009). Definitions of multiculturalism vary; it has been defined as “the radical idea that people in other cultures, foreign and domestic, are human beings, too” (Orkin, Cohen, Howard & Nussbaum, 1999, p. 4).

Multiculturalism condemns intolerance and encourages cultural diversity. It argues for equal participation for “others” in education, economics, and politics. Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context, which empowers all within the organization or society.

The term multiculturalism has served as the banner of numerous movements, proposals, and theories over the years. Multiculturalism can be viewed as a particular facet of the broader movement of “political correctness” (Spencer, 1994). I will briefly discuss three forms: conservative multiculturalism, mainstream multiculturalism, and critical multiculturalism (Bensimon, 1994; McLaren, 1995; Rhoads, 1995), as well as offer Banks’ perspective on how these theories manifest when pedagogically enacted.

Theoretical Frames

The theory of multiculturalism highlights the pluralistic nature of US society and questions about what courses and subject matter might be part of school curriculum

(Margai & Frazier, 2010). One understanding of multiculturalism tends to stress the inclusion of cultural diversity in an already recognized canon (Bensimon, 1994). According to Bryson (2005), some (e.g., Bloom, 1995; Kimball, 1990; Hirsch, 1987) view multiculturalism as anti-canon, suggesting that the canon constitutes our common culture and to reject it is to reject our culture.

However, conservative multiculturalism seeks to preserve the canon and simply include multiculturalism as a supplement to the main curriculum; it renounces racism but fails to relinquish power. According to McLaren (1995), conservative multiculturalists “pay only lip service to the cognitive equality of all races” (p. 36). Conservative multiculturalism assumes that the present-day social order is just. Additionally, the norms of dominant culture are viewed as the indicator for what is and should be valued (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997).

Mainstream multiculturalism suggests that other worldviews are as important and students ought to become more accustomed to and accepting of diverse cultures, yet issues of power tend to be avoided. Conversely, some may view mainstream multiculturalism as a means to create a more tolerant social atmosphere. Of the three forms of multiculturalism, mainstream multiculturalism is most accepted in academe (Rhoads, 1998). According to Rhoads, multiculturalism is a means to reach greater acceptance for diverse peoples. The inclusion of multicultural education in today’s classrooms is valuable for each and every student. “By offering courses and educational experiences that expose students to a wide range of cultures and world views, both the majority and the minority will gain from increased understanding of the other” (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996, p. 8). Bensimon (1994) criticized the mainstream multiculturalism

perspective because it fails to bring cultural differences to the fore: “It is primarily concerned with the reduction of tension and conflict among different groups.

Accordingly, curricular change that is framed in human relations terms will focus on the development of more accepting attitudes” (p. 13). Mere toleration of difference and diversity is challenging for Bensimon; doing so does not encourage the kind of social transformation that facilitates diverse cultures’ influence on schooling as well as the world. The theories of conservative and mainstream multiculturalism fail to transform mono-cultural institutions into multicultural democratic communities because they situate cultural diversity as something to be learned or diverse identities to be tolerated. Each of the abovementioned views is more accommodating than transformative. McLaren (1995) states, “Multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda can just be another form of accommodation to the larger social order” (p. 126). Power and privilege shape reality, both socially and educationally. Unfortunately, inequities exist based upon race, class, and gender; acknowledging difference without challenging domination fails to effect change.

Bensimon (1994) called for social transformation based on diverse cultures and identities. This transformative adaptation of multiculturalism has been described as critical multiculturalism because it combines cultural diversity with the emancipatory vision of critical educational practice. Hence, this form of multiculturalism seeks to transform schooling from monolithic centers of power to democratic constellations in which organizational structures reflect a wealth of viewpoints (Rhoads & Solórzano, 1995). Critical multiculturalism is similar to liberatory forms of pedagogy in which a goal of education is to challenge students to become knowledgeable of the social, political,

and economic forces that have shaped their lives and the lives of others (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1992; Hooks, 1994). Critical multiculturalism, according to McLaren (1994), recognizes the socio-historical construct of race and its intersections with class, gender, nation, sexuality, and capitalism. It creates pedagogical circumstances in which students question conditions of “otherness.” Critical multiculturalism challenges historic issues of power and makes whiteness, the historical and social construction of it, visible. Critical multiculturalism is resistant in nature because it rose out of a “crisis of meaning.” Critical multiculturalism questions the meaning of being with or without power, identity, or the ability to negotiate (Clary-Lemon, 2003).

According to Cai (2002), critical multiculturalism is an emancipatory theory that values diversity and deals with issues of equality and equity in society and education. Therefore, those who teach from the critical multiculturalists’ perspective bring difference to the center in their teaching and want it to be confronted by students directly (Groban, 2007). The confrontation of difference should take place in classroom discussions to ensure that multiple perspectives are shared and misconceptions are addressed. Critical multiculturalism opens minds and ultimately doors to the possibility of real and effective change. For that reason, the aims of critical multiculturalism are to include previously marginalized texts and writers into the canon, curricula, and syllabi, to value contributions (artistic and cultural) of excluded groups, and to advance social reform (Groban, 2007). As educators open their minds to embrace and practice the aims of critical multiculturalism, they create an environment in which growth can occur.

Accordingly, the tenets of critical multiculturalism include raising issues of power and

foregrounding difference; doing so will lead students in discussions toward social justice (Groban, 2007).

Dimensions of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is drawn from multiple traditions and disciplines, including ethnic studies and women's studies. The goal of multicultural education is to accomplish equity in education (Banks, 2004). Multicultural education provides an important function in our diverse world; it seeks to assist students in developing attitudes, knowledge, and temperament to work with individuals from diverse cultures. According to Banks (2004):

Because of its focus on equity, justice, and cultural democracy, multicultural education is consistent with the democratic ideals of the basic documents of the United States: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. One of its major aims is to actualize for all the ideals that the founding fathers intended for an elite few at the nation's birth. (p. xi)

Multicultural education is a theoretical concept and an educational method based upon the ideals of equality, equity, freedom, human dignity, and justice which provides knowledge about how the United States, its culture, history, and politics, was formed by the contributions of the nation's diverse groups and informs curricula in schools and other educational establishments (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). According to Banks (2008), the principal scholar in the field, most multicultural education theorists agree that the chief aim of multicultural education is the restructuring of educational institutions so that every student acquires the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to function in this ethnically diverse nation and world. Furthermore, Banks (1995) posited explicit focus on the issues of privilege and power in school curricula. He conceptualized the interdisciplinary field with several interconnected dimensions for use by educators.

Banks (1994) described five dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, the knowledge construction process, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and creating an empowering school culture and social structure. Content integration is described as the degree to which examples and content from diverse cultures and/or groups are used to demonstrate key concepts, generalities, principles, and theories into the teaching of content area information (Banks, 1993). According to Banks, many view content integration as the primary focus of multicultural education. Teachers of language arts and social studies can often incorporate this dimension in relevant ways. For example, this can be achieved by utilizing various types of texts with diverse characters in language arts instruction and incorporating immigrant contributions in social studies lessons. Teachers of math and science are not exempt from incorporating multicultural education into their teaching (Banks, 1993). The knowledge construction process describes teachers' employment of procedures to aid students to determine, examine, and understand how cultural assumptions, biases, and views influence the development of their knowledge. This dimension points out the manner in which knowledge is created by behavioral, natural, and social scientists (Banks, 1993). The work of feminist scholars (Collins, 2000; Code, 1991; Harding, 1991, 1998) recognized and discussed the significance of race, class, and gender due to the subjective and objective nature of knowledge. Prejudice reduction is important because research suggests that by the age of four, children are aware of racial differences and are biased towards whites (Spencer, 1984). By naturally and consistently including teaching materials that portray images of ethnic groups in authentic and realistic activities teachers can help students to develop positive racial attitudes in their students. This dimension describes how educators can

assist in the development of more democratic attitudes and values in children (Banks, 1994). Prejudice reduction focuses on the ways that teaching methods and materials can be modified to address students' racial attitudes. Equity pedagogy identifies the ways teachers adapt their pedagogy to ensure academic achievement for all of their students, including the teaching styles employed and attention given to the learning styles of their diverse students, regardless of their ethnic, racial, and social backgrounds. Equity pedagogy seeks to improve the academic achievement of the non-dominant culture students in educational settings (Banks, 1993). According to Gay (2000), effective teachers are skilled in translating knowledge successfully to their diverse students while acknowledging their unique backgrounds. An empowering school culture and social structure dimension relates the ways in which students from diverse backgrounds are represented through various school components, including grouping and labeling processes, interaction with staff and peers, as well as participation in sports and extracurricular activities. An empowering school culture can be achieved by ensuring unbiased assessments, equal opportunities for success, eliminating tracking, and adopting a philosophy that all students can learn (Kornhaber, 2004; Oakes, 2005; Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001). Restructuring of the culture and organization of schools may be necessary in order to create school climates in which students of color and low-income students achieve (Banks, 1993).

Multicultural education calls for deliberate, fundamental, and comprehensive changes to be made in the educational process, including its conception, organization, and execution. The actions taken in schools should reflect the languages, cultures, customs, and habits of ethnic groups represented in the global community (Banks, 1993).

According to Gay (2004), students need to understand how multicultural issues shape the social, political, economic, and cultural fabric of the world and fundamentally influence their lives. She posits that multicultural education ought to be part of the curriculum core and woven in an interdisciplinary way. Moreover, as teachers create classroom environments that foster open dialogue about texts and foreground issues of oppression, power and privilege therein, students learn to read critically and challenge misconceptions and biases. Multiculturalists are concerned with creating environments in the classroom and educational environment that encourage active student participation and engage students in discussions and decision-making (Kanpol & McLaren, 1995). When the classroom is viewed as a place of learning for students and teachers, real change can occur.

Reader Response Theory

I rely upon Rosenblatt's (1976) transactional theory of reader response to analyze student of color responses to the multicultural texts. Rosenblatt's perspective suggests that meaning occurs as a result of the transaction that occurs between a reader and the text being read. The transaction is influenced by the experiences of the reader, those from the reader's life and from previous literary exposure. Therefore, response is constructed from multiple vantage points and the stance taken by the reader. Response is a process of evocation and reflection; readers interpret authors' words and the actions of characters through their individual lenses. Nevertheless, Rosenblatt (1995) suggests that students can benefit from being guided in their transactions with literature and posits that readers be encouraged to assess the ethical and social connotations of the images and descriptions they encounter through literature.

Response is enhanced through discussion. Teachers of literature need to engage their students in transaction discussions about themselves and the world regardless of the students' ethnic and racial backgrounds. Unfortunately, lack of discussion impedes valuable opportunities to provide access to multiple viewpoints that can enhance understandings of social issues often encountered in texts. In addition, failure to initiate literature discussions with students hinders opportunities for the creation of learning spaces in which children and adults can conceptualize; for example, the issues relating to diversity as it connects to literature, life, and societies today (Moller, 2008). For this reason, examining student response is important. Curricula and instruction will be better informed as the responses of students of color to texts are further explored (Brooks, 2006).

Based upon the ideas inherent in the abovementioned theoretical frameworks, critical multiculturalism, multicultural education, and reader response, this study supposes that teachers' pedagogical decisions about multicultural literature affect student interpretation of texts. I examined four private school middle grade classroom teachers as they taught multicultural literature. By examining the teaching of and responses to literature in four middle grade private school classrooms through the lenses of critical multiculturalism and multicultural education, I attempt to elucidate pedagogical decisions that foster classroom climates in which teachers (and students) confront issues of difference, power, and privilege in multicultural texts toward justice and equality.

Extant Research

Research on Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education

Increase in the diversity of the United States calls for teachers to increase their understanding of multicultural education (Nieto, 2004). Appropriately, teacher preparation, beginning in the 1980s, has been under reform and the need for knowledgeable, skilled teachers prepared to work with our nation's student population that is diverse ethnically, linguistically, racially, and socioeconomically, has been a major focus (Banks, 2000). Much of the research in relation to multicultural education explores pre-service teachers' knowledge and understanding of multicultural education as well as their preparedness for delivering instruction (Atkins & Gabbard, 2003; Henry, 2005; Barksdale, Richards, Fisher, Wuthrick, Hammons, Grisham & Richmond, 2002).

Over the past two decades educational research has included studies describing the importance of multicultural education. According to Bhagava, Hawley, Scott, Stein & Phelps (2004), teaching focused on creating equitable education begins with individual teachers. They contend that teachers significantly influence the learning experiences of the students in their classrooms and can become agents of change. It is important for all teachers to examine their beliefs and suppositions about themselves, cultural difference, and society. Smith (2009) provided analysis designed to demonstrate how the promotion of educational equity and social justice could assist classroom teachers in ensuring that their diverse learners achieve their full potentials (both academic and social). He contends this goal can be achieved by implementing multicultural education philosophy.

In an article describing her teaching focus in teacher preparation, King (1997) contends that prospective teachers need to understand their “responsibilities as change agents” (p.162) and their own miseducation. King states that teachers need to consider their readiness to engage in teaching that is transformative for their students. In order for students to experience multicultural education, their teachers must be willing to consider their own identity construction and understand that their position in the dominant culture influences their ability to incorporate multicultural principles in their teaching (Noel, 2000).

In an enlightening commentary, Manning (2000) proposed three developmental characteristics of multicultural education experiences that would promote harmony amongst young adolescents. He argued that all learners, regardless of their developmental stage, could benefit from multicultural educational experiences; however, he proposed the middle grades as the most favorable time to make available developmentally responsive experiences with the aim of promoting cultural identities, fostering close friendships and social networks, as well as developing awareness of and commitment to fairness and justice. He contended that elementary school learners may remain heavily influenced by their parents’ beliefs and that, therefore, they might be too young, and attitudes (good or bad) of older adolescents may have formed too much to be influenced by such experiences.

However, Manning argued that middle school learners benefit from multicultural education. He asserted, “During this critical period, effective, developmentally responsive multicultural educational experiences can have profound and long-lasting effects on young adolescents' developing attitudes. As society grows more diverse,

middle school educators will be challenged to promote students' positive feelings toward diversity, and to encourage justice and fairness among young adolescents” (p. 87).

Not only has the inclusion of multicultural education been examined but the use of multiculturalism has as well. Marusza (1997) examined the enactment of multiculturalism in the classrooms of eleven upper grade urban and suburban social studies teachers. Differences were noted between the lower and upper grade teachers’ pedagogy. Interaction was found to be important in shaping classroom life; the quantity and quality of discussion affected both students and teachers. Moreover, discussion created space for the exposure to divergent points of view and social critique. Findings suggest that multicultural practice is shaped by a variety of influences and teachers who worked in schools that promoted multiculturalism found more support. Furthermore, teachers who viewed knowledge as complex (primarily those who taught upper grades) allowed for more opportunities for discussion than those who viewed history as one-dimensional.

Adams (1995) conducted an ethnographic study in an eighth grade classroom of a predominantly white southern public middle school describing the effectiveness of a newly adopted multicultural English curriculum. Study participants (students and teacher) were interviewed and completed a questionnaire, which described the literacy habits of their parents and their understandings of multiculturalism and literacy. The school incorporated multicultural literature written by non-white authors into the curriculum as part of their philosophy of multicultural education. The assumption was that introducing students to difference in the literature and having cultural difference discussions would bring about an increase in tolerance of diversity. The implementation of a multicultural

curriculum failed and many questions remained unanswered related to the study site's philosophy of education.

Multiracial middle grade student discussions about race were closely examined by Schultz, Buck, and Niesz (2000). This three-year study took place in an upper middle class public school located in a suburban area and was designed to summarize the voices of students and track change interactions. Data collection consisted of writing groups, which met weekly, focus groups, interviews (formal and informal), and participant observation. Two types of discussions were found to occur, bridging conversations and conflict talk. The researchers were able to reflect upon the manner in which they structured mixed race democratic discussions. This study highlighted the importance of discussion across races.

The multicultural teaching strategies utilized in a midwestern fifth grade classroom were examined by Brown (2002). The researcher conducted classroom observations to provide insight into interactions between the teacher and her students, and determine activities that support academic and social development of all students. The inclusive classroom was scrutinized for examples of the nurturing of academic excellence. Data was collected through informal interviews, observational field notes, and focus groups. The teacher was found to exemplify her commitment to multicultural education in the way that her teaching philosophy created a classroom environment that was inclusive and supportive of all students.

Each of the aforementioned studies related to multiculturalism and multicultural education was conducted in public schools. Research to address the effectiveness of multiculturalism and multicultural education in private schools would be beneficial.

Additionally, student response to teachers' multicultural education pedagogy could provide important insights for practice and policy.

Research on Multicultural Literature

Multicultural literature in schools has been the focus of research since the early eighties, Florez-Tighe, the pioneer of such studies, advocated for its use in curricula (Pirofski, 2001). Today's students encounter people from diverse backgrounds and cultures daily. It is important to note that those encounters will be influenced by the attitudes and knowledge developed through previous exposure and experience. Consequently, multicultural literature can assist children in understanding individuals from cultures other than their own (Tolson, 2005). As previously mentioned, there are numerous competing thoughts and definitions regarding multicultural literature and which texts can be classified as multicultural.

Nonetheless, the effective use of high quality multicultural literature in schools can serve to provide students with positive experiences that foster acceptance and understanding of diversity (Hillard, 1995). Curriculum development must involve focus on inclusion of all cultures as a means of preparing today's students to function appropriately in our diverse world. Multicultural literature can shed light upon the lives of people of color who have been affected by racism and other forms of discrimination (Glazier & Seo, 2005). Additionally, multicultural literature in the classroom has the potential to add to the cultural exposure of students and to influence student understanding of people of color. According to Dressel (2005), "teachers need to assist students in recognizing the ways texts position them in relation to power and society" (p.

760). For this reason, it is important to choose with care the pedagogical practices employed when utilizing multicultural texts.

The uses of multicultural literature are discussed at great length in contemporary research. Some of the research on multicultural literature has focused on its definition and importance (Bishop, 1992; Cai, 1998; Center, 2005; Harris, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995); pedagogy (Glazier & Seo, 2005; Harris, 1992; Ketter & Lewis, 2001; Landt, 2006; Norton, 1990), classroom use (Beach, 1997; Colby, 2004; Harris, 1992; Glazier, 2005; Louie, 2006; Stallworth, Gibbon & Fauber, 2006) and student response (Brooks, 2003; Brooks & Hampton, 2005; Connor, 2003; Dressel, 2005; Louie, 2006; Thein, Beach & Parks, 2007).

Norton (1990) and Louie (2006) presented approaches for teachers to follow in incorporating multicultural literature into the classroom. Each begins with positing the importance of multicultural literature and its study. Norton (1990) states, “experts in multicultural education frequently emphasize the importance of using literature to increase cultural awareness” (p.28). Norton (1990) presented a five-phase model for studying multicultural literature for use in elementary and middle schools as well as in children’s literature courses. This approach is designed to assist students and teachers in making cross-cultural comparisons, which allows them to see likeness and value difference in cultures and in literature. Louie (2006) invited a fourth grade teacher to develop a multicultural text unit based upon various versions of the Mulan tale. Guiding principles for multicultural literature instruction were incorporated; students were engaged in classroom discussions and participated in reflective writing. Most of the fourth grade students developed critical and cross-cultural understandings of the text. The

participating teacher hoped that the unit would enhance the reading of multicultural literature in the future.

In similar manner, Wan (2006) provided a model with guidelines for classroom teachers' use in addressing the multicultural issues encountered in children's literature. He asserts that multicultural books "are used to enhance children's self-esteem" (p. 142) and can assist in helping students to comprehend cultural behavior. Wan demonstrated how the use of Cinderella stories from various cultures could be used to teach diversity and tolerance in classrooms. His model presents guidelines highlighting the importance of teachers' partaking in literature discussions. Wan suggested the importance of presenting multicultural texts in meaningful ways, going beyond the typical comprehension questions connected to the reading of multicultural literature. Wan asserts that "framing the social-political contexts of a story by drawing on readers' prior knowledge, responding through one's own experiences" (p. 149) are strategies that could enhance the use of multicultural literature in classrooms.

The importance of the teachers' role in the use of multicultural literature as well as how teachers could use multicultural literature to encourage cultural understanding and critical thinking were examined by Mathis (2001). Social studies teachers of grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade met to discuss multicultural children's literature and its use in classrooms. The participants made sense of their literary experiences by telling stories in light of the texts read. The participants found that answers to their individual humanity were found "in the human experiences of others" (Mathis, p. 158).

Multicultural literature is viewed as an essential component in student awareness and understanding of others' cultural backgrounds and language (Piper, 1986; Tway,

1989). In view of that, teachers need guiding principles to ensure the use of effective instructional practices to ensure that practices do not lead to lack of understanding that could foster indifference and resistance (Beach, 1998; Beach & Finders, 1999). Teachers play an important role in students' interpretation and understanding of literature; as a result of using multicultural literature in their classrooms, teachers provide opportunities to create clear understanding, and question the traditional prevailing attitudes and beliefs that people hold of others and themselves. Unfortunately, some teachers fail to use multicultural literature in their classrooms because of their lack of familiarity with it. As a result, their students' exposure to multicultural literature may be truncated because of the predominately white male canon they were exposed to in their education (Applebee, 1992).

Much attention has been given to student response to multicultural literature in recent years. I will begin by discussing the work of Brooks (2002; 2003; 2005; 2006), who has focused upon textual analysis and student response. Brooks (2002) utilized textual analysis to identify cultural features embedded in African-American texts. Three African-American literary features were identified and analyzed to reveal how culture is an influence in the transactions of readers with texts. Brooks emphasizes the importance of recognizing culture as a significant influence.

Cultural features add to the creation of an authentic portrait of African-Americans that provides opportunities for African-American children, in particular, to see themselves in print both visually (via illustrations) and through literary features consistent with their cultural backgrounds. It also allows readers to be exposed to a cultural fabric that is different from their own. (p.284)

Authentic portrayal and seeing oneself represented in literature can enhance the reading of multicultural literature for the reader. Therefore, Brooks suggests that understanding of cultural themes can extend comprehension and interpretation. Additionally, the textual analysis revealed how the examination of various cultural representations could assist in understanding the way students construct meaning from texts.

To investigate the way embedded textual features influenced middle grade students' interpretation of an African-American text, Brooks (2003) utilized the reader response theories of Belich (1976) and Iser (1978). Over an eight-month period, class literature discussions were audiotaped and classroom and written responses were interpreted. The findings suggested that students often interpreted books from psychological perspectives and they filled in gaps by inserting their own story "imaginings" in order to construct meaning.

In a later textual analysis study, Brooks and Hampton (2005) examined oral and written responses of urban adolescents to cultural features embedded within an African-American text. Study participants' interpretations of the embedded literary themes were presented through a discussion of reader response categories. The rationale for exposing adolescent readers to racism through literature was also addressed. Findings suggested that student interpretations were influenced by their knowledge of racism and the socio-cultural events of their lives. The classroom context created by the teacher participant created a "safe place" for discussion and understanding of racism. Brooks and Hampton contend that African-American texts can be used safely in classrooms to address the social values and conditions of society.

Brooks (2006) continued her research in student response in a study that explored the interpretations of middle grade readers related to the embedded cultural features found in three African-American texts. Qualitative methods were used to investigate the students' oral and written responses. The reader response data consisted of observation field notes and student written work artifacts and was analyzed using a partially inductive approach. Among the study's significant findings was the manner in which story understanding and meaning construction were influenced by the reader's culture.

While students' culture influences their interpretations and understandings, as revealed in the Brooks (2002; 2003; 2005; 2006) studies, the student participants held to the attitudes of their own cultural groups. These findings imply the need for teachers to expose their students to multicultural literature as a means to giving them access to diverse worldviews. Therefore, the complexity of culture must be taken into account when utilizing multicultural literature in the classroom. Moreover, pedagogy can be enhanced by the use of multicultural literature when students' cultural knowledge and experiences are acknowledged during instruction.

Response to multicultural literature has also been examined related to the importance of discussion (Dressel, 2005; Louie, 2006; Moller, 2008; Thein, Beach & Parks, 2007; Tyson, 2007).

The writing samples collected from eighth grade students were examined by Dressel (2005) to show the character and cultural perceptions revealed in their written responses during a multicultural unit. The majority of the students were found to have enjoyed reading the multicultural literature; their cultural understandings of others were

not affected. The findings revealed the importance of discussion in the reading of multicultural literature.

Additionally, Dressel affirmed the need for discussions of the struggles of different groups encountered in literature and society as well as discussions of the manner in which power and privilege are enacted in systems. “When students share their responses and listen to the responses of others, they learn that different readers make different meanings from the same text” (Dressel, 2005, p. 762). Moreover, this study suggests that teachers view their role in the classroom curriculum as vital and recognize the need to guide students in text discussions with care.

The manner in which a fourth grade teacher used a multicultural unit designed to assist students in learning about the cultural diversity outside of their community was investigated by Louie (2006). Four versions of a multicultural text were utilized in 10 one-hour sessions during a three-week period. Observational field notes, interviews, videotaped instructional sessions, student and teacher journals, and student projects were collected to ascertain student understanding. Transcriptions of student interviews and audiotaped classroom instruction were analyzed. The student participants reflected in their journals and participated in classroom discussions. The students learned to understand cultural perspectives, explore cultural values, and question text images. Additionally, the students developed cross-cultural understandings that could enhance their reading of multicultural literature in the future.

Student response to multicultural literature was examined by Beach & Parks (2007) who spent a semester in a high school English classroom. The students were engaged in class discussions, journal writing, and small group work. Recorded classroom

observations, student one-on-one interviews, and student focus groups provided the data for analysis. The observed discussions were productive, stimulating, and at times challenging; however, the students benefited from the exposure to diverse perspectives found in the texts and encountered during discussions. The study provided insight into discussion techniques, perspective taking, and the instructional strategies that encourage it. Findings suggested that exposure to multicultural literature and discussion of such literature elicited subtle yet transitory authentic change in the way white students make sense of the social and cultural worlds.

Moller (2008) proposed the theoretical construct relevant to reading and responding to multicultural texts, for which she coined the phrase “response development zone.” This theoretical construct “encompasses the potential each reader has for creating and extending responses to literature within sociopolitical and historical as well as local contexts” (p. 152). Moller participated in a literature discussion group with four middle grade female students. The participants read and their responses shifted between individual and group response development zones. Moller defined response development zone as a structure for examining response to culturally diverse literature, particularly texts that create the likelihood of social justice discussions. Moller and the participants shared their literature interpretations, responded to one another and the embedded issues in the text. Multiple perspectives were encountered that shaped and refined their personal understandings. Findings suggested the participants grew in their understanding of the text and the historical and contemporary social justice issues because of the discussion.

In 2002, looked at how the use of literature with controversial issues embedded within it assisted students in developing definitions of social action toward making

changes in their urban communities and their lives. The study explored the responses of African-American middle school student participants to contemporary issues through the reading of children's and young adult literature as well as pedagogical decisions related to instruction and selection. This yearlong study was conducted in a sixth grade language arts and social studies classroom in an urban middle school. Through participant observation, classroom discussions were observed and individual interviews were conducted. Findings suggested that throughout the process student participants demonstrated growth in their understanding. Literature assisted the student participants in expressing their views related to injustice while they worked with their teachers, whose pedagogical decisions created opportunities for them to understand the social and political contexts in the world.

The abovementioned studies suggest that exposing students to multicultural literature and engaging them in discussions related to multicultural literature could assist in their abilities to question, develop, and express their views of cultural content. Doing so could affect the way that students view and operate in the diverse worlds in which they live. The incorporation of multicultural literature into a curriculum could also be viewed as an attempt to fulfill a purpose of multicultural education, promoting cultural pluralism. Students could thus learn to analyze and critique the perspectives they have about the cultures encountered in the texts and address stereotypes brought into the classroom (Banks, 2001). As presented in this section, multicultural literature research has focused on accuracy and authenticity (Bishop, 1992; Louie, 2006), the importance of perspectives [“insider” / “outsider”] (Bishop, 1992; Harris, 1997; Louie, 2006), and ideological concerns (McNair, 2008; Sims, 1982) in public schools. Little research has addressed the

issues related to multicultural literature, teacher pedagogy, and student of color response in private schools. The voices of students of color who attend private schools could be added to the discussion of how multicultural literature is utilized and its effect.

Research on Students of Color in Private Schools

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, the National Center for Educational Statistics reported in 2009 that ten percent of our nation's children are enrolled in private schools. According to an article in *Independent School*, "in the last 20 years independent schools have collectively taken many meaningful steps to become more diverse and more socially equitable places" (Thompson & Shultz, 2003, p.42). While the number of students of color in private schools continues to be small, their experiences remain significant.

While the research of Fordham and Ogbu (1986) was conducted in public schools, it was among the seminal research related to African American students in schools. This research addressed the black-white achievement gap and the issue of "acting white." Fordham and Ogbu (1986) claimed that contributing factors to low achievement in African-American students were striving for academic success and being true to what it meant to be black. Although Fordham and Ogbu presented quotes from the African-American students in their study that suggested that there was a connection between the two, little evidence was found of that connection. The hypothesis of the burden of "acting white" has been examined over the years in both public and private schools.

According to Datnow & Cooper (1996), research examining African-American students' educational experiences in private schools has been ongoing for decades. Initially, the majority of the research focused on academic achievement (Coleman et al., 1969; Jenks et al., 1972). The research emphasis shifted in the 1990s to factors that contributed to the academic success of African-American students (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Lee, Winfield & Wilson, 1991). These studies have been conducted in both private

and public schools (Andrews, 2009; Arrington, Stevenson, 2003; Fordham, 1991, 1993, 1996; Carter, 2006; Horvat & Lewis, 2003).

In 2009, Andrews examined the way African-American students who attended a predominantly white high school constructed their self-concepts, in both racial identity and achievement. For nine months the author observed the high-achieving student participants in the classroom, during group meetings and during school functions. In addition to the observations, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants and one of their teachers. The experience of tension between their racial identity and academic achievement did not cause the student participants in this study any difficulty; they understood that achievement was not for white students alone. The students maintained academic success because they held positive racial and academic perceptions of themselves.

In an attempt to understand the cost of academic success, Fordham (1993) spent two years in a predominantly African-American urban “magnet school” interviewing, observing, and analyzing high- and under-achieving male and female students, their parents, and their teachers. Additionally, she studied the issue of how gender was constructed for or by the participants. She found that the African-American females at the study site were more successful, yet they were less visible, silenced. Their silence was considered to be explicitly and implicitly taught (by their male peers, parents, teachers, and school officials) due to their gender. The African-American female student participants were influenced by their adoption of the “Euro American definition of power” (p. 24), which they learned from numerous sources, including media and

textbooks. The cost of academic success in the lives of these African-American females raised many questions.

Utilizing methodical analysis of surveys from and semi-structured interviews of the sixty-eight black and Latino middle, high school, and college students, ages 13 to 20, Carter (2006) identified three types of racial and ethnic identities. The author examined the negotiation between peers and school of low-income minority students. The findings suggested that the educational attitudes and school performance (self-reported) of the study participants were due to the embracing of conventional or dominant beliefs about education and had “little to do with the equating of academic success with whiteness” (p. 309). The students in this study resisted acting white by the way they dressed and used language not by choosing academic underachievement.

In an ethnographic study, Horvat and Lewis (2003) discuss the academic success of African-American female students from a variety of backgrounds in urban high schools. The researchers utilized observations, interviews, and field notes to understand the experiences of the student participants in this study. In analysis of the experiences of the young African-American women in this study, it was found that academic success was managed in differing ways; the student participants did not always hide their academic success but shared it with those who were supportive. This study also revealed the heterogeneity of African-American peer groups. Additionally, the study participants demonstrated that being African-American and achieving academically were not incongruent.

While the aforementioned studies shed light upon the academic experiences of African-Americans, other research has focused on the experiences of students of color in

private schools; feelings of alienation and marginalization, school culture, and identity (Ascher, 1986; Cookson & Persell, 1991; Cooper & Datnow, 2000; Datnow & Cooper, 1998; Herr, 1999; Horvat & Antonio, 1999; Proweller, 1999). Over the years, many private schools have attempted to increase the diversity of their student populations (Speede-Franklin, 1998). Understanding the experiences of their diverse students is important.

In an earlier study, Horvat & Antonio (1999) examined how the lives of six high-achieving African-American high school seniors attending elite private schools were influenced by race. Special attention was paid to the participants' interactions related to the organizational and cultural context of the school. Over an eight-month period, one of the researchers served as a participant observer and conducted individual interviews with the study participants and school personnel. In addition to the observations, field notes, and interviews, documents were collected and analyzed. Both researchers analyzed all of the data. The habitus, the physical state of the school, was not apparent simply in its racial makeup but in curriculum as well. The student participants felt excluded from school due to the overwhelming regard of the dominant culture. The students in this study learned their role in the school and subsequently the world; they became successful at fitting into the culture of the school in order to prosper in the predominantly white world.

The lived experiences of students of color at an elite private school were examined by Ottley (2007) in an attempt to provide the school with insight into how best to meet the needs of such students. Using the process of action research, the author and four teachers from the school interviewed fifty-one black and white students and twenty-three black alumni about their experiences at the study site. In addition to the student

interviews, teachers and African-American parents participated in a focus group. The author found that the African-American students felt a sense of indebtedness to the school while their white counterparts felt a sense of entitlement. The students of color expressed pride in their schools but lacked the sense of belonging shared by the white students. This study indicates that there is a tension between the independent school culture and attempts at diversifying. The author suggested recommendations for private schools seeking to improve the experiences of their students of color.

As demonstrated above, much of the contemporary research related to students of color remains relegated to those attending public schools. Articles about and research studies focused on students of color that have specifically been conducted in private schools continue to focus upon academic achievement and student experiences. There is little focus upon students of color in private schools in their responses to curricula. The gaps in this area should be addressed as the numbers of people of color in the United States increases. What is more, many private schools claim to prepare students to be our future leaders, those who are likely to be policy- and decision-makers who will do well to be able to be globally minded.

Even with the preceding research, a good deal of work must still be done. Understanding the experiences of students of color related to curriculum in such schools can lead to greater effectiveness of private school instruction. Although studies exist examining each of the individual domains, studies addressing the incorporation of multiculturalism, the use of multicultural literature, and the experiences of students of color in private schools related to both are needed. The understanding gleaned from such studies can assist teachers in planning, developing, and implementing discussions of

multicultural literature that can enhance the academic experiences of all. Additionally, such information can be used to improve curricula and instruction. The present study addresses the research gaps mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter. Answering the following research questions is the focus:

1. How do private school teachers conceive and incorporate multicultural literature into their Language Arts classrooms?
2. What are the experiences of middle grade private school students of color who read multicultural literature in their language arts class?

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY
Research Design

Qualitative research, the interpretivist paradigm, is an appropriate approach for the examination of this important issue because the understanding of private middle grade teachers and students of color experiences with multicultural literature can be derived from an emic perspective. It was important to “hear” from teachers and students regarding their experiences with multicultural literature. The interpretivist’s

approach to social science research rejects the idea that the same research methods can be used to study human behavior as are successfully used in fields such as chemistry and physics. What the world means to the person or group being studied is critically important. (Willis, 2007, p. 6)

Clear understanding assists in the guiding of theory and practice. According to Gage (1996), good research can lead to greater understanding and allows for the basing of practice on the knowledge gleaned from such research. Willis suggests “Interpretivists believe an understanding of the context in which any form of research is conducted is critical to the interpretation of the data gathered” (Willis, 2007, p. 98). Objectivity is not seen as a possibility in research from an interpretivist viewpoint; all research is viewed as subjective, and informants and observations are crucial. Understanding is the key. Thinking and reflecting are important to the interpretivist; thoughtful decision-making is one goal of interpretivist research.

Critical multiculturalism (Grobman, 2007) along with Banks’ (1994) dimensions of multicultural education, were theoretically applied in this study to examine the pedagogical practices of four middle grades language arts teachers in a private school

related to multicultural literature. The manner in which multicultural literature was used by each teacher and the responses of students of color to the multicultural literature as well as teacher pedagogy were the primary foci of this study.

Study Site, Gaining Access, Selection Rationale, and Researcher Role

A bounded case study assisted my ability to answer the aforementioned research questions adequately. In a case study, the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individual cases. Qualitative case study is defined by Merriam (1988) as “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p.16). Case studies are bounded by time and activity, and detailed information is collected using various measures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995). This case study took place at one northeastern city’s suburban elite single sex private school, the Lynn Morgan School (LMS); data collection took place over a seven-month period of one school year.

The rationale behind the selection of the private school as a site for this study was based upon the historical perspectives of private school excellence, the claims of successful graduates from such schools, this school’s positive reputation, and the increase in students of color enrollment in private schools over the years. An additional factor was this school’s espoused commitment to multiculturalism as conveyed on their website.

To gain access to this case study site, I emailed the heads of several private schools in the city’s western suburbs seeking contact with middle school language arts teachers. The middle school language arts department chair of the research site responded to the email I sent to the head of the school. We met to discuss the particulars of my research and found that the language arts teachers in grades five through eight met my

research criteria. Following the meeting and learning about the school's apparent commitment to student and faculty diversity, multiculturalism and broad use of multicultural literature, I chose this school as the research site. The research site is a non-sectarian single sex (female) elite private school. The tuition at the study site is relatively high; however, financial aid is available based on merit and need. This site offers an exemplary case for study due to the diversity it offers. The uniqueness of the study site will generate insightful work, which can be used to demonstrate the results of this study in an enlightening manner. It will shed an important light upon policy and practice and assist in practical terms (Yin, 1994).

I conducted the seven months of this study as a non-participant observer (Creswell, 2009) whose primary purpose was known at the research site. The middle school staff was informed of my presence and purpose and the students in the observed classes were informed as well. I am aware that my presence in the research site may have altered some of the interactions initially but my prolonged presence appeared to minimize the potential impact. The teachers and students seemed comfortable with my presence and eventually appeared to ignore me as they interacted.

The Research Questions

The overall purpose of this study was to examine teacher pedagogy related to multicultural literature. Additionally, this study examined how students of color in a private school responded to teacher pedagogy and multicultural literature. The following questions guided the research:

1. How do private school teachers conceive and incorporate multicultural literature into their language arts classrooms?

- a. What pedagogical practices emerge from the multicultural literature?
 - b. What perspective(s)/beliefs about multiculturalism undergird the teaching of multicultural literature?
 - c. How do teachers experience the teaching of multicultural texts?
2. What are the experiences of middle grade private school students of color who read multicultural literature in their language arts class?
- a. How do focal students react to their teacher's multicultural literature pedagogical practices?
 - b. In what ways do focal students experience multicultural literature?

Table 1: Mapping of the Research Questions

Research Question	Data Collected	Analysis Method	Unit of Analysis	Triangulation
How do private school teachers conceive and incorporate multicultural literature into their language arts classrooms?				
(a) What pedagogical practices emerge from the multicultural literature?	-24 Classroom observations & field notes -Teacher pedagogical artifacts	Constant comparative (Strauss & Corbin, 1994)	Coding to identify pedagogy (instructional episodes)	-Multiple sources of data -Inter-rater Reliability - Member checking (Kirk & Miller, 1986)
(b) What perspective(s)/beliefs about multiculturalism undergird the teaching of multicultural literature?	-4 semi structured teacher interviews - 6 stimulated recall teacher interviews (Gass & Mackey, 2000) -1 Department chair Interview -1 Diversity director Interview	Modified analytic induction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003)	Coding to identify examples of Banks' (1995) dimensions of multiculturalism	-Multiple sources of data -Inter-rater reliability - Member checking (Kirk & Miller, 1986)
(c) How do teachers experience the teaching of multicultural texts?	-4 Semi structured teacher interviews - 6 stimulated recall teacher interviews (Gass & Mackey, 2000)	Constant comparative (Strauss & Corbin, 1994)	Coding to identify teachers' responses (topic changes)	-Multiple sources of data -Inter-rater reliability - Member checking (Kirk & Miller, 1986)
What are the experiences of middle grade private school students of color who read multicultural literature in their language arts class?				
(a) How do focal students react to their teacher's multicultural literature pedagogical practices?	-24 classroom observations & field notes -1 student focus group transcript	Constant comparative (Strauss & Corbin, 1994)	Coding to identify reactions to pedagogy (instructional episodes)	-Multiple sources of data -Inter-rater Reliability
(b) In what ways do focal students respond to multicultural literature?	-1 student focus group transcript -1 parent focus group transcript	Constant comparative (Strauss & Corbin, 1994)	Coding to identify student responses (conversational turns)	-Multiple sources of data-Inter-rater reliability

Teacher Participants

The head of the middle school division of LMS gave permission for the English department chair to share my research study overview with the middle grade language arts teachers during a department meeting. The English department chair and I met and discussed the proposed research study. Following our meeting, it was agreed that the study would be of benefit to LMS as they were considering the impact of the literature read in language arts classes in each of the school's three divisions, lower, middle, and upper. This was a convenience sample as the population of language arts teachers in the middle division of the study site is limited.

Four of the six middle division language arts teachers volunteered to participate (see Table 2 for demographics) during the department meeting. The other two middle division language arts teachers were not present when the research study was explained; they taught other subjects and were in those meetings at the time. The middle grades language arts teachers who agreed to participate are themselves diverse: one is an African-American female, one is a Caucasian male, and the other two are Caucasian females. All of the participant teachers had a minimum of seven years' teaching experience at the time of the study. During data collection, one teacher participant was enrolled in a master's degree program and another had been accepted into a PhD program at local universities. The African-American female teacher served as the school's part-time diversity director. The language arts department chair also agreed to participate in the study. The teachers were asked to schedule observations of each class section taught. All observations occurred during regular class periods; additionally field notes were taken during each observation. I conducted semi-structured teacher interviews with each

teacher/faculty participant. The teacher/faculty interviews were conducted in middle school classrooms at a time convenient to the teacher. An interview protocol was utilized (questions are provided later in this chapter) but not all questions were asked in the same order. Some participants' responses answered more than one question and then the question was rephrased for response clarity. Participant teachers were compensated with gift cards and lunch during interviews when appropriate.

Student Participants

The student of color population at the site was small but commensurate with the enrollment at similar area private schools and was representative of varied backgrounds and cultures. The focal students for this study derived from the student of color population in the middle school division. Focal student participation was voluntary; they were recruited via letters written by me and distributed by the school's diversity director. The diversity director facilitated participation by mailing the letters to the students' homes and reminding them to return their assent/consent forms if they were interested in participating.

There were 22 students of color enrolled in the middle grades at the time of this study. Each student of color received the packet of information containing the introduction letter explaining the purpose of the study as well as student assent and parental consent forms. Fourteen students returned the packets giving assent to participate along with their parents' consent. Unfortunately, two of the African-American students who returned the packet were unavailable to participate on the date assigned by the school for the focus group meetings. An attempt was made to include these two students but a mutual meeting time was never achieved. Two of the student participants read the

texts that were observed but were not in a section taught by any of the teacher participants (see Table 3 for demographics). No fifth grade students participated in the study. The majority of the student participants were from the same grade and section. Of the twelve focal students, all except three were of African-American descent (it is interesting to note that when self-identifying their ethnicities, all of these students chose ‘Black’). The three non-African-American focal students identified their ethnicity using the following descriptors: Asian, Indian, and Latin American. Caucasian parents adopted the Asian student participant; both father and mother participated in the parent focus group.

Table 2: Teacher Participants

Teacher Participant	Years of Teaching Experience	Years Teaching at Study Site	Grade Taught
Mrs. Sojourner	11	6	5
Mr. Frank	25	10	6
Ms. Villanelle	7	7	7
Ms. Glass	9	1	8

Table 3: Student Participants

Name *Pseudonym	Ethnicity *As self-identified	Grade	Years at Study Site
Becca	Black	8	2
Jeanine	Black	7	6
Jessica	Black	7	1
Katie	Black	7	5
Keenan	Black	7	2
Kel	Black	7	4
Louise	Asian	7	2
Melody	Black	6	4
Mia	Indian	7	3
Nyla	Black	8	3
Rose	Latin American	7	6
Tori	Black	6	2
Total Number of Student Participants 12	9 Black 1 Asian 1 Caucasian 1 Indian	2 Grade 6 Students 8 Grade 7 Students 2 Grade 8 Students	

Data Collection

Data collection as described by Miles & Huberman (1994) is a continuous process, which requires interaction with data, going over it, categorizing it, and analyzing it. Each step is “interwoven before, during, and after data collection in parallel form” (pp. 11–12) and conclusions are drawn from it. After each week spent at LMS, I downloaded

the digital recordings of classroom observations and interviews onto iTunes on my computer; in addition, I made backup copies on recordable compact discs. Following classroom observations, I read through my handwritten field notes each evening; once the observational field notes were typed, I listened to the digital recordings while reading them and made the necessary corrections/adjustments. After the interviews and focus group sessions were transcribed, I read through the transcripts while listening to the digital recordings.

I logged all of the data collected in a notebook, and dated all of the documents as well as recording the time of each record. From the time of data collection through the final writing, I read and reread the observational field notes and listened repeatedly to the digital recordings of classroom observations, focus group sessions, and interviews. I made charts and memos as I analyzed and categorized the data collected (Strauss, 1987). Finally, I checked with teacher participants to ensure the validity of my perceptions (Merriam, 1988). Repeated engagement in the above process produced findings, which I was able to confirm across data sources.

Data for the first research question was gathered from teacher participants through information acquired from classroom observations, observational field notes, and two types of teacher interviews; semi-structured and stimulated recall (Gass & Mackey, 2000), as well as individual semi-structured interviews with the language arts department chair, the diversity director, and from written pedagogical artifact. Teacher pedagogical artifacts were collected and analyzed as well. Data for the second research question consisted of classroom observations, observational field notes, and student and parent focus groups. All data were collected from November to May of the 2009–2010 school

year.

The student participants gathered at LMS on a Saturday (mid-morning) to participate in a focus group discussion. Their parents accompanied them and all were eager to engage in the discussion. In order to give the parents some free time following their session, the parent focus group was conducted first. Lunch was provided for all focus group participants; the students ate while the parent focus group met and then spent time outside on the school grounds and talked with two college student volunteers about the issues of adolescence and being students of color in a predominantly white educational environment. Their discussion focused upon the typical middle grade student issues of fashion, fitting in, “mean girls,” and the opposite sex. The focal students were compensated for their participation with gift cards and pizza and beverages for lunch during the scheduled focus group meeting.

The LMS faculty presented me with two dates, both of which were Saturdays in March of 2010, to conduct the focus group meetings, and determined that the school would be the most appropriate location. Given the use of the school’s facilities and the need for faculty representation in the building, the diversity director agreed to open the school and assist in arranging the cafeteria for lunch but did not participate in or attend the focus group discussions. The school’s cafeteria was the location for the initial gathering, for completing necessary participation forms and for lunch; the focus group meetings were held in a middle grade classroom.

Table 4: Data Collected from Teacher Participants

Teacher	Classroom Visits / Minutes Observed	Multi-cultural Texts Taught	Observation Field Notes	Semi-Structured Interviews	Stimulated Recall Interviews	Documents Collected *Teacher Pedagogical Artifacts
Mrs. Sojourner	8 414 minutes 8 seconds	<i>Esperanza Rising</i> Pam Munoz Ryan (2000) <i>Journey to the River Sea</i> Eva Ibbotson (2001)	4 4	 1	1 1	 12
Mr. Frank	6 224 minutes 41 seconds	<i>Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</i> Mildred D. Taylor (1976)	6	1	1	9
Ms. Villanelle	9 329 minutes 44 seconds	<i>House on Mango Street</i> Sandra Cisneros (1984) <i>To Kill A Mockingbird</i> Harper Lee (1960)	5 4	 1	1 1	 17
Ms. Glass	5 192 minutes 9 seconds	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> Lorraine Hansberry (1958)	5	1	1	13
4 Teachers	28 Classroom visits 1,160 minutes 2 seconds	6 Multicultural texts	28 sets of observational field notes 105 single spaced pages	4 Semi structured interviews 54 single spaced pages	6 Stimulated recall interviews 50 single spaced pages	Teacher pedagogical documents collected 51 pages

Table5: Data Collected from Focal Students

Name* Pseudo nym	Grade	Teacher / Section	Text Read	Focus Group Participant/ Present during Observations
Becca	8	Ms. Villanelle (*Section not observed)	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Yes / No
Jeanine	7	Ms. Villanelle	<i>House on Mango Street</i> <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / Yes
Jessica	7	Ms. Villanelle	<i>House on Mango Street</i> <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / Yes
Katie	7	Ms. Villanelle	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / Yes
Kel	7	Ms. Villanelle	<i>House on Mango Street</i> <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / Yes
Keenan	7	Ms. Villanelle	<i>House on Mango Street</i> <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / Yes
Louise	7	Ms. Villanelle	<i>House on Mango Street</i> <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / Yes
Mia	7	Ms. Villanelle	<i>House on Mango Street</i> <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / Yes
Melody	6	Non Participant Teacher	<i>Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</i>	Yes / No
Nyla	8	Ms. Glass	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i>	Yes / Yes
Rose	7	Non Participant Teacher	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Yes / No
Tori	6	Mr. Frank	<i>Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry</i>	Yes / Yes
		Ms. Villanelle -8 students Ms. Glass - 1student Mr. Frank - 1student Non- participating teachers- 2 students		

Table 6: Data Collected from Faculty

Faculty Member	Semi Structured Interview	Pages Transcribed (single spaced)
Language Arts Department Chair	1	15
Diversity Director	1	10

Table 7: Data Collected from Parents

Parent *Pseudonym	Ethnicity *As self-identified	Focal Student *Pseudonym	Focus Group Participant	Length of Time as Parent at Study Site
AKG	African-American	Jessica	Yes	1 year
Andrew	African-American	Jeanine	Yes	6 years
Beedo	African-American	Tori	Yes	6 years
BRS	African-American	Nyla	Yes	3 years
Char	African-American	Kel	Yes	4 years
CP	Hispanic	Rose	Yes	6 years
El	Black	Melody	Yes	4 years
Foster	Caucasian	Louise	Yes	2 years
Maurice	African-American	Katie	Yes	5 years
Meekee	Black	Tori	Yes	2 years
Rah	Indian	Mia	Yes	3 years
RT	Caucasian	Louise	Yes	2 years
Shayna	Black	Becca	Yes	2 years
Total Number of Parent Participants 13	9 African- American/Black 1 Hispanic 2 Caucasian 1 Indian			

Classroom Observations and Field Notes

The teacher participants were asked to schedule classroom observations they felt reflected good representations of their language arts teaching. The teacher participants were observed teaching the multicultural texts to each assigned class section twice. Three of the teacher participants taught two sections of middle grade language arts classes, the other taught three class sections. The language arts classroom activities at the research site were documented (field notes and digitally recorded classroom discussions) in an open-ended manner. The observational field notes served to enhance the study because they offered first hand descriptions of what was observed as it occurred. The field notes described teacher pedagogy, the various instructional episodes witnessed, classroom context, questions asked by students, and discussion descriptions. The data were gathered in an authentic setting during the course of regular school days.

Field notes are most useful when analyzing data because precise memory of every detail cannot always be recalled. They also serve as a buffer to any bias brought to the study by my personal experiences and ideas. Given the amount of time in the setting necessary for a case study, it appeared that the participants (teachers and students) became comfortable with my presence in their classrooms and did not appear to act in ways that denoted the presence of an “outsider,” thus affording me the opportunity to witness an accurate picture of the classroom interactions.

The focus on the teacher and her/his pedagogical and curricular decisions was not simply that which she/he reported but what I actually witnessed. This aided in my understanding of what occurred during authentic language arts activities. I was afforded the opportunity

to observe activities and behaviors beyond the teachers' words and asked for clarity when necessary.

Teacher Interviews

Two types of interviews were conducted with each participating teacher. Each teacher interview was digitally recorded and transcribed. One of the interviews was a semi-structured face-to-face interview which allowed me to focus upon a set of questions yet gave the teachers some freedom to talk about information that was important to them (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006); the information gleaned assisted in clarifying what was observed and give insight into the thoughts and rationale of the teachers' pedagogical decisions. These interviews also assisted in providing historical and contextual information about the teacher participants, the school, and the students they taught. The transcribed responses to the following interview questions were coded and analyzed.

The semi-structured teacher interview questions included:

1. What is your definition or understanding of multicultural literature?
2. How is the decision made to choose the multicultural literature that you teach?
3. Are there additional multicultural texts you would like to include in this course, if given the option?
 - a. Which titles? Genres? Authors?
4. How much multicultural literature have you read? Taught?
5. How were the multicultural texts incorporated into your curriculum?
6. How and why are multicultural texts removed or added to this course?
7. How would you describe your experiences with teaching multicultural literature?

8. What types of student responses do you notice when teaching multicultural texts?

A stimulated recall interview (Gass & Mackey, 2000) was the second type of interview; these focused on the pedagogical decisions and practices of the teachers during the teaching of multicultural texts. According to Gass and Mackey:

Stimulated recall methodology is used to explore learners' thought processes (or strategies) at the time of an activity or task. This is achieved by asking learners to report those thoughts after they have completed a task or activity. Stimulated recall is carried out with some degree of support for the recall. (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. xi)

At least one stimulated recall interview was conducted with each participant teacher, to investigate his/her thought processes, pedagogical decisions and actions following two classroom observations of each multicultural text. The observational field notes and digital recordings of class text discussions served as stimulants for each interview. The transcribed responses to the following interview questions were coded and analyzed.

The stimulated recall interview questions included:

1. How does what I observed today compare to your teaching of other texts?
2. In this instructional episode, you did...

Please explain what informed your decision to do this.

- a. What other activities/approaches did you consider?
 - b. What factors lead to your chosen approach?
3. How did you experience the following instructional episode?

Department Chair Interview

An interview with the language arts department chair was digitally recorded and

transcribed. This interview was semi-structured (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) and face-to-face and assisted in deepening my understanding of the school's philosophy of language arts teaching, as well as its commitment to multiculturalism and diversity. Insight was also given into school-wide philosophies and overall climate. Historical information about the evolution of the school's literature selection was provided. The transcribed responses to the following interview questions were coded and analyzed.

The interview questions included:

1. What is your role as language arts department chair at this school?
2. How long have you held this position?
3. How are texts chosen for middle grades language arts classes?
4. Describe the literacy history of this school.
 - a. What methods of language arts instruction have been utilized in the past?
 - b. What other multicultural texts have been part of this school's curriculum?
5. How is multiculturalism through literature viewed in this community?
6. What are your thoughts about the diversity of the school's language arts curriculum?
7. How would you describe your overall experience as the middle school language arts department chair?

Diversity Director Interview

An interview with the diversity director was digitally recorded and transcribed.

This qualitative interview was semi-structured (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) and face-to-

face and also assisted in deepening my understanding of the school's commitment to multiculturalism and diversity. Insight was also given into school-wide philosophies, overall climate, experiences of students and faculty of color as well as the diversity director's views of parental needs and involvement. Historical information about the school's diversity growth was also gleaned. The transcribed responses to the following interview questions were coded and analyzed.

The interview questions included:

1. What are the aspects of your role as diversity director?
 - a. How has your role emerged?
2. How long have you held this position?
3. How would you describe the school's commitment to diversity?
4. What is the diversity history of this school?
5. How is diversity and multiculturalism embraced in this community?
6. What are your thoughts about the diversity of this school's curriculum?
7. What experience stands out most as diversity director at this school?
8. What has been your overall experience in this position?
 - a. With colleagues?
 - b. With students?
 - c. With parents?

Teacher Pedagogical Artifacts

Teacher pedagogical artifacts (i.e. assignment sheets, board documents, and related project descriptions) were used to provide data that assisted in deepening my understanding of teachers' pedagogical decisions and practices beyond what the teacher

participants shared during interviews and what was witnessed during classroom observations. The teacher participants were asked to share language arts pedagogical artifacts for literature not limited to the multicultural texts being examined in this study. Examining pedagogical artifacts for texts other than those selected for this study gave insight into the manner in which non-multicultural texts were taught. A total of fifty-one teacher pedagogical artifacts were collected, many of which were related to the multicultural literature taught. These documents assisted in corroborating semi-structured interview responses related to the individual's teaching of multicultural literature.

Student Focus Group

I met with the student participants in a focus group session that was conducted on a Saturday at the study site. I spent approximately two hours with the students as they eagerly discussed their experiences related to the multicultural texts they read, their teachers' pedagogy and what they believed to be their teachers' beliefs about multicultural literature. There were thirty-six single-spaced transcribed pages from the student focus group session. The focus group allowed me to interview the twelve student participants at one time; the questions posed and the discussion led to the sharing of students' opinions, which further enhanced my understanding of the way they think about the texts, the assignments, and the pedagogical practices of their teachers (Morgan, 1997). The responses to the following focus group questions were coded topically in conversation.

Focus group questions included:

1. How do you define multicultural literature?
2. What do you read outside of school?

- a. Authors
 - b. Genre
3. How do you feel about the assigned reading you have done in school?
 4. How do you participate in class assignments and activities about multicultural literature?
 5. In what ways do your classmates participate in classroom discussions about multicultural texts?
 6. What stands out to you about your teacher or classmates during classroom discussions involving multicultural literature?
 7. How do you think your teacher values multicultural literature?
 8. What kinds of reactions do your parents have to the literature you are assigned in school?
 9. How would you like to see culture included in your language arts class?

Parent Focus Group

All parents of the participating students were invited to participate in the parent focus group discussion. Open-ended questions lead to the sharing of parents' opinions, which further enhanced my understanding and analysis of the data collected. Thirteen parents (9 African-American/Black, 2 Caucasian, 1 Latin American, and 1 Indian) participated in the focus group session. Four of the parent participants were male, two African-American, one Caucasian, and one Latin American. The parent focus group session was conducted in approximately 90 minutes and thirty-three single-spaced pages were transcribed. The parents offered insight into the reasons they chose LMS for their daughters' education, their thoughts about the school's diversity, and their views about

the assigned texts and related coursework. The responses to the following focus group questions were chunked in conversational turns and analyzed and coded topically.

1. What informed your decision to have your daughter attend this school?
2. How important is diversity in your daughter's educational environment to you?
3. How would you describe your experience at this school?
4. What influence, if any, do you have on your daughter's leisure reading?
5. How do you feel about the literature choices in your daughter's educational experience at this school?
6. Have you and your daughter discussed any of the multicultural literature she has been assigned?
 - a. If yes, please describe the nature of those discussions?
7. What would be the optimal incorporation of culture into your daughter's curriculum?

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed utilizing modified analytic induction, descriptive activity codes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), and cross case analysis using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

The iterative process between the collection of data and the analysis of that data known as analytic induction was performed. As I collected data, I interpreted what was collected and began formulating ideas to assist in further data collection (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Constant comparison was conducted through three stages of coding: open, axial and selective coding. Open coding is a process by which labels or categories are

created from the data in an unrestricted manner. The labels were analyzed and compared and afterward a listing of conceptual categories was created. Axial coding identified connections and or relationships between the categories created during open coding. It involved identifying and seeking to understand connecting conditions and related aspects, creating major codes and sub codes. Selective coding seeks specific connections between the core categories and the confirming of relationships identified during axial coding. During selective coding final codes were developed and used for analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Throughout the levels of coding, negative cases that emerged from data analysis were sought and when necessary the codes were refined (Creswell, 1998). Reflecting upon the initial observations it appeared that each of the language arts teacher participants made efforts to draw attention to the cultural content embedded in the texts. During the observations of the second multicultural text taught by Mrs. Sojourner, it became clear that she drew attention to cultural content that was explicit to the neglect of implicit content. This caused a shift in the description of way cultural content was addressed.

Data transformation was utilized to sort, organize, focus, clarify, and eliminate data for final analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1983). Figures and tables were created to sort data in a compact orderly fashion. I utilized memos (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) within observational field notes focused primarily upon events that were unclear or uncovered in order to sharpen the data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

In order to answer the overarching question about teachers' incorporation of multicultural literature into their classrooms, coding and analysis was conducted in the following manner. Question 1a, related to teachers' pedagogical practices, was coded to

identify pedagogy (instructional episodes) using the constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Question 1b, related to the perspective(s)/beliefs about multiculturalism, was coded to identify examples of critical multiculturalism (Bensimon, 1994; Cai, 2002; McLaren, 1995; Rhoades, 1998) and Banks' (1995) dimensions of multiculturalism using modified analytic induction (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Question 1c, related to the teachers' responses to the teaching of multicultural literature, was coded to identify their responses using the constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). The following table represents the coding for question 1a.

Table 8: Coding Table for Question 1a

Initial Codes	Axial Codes	Final code
Mrs. Sojourner – 37 Mr. Frank – 38 Ms. Villanelle- 58 Ms. Glass- 32 Total = 240	Teachers' statements Enactment in assignments Evidenced in work artifacts Witnessed in classroom observations	Philosophy and pedagogy

Table 9: Coding Table for Question 2

Initial Codes	Axial Codes	Final code
Total = 77	Teacher thoughts Literature thoughts Specific texts Participation overall	Pondering pedagogy Multicultural mindsets Dealing with diversity

The data gathered to address the overarching question regarding student of color responses to multicultural literature was analyzed and coded using the following

approach: Question 2a, related to student responses to teachers' pedagogy, was coded to identify responses using the constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) was also used to answer question 2b, related to students' perspective(s)/beliefs, and coded in order to identify them.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the qualitative equivalent to quantitative validity and reliability. One method of ensuring trustworthiness is triangulation. Triangulation seeks to locate multiple sources to validate the conclusions drawn from the data gathered. Several types of triangulation exist. I used methodological triangulation, which requires corroboration across three different data collection methods (Willis, 2007). The following methods were utilized to ensure confidence in my findings: member checks (Kirk & Miller, 1986), and prolonged engagement in the classrooms. Member checking was done throughout the study, particularly during interviews via paraphrasing and statement clarification; additionally, the teacher participants viewed and were asked to comment on the descriptions of their language arts teaching philosophies and definitions of multicultural literature (Kirk & Miller, 1986). All classroom discussions were digitally recorded (1,160 minutes and 2 seconds) and used for the stimulated recall interviews. The use of digital recording assisted in trustworthiness as well.

The more than thirty-one days spent in the classrooms and research site also assisted in my understanding. I had prolonged engagement in the field from November to May of one school year. I visited the research site prior to the start of research to meet with the teachers and faculty and remained in the site following observations for the purposes of gaining familiarity and comfort.

In order to obtain inter-rater reliability, collected data were independently coded by Robyn J. Murphy. As suggested by Miles & Huberman (1994), an 80% agreement in coding between myself and another rater was sought. I explained the coding procedures for observational field notes and teacher participant work artifacts. Mrs. Murphy was provided with sixty-nine single spaced pages of the observational field notes, the teacher work artifacts, and the definitions and descriptions of the dimensions of multicultural education and tenets of critical multiculturalism in order to code the teachers' individual enactments of multiculturalism. After spending prolonged engagement with the material (approximately three weeks) and applying codes, Mrs. Murphy and I discussed the final codes reached. There was little discrepancy in the codes identified. Ultimately, we reached 100% agreement on the coding. Mrs. Murphy's qualifications and experience are described in Appendix A.

Potential for Bias

Researcher bias can influence interpretation (Creswell, 2007). As a woman of color, literacy instructor and avid reader, I have to acknowledge a level of bias regarding teacher pedagogy in the literacy classroom. As an adjunct instructor, I encouraged the pre-service students in my literacy methods course to embrace the literature-based approach to their future literacy teaching and to exercise cultural sensitivity. As a former special education teacher, I advocate that all teachers utilize multiple modes of instruction and acknowledge diverse learning styles in their lessons. Additionally, I think that it is very important for multicultural literature to be valued and its use to be a significant component of language arts teaching. My home is filled with books representing various genres and topics; I regularly encourage those around me to read. I

often share literature with family, friends, and colleagues. On a monthly basis, I facilitate an adult female book discussion. I therefore exercised caution in my interpretation of the things I observed.

In addition to the aforementioned, it was also important for me to acknowledge the effect that my daughters' private school educational experiences had on my interpretations and the outcomes of this present study. I needed to be conscious of the natural tendency to compare what I witnessed to either my personal teaching style and experiences or the way I believe my daughters would have responded. I also paid close attention to the manner in which I phrased interview questions. I must however, acknowledge my agreement with the words of Alverman (1996):

Because I write (or read) from perspectives informed by my personal history, by what I believe counts as knowledge, and by how willing I am to accept a text on its own terms, I can never separate my own experiences from the experiences of those I write (or read) about. Nor would I want to, mainly because I believe that the more multiple experiences represented, the more meaningful the text. This belief leads me to treat every text I create or review as partial and in the process of becoming. (p. 117)

It is impossible for me to separate my history, knowledge and background from the manner in which I represent and interpret the data collected for this present study.

Study Limitations

One of the limitations of this study was the manner in which classroom observations were conducted. The teacher participants scheduled the observations that would be good representations of their language arts pedagogy related to the multicultural literature. The rationale for this was to ensure that the teaching would be focused on the multicultural texts and not other areas of their language arts teaching. On at least two occasions, portions of the observations included grammar and other English-related

topics. Allowing the teacher participants to schedule the observations may have altered some of their behavior. They were aware ahead of time that I would be in the classroom and this could have potentially affected the authenticity of teacher behavior.

Another limitation was the self-reporting of data. The ability to verify information independently gleaned from the study participants was not possible. It was necessary to take all of the information shared during focus group sessions and interviews at face value. Both parent and student participants had strong feelings about LMS and their experiences during their enrollment. The fact that the focus group discussions were the first time either group had been engaged to discuss the curriculum and their experiences was significant. The validity of the examples used to describe their experiences was subject to the participants' memory, as much of what was discussed did not occur immediately prior to the discussions. Several factors present limitations related to self-reporting; exaggeration, selective memory, and attributing outcomes to one's agency or to external factors.

After establishing the context, which includes the description of the school, the teacher participants; their philosophies of language arts teaching and multicultural literature, and the multicultural literature illustrated in the next chapter, I begin analysis of the data collected for this present study. The enactments of multiculturalism employed by the teacher participants are examined as well as the correlation between their pedagogical decisions and their individual philosophies.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTEXT

In this chapter, I offer information about The Lynn Morgan School, the four middle grade language arts teachers, and the multicultural literature included in the present study. The information included in this chapter will add insight into data interpretation and the findings revealed in this study. I begin with a description of LMS. Following the school description are portrayals of the four participant teachers, their classroom environments, and the manner in which they interacted with their students. This chapter concludes with explanation of the multicultural literature utilized in the middle grade classrooms, including the text selection.

The Lynn Morgan School

The Lynn Morgan School is an all-female independent day school educating students from pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. According to the school's website, it is one of the earliest schools in the United States devoted to educating girls; the school was established in 1869 by a descendant of Benjamin Franklin. LMS is located in the western suburbs of a major northeastern city on an ample campus with two buildings. The lower school division for students in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade is housed in a separate, unattached building. The middle school (grades five through eight) and upper school (grades nine through twelve) divisions share space in interconnected buildings. Each division has a head and there is a head of LMS overall.

The mission of LMS is "to foster the intellectual and personal growth of girls and young women. The School provides its students with a rigorous academic education and

dedicates itself to developing each student's highest potential in intellect, character, and physical well-being. Committed to being a diverse community that fosters self-confidence and respect for others, the School prepares each student to lead and to enrich the world” (retrieved from the school’s website). At the time of this study, there were approximately 670 students enrolled at LMS, with approximately 200 students in the middle school (Mrs. Sojourner, personal communication, April 23, 2010). According to the school’s website, diversity in the student body, faculty, and curriculum is important. There was a link to the multicultural resource center on the school’s website. The diversity director position was designated as part-time and filled by one of the middle grade language arts teachers participating in the study. At the time of this study, approximately twenty percent of the students at LMS were students of color.

The language arts/English department chair, Cindy (responsible for curriculum for grades five through twelve) stated that the school was considering the impact of the multicultural literature utilized. She was happy to negotiate my entry into the middle school to conduct the present research study (personal communication, August 2009).

During an interview Cindy said:

So it was, there wasn't a whole lot of diversity in the curriculum. When the school, though, made a commitment to making our community more diverse, then we in turn responded by making our curriculum more diverse and to be even more sensitive to other issues of diversity like class. (Personal communication, April 16, 2010)

After our initial meeting at a local bookstore’s coffee shop, Cindy relayed the request for study participation during a regularly scheduled middle grade language arts departmental meeting. An overview of the proposed research was presented and teachers were assured that participation was voluntary. As a result of the meeting four middle

grade teachers volunteered to participate. There are a total of seven middle grade language arts teachers (personal communication, April 16, 2010), three of whom taught more than one subject area and were absent from the initial meeting. They missed the opportunity to hear the study's description from the department chair. It is unknown whether they were given the opportunity at a later date to give their consent to participate. Following the departmental meeting, I was invited to meet with the teachers who had consented to participate.

Walking down the hallway of the middle school division of LMS, one encounters numerous groups of enthusiastic students mulling through during class changes. Smiles were in no way at a minimum and conversations were often animated. Faculty and staff were also friendly and engaging. The cheerful atmosphere was quite contagious. During my visits to the school over seven months, I never experienced the feeling of being an outsider, as both faculty and students alike always warmly greeted me. My warm feelings during the initial encounter with the language arts/English department chair were corroborated by the experiences of being inside the school.

I arrived at LMS to meet with the four teacher participants on a rainy Friday afternoon in October of 2009. The weather conditions were dreary, but when I entered the classroom to meet the teacher participants, the atmosphere was cheerful. They were as pleasant and enthusiastic as the students I had encountered in the hallways. Cindy, the department chair, made the introductions, and then Mr. Frank, Ms. Glass, Mrs. Sojourner, and Ms. Villanelle sat and listened with warm inviting faces to my research proposal and explanation of their responsibilities. We agreed to schedule my visits based upon the teaching of the multicultural literature and their thoughts about which lessons would best

benefit my research. Following our brief discussion, they each shared their contact information with me and assured me of their excitement about their participation in the study.

Mrs. Sojourner

Upon entering LMS and receiving a visitor's pass from the male receptionist seated at his desk in the main lobby, one could walk down the hallway to the left, pass the teachers' lounge/mailroom and middle grade head's office to a stairwell where steps descended to the fifth and sixth grade wing of the middle school. The hallway on the main level was well lit and decorative; artwork (professional and student-generated) lined the walls. A middle grade announcement board filled with handwritten notes, athletic and fine arts announcements, and community information, hung on the wall on the left just before the stairwell doors.

Mrs. Sojourner's room was the second classroom on the left hand side of the lower floor hallway diagonally from the shared multipurpose space (which served as the student lunchroom, study hall, and large group meeting space). The walls of the lower floor hallway were decorated with student work artifacts from various subject areas. The door of Mrs. Sojourner's classroom was decorated, with her teaching schedule attached. Inside of the classroom sat student desks organized in sets of four or five in the shape of a square. The center of the room was empty, and Mrs. Sojourner's desk was located at the front of the room to the right of the white board. The three bulletin boards were covered with pre-made language arts posters, school announcements, and student work; three filled bookshelves were in the room, a tall one on the left side of the whiteboard, one

below the bulletin board on the right side of the room adjacent to Mrs. Sojourner's desk, and one below the bulletin board at the rear of the room.

Mrs. Sojourner, an African-American married female, was in her early forties at the time of the study and had been teaching language arts at LMS for nearly seven years. Prior to teaching at LMS, Mrs. Sojourner taught in a suburban public school district for five years. At the time of the study, Mrs. Sojourner was teaching language arts part-time and serving as the diversity director for the entire school. Her position as diversity director began shortly after her arrival at LMS. At the time of this present research, Mrs. Sojourner was actively involved in the application submission process to a local college's PhD program.

After her first year, Mrs. Sojourner volunteered to attend a National Association of Independent Schools People of Color Conference; upon her return she was asked to share her experiences and provide feedback via a presentation at a faculty meeting. Subsequently she was asked by the head of school (at the time) to join the diversity committee. Her role as diversity director emerged from her involvement on the school's diversity committee.

Mrs. Sojourner's split role in the school kept her busy, teaching sections of fifth and sixth grade language arts, assisting colleagues with diversity issues, addressing student and parent needs, as well as serving as the advisor to the Black Student Union. Her interactions with those within the community were vast. Mrs. Sojourner described her role as "building relationships, building trust, speaking to people.... It's all about conversation.... It's all about learning who we are as a community and building relationships " (Mrs. Sojourner, personal communication, April 23, 2010). The proof of

her ability to build relationships was evidenced by colleagues coming to her for curriculum-related guidance, the manner in which her students appeared to be drawn to her cheerful, encouraging demeanor, and the words of an older student in this study's focus group mentioning her as a means of support for diversity at LMS, "she's like really into diversity but I don't think it's just about black people. I think it's about like everyone" (Katie, personal communication, March 20, 2010).

She rarely sat at the desk while teaching; she moved excitedly around the room regularly and was almost motherly in her pedagogical approach, nurturing students along in their language arts skill development. Mrs. Sojourner was both well liked and dedicated. She described her language arts teaching as follows: "To motivate, to incite curiosity, to impart, to pull out, just basically to explore...to help them build connections and bridges to life in general" (Mrs. Sojourner, personal communication, April 23, 2010). I observed Mrs. Sojourner teach two multicultural texts to two sections of fifth grade students. There were ten students in one of the sections, none of the students in the section were students of color; there were eleven students in the second section, nine of the students were Caucasian and two of the students were African American. The texts were *Esperanza Rising* and *Journey to the River Sea*.

Mr. Frank

Mr. Frank's classroom was located a few doors down the hallway from Mrs. Sojourner's classroom on the right. The wall outside of Mr. Frank's classroom was brightly decorated with students' language arts works, brightly colored journals, poetry, and reports (over the course of data collection, the student work on the wall changed

repeatedly). Mr. Frank's teaching schedule was also posted on one of the doors to his classroom (there were two doors, one toward the front of the room and one near the rear).

Mr. Frank, a Caucasian married male, at the time of this study was in his mid-forties with a diverse teaching history. He had been teaching at LMS for ten years and had taught for a total of twenty-five years. Mr. Frank began his teaching career at a university in Shanghai, China, where he taught English as a second language. Following his international teaching experience, he taught at four area elite private schools (two of which were Quaker-related and the other two were non-sectarian) with college preparatory curriculums similar to the LMS curriculum. During the course of his career at each of the schools, Mr. Frank taught language arts and history. Mr. Frank introduced the Dream Flags project at LMS, which he described as being "all about writing for a better world, essentially" (Mr. Frank, personal communication, May 10, 2010). Mr. Frank seemed to be an extremely conscientious individual who viewed himself as a minority at LMS, due to the fact that he was a male teacher in general and because he was teaching at an all-female school in particular. These views appeared to cause him to carefully consider his presence in the classroom and school community. During an interview, he said that his white male privilege:

increases the amount of power that I have in my classroom and it increases how careful I need to be about using that.... I think that I don't think that the students regard me kind of through any conscious lenses being a white male person. I think they just see me as their teacher. Certainly they see me as a male person, that I'm white, especially being male, is quite unusual in this environment but I also think that what I say matters a lot because of that. And that's especially important for me to be as gentle as I can be in my work with them as a teacher. In a way I see that as my role as a male teacher here, my purpose. With reference to gender, in our culture there's a lot of hostility between females and males historically in contemporary society so I don't want to play into that. I don't want to reinforce that and I'm hopeful that by being a teacher who questions them and who pushes them to question themselves but without doing it in a harsh way that I can help

them to learn and also to learn about English and to learn about thinking but also to think about men in the way they think of men. (Mr. Frank, personal communication, May 5, 2010)

Mr. Frank used technology regularly in his teaching by projecting notes related to text discussion on the Smartboard. He engaged the class in an exchange writing activity and planned Skype sessions with a middle grades language arts class in Texas. During my observations, the students in Mr. Frank's class individually used laptops and blackboard as part of instruction.

Mr. Frank's classroom was organized in a U-shape at times and at other times the desks were arranged in groups of four. His desk was in the right corner at the front of the room. Student work was displayed inside the classroom as well as commercially prepared posters with various philosophical statements on the walls. Books of various types were placed on bookshelves, on top of a file cabinet and on a cart around the classroom. The bulletin boards in the classroom contained student work, school and community announcements, and a few language arts-related cartoon items. Mr. Frank rarely sat at his desk during instruction; he moved around the room or sat either on the windowsill or on a chair that he placed in the middle of the student desks.

His commitment to diversity was evidenced in his instructional practices and participation in school diversity events. While the focus group students had various ideas about Mr. Frank, one student commented that she felt he "valued diverse learning" and another mentioned that he attends many school diversity events and activities. "I think he's a good teacher and I think that he's actually one of the few teachers that take part in a lot of stuff in school. Like with multicultural stuff" (Kel, personal communication, March 20, 2010). Mr. Frank enthusiastically led text discussions and used non-text

related information to enhance discussions and student comprehension. Following is his definition of his language arts teaching,

in a sort of metaphorical way...part of it is very inquiry based. That is, I'm trying to think about what I'm doing all the time and revising it and looking at how students respond to it and so it has kind of a scientific framework in that sense. But at the same time I really see teaching as an art and I see what I do as an art and that it has to do with-in the same way as an art school, we articulate the same painting over and over again to try to get some sort of intangible quality to be embodied in that painting. That's the way that I teach my students and I think the intangible quality that I try to convey is for them to be active learners. Above all, to me learning language arts is learning how to think and there are so many tools in order to do that effectively, but to be able to go into life and understand settings and expectations and other human beings, and problem solving and organizational structure and communication tools that are needed to participate in a dialogue that's academic. (Personal communication, May 5, 2010)

I observed Mr. Frank teach one multicultural text, *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* to three sections of sixth grade students. There were fourteen students in the first section, thirteen were Caucasian and one was African American, there were thirteen students in the second section, ten were Caucasian, two were African American and one was Indian, in the third section, there were eleven students, none of which were students of color.

Ms. Villanelle

Ms. Villanelle's classroom was located on the main floor of the middle division, down the left hallway from the receptionist's desk and around the corner from the middle division head's office. Her classroom was the second classroom on the left side of the hallway diagonally from the middle grade library. Walking to Ms. Villanelle's classroom one passes large photographs of LMS students participating in an out-of-school activity, and a bulletin board with student work. The door of Ms. Villanelle's classroom also had her teaching schedule attached.

Inside of the classroom were student desks organized in sets of four to six in a U-shape with four desks clustered in a square at the front center of the room. In front of the set of four clustered desks was a projector on a table. The center of the room was empty and Ms. Villanelle's desk, which was an L-shaped configuration of two long desks, was at the front of the room to the left of the white board. Ms. Villanelle's desk was placed directly in front of the windows. Bookshelves were placed on either side of the whiteboard at the front of the classroom and next to the classroom door. A television on a cart was in the left corner at the back of the classroom. Along the back wall of the classroom was a bulletin board with various announcements and student work. Under the bulletin board was a table with four chairs.

Ms. Villanelle, a Caucasian single female in her late twenties, had been teaching at LMS for seven years at the time of this study. She began as a sabbatical replacement, teaching three sections of Latin and one section of math. At the end of the sabbatical replacement semester, Ms. Villanelle was hired to teach full time. After teaching Latin for two years, she was given the opportunity to teach language arts, one section at a time. Following her first three years at LMS, Ms. Villanelle began teaching middle grade language arts exclusively.

Ms. Villanelle enthusiastically taught her language arts classes. She was eager to hear the students share their views of the readings and regularly encouraged them to speak their minds. She moved about the classroom with ease as she taught and during class discussions. During read-alouds or when students shared their views about text events, Ms. Villanelle was focused upon the reading (even jotting notes in her text) while either sitting at her desk or on an empty student desk. During lessons Ms. Villanelle

encouraged students to make text, personal, and world connections, and to focus on symbolism and point of view.

Ms. Villanelle appeared to create a classroom environment in which students appeared comfortable asking questions and sharing their opinions without concern for judgment. When students seemed shy about making a statement related to the reading, she gently nudged them to express themselves by saying things like, “go ahead...you can say it...just say it.” Her commitment to free expression of ideas was seen and corroborated by students during the focus group session. One student said, “I mean, my English teacher [referring to Ms. Villanelle] really takes it [multicultural literature] very seriously and she wants everyone to contribute and think about what they’re going to say and things like that” (Jeanine, personal communication, March 20, 2010).

Ms. Villanelle described her language arts teaching as teaching that seeks to:

develop language skills... develop basic reading and then critical reading, critical thinking skills... literature teaching I think is important to make sure that the students are making meaning out of it in the sense of getting actively involved with the text, which is why I believe in coding and discussion questions and a lot of group discussion... I really believe strongly that English class needs to have some strong hard-core elements of English instruction as in the basics, grammar and sentence structure and how does that impact your ability to express yourselves. (Personal communication April 23, 2010)

I observed Ms. Villanelle teach two multicultural texts, *The House on Mango Street* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, to two sections of seventh grade students. There were seventeen students in one section, thirteen students were Caucasian, three were African American and one was Chinese. There were sixteen students in the second section, thirteen students were Caucasian, two were African American and one was Indian.

Ms. Glass

When going to observe Ms. Glass teach, I had to ensure that I would be able to locate the classroom. It was most important that we communicated repeatedly when scheduling observations because she did not have a permanent space in the school. I observed Ms. Glass teach in at least three different classrooms. All except one were located in the middle school division section of the building; the other was located in the high school section.

Ms. Glass, a single Caucasian female, in her early thirties at the time of this study, was in her ninth year of full time teaching. She was new to LMS, having begun her tenure there at the start of the 2009–2010 school year. Her first teaching position was at a private school in Chicago, where she taught English and physical education. Upon completion of her master's degree, she taught high school English for seven years at an elite college preparatory boarding school located approximately 45 minutes from LMS. Prior to teaching full time, Ms. Glass spent three years as a substitute teacher in Anchorage, Alaska, and Seattle, Washington. At LMS, she taught two sections of eighth grade language arts and a few sections of high school English. At the time of this study, Ms. Glass was having her first experience teaching middle grade students.

Since Ms. Glass did not have a permanent classroom space, my observations took place in the classrooms she was assigned to teach in. However, I noticed in each observation that Ms. Glass positioned herself in the midst of her students for the entire class period. I observed her sitting with a cup of hot tea in her hands in a student seat repeatedly or in a chair typically at the rear of the room. Not one time did I observe Ms. Glass seated at the teacher's desk.

The students were involved in a dramatization of the text being read during each of my observations. They enthusiastically volunteered to read narrator or character parts and were invited to the center of the classroom for the text reading. On several occasions, Ms. Glass had to remind the students to allow those who had not previously been involved in the dramatic reading to have the opportunity to participate. She encouraged them to read with passion and share their thoughts and ideas during discussions. As the students read, Ms. Glass read along in her text. When addressing the class during text discussions she kept her copy of the text in hand and remained seated unless she was writing on the board.

Periodically, Ms. Glass would interrupt the reading and ask students to share assigned allusions related to the reading with the class. She would also interject relevant information during the dramatization and lead the class in discussions related to the text. Her demeanor during the observations was relaxed yet engaged. The students who were not participating in the dramatization of the text were often reading along but several had their heads resting on the desk as they read. Ms. Glass told me that student involvement during class was important to her. She hoped to create an environment in which

students learn what it feels like to feel comfortable expressing their opinion and hearing the opinions of others and coming into conflict even with other people's opinions and learning that that can happen and that it doesn't have to feel life threatening so that creating an environment in which those things can be explored. (Personal communication, April 15, 2010)

I observed Ms. Glass teach one multicultural text, *A Raisin in the Sun*, to two sections of eighth grade students. There were fifteen students in one section, none of which were students of color and there were fourteen students in the second section, two African American and one Middle Eastern. Ms. Glass described her language arts

teaching as teaching designed to “help students to become better or more functioning critical thinkers... to be able to speak and write from an authentic place... learn how to discover what they really think about something and then be able to express it clearly” (personal communication, April 15, 2010)

The Multicultural Literature

The language arts/English department chair at LMS, Cindy, is responsible for the curriculum in the middle and upper school divisions as well as hiring teachers and setting policy for the English department. She stated that the definition of multicultural literature used by the department is literature that addresses “any other experience outside the mainstream of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant” (personal communication, April 16, 2010). It is her aim to expose the students to “other ways of seeing things, other points of view” (personal communication, April 16, 2010). Therefore multicultural literature is a part of the experience of all students at LMS. The middle grade students read a variety of multicultural texts.

As noted in Chapter 2 of this study, Cindy agrees that there are competing definitions of multicultural literature. The participant teachers evidenced this diversity in their personal definitions, which differed. In her semi-structured interview, Mrs. Sojourner’s defined multicultural literature as “literature that explores different religions, different perspectives other than a Eurocentric perspective, different cultures, ethnicity, races, geographic areas, people from different geographic areas” (personal communication, April 23, 2010). Following is Mr. Frank’s definition: “literature which helps to serve as a way of engaging students at looking at their own assumptions about who they are and where they are in the world based upon all those things, race, class,

gender, etc." (personal communication, May 10, 2010). When Ms. Villanelle was asked her definition of multicultural literature, she stated, "literature that reflects aspects of culture... about socio economic, racial, ethnic, all kinds of different things" (personal communication, April 23, 2010). The remaining teacher participant, Ms. Glass, said that her definition was literature authored by "non-dead white authors" (personal communication, April 15, 2010).

The multicultural texts that I observed being taught were: *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan, *Journey to the River Sea* by Eva Ibbotson, *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor, *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. The award-winning texts were chosen by the teachers and sometimes they were "chosen in conjunction with what the girls are doing in history class... other books we chose to get different voices into the curriculum and then again it may or may not have anything to do with what the girls are studying in history (Cindy, personal communication, April 16, 2010).

Language arts teaching in the middle grades at LMS was primarily discussion-based, small and large groups. Each of the four participant teachers regularly engaged their students in text discussions. Each student had her own copy of each text and was encouraged by her teachers to write in them for the purpose of deepening understanding. The consistency with which language arts teaching is done assists the students in establishing expectations for their language arts experiences, as common strands existed across the middle grade classroom teachers. The primary goal of language arts teaching at LMS is to "focus is on teaching the girls on how to read closely and meaningfully" (Cindy, personal communication, April 16, 2010).

A Raisin in the Sun

This play received the New York Drama Critics' Award for Best Play in 1959. It is the story of an African-American family (the Youngers) in the 1950s facing numerous challenges, such as discrimination, poverty, and the African-American racial identity development. African-American vernacular English is used throughout the play. Tensions between the white and Black community as well as within the Black community are explored. Issues of race and gender are broached as well as the controversial issue of abortion. The Younger family experiences clashes over their differing dreams while trying to determine what will be done with the insurance money due them from the deceased father/husband's insurance policy. The matriarch of the family desires to better their lives by leaving their city apartment and purchasing a house in a white community. Symbols and motifs assist in the complexity of the text. *A Raisin in the Sun* explores racial discrimination, importance of family and the value of dreams.

Esperanza Rising

This novel received the Belpre Medal in 2002 for the best portrayal of Latino cultural experience in children's literature. It is set in the 1930s and begins in Mexico. The protagonist is a wealthy twelve-year-old whose father's death alters her life dramatically. She and her mother are forced to leave their lives of luxury in Mexico, and immigrate to the United States to find work in the fields of California. The protagonist learns what it means to go from riches to rags as she and her mother experience the life of poverty as migrant workers living in a work camp. This novel addresses the issues of poverty, deceit, economic struggles, illness, and depression. Eventually, the protagonist learns that life can be happy without wealth.

Journey to the River Sea

This novel won the Nestle Smartie award in 2001 and the Blue Peter Book Award in 2002. It tells the story of an orphaned girl from who goes from living at a boarding school in England to living with distant relatives in Manaus, Brazil. The protagonist and her governess travel by ship from England to Brazil to unite with her new family. On the ship she befriends an adopted actor who wishes to escape from his unloving parents. She dreams of the wonderful experiences she will have as a member of a family again but those dreams are extinguished once she meets her relatives. While in the Amazon, she meets a half-native (Xanti tribe), half-British boy, who is being sought after to take his place in the estate of his wealthy English family. The disenchanted youth escape to spend a brief period of time with the Xanti tribe but are discovered by those who have plans for their lives.

Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry

This novel won the Newberry Medal in 1977. It is the story of the Logan family living in Mississippi in the 1930s. The Logan family live on farmland which they own; most people were sharecroppers. The Logan family deals with many racial injustices throughout the text. This proud family attempts to assist others in their community in the boycott of a local business, which treats Negroes unfairly. Circumstances shift and put pressure on the Logan family. Their land, crops, and lives are threatened by the injustices of the time. The Logan children are raised in a family that teaches them to respect themselves and others. Friendship and family are strong themes in this novel. This novel addresses numerous sensitive issues such as poverty, discrimination, racism, sharecropping, lynching, and other violent attacks.

The House on Mango Street

This coming of age novel won the American Book Award in 1985. It tells the story of one year in the life of a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago. The protagonist longs to leave the impoverished ghetto neighborhood that she lives in. The protagonist grows emotionally and physically throughout the novel, as do some of her friends introduced throughout the text. The life changes of the protagonist and her friends are chronicled in this novel, which deals with the sensitive issues of segregation, domestic violence, sexual assault, and gender roles. The power of language, self-definition, sexuality, shoes, trees, and home are among the themes and symbols present in this text. While the protagonist longs to leave Mango Street throughout the novel, in the end she realizes that while she may move away, she will never fully leave since she must return to help those left behind.

To Kill a Mockingbird

This novel was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. Narrated at times by the six-year-old protagonist (some narration is from the point of view of the protagonist as an adult), this novel takes place over the course of three years during the Great Depression in a small Mississippi town. It tells the story of a prominent attorney/father who is appointed to defend a black man accused of raping a white woman. The attorney's children have to deal with the unfair scrutiny of family members and peers of their father's position. Their father attempts to teach them to view life from the perspectives of others and encourages them to think of all people as human beings. The themes of classism, gender roles, hatred, prejudice, racial injustice, and the death of innocence are addressed in this text.

The following chapter provides analysis of the data collected to answer the first research question, How do private school teachers conceive and incorporate multicultural literature into their language arts classrooms?

CHAPTER 5

THE TEACHERS' CONCEPTION AND INCORPORATION OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

The following Teacher Profile table (Table 10) serves as a summary of the findings related to the first research question. Each teacher participants' enactments of multiculturalism, pedagogical practices, categories of instructional focus and responses to cultural content are identified.

Table 10: Teacher Profile

TEACHER	ENACTMENTS OF MULTICULTURALISM	PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND PEDAGOGY	EXPERIENCES OF TEACHING MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE
MRS. SOJOURNER	Content integration (Banks, 1994) *No dominant expression of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007)	Class reading Large group discussions Small group discussions Student presentations	Promoting skills and strategies: Comprehension Vocabulary	Discomfort related to heated discussions
MR. FRANK	Knowledge construction (Banks, 1994) Raising issues of power (Groban, 2007)	Class reading Large group discussions Small group discussions Technology interactions via discussion board	Understanding context: Literary interpretation Explanation Discussion Inferences	Self-awareness related to language / vernacular use of the "n" word Cognizance of white male privilege
MS. VILLANELLE	Content integration (Banks, 1994) Raising issues of power (Groban, 2007)	Class reading Large group discussions Small group discussions Student presentations	Analyzing literature: Discussion Literary devices Perspective	Feeling responsible for deep understanding of Immigration Prejudice
MS. GLASS	Knowledge construction (Banks, 1994) Raising issues of power (Groban, 2007)	Dramatic reading Large group discussions Student research input	Addressing assumptions: Discussion Clarification Explanation	Empowered by providing knowledge about Abortion Cultural insensitivity (words)

As mentioned in my literature review, to categorize the enactments I draw from Banks (1994) five dimensions of multicultural education: content integration, the

knowledge construction process, equity pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and creating an empowering school culture and social structure. The tenets of critical multiculturalism are also included: raising issues of power and foregrounding difference (Groban, 2007).

Analogous with the table, each teacher's observed performance has been examined in this chapter.

The language arts pedagogy was generally similar among the four teacher participants; each teacher utilized the literature-based approach. According to LMS' language arts department chair, the witnessed approach to language arts teaching was linked to the philosophy adopted by the school:

that's generally the way that we've been doing it since I've been here because our primary focus is on teaching the girls on how to read closely and meaningfully and so in order to do that we want to take them through the text... and the reason that we do that is because we want to hear their voices and we want them to take academic risks. Our goal is to make an environment where if the girl is answering a question and she doesn't really feel certain about her answer that she will still give it a shot and feel like even if she's wrong that's okay. It's okay to be wrong. Or it's okay to throw in a different point of view that we want to teach them and a lot of times when we're teaching literature, there's no one right answer and there are different ways of looking at text and interpreting them. (Personal communication, April 16, 2010)

Teacher Profiles

I begin with the analysis of each teacher participant and his or her enactments of multiculturalism. Then I examine the pedagogical practices that emerged during the teaching of the observed multicultural text; here the theme of *Philosophy and Pedagogy* surfaced. The theme philosophy and pedagogy refers to the teachers' stated philosophy of language arts teaching and the witnessed pedagogical practices. Finally, I address the teachers' responses to the teaching of the multicultural texts. The evidence was found in teacher interview transcripts, observational field notes and teacher pedagogical artifacts. The following Enactment Explication table (Table 11) elucidates enactment identification.

Table 11: Enactment Explication

Category	Definition	Observed Example
Content Integration	Placing content about “others” into the curriculum (race, class, etc.)	“Okay, obviously at the beginning of this text we already get the setting, the characters and what you’re talking about that is what? The problem. There is a big underlying problem here that we can see right at the beginning of the story it makes a lot of difference to Little Man who reacts so strongly to the difference he sees.”
Empowering School Culture and Social Structure	Making the total school culture more equitable.	This dimension was not witnessed, as the focus of this study was the middle grade language arts teachers.
Equity Pedagogy	Using teaching methods that ensure all students understand the concepts taught.	Vignette presentations: Students individually shared the characters, new vocabulary, major themes and events found in their assigned vignette. Each student generated discussion questions, which were posed to the entire class at the close of their presentation.
Knowledge Construction Process	Helping students to identify and understand the implicit cultural assumptions and frames of reference, understanding the assumptions that underlie our knowledge.	“That’s racism... it isn’t just discriminating based on race its when that discrimination is used by one group of people to stay in power and to keep another group of people from gaining any power”
Prejudice Reduction	Teaching that assists students in developing positive racial attitudes.	“Nothing should hold you back! Not race, class or gender!”
Foregrounding Difference	Highlighting difference related to identity, socio-economic status, gender, etc.	Mrs. Sojourner asked the students to turn to an excerpt on page 79 to ask the students to consider the quote. The segment read discussed one of the character’s actions, taking care of those who had less than she did. She asked them what they thought the author meant by; “those with Spanish blood who have the fairest complexions in the land are the wealthiest.” She highlighted the skin complexion differences and the notion of the workers versus the elite. She pointed out that the character that was being quotes was pointing out the realities of life – the rich versus the poor.
Raising Issues of Power	Explicitly calling attention to power relationships that undermine equity.	Ms. Villanelle reminded them that the setting was the South in the 1930s. She told them that there was both support for and resentment of the Jim Crow Laws at that time (racism and segregation). Mrs. Villanelle references the text; reminding them that Atticus was defending a black man.

Mrs. Sojourner

I observed Mrs. Sojourner teach two texts which the English department of LMS identified as multicultural, *Esperanza Rising* (Pam Munoz Ryan, 2000) and *Journey to the River Sea* (Eva Ibbotson, 2001.) The descriptions of the texts are provided in Chapter 4. The eight observations included twenty-seven instructional episodes. Each of the texts contained cultural content; however, the incorporation of the content varied. In *Esperanza Rising* the cultural content was explicit while in *Journey to the River Sea* the cultural content was somewhat ancillary to the story.

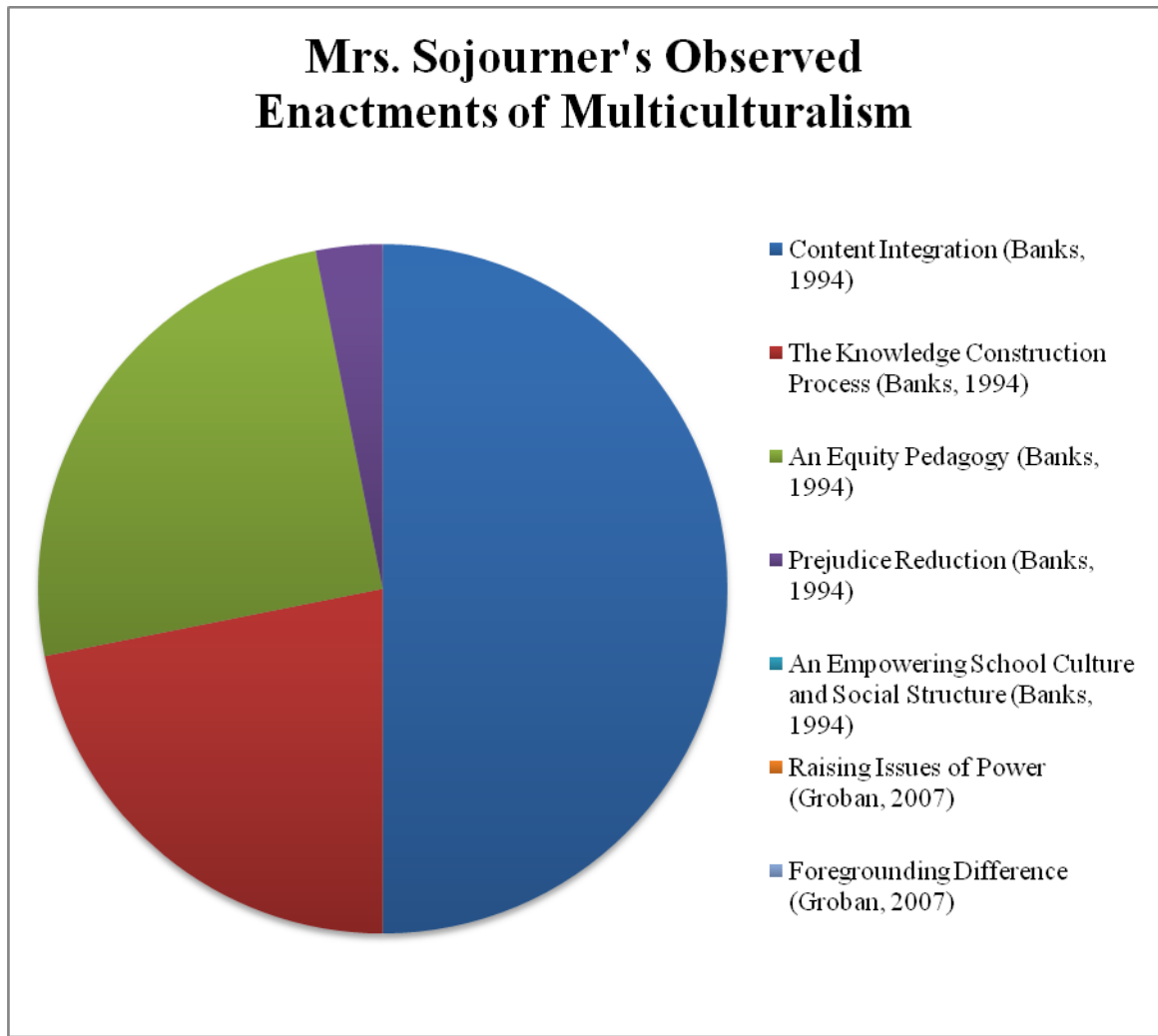


Figure 1: Mrs. Sojourner's Observed Enactments of Multiculturalism

The figure above illustrates Mrs. Sojourner's enactments of multiculturalism throughout the eight observations of her teaching. Although Mrs. Sojourner taught both texts in a similar manner her enactments of multiculturalism varied based upon the presentation of the cultural content in the texts. In *Esperanza Rising*, the cultural content was explicitly presented; the cultural content in *Journey to the River Sea* was implicit. Mrs. Sojourner's teaching was primarily related to the content integration dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994), and no dominant expressions of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) were witnessed. Content integration (Banks, 1994) was witnessed sixteen times, knowledge construction was witnessed seven times, and prejudice reduction was witnessed once. Enactments of the remaining dimensions and tenets were not witnessed during my observations of Mrs. Sojourner's teaching. All of the aforementioned took place during the observations of *Esperanza Rising*.

Content integration (Banks, 1994) deals with the degree to which teachers use content and examples from cultures and groups to exemplify key concepts, generalities, and issues in the subject areas. The knowledge construction process illustrates how teachers help students to recognize, examine, and find out how the biases, frames of reference, and point of view influence the ways in which knowledge is created (Banks, 1996). Within this dimension, students learn how to construct knowledge. Mrs. Sojourner used the multicultural texts to teach language arts skills and strategies, which exemplifies the multicultural dimension of content integration (Banks, 1994).

During a discussion of a character's motives regarding the implementation of a strike, Mrs. Sojourner briefly mentioned the Mexican Revolution. Unfortunately, Mrs. Sojourner did not choose to expound upon the revolution and its necessity, which could

have challenged possible distortions held by students regarding that historic event. Expounding upon the Mexican Revolution would have provided the opportunity for the students to build knowledge about the life histories of the text's characters and combat any misconceptions about the characters or Mexicans they may encounter in their daily lives.

Prejudice reduction, another dimension of multicultural education was witnessed five times during the reading of *Esperanza Rising*. Prejudice reduction seeks to advance positive racial attitudes and assist students in understanding how dominant social groups influence ethnic identity. Prejudice reduction takes place through interracial contact (Banks, 1994). Teachers can promote prejudice reduction in classrooms among students and during text discussions. Due to Mrs. Sojourner's focus on characters during text engagement, the opportunity to reduce and address prejudice was present. On the one occasion when prejudice reduction was observed, Mrs. Sojourner addressed the difference treatment of members of the same culture because of the complexion of their skin.

She attempted to lead the students to a deeper understanding of the role complexion played and continues to play in the treatment of persons of color. Mrs. Sojourner read aloud from the text emphasizing the words, Spanish, fairest and wealthiest. Following the reading of the quote, she asked, "What do you think he means by that?" Mrs. Sojourner repeated the quote. Students responded with various ideas ranging from the protagonist's creamy skin to thoughts that the character was viewed as perfect. Mrs. Sojourner attempted to deepen their understanding by asking, "Why would they [the protagonist's family] have creamy skin and Miguel and his family are also

Spaniards, why would they have dark skin?" a number of students enthusiastically raised their hands to respond. The student that Mrs. Sojourner called upon stated that the protagonist's family never went out to work in the fields. Another student shared that the character was selfish, Mrs. Sojourner responded, "No, he's not selfish..." She went on to suggest that the character was attempting to get the protagonist to understand the differences they faced due to their complexions. She added, "... he was saying...wake up honey...smell the coffee...this is life!" (Observational field notes, November 23, 2009). This discussion was not lengthy because it appeared that the students did not grasp the concept. Mrs. Sojourner did not force the discussion but felt it was necessary to raise it.

There were numerous opportunities to enact dimensions of multicultural education throughout the reading of both texts. In *Journey to the River Sea*, the existence of the tribal groups in the Amazon remained in the margins of the text; they were not brought to the center of any of the teaching or discussions. There were several missed opportunities to address the knowledge construction process and prejudice reduction in Mrs. Sojourner's teaching of *Esperanza Rising* and *Journey to the River Sea*.

I noticed issues of power being raised on six occasions during the reading of *Esperanza Rising*. As previously stated, this story was replete with cultural content and explicit examples of privilege and power. The issues of power that Mrs. Sojourner raised during the four observations of *Esperanza Rising* dealt with deepening students' understandings of the characters and vocabulary presented in the story. Her primary focus was upon the manner in which the author underscored differences related to socioeconomics and lifestyle. Foregrounding difference was witnessed only once during the eight

observations of Mrs. Sojourner's teaching. This occurrence was also related to lifestyle and socioeconomic status.

Mrs. Sojourner drew the students' attention to the dissimilarities between the protagonist's lifestyle prior to and following her father's death. She engaged her students in discussions related to the character's positions in society, manner of living and treatment of one another. She asked her students to consider the effects of the drastic shift in power and privilege experienced by the protagonist. The differences between the characters' socioeconomic statuses based upon complexion were not ignored either; Mrs. Sojourner mentioned the differences in the divergent status positions. She asked the students what they believed the author meant by the words of a quote from the text; "those with Spanish blood who have the fairest complexions in the land are the wealthiest" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 79). This resulted in a vigorous discussion of the differences between the elite and the impoverished as portrayed in the text.

When students made comments about the manner in which they perceived the rich characters being portrayed in a negative light, Mrs. Sojourner reminded the students of the time period of the story, it was set "in an era of extreme poverty and lack of jobs" (observational field notes, November 23, 2009). She added that during that era and in the story, there were rich people who mistreated those who were poor. Mrs. Sojourner's contributions to the literature discussions appeared to have a clarifying effect upon her students' understanding of the story events. Unlike the teacher in Adams' analysis (1995), whose implementation of multiculturalism into her classroom was uncritical and separated cultural issues in their teaching from those encountered in the real world and students' lives, Mrs. Sojourner did not attempt to distance the issue of poverty mentioned

in the text from that in their worlds. During a discussion related to extreme poverty, Mrs. Sojourner reminded her students of the existence of present day poverty, stating that poverty wasn't something that existed only in foreign lands "like Kenya;" she reminded them that people in areas not far from the LMS also lived in poverty. She added, "Today, we learned in assembly that the cans we collected were being taken to a local shelter... not more than ten minutes away... we don't realize that what [student's name] said and what was said in the assembly that poverty is not in some far off place... but right where we live..." (Observational field notes, November 23, 2009).

In responding to her students' apparent lack of understanding of how the shift in the protagonist's socioeconomic status impacted her life and positioned her in relation to her once servant, Mrs. Sojourner asked the students to locate a quote within the text. She read the quote, "in Mexico they stood on different sides of the river" (Cisneros, 1984, p. 87) then engaged the class in a discussion of its meaning. She probed for their understanding by asking them to respond to the statement's accuracy and share what they believed the author's intent was for placing it in the story. Mrs. Sojourner pushed her students to think about the issues of race and class raised in the text. When the students' responses were off target or incomplete, Mrs. Sojourner attempted to deepen their understanding by reading directly from the text to aid their comprehension (observational field notes, November 23, 2009).

In addition to the instances in which Mrs. Sojourner raised issues of power (Groban, 2007) related to socioeconomics and lifestyle, she also addressed power-related issues as she clarified unfamiliar vocabulary. In an attempt to clarify students' understanding of a character's motives and a story event, Mrs. Sojourner encouraged a

class discussion about the strike in the story. She explained that strikes were not about people being selfish but often, as in the story, were about “higher wages and better housing.” Additionally, Mrs. Sojourner added to the discussion the fact that the strike would not affect all of the characters in the same way, referring to those who had versus those who had nothing (observational field notes, December 9, 2009). She discussed that most strikes are about power. Again in an attempt to deepen vocabulary understanding, Mrs. Sojourner defined and described the term activist to her students. Mrs. Sojourner explained the cause of the Mexican Revolution and the connection it had to the story character’s actions. She pointed out that the character was attempting to fight on behalf of others who were being unfairly treated and she encouraged them to hold their opinions until they read further (observational field notes, December 9, 2009).

Journey to the River Sea was the second text I witnessed Mrs. Sojourner teach. There were numerous opportunities to address issues of power (Groban, 2007) during the reading of this text; however, they were not explicitly addressed. Mrs. Sojourner focused more on highlighting the unfamiliar vocabulary encountered in the story. At one point in the third observation of *Journey to the River Sea*, as students were sharing their independently developed Q + As, Mrs. Sojourner reminded the students that one of the characters wanted to locate and live with his mother’s tribe/people, but did not mention anything related to the tribal people of the Amazon nor the colonization that had taken place (observational field notes, March 10, 2010).

Relationship between Philosophy and Pedagogy

Mrs. Sojourner’s focus was upon the teaching of skills and strategies with specific emphasis upon comprehension and vocabulary. When asked to share her thoughts about

how the multicultural literature impacted her text teaching, she said, “it's about what literature can we use... you have a set of strategies or standards that you're trying to achieve and then what literature” (personal communication, April 23, 2010). Mrs. Sojourner appeared to consider cultural content and aspects of multiculturalism secondary to the teaching of skills and strategies.

In addition to the importance of skills and strategies, Mrs. Sojourner was concerned with the students' readiness and adjustment to the expectations of the middle division. Thus her primary focus was upon skills and strategies and she felt that the parents shared similar concerns. When asked about parental reactions and expectations related to the multicultural literature being read, she stated, “They're [parents] just interested in the fact that their children are getting the strategies that they need to think in a critical way, to write in a critical way... at this level they're just worried about the transition and that their daughter is able to settle down and really get what she needs, the foundation she needs to go forward” (personal communication, April 23, 2010). This belief fortified her witnessed focus on skills and strategies to the neglect of incorporating aspects of multiculturalism while engaged with multicultural texts.

Mrs. Sojourner's philosophy of language arts teaching is found in Chapter 4. She said that her assignments are purposefully designed to:

Make them [students] think critically about the various elements of the novel... even in something as general as basic skills as spelling. The way I approach that is to have them not just memorize but I teach them strategies. I teach them when they're writing their sentences and their definitions to give me good quality so that I know the meaning of the word by just reading the sentence if I didn't know the word. So you can't just tell me something by rote. You can't make up your meaning. You have to demonstrate it.” (Personal communication, April 23, 2010)

During the observations of Mrs. Sojourner's teaching, I witnessed her approach to language arts teaching. Mrs. Sojourner said that her general approach to teaching is derived from the standard followed by all teachers in the Language Arts/English department. However, she indicated that in addition to following the LMS standard, "I organically follow their threads because I want to see what becomes of it... knowing what I have in the back of my mind to achieve" (personal communication, December 8, 2009). This was evident during the observations. Mrs. Sojourner's approach to the two texts was similar. She engaged students in literary element discussions as well as vocabulary and comprehension activities.

Examination of Mrs. Sojourner's pedagogical artifacts related to the texts focused on characters, factual information, and literacy skill development. Mrs. Sojourner stated that the goal of such assignments is to "get them [students] to get what's up here [in their heads] out... to articulate it into their understanding in a written way... their written expression" (personal communication, February 2, 2010). Three of the seven homework assignments submitted by Mrs. Sojourner were focused on understanding story characters. Four of the questions represented in the assignments were focused upon story characters, two focused upon skills, and five related to demonstrating comprehension of factual information from the story. Students were required to give text evidence (i.e. page numbers) in their responses. The whiteboard artifacts (teacher directives / instructions / notes written on the board during observations) focused on characters, skills, and vocabulary. Of the six teacher artifacts from the whiteboard, two were related to vocabulary and three were related to characters and comprehension skills. The majority of the observed text discussions were focused on characters and language arts skills.

Evidence from the observational field notes shows that over the course of the eight observations, skills were the focus a total of fifteen times. Characters and references to them occurred eighteen times in various ways. Vocabulary was addressed throughout the reading, discussing, and teaching of both of the observed multicultural texts.

The importance of teaching multicultural literature from different paradigms and viewpoints is not a novel idea (Thein, Beach & Parks, 2007). While the LMS and Mrs. Sojourner viewed this as important, Mrs. Sojourner appeared to focus upon teaching literary conventions using multicultural literature. The manner in which she approached the teaching of the two multicultural texts was consistent with her stated philosophy of language arts teaching. Thus, Mrs. Sojourner's philosophy and pedagogy were consistently and notably aligned. She relied primarily upon teacher-led discussion to provide opportunities for grand conversations about the literature while promoting response, emphasizing important statements made by students, and demonstrating comprehension strategies. The focus upon comprehension and vocabulary did not negate the opportunities to infuse teaching reflective of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) or multicultural education (Banks, 1994).

During my observations, Mrs. Sojourner missed opportunities to address issues of equity and equality with her students related to the textual content. These issues existed in each of the multicultural texts taught, either explicitly or implicitly; however, they were not discussed. Mrs. Sojourner failed to expose her students to discussions that would aid in their understanding of the multicultural issues that shape the world and influence their lives (Gay, 2004).

Experiences of the Teaching of Multicultural Literature

As previously mentioned, Mrs. Sojourner served in dual roles at LMS during this study. As the part-time diversity director and part-time language arts teacher, her roles at times were blurred with students and colleagues. While teaching multicultural literature, Mrs. Sojourner viewed herself as a teacher who “took a lot of things from my background and added, supplemented the experiences to bring the text to life” (personal communication, April 23, 2010). She prided herself in creating a classroom atmosphere in which colleagues and students alike felt comfortable in discussing the material found in the multicultural texts. Mrs. Sojourner said that she regularly assists a colleague who teaches in her classroom with text engagement. During the teaching of one of the multicultural texts, her colleague asked for reassurance when cultural content was being discussed. She viewed herself as somewhat of an encourager, persuading the teacher to follow the flow of the content. Mrs. Sojourner stated that she told her colleague to “bring it out” and contended that “a lot of conversations were able to be had because I made it a little more comfortable for the teacher to speak and then the students who already had me were comfortable enough to speak” (personal communication, April 23, 2010).

Mrs. Sojourner stated that she does not introduce texts related to their genre; she chose to “emphasize the skill as opposed to the actual genre... in fifth grade it’s just general. We’re trying to get them used to the structure of middle school” (personal communication, April 23, 2010). Based upon the observations in this present study, Mrs. Sojourner focused primarily upon the teaching skills and strategies and did not address the cultural content presented in the texts. However, it appears that she felt that cultural content was important and that it was addressed in her teaching, as evidenced by the

following. “I think the major difference is that we tried to immerse the girls in the culture of the Amazon and Brazil...” (personal communication, May 5, 2010). This presents another discrepant piece of evidence; immersion in the Amazon/Brazil culture did not occur during any of my observations, nor was it apparent in any of the teacher or student work artifacts. The students recapitulated an assignment from *Journey to the River Sea* in which they individually presented facts about the Amazon or Brazil. Vocabulary was a significant focus of this assignment.

During an instructional episode related to the reading of *Journey to the River Sea*, an emotionally charged discussion ensued. The students were discussing the protagonist’s adjustment to the reality of her new living circumstances and the dichotomy in her expectations prior to arriving in the Amazon. Initially, Mrs. Sojourner was delighted that the students were openly expressing their opinions and engaging in a riveting debate. She viewed the discussion as good in that “they’re learning essentially how to defend their thinking...but as it started to go awry, I started to think, this is not healthy... you’re attacking someone’s person as opposed to the actual idea... that’s not healthy” (personal communication, February 2, 2010).

While Mrs. Sojourner appeared to be open to multiple perspectives via classroom discussion, the abovementioned incident is reflective of one of the teachers in the Marusza (1998) study who was unnerved and annoyed by students’ challenges and differing perspectives. Mrs. Sojourner did not resort to short-circuiting the conversation like that teacher, but relished the interruption of the older students and the end of the class period.

Mrs. Sojourner's clear discomfort with the manner in which the discussion unfolded was apparent; as a result, she changed the approach for the class she taught. She said, "When I saw how it took off in that one class, I changed it... some of them went out of here [in the first class] with a headache. It was that bad" (personal communication, February 2, 2010). In her discomfort, Mrs. Sojourner deflected the teachable moment to upper school students of color who happened to come to speak with her toward the end of class. The upper school students of color entered the classroom at the point when the heated discussion began to boil over. Mrs. Sojourner asked the upper school students to intervene. She assumed the presence of the upper school students who were seniors would have impact upon her fifth grade students. She stated:

I said, you know girls this is a good place to have one of those teachable moments... let me ask these young ladies [the upper school students of color] tell you what happens when you attack a person for their ideas or if you're in a meeting and you call out and you disrupt, what happens and the girls were able to give their experiences. (Personal communication, February 2, 2010)

Shifting the emphasis from attacking others for their ideas to calling out during a meeting diminished the cultural connection to the discussion. Mrs. Sojourner shared she was pleased with the input given by the older students. She considered the hostile nature of discussion unnecessary: "It's not even... something we need to get this heated over" (personal communication, February 2, 2010).

Maintaining a classroom atmosphere in which students felt comfortable expressing themselves was important to Mrs. Sojourner. She did not want any of the students to feel she would allow class discussions to become personal or unmanageable. Her major concern was the manner in which those who rarely participated in text discussions might interpret the debate and subsequently become discouraged or deterred

from sharing their thoughts and or opinions. Perhaps part of her desire to maintain such a classroom environment was to avoid the discomfort that could be attached to delving into sensitive cultural content or addressing the beliefs that students come to school with.

Mrs. Sojourner's views about immersion into cultural content and her role as an African-American teacher in a primarily white educational institution are of great interest. While Mrs. Sojourner views herself as one whom colleagues, parents and students look to for guidance, this notion appears to be somewhat inflated. During a semi-structured interview while discussing her previous teaching of a multicultural text, she said:

I took a lot of things from my background and added, supplemented and experiences to bring the text to life... I was able to also help my colleagues... and they come to me... defer to me on some things... a lot of the conversations were able to be had because I made it a little more comfortable for the teacher to speak and then for some of the students who already had me were comfortable enough to speak. (Personal communication, April 23, 2010)

I did not have any conversations in which the student participants or faculty expressed views of Mrs. Sojourner as a resource when dealing with multicultural texts or issues.

One of the student participants in the focus group affirmed Mrs. Sojourner's commitment to diversity at the LMS. She offered the following comment:

I really think that one of the teachers, would you mind if I said her name because I think it's really important?... Mrs. Sojourner, and I really feel like she's involved but when she is involved some people are accusing her of being a racist... in my class and this girl... she was like 'yeah, Mrs. Sojourner is like so racist'. I was asking her like 'why do you think she's racist?' And she's like 'I don't know I just think she favors like black people over me'... And I'm like 'I just think she's like really into diversity but I don't think it's just about black people. I think it's about like everyone.' (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

While this statement supports Mrs. Sojourner's commitment to diversity in the eyes of a student, her witnessed actions during observations do not suggest that her diversity views

impact greatly upon her pedagogical decisions related to multiculturalism.

It is important to note that while no parents of fifth grade students participated in the focus group, many participants' daughters arrived at LMS before the fifth grade. None of the parent participants corroborated the sentiments voiced by Mrs. Sojourner; texts and content were important to them at all grade levels. One parent stated, "I think that... the English department has tried really hard to select books that range in diversity in thought and in culture... to integrate the English and History classes and as a result picked books that reflect the time period in history that's being studied with really rich characters in these books" (personal communication, March 8, 2010).

Mrs. Sojourner's personal views about middle school language arts teaching, multicultural literature, and student needs appeared to influence her pedagogical approach. The dual role that Mrs. Sojourner played at LMS may have affected her effectiveness at each. As is the case with many persons of color in private schools who find themselves in these dual roles, the manner in which Mrs. Sojourner was to function was unclear and echoed the diversity goals of the LMS mission statement (Hall & Stevenson, 2007). Mrs. Sojourner was faced with the challenge of "doing diversity" (Hall & Stevenson, 2007) and teaching at the same time. It is important to note that by the end of data collection for this current study, LMS made the decision to afford Mrs. Sojourner the opportunity to function as the full-time diversity director.

Mr. Frank

I observed Mr. Frank teach one text identified by LMS as multicultural, *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry* (Mildred D. Taylor, 1976). The text description is provided in Chapter 4. There were a total of six observations of *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*; Mr.

Frank taught three sections of sixth grade students. I observed him teach each section twice, I witnessed eighteen instructional episodes.

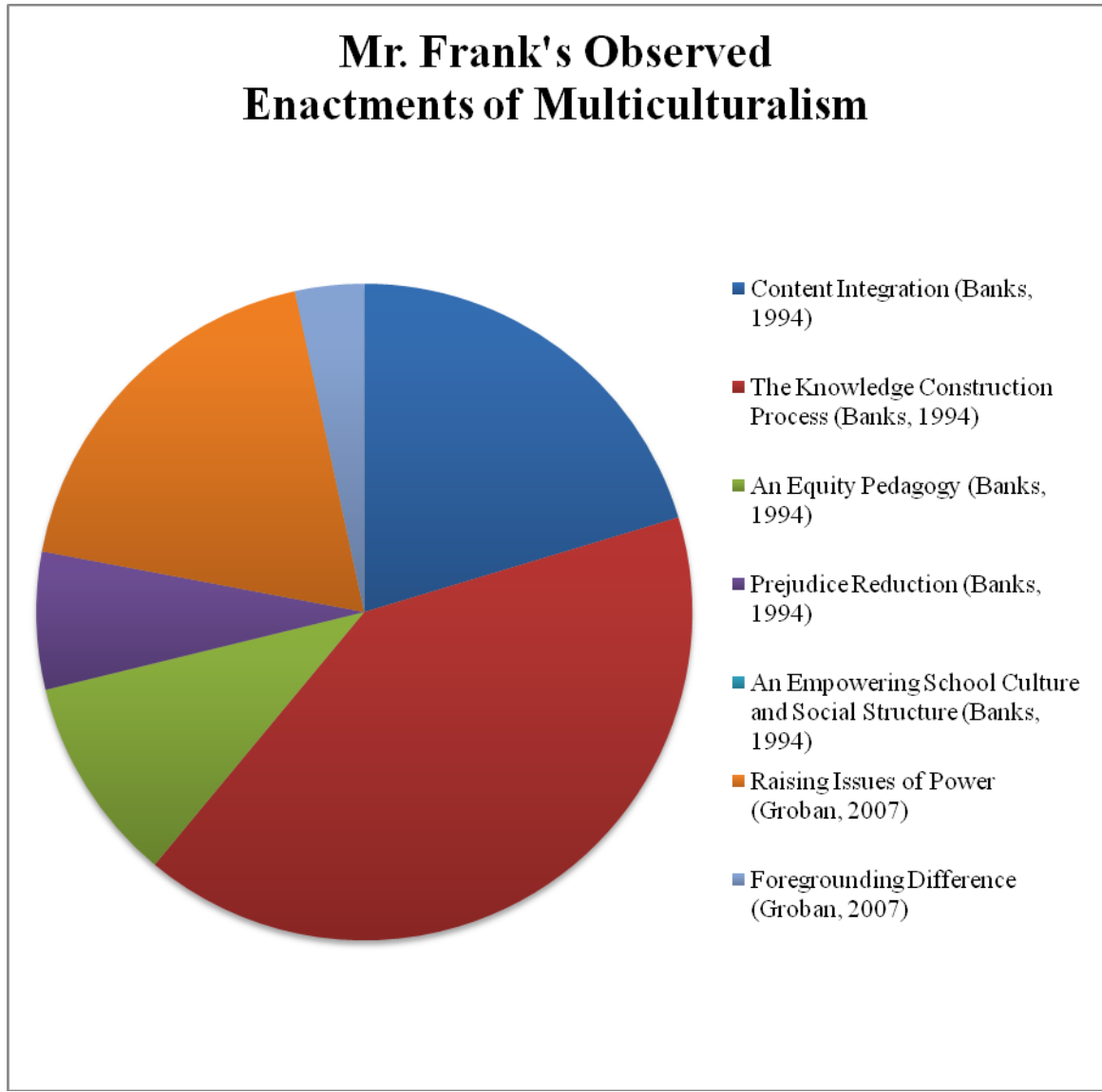


Figure 2: Mr. Frank's Observed Enactments of Multiculturalism

Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry is replete with cultural content, which Mr. Frank did not hesitate to highlight, expound upon, and address with his students. The tenets of

critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) were also employed in his teaching. Mr. Frank raised issues of power eleven times and foregrounded difference on two occasions.

The knowledge construction dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) was witnessed twenty-four times, content integration a total of twelve times, and prejudice reduction was witnessed four times. Mr. Frank enacted tenets of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) primarily by raising issues of power found in the text. On two occasions, foregrounding difference was addressed. Throughout each of the six observations of *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry*, Mr. Frank utilized content integration (Banks, 1994) at least once. The only dimension of multiculturalism that was not witnessed during my observations of Mr. Frank's teaching was an empowering school culture and social structure. This should not be viewed as a missing component of Mr. Frank's teaching as the focus of this study was not The Lynn Morgan School.

Mr. Frank's enacted the knowledge construction process repeatedly throughout my observations of his teaching; on numerous occasions he assisted his students in understanding how knowledge is created in addition to the influences individuals' ethnicity, race, and social class have upon the creation of knowledge (Banks, 1993). Mr. Frank was concerned with students' understanding of the historical information connected to the story from the beginning of his teaching. Mr. Frank was concerned with his students' clear understanding of the time period of the story and the implications that Mississippi in 1933 had upon the characters' lives. He called his students' attention to the text as they discussed the story's era: "There's a specific time in the book... did you catch that...the date... look on page 7..." (observational field notes, January 12, 2010), and related the date to the racism and discrimination presented in the text. Mr. Frank

explained the Great Depression and the hard economic times faced by both African-Americans and Caucasians during those years. He related the difficult economic times to those being faced by contemporary people who are not among the wealthy.

In addition to clarifying how the setting affected the story, Mr. Frank also asked the students to consider why education was so important for African-Americans at that time. He explained the Jim Crow laws and told the students about the Plessey v. Ferguson case. Another example of Mr. Frank's attempts at ensuring his students had clear understanding of the story's context was the manner in which he built the background knowledge of his students. As a discussion prompt, he wrote the word racism on the Smartboard as he described the realities of the time; as Mr. Frank discussed the term with the class, he told them that racism could not be ignored because it played a major role in the setting of the text. Mr. Frank repeatedly attempted to clarify how racism, segregation, and discrimination impacted the lives of African-Americans throughout history.

The students in Mr. Frank's class were presented with numerous thought-provoking discussion topics. Mr. Frank addressed the author's use of African-American vernacular English, combating the misconceptions that it was slang. Doing so sparked a discussion of various forms of dialect spoken in the United States. He asked his students their thoughts about current discrepancies in education as they discussed the segregated schools in the story. Mr. Frank introduced and clarified students' misunderstandings of vocabulary presented in the story. He drew the students' attention to the terms used in the story such as justice and boycott, which led to vigorous discussions about fairness of society and those who make the rules.

Mr. Frank enacted the prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) as he asked the students to consider how the harsh realities of the time affected a story character. He drew their attention to the manner in which the Logan family members respected one another and contrasted it to the degree of disrespect they encountered in their surroundings. Mr. Frank also highlighted the proud, caring, hardworking nature of the Logan family, and made references to the differences between their family dynamics and those of other families presented in the story. Engaging his students in discussions concerning the characters and focusing upon their admirable characteristics and actions could have served to eliminate stereotypes possibly held by students about African-American families during the time of the story and the present, thoughts often due to negative media portrayals.

I witnessed Mr. Frank raise issues of power on eleven occasions and foreground difference twice throughout my observations of his teaching (Groban, 2007). Mr. Frank did not hesitate to utilize information from previously read texts to expound upon the importance of setting in understanding the context of a story. He reminded his students of a previously read book in which the historical context provided significant insight into unequal treatment of story characters. Mr. Frank asked his students to recall and discuss how the protagonist was treated because of the inequity of gender roles in the text. During the discussion, his students began to perceive the power issues were related to culture and gender (observational field notes, January 12, 2010).

Mr. Frank also raised issues of power as he led his students in a discussion related to the subject of the segregation of schools. He extended students' knowledge by explaining the inferior conditions of school buildings, resources, and student materials.

He called their attention to a text example in which the African-American students were given old, damaged textbooks and the teacher attempted to repair them. He explained that doing so would be a violation and could cost the teacher her job. As he explained the position of powerlessness the African-American teachers faced, Mr. Frank assisted the students in understanding that those issues were factual and systemic in nature. Mr. Frank elucidated injustice as being “the order of the day” and suggested that African-Americans were subject to mistreatment because they were not in positions of power. He added that African-Americans faced significant danger simply because they were not white (observational field notes, March 12, 2010).

As he led the class in a discussion of the various characters’ reactions to racism, Mr. Frank explained, “The whole idea of having separate schools was approved by the Supreme Court in a famous case called Plessey v. Ferguson...said that...” A student interjected that the he government is showing bias. Mr. Frank continued, “The whole notion of separate but equal in schools was not equal...it wasn’t fair, it was legal and it wasn’t just in their place, it was all over”. Another student shared that one character seemed to feel that the children in the story needed to learn and accept how things were. Another added that the character seemed to feel that the children in the story needed to learn to deal with the way things were. Mr. Frank asked the students if they remembered a conversation between the mother and another teacher about the children’s’ reaction to racism, then asked them to turn to age 29 and asked for a volunteers to read aloud from the text. After the students read, Mr. Frank instructed the students to mark the excerpt in their texts. He asked, “How would we summarize, maybe, Miss Crocker’s reaction to the racism?” Tori shared the following, “She was like a local because I think she grew up

around it, she's gotten used to it so she's just like that's the way things are so they're gonna have to learn to deal with it..." Mr. Frank summarized and wrote on the Smartboard, "accept and deal... because it's bigger than us...that's the way it is. It has to do with the Supreme Court of the United States, it has to do with laws that have been made...it has to do with things that are way bigger than what you or I can do so we can't even try to change it, we have to accept it and know the reality". Tori added, "It's more like the mom is saying yea, that's the way it is but it doesn't have to be so she's kind of like...this is eventually going to change because nothing can go on for that long... like there's only so long for a thing to go on, whether I'm alive to see it or not we don't really have to accept it we can just acknowledge that's the way it is but we don't have to be okay with it..." Mr. Frank told Tori that she was getting right to the place he wanted the discussion to go, he asked the students to consider the more activist character's reaction, "What do we see, besides what Mama says, what does she show... what's her reaction?" (Observational field notes, January 12, 2010).

Mr. Frank carefully explained how issues of power affected the lives of African-Americans during the story's era and made it difficult if not impossible for them to assert themselves when they faced the racism that was commonly accepted. Throughout my observations of Mr. Frank's teaching, he repeatedly used the cultural content presented in the story to attempt to deepen his students' understandings.

The content integration dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) deals with the degree to which a teacher uses content and examples from cultures and groups to exemplify key concepts, generalities, and issues in the subject areas. During my observations of Mr. Frank's teaching of *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry*, his enactments of

the content integration dimension included characterization, discussions related to author intent, prediction based upon introduction of new characters and story elements as well as vocabulary.

Relationship between Philosophy and Pedagogy

The description of Mr. Frank's philosophy of language arts teaching can be found in Chapter 4. There he explained his affinity toward the use of classroom literature discussions. When asked his rationale for engaging students in large and small group discussions, he said, "I'll try to vary it a fair amount and I think that's really good for middle school too. Because they [students] need changes to stay engaged. They need to keep moving or they'll get bored" (personal communication, February 23, 2010). Mr. Frank's approach is directly related to his philosophy; his expectations of students are high and he requires active thinking in his classroom. When asked about ensuring that students grasped the vocabulary of the text, Mr. Frank replied, "definitions come through context not dictionaries" (personal communication, February 23, 2010); understanding context was of primary importance to him.

Ensuring that the students understood the context of the text was Mr. Frank's primary focus; significant attention was paid to literary interpretation, explanation, and inference. Mr. Frank offered his views on the importance of understanding text:

because we focus on the issue of the injustice, which is something that every child recognizes from a gut level. It gave them a way to connect to the story that meant something to them and what I saw was a much more focused engagement in developing an idea and that's a hard thing to do. Because what happens is when you asked kids to write an essay, before they really understand what they're writing about or what it is that you want to do when you're creating an essay. This was a very different experience because there was a lot of scaffolding to where they were going and it wasn't too challenging: what some of the specific incidences in the book were that supported what they were going to say about a

character and how that character responded to injustice, because we did talk about it a lot. (Personal communication, May, 10, 2010)

Additionally, Mr. Frank shared his views on the benefits of utilizing multicultural literature and why it is important to him that students understand what they are reading:

it sort of creates exactly the kind of challenge that I think gets students to begin to broaden their thinking and to engage actively in the process of reading and writing. It would be hard to have the same kind of conversations or the depth of conversations if what we were dealing with a dominant culture narrative. If you're dealing with a text like; I'm not saying that like close reading doesn't have any purpose or anything like that but I think it can be very self-serving and very irrelevant. And it cannot serve the purpose of making active and empowered readers... understanding of the world that gives people the power to make their own decisions and to find out things and to be investigators in their own lives. I like working with a multicultural text that has a lot of pull. (Personal communication, February 23, 2010)

During my observations of Mr. Frank's teaching, I witnessed his rigorous approach to language arts teaching, which he described as inquiry-based. The dominant focus was upon students' understanding of context. He repeatedly engaged students in discussions involving literary interpretation; often asking why students thought the author chose to use certain symbols and examples; students were also required to give robust explanations of their discussion contributions, which often required text-based evidence and higher order thinking questions were posed in discussions, and written assignments to address inferential understanding. Mr. Frank's students' understanding of *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry* was deep; through the use of analysis and evaluation they were able to understand the text beyond the literal interpretations (Louie, 2006). As Marusza (1998) found in her examination of teachers' multiculturalist teaching enactments, Mr. Frank's classroom discussions also provided his students with exposure to divergent points of view and social critique. Mr. Frank appeared to bring a significant commitment

to teaching reflective of multicultural practice from his previous life and teaching experiences.

The aforementioned statements by Mr. Frank were corroborated in his teaching, the assignments he chose, and the manner in which he conducted classroom discussions. He guided and challenged his students to identify characters' beliefs and feelings for deeper understanding of their actions (Louie, 2006). His enthusiasm about the importance of multicultural literature was at times lost on his students; the student participants found him "hard to read" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). They felt that he valued multicultural literature but they struggled to fully understand the depth with which he attempted to engage them with it.

Additionally, Mr. Frank utilized various forms of technology regularly. When asked about his use of the Smartboard, Mr. Frank replied:

I think [technology] is very useful for discussion in literature classes... it's a way of recording. I write down information that I want to convey directly. But then it also provides kind of a running record of our discussion. So the way I use that [the Smartboard] - it's like having a scrolling blackboard that goes back infinitely and I can scroll to where we were a few days earlier in our discussion. But it provides a strong visual reminder that the discussion that we have is continuous. (Personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Examination of Mr. Frank's pedagogical artifacts revealed significant focus upon explanation of text events, interpretation of author intent and symbolism found in quotes, inferential understanding, and personal application. The final project related to the reading of *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry* required the students to compare themselves to a character from the text with respect to how the character responded to injustice. This was a multi-paragraph assignment, which required the students to introduce the book, the topic of injustice, and provide an explanation of their response to injustice. Finally, the

students were required to end their writing assignment with their personal interpretation of the author's teaching about responding to injustice. A detailed description of the assignment was provided and the writing process was employed as part of the assignment. Mr. Frank said:

One of the very teachable aspects of this book outside essentially of its historical or thematic framework is the character development that Mildred Taylor does and one of the things I want them to become attuned to is how characters in books are developed and play off of one another and that it's through those characters that we get the sense of the author's intentions about a theme or about a main idea. And so this book sets itself up very well for contrasting responses to similar circumstances, which is what creates character, creates the individual. That's what I want them to see. (Personal communication, February 23, 2010)

In written assignments and during discussions, Mr. Frank required the students to explain their shared statements; he asked questions like, "How would we summarize Miss Crocker's reaction to racism?" (observational field notes, January 12, 2010). He repeatedly encouraged his students to "see the world through the characters' perspectives and identify the values that shaped the characters' conflict resolution strategies" (Landt, 2006, p.439). He frequently introduced vocabulary to assist in clarifying student responses during discussions. Each new vocabulary word was added to the Smartboard notes to be used in future discussions. Mr. Frank did not ignore the teaching of literacy skills and strategies throughout the teaching of *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry*; they were incorporated into the discussions and assignments while the focus remained upon understanding the context and content of the text. In a manner to similar to that of one of the teachers in the DeNicolo & Franquiz (2006) study, Mr. Frank unashamedly encouraged and provided opportunities for his students to question in order to enhance their learning.

The manner in which Mr. Frank described his philosophy of language arts teaching was corroborated by what I observed. His significant focus upon understanding context was complemented by his commitment to infusing dimensions of multicultural education and tenets of critical multiculturalism. Mr. Frank effectively engaged his students in transcending cultural barriers while engaging them in text discussions and activities that can assist in the promotion of a just and equitable society (Nieto, 1992).

Experiences of the Teaching of Multicultural Literature

When asked specifically about the use of *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry*, Mr. Frank stated:

It's a really valuable text to use. There are a lot of texts that deal with the horror and Jim Crow and slavery that just kind of leave you breathless and wouldn't be right for sixth grade. I think this one is because of the importance of family in it. So that's one of the reasons I use the book and continue to feel comfortable with using it. I believe that the reason the book works so well is while it deals with really painful issues, the main character comes from a secure and loving family. She [Cassie] comes from such a powerful root and hopefully the kids recognize the power of love in her family is much more powerful than the hatred or the ignorance that surrounds her. (Personal communication, May 10, 2010)

Mr. Frank admitted that he is not always comfortable when teaching this text. Nor did he hesitate to allow students to be viewed as experts when dealing with topics they knew more about than he did. During an observation, one of the students addressed the issue of vernacular in response to a classmate's question. When I asked Mr. Frank how he felt about allowing the student to share, he replied:

I thought she could say it better than I could. And I think because of my cultural background, I don't have as strong a connection to African-American culture by light years as any kid that has grown up in an African-American family so when she says something about the way other people talk I think it's more authentic than if I say it as sort of an observer. (Personal communication, February 23, 2010)

One of his concerns was the ability of the girls in each section to grasp the depth of the text and the rationale for teaching such painful history. Additionally, he said he believed

that group dynamics impact the manner in which the class discussions occurred. Some groups are more engaged with the text and sensitive to the injustices than others (personal communication, February 23, 1010).

During one of the observations (observational field notes, January 12, 2010), Mr. Frank had to address the use of derogatory language and terminology used in the text. When students spoke of the characters in terms of “they” or “them”, Mr. Frank required them to say the names of those they were referring to. When a student referred to the characters as “colored people,” Mr. Frank did not address her word choice; he modeled the use of the term African-American in his response. During class readings, Mr. Frank spoke in a somewhat southern accent depicting the dialect/vernacular the author used when reading aloud from the text. When the word nigger was used in the text, Mr. Frank intervened before the student who was reading aloud had the opportunity to say the word, he simply stated, “You don’t have to say this out loud because it’s pretty offensive” (observational field notes, January 12, 2010).

When asked about his experiences with vernacular, he responded:

Political hot spots... The fact is that most of them live in a world where there's very little exposure to derogatory terms of race, which isn't to say that there isn't racism. I do need to explain to them that not all words that begin with N mean the same thing. There are these various terms and some are very derisive and others in their day were considered fairly sort of neutral in a way. So there's that teaching element that I have to... this year I needed to do more about it with some groups and that they were a little bit like disoriented at the beginning. I don't have a problem dealing with those things because they're sort of up front. It is easy for students to say, there's no racism today and students always say that. And sometimes I give them examples. I'll give them an article to read about some act of violence but it's a tricky thing how much graphic information I want to share with them without causing them to be afraid or just sort of terrified. (Personal communication, May 5, 2010)

Mr. Frank went on to share his concerns about causing students to “shut down” if he goes too far in attempting to explain things or pushing them to fully understand the text in a deeper way than they may be capable of at the middle grade age. He was also concerned with the language used during class discussions; he cautioned his students to be thoughtful about the way they phrase things so as not to offend others. He repeatedly addressed the use of “they” and “them” by asking the speaker to whom they were referring.

Mr. Frank fully recognized his position of power as the teacher and as a white male and is cognizant of the effects of each. During the stimulated recall interview, Mr. Frank acknowledged the “white male bubble” that he lives in and his sensitivity to being a male teacher in an all-female school. He stated:

I'm a powerful person in my own classroom. And I have to be careful not to use my own power to completely squelch because it's not that I think their view should be promoted, it's that I recognize that the way that they will be able to see things differently and other students who may come from a similar framework isn't by being attacked but by being compelled to thoroughly explain and delve into what their thoughts and ideas are. Because very few of them [students] would ever say I'm an openly racist person. On the other hand, they've been raised, as was I, with many racist assumptions about who people are and why they act the way they do and how they identify themselves. (Personal communication, February 23, 2010)

Mr. Frank was very aware of the powerful position he was in as a teacher and a white male. Being self-aware, he did not take his position of power lightly. Nor did he shy away from opportunities to address the injustices and unfair treatment presented in the texts that he taught. He appeared to accept his role as a teacher to include sociopolitical responsibilities (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006). In doing so, he drew upon his experiences, his own and students' knowledge, author information and intent to frame

the socio-political context on his teaching of *Roll of Thunder Hear my Cry* (Mathis, 2001).

Ms. Villanelle

I observed Ms. Villanelle teach two texts, which were identified by LMS identified as multicultural, *The House on Mango Street* (Sandra Cisneros, 1984) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harper Lee, 1960), to two sections of seventh grade students. The text descriptions are provided in Chapter 4. The nine observations included fifteen instructional episodes. Each of the texts contained cultural content, some of which was implicit. However, Ms. Villanelle carefully focused student attention to the various cultural issues presented in each of the texts. It is important to note that there was a significant focus upon gender roles in Ms. Villanelle's teaching of the two multicultural texts.

Content integration (Banks, 1994), was the primarily witnessed enactment of Ms. Villanelle's teaching of both seventh grade multicultural texts. Content integration (Banks, 1994) deals with the degree to which teachers use content and examples from cultures and groups to exemplify key concepts, generalities, and issues in the subject areas. The knowledge construction process illustrates how teachers help students to recognize, examine, and find out how the biases, frames of reference, and point of view influence the ways in which knowledge is created (Banks, 1996). Within this dimension, students learn how to construct knowledge. Ms. Villanelle used the multicultural texts to teach her students to analyze literature through discussion, literary devices, and

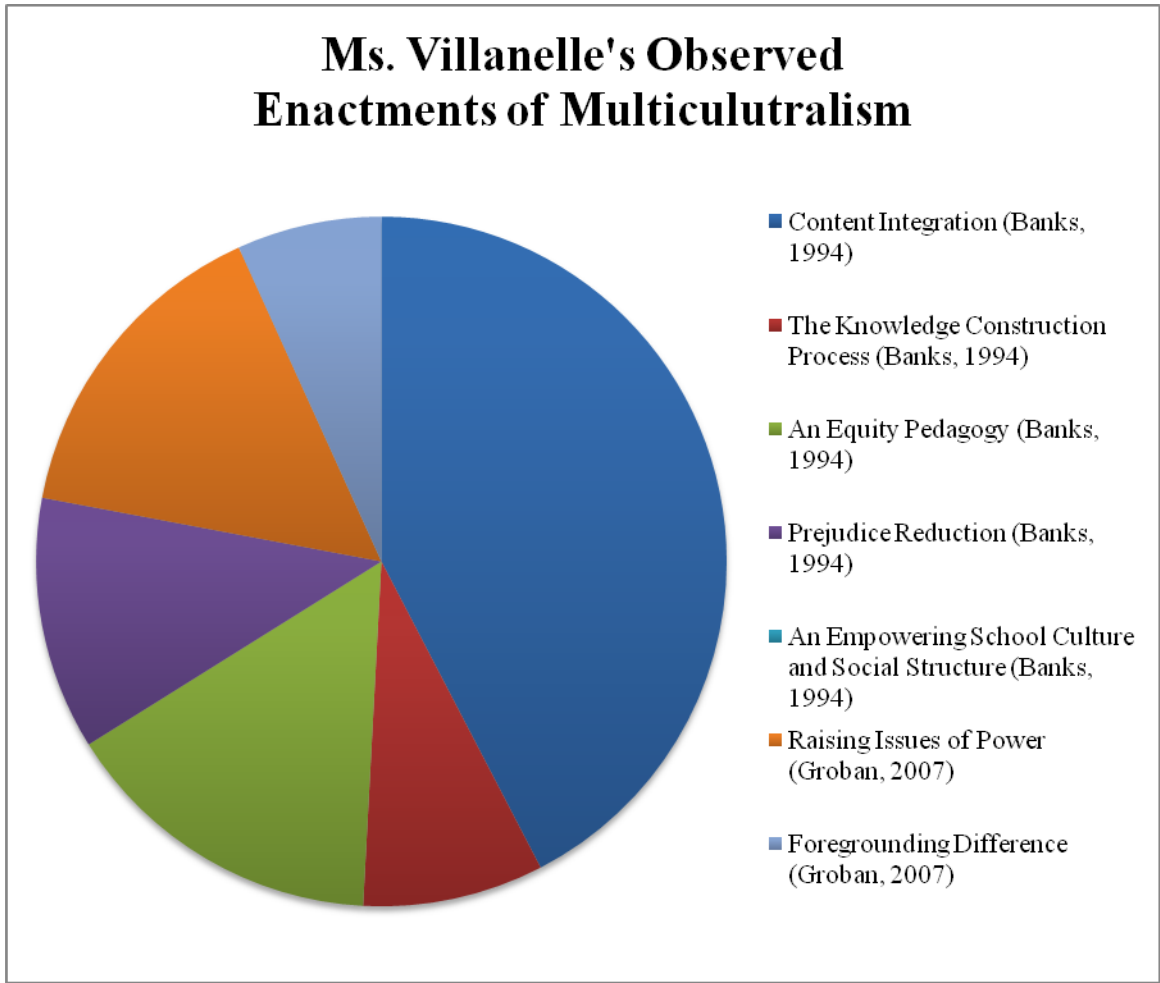


Figure 3: Ms. Villanelle's Observed Enactments of Multiculturalism

perspective, taking the aforementioned exemplify the multicultural dimension of content integration (Banks, 1994). The remaining dimensions of multicultural education were not witnessed during my observations of Ms. Villanelle's teaching.

Content integration (Banks, 1994) was observed twenty-five times, prejudice reduction was observed seven times, and the knowledge construction process (Banks, 1994) was witnessed five times. Ms. Villanelle raised issues of power (Groban, 2007) nine times, and foregrounded difference (Groban, 2007) four times. When asked to identify the multicultural texts she taught, Ms. Villanelle said, "... if you ask me which of

the texts that I teach that are multicultural text I think they all are” (personal communication, April 23, 2010).

Throughout each of the nine observations, Ms. Villanelle utilized the content integration dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) more than twice during each instructional episode. While engaged with *The House on Mango Street*, students were expected to identify characters, important vocabulary, major themes and events, and literary devices, as well as develop discussion questions. Similarly, while reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, students were expected to identify characters and their traits, think about the setting and how it related to text events and consider the narrator’s voice or point of view.

Ms. Villanelle’s enactments of the knowledge construction process included interjecting the following during one discussion of *The House on Mango Street*; she attempted to explain the immigrant status of the various characters and how segregation affected their lives. Issues related to gender roles, housing, and schooling were the focus of a number of the teacher-led discussions in Ms. Villanelle’s classroom. During the student presentations, Ms. Villanelle would at times suspend the discussions to ensure that student misinterpretations or misconceptions did not go unaddressed.

During the vignette presentations connected to the reading of *The House on Mango Street*, the students shared their interpretations and posed self-generated questions to the entire class for discussion. Ms. Villanelle directed the students attention to page forty-five of the text, “This seems like déjà vu... It’s the house again. Why is this house topic so upsetting for her?” One of the students replied, “She really wants a nice house and I think she kind of realizes that it might not happen.” Ms. Villanelle asked, “Or what

do other people think, really?” Another student added, “They don’t think she’s ever gonna have a nice house but she doesn’t want to admit that she has ever lived there...”

Ms. Villanelle interrupted with, “Is this house the nun is pointing to her house?” The student continued, “No, I don’t know. She kind of thinks that... if I were her I think that the nun thought that I was not as good as I was...” Ms. Villanelle affirmed the student’s response then asked, “Is the house just a house to Esperanza? Is it just about money and what she can afford?” Another student answered, “It’s kind of like her status, like what she can afford... the reason she wants a house so bad is because she always wants more than what she has, I think.” Ms. Villanelle asked, “Is that bad to want more than what you have?” The same student replied, “Sometimes, I guess like in her condition I guess its kind of okay but... not really, because I think she should be happy with what she has. She should be happy that she has a family and stuff and I don’t think she really realizes the important things in life.” Ms. Villanelle attempted to get the students to dig deeper, she asked, “But is it just a house to her? Is it all about the physical building, I think you said a lot of important things but is it just about the house...brick and stone where you go home to sleep at night?” She called on a student, whose hand was raised, the student said, “I think that she doesn’t think of it as a house but as a home... like house is just another building but home is like a permanent place where you really want to be I think she wants a nicer house where all of her family can be and everyone just stays there and doesn’t move anymore She wants to be in a good neighborhood and have real friends and wants to live...” Ms. Villanelle interrupted, “Does she not have real friends?” The student responded, “Well, I think... but I don’t know.”

Ms. Villanelle directed this question to the entire class again, “What do you think, just a house?” (Observational field notes, November 16, 2009). She repeatedly asked her students to consider the customs of the characters’ culture in order to gain deep understandings of decisions and behaviors.

During my observations of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ms. Villanelle interjected in the early discussions of the story’s setting to ensure her students had clear understanding of the era and how it impacted the lives of the characters. She told the class that there was both support for and resentment of the Jim Crow Laws; she went on to explain the implications of the racism and segregation of the 1930s. She emphasized the issues related to a white character’s criminal defense of a black character. She added:

It’s in the south in the 1930s and we’ve talked about the context... where there was a lot of resentment... certainly in this part of the world but in a lot of parts of this country still... we talked about Jim Crow Laws and how there’s a lot of support for that position... of segregation and racism that is supported by... the laws that were in effect. (Observational field notes, February 3, 2010)

Ms. Villanelle also led the students in deepening their understandings of how prejudice and racism were embedded into the culture in a pervasive way. She highlighted the fact that due to racism, prejudice, and Jim Crow Laws there was little confidence in the efficacy of the criminal justice system. It appeared that Ms. Villanelle did so in an attempt to deepen the students’ understanding of injustice.

I witnessed Ms. Villanelle enact tenets of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) in her teaching as well. Raising issues of power and foregrounding difference were observed on four occasions. Most of the issues of power raised by Ms. Villanelle in the discussions related to *The House on Mango Street* were focused upon gender issues. There were opportunities to highlight issues of power related to poverty and injustice;

however, they were not the primary focus of Ms. Villanelle's teaching during my observations.

Once, she focused her students' attention upon the symbolism utilized to discuss disparities between the haves and the have-nots. One of the vignettes discussed a character's plans to treat those considered by most to be bums with respect by showing deference of position in her home. The character suggested that the bums be given a place of honor within the home instead of the customary basement/cellar location. Ms. Villanelle interjected, providing deeper understanding of the vignette by clarifying the author's use of symbolism. She emphasized the power differential between those with money and the poor, and the manner in which decisions are often made for the poor without regard for their desires. Issues of power were also raised in a discussion of the roles and expectations of adults versus those of children.

Through the imagery used to denote a female character's dependence upon her male counterpart, she pointed out the supposed helplessness of females in the text and in society. Ms. Villanelle engaged the students in a discussion about the roles of males and females in the culture. She made references to damsels in distress and Prince Charming, some men's' desire for dependent women and disdain for independent women, and how some women are forced to make the decision between being strong and independent versus being in a love relationship. She called students' attention to the use of allusion with the story of Rapunzel, highlighting the power differential in male-female relationships.

During a discussion of an immigrant text character that died and was without identification, the students did not seem to understand the significance of his lack of

identification. Ms. Villanelle emphasized the reality and implications of illegal immigrants in this country. She showed how the families they leave behind are impacted and how life is very different for them. She explained in part:

the sadness in this vignette is huge because this man had come to another country to work to send money home and then imagine being his family back in...probably Mexico and you hear from him and he sends money home and he's trying to support his family and give them the means to survive and all of a sudden, it stops... and you never know what happened...imagine being in that position and your family member had gone to work and you just suddenly never hear from them again... and there's just no way for anybody to know who needs to be contacted...because he doesn't have that legal identity here in America. This is another clue about how important names are being developed to be.
(Observational field notes, November 23, 2009)

Ms. Villanelle took the time to draw their attention to what the students originally seemed to view as unimportant when they read and initially discussed on their own, thus deepening their understanding.

During a prejudice discussion related to a character portrayed in *To Kill a Mockingbird* as eccentric, Ms. Villanelle drew the students' attention to the fact that prejudice remained a recurring theme throughout the text. She reminded the students that judging others was a form of prejudice, particularly when the judgments translated into mistreating others. Mrs. Villanelle then asked the students to give text evidence of various forms of prejudice depicted. Additionally, during the monitoring of small group discussions of the same text, Ms. Villanelle admonished her students to pay attention to the many types of prejudice presented in the story.

As the students shared their thoughts, Ms. Villanelle summarized and added depth when necessary. One student shared she felt characters in the text were judging another character because he was different. "I thought prejudice is because of fear... they were prejudice against Boo Radley because a lot of people were judging him because he stayed

in the house and because he was different". Ms. Villanelle affirmed the students' idea and then asked, "Is there another character that people showed prejudice not because of race?" Kel added, "Tom Robinson because of the trial?" Jessica added, "I think there was a lot of prejudice... Atticus because of the trial and people were talking about him... shows that some people were more opposed to or prejudice about what he's doing and why he's doing it and not just race". Ms. Villanelle affirmed and summarized, "it's not prejudice against Atticus for standing up for someone of a different race." Another student added, "Mr. Belfus Raymond, he lives with Black people and people assume he's always drunk but really, if you took a closer look you'd see all he drinks is Coke... he does that because that's his choice...he chose to do that consciously..." Ms. Villanelle interjected, "And he also chose to pretend like he's drunk all of the time... Why did he do that?" A student responded stating that Belfus Raymond did that in order to make people think he didn't know what he was doing she struggled with clarifying her point, she stumbled saying, "it gave people a reason..." Ms. Villanelle clarified, "To kind of let it slide, I think, to not pick on him as much. Its his way of protecting himself against the town for the choices that he's made to make himself happy, so he's got this whole cover of being a drunk so that the town doesn't attack him... so this gives him a way to protect himself" (Observational field notes, March 10, 2010).

As Banks (1994) recommended, Ms. Villanelle encouraged her students to view story events, problems, and concepts from multiple perspectives, including, race, class, and gender. However, while it appeared that Ms. Villanelle focused upon the cultural content in both of the multicultural texts, she primarily utilized the cultural content to teach literary devices and engage her students in perspective-sharing discussions. As

stated by some of the students of color who participated in the focus group, Ms. Villanelle appeared to value multicultural literature; however, her understanding of the cultural content issues was not fully conveyed.

Relationship between Philosophy and Pedagogy

Ms. Villanelle's focus was upon analyzing literature, with specific emphasis upon skill development, literacy devices, and personal perspectives. Students were expected to identify the use of symbolism, allusion, and imagery found in the texts. These were the foci of the observed pedagogical practices as well as the manner in which Ms. Villanelle described her literature-teaching philosophy.

Ms. Villanelle's assignments reflected her thoughts about teaching literature. She consistently required her students to analyze various aspects of the text being read. These expectations were for written assignments and class discussion. Students were not allowed to state their opinions without carefully constructed arguments and text evidence. Discussion and student presentation were significant parts of the instructional activity during my observations of Ms. Villanelle's teaching.

Ms. Villanelle's philosophy of language arts teaching can be found in Chapter 4. When asked to share her thoughts about how literature should be taught, she stated,

literature teaching I think is important to make sure that the students are making meaning out of it in the sense of getting actively involved with the text, which is why I believe in coding and discussion questions and a lot of group discussion, either whole class or small group discussion. I want them to be actively engaged in finding meaning in the text. I want them probing and looking for how it relates to some bigger ideas dogmatically... then have the opportunity to... hash out meaning and see what other people thought and test their own opinions against their peers and against myself... their peers are the real test for them at this age. (Personal communication, April 23, 2010)

Ms. Villanelle's stated philosophy of language teaching and the observed actions were coherent. She continuously engaged her students in meaningful discussions about the text being read and attempted to provide deeper understanding when necessary. At no time during my observations did I witness students seated at their desks unengaged. There was always a buzz of text-related conversation in both small group and whole class discussions. She encouraged her students by saying, "... remember that you guys are detectives on these vignettes...you wanna really dive in and get as much as you can out of them" (observational field notes, November 6, 2009).

During my classroom observations, the students in Ms. Villanelle's classes were reading and thinking critically, involved in activities designed to assist them in analyzing literature, making sense out of what they were reading, and expressing themselves freely. There was significant discussion of literary devices and language usage. Students were required to give text evidence for statements made during text discussions, presentations, and written assignments. Writing in the text to designate codes, symbols, and vocabulary was expected from all students. In addition to classroom discussions (large and small group), students presented their work, used anticipation guides, and participated in literature circles.

Ms. Villanelle repeatedly asked her students to read beyond the words on the page; she reminded them to underline the symbols represented in the vignette and the presentation. She would add to the discussions that appeared not to get to the points she wanted expressed by saying things like, "It's a little deeper though... it's true in the context of the vignette... do you see how things always have double meanings? That's what it probably means but what else is going on in the context of this vignette?"

(observational field notes, November 6, 2009). Ms. Villanelle provided clarity to her interpretations by asking questions. Even when a student's response was slightly off base, she remained encouraging and attempted to refocus the student presenter toward greater accuracy.

The majority of the literature discussions in Ms. Villanelle's classroom were teacher-led and teacher-directed, as were the discussions observed in the Adams (1995) study. Even when the students were presenting, Ms. Villanelle facilitated the subsequent discussions by posing questions and concluding the discussion with attempts at summing up the views shared. On the other hand, Ms. Villanelle encouraged her students to see the world through the perspectives of the characters they encountered in the stories (Louie, 2006). Doing so enhanced the students' abilities to deepen their understandings of the story through related discussions of how they would handle similar situations.

Examination of Ms. Villanelle's pedagogical artifacts revealed significant focus upon close reading, point of view/perspectives, and defending opinions instead of simply stating text facts. Inference and explanation were focused upon as well as analytic writing. In *The House on Mango Street* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, she encouraged her students to "see the world through the characters' perspectives and identify the values that shaped the characters' conflict resolution strategies" (Landt, 2006, p.439). Ms. Villanelle provided rubrics for assignment grading and required her students to consider whether or not they met their writing goals, in addition to what they might adjust for their next assignments. The majority of the written assignment questions posed required students to explain their answers. The final *To Kill a Mockingbird* assignment was a multi-paragraph analytic essay, which required a thesis statement and topic sentence,

both of which were required to be opinions and not fact. The topic sentence was to clearly and directly support the thesis statement.

The focal students shared that the significance and weight of the analytic essay suggested the importance placed upon the multicultural text and denoted the value the teachers placed upon multicultural literature.

Experiences of the Teaching of Multicultural Literature

Ms. Villanelle did not miss an opportunity to highlight and expand upon cultural content presented in the text even when her students appeared to miss its importance. During an interview, she said, “I think I try to be sensitive if there are sensitive parts about the text but I wouldn't shy away from anything in a text” (personal communication, November 23, 2010). However, it seemed to be a consensus of the student participants that while Ms. Villanelle appeared to value multicultural literature, she did not always appear to “understand it.” During the focus group, Katie shared, “But I feel like sometimes when she's talking about racial differences and like in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, like Becca was saying sometimes she's sound like unsure and she's not very competent almost about what she says”. Louise added, “And I also think that my English teacher tries to interpret what they were feeling at the time but she really doesn't know. Like she pretends like she knows and she tries to feed that to us...” (Personal communication, March 20, 2010). The student participants agreed that Ms. Villanelle was willing to initiate and facilitate discussions involving cultural content, but her lack of expertise was apparent. Their thoughts about Ms. Villanelle’s full understanding of cultural content may have stemmed from her unwillingness to act as the dispenser of knowledge: she

allowed them to construct knowledge through discussion with one another and interaction with the text.

To illustrate her straightforward approach to dealing with cultural content, during one of the observations Ms. Villanelle asked the students to consider the reasons particular text characters chose to come to America. She asked the class to consider the facts surrounding immigration. She posed several reasons: persecution, quest for new opportunities and availability of employment. Ms. Villanelle posed questions regularly but rarely provided what might be viewed as answers. She appeared to want her students to engage actively with and analyze the text without adding her personal interpretations.

During the reading of *The House on Mango Street*, some derogatory language referring to one of the Mexican characters was presented in the text. As the students read from and discussed that portion of the text, none of them appeared to notice the language or felt the need to question its use. With her focus on analyzing text, Ms. Villanelle stopped the discussion and highlighted the term. She stated,

we need to understand that Geraldo is not a legal immigrant, he's someone who is here working and sending money home... he's an illegal immigrant... and there's some derogatory language that is used in the middle on page 66, these terms umm... brazier and wetbacks...these are derogatory terms that are being used to reference.... (Observational field notes, November 23, 2009)

She reminded the students to keep the importance of names in mind as they continued to read.

When asked what she was attempting to achieve, Ms. Villanelle stated:

we talk a lot about language and we talk about connotation and denotation... I think that a lot of times there's a lot of vocabulary coming up and it doesn't even register on their consciousness but especially when they ask about something or when we see something that's significant in the context where it appears, you don't want it to register in their understanding as an appropriate term. I would rather highlight it as what it is and have them [the students] have some

understanding of... look at how it's being used in the context of this vignette. This is a person to the majority is nameless without an identity and yet they would make an assumption by using this term. But look at that, can you see how that's meaningful in this context. There's several times throughout the year that we do *Mockingbird* too, so we spend a good amount of time talking about derogatory terminology and the force that it has and why the author chose to include it and they need to think about that. They need to be thinking about language and how people use language and for what purposes and with what intentions... (Personal communication, December 17, 2009)

Ms. Villanelle also shared her belief in having the discussions about language utilized in text because such discussions aid in deepening students' understanding. Most of the students who attend LMS have little to no experience with certain types of name calling, specifically those related to Latino culture. Ms. Villanelle offered an additional focus of her literature teaching philosophy: "to hit all different levels... I don't expect that they're going to master..." (personal communication, December 17, 2009); however, she noted the importance of exposure, which may make a difference immediately or sometime in the future.

During the reading of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Ms. Villanelle repeatedly instructed the students to pay attention to the prejudice presented throughout the text. This focus was not relegated to racial prejudice alone, Ms. Villanelle called students' attention to various forms of prejudice, gender, eccentrics, and economics. When asked about the rationale for highlighting prejudice within *To Kill a Mockingbird*, she stated,

In part our English curriculum is focused on helping them to understand the difference between the subject or developing theme. So we really want them to investigate when they're looking at something or tracking something that's happening in the book, what is the author's message or lesson about that? So with prejudice in *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, the author explores that in so many different ways, which makes it a really great text for the seventh graders at that particular level to be able to connect with different kinds of prejudice. (Personal communication, March 11, 2010)

Her focus on everyday forms of prejudice was purposeful; Ms. Villanelle wanted her students to recognize it and discuss it because she felt that they did not have true personal experiences with prejudice.

In addition to the focus upon prejudice, gender issues surfaced in Ms. Villanelle's teaching of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. On numerous occasions, she called students' attention to the author's mentioning of gender roles. During a point-of-view discussion of an incidence of violence between two characters, a female hitting a male, a student mentioned the notion that boys could not hit girls. Ms. Villanelle interposed, "That's gender roles right there... you're applying today's gender roles... girls don't fight, so you can't hit a girl because they're weak... really it's gender roles... that you know rule is gender roles" (observational field notes, February 3, 2010).

Ms. Villanelle called the students' attention to the way gender roles were depicted in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. During a discussion about societal gender expectations during the time of the text, she asked, "So whatever society says is right?" (observational field notes, February 9, 2010). This led to a point-of-view discussion about gender. Ms. Villanelle questioned their ideas about gender differences related to maturity, strength, and acceptable activity. She challenged them to focus on the language choices they made in reference to characters' actions and their gender.

Ms. Villanelle's thoughts about student lack of exposure to all types of prejudice were fueled by her misinterpretation of the students' feelings of being an inclusive community. The student participants spent a significant portion of our focus group discussion referencing the pseudo community they were being educated in. Again, Ms. Villanelle's naiveté about cultural issues present in the curriculum and students' lives

surfaced. It is important to note that while Ms. Villanelle did not shy away from highlighting and leading students in discussions of cultural content, the students of color who participated in the focus group for this study misunderstood her efforts. This issue is further explained in the next chapter.

Ms. Villanelle's teaching fostered analytical thinking in her students; she encouraged them to question the text and others' interpretation by engaging them in discussions, which allowed multiple perspectives to be shared. Ms. Villanelle's commitment to the sharing of various perspectives through discussion afforded her students opportunities to understand "how their beliefs and values are formed and why other people think differently" (Thein, Beach & Parks, p. 55). She seemed to feel personally responsible for the ensuring students' understanding of the information shared in the books they read and clearly viewed discussion as a necessary tool.

This sense of responsibility was not limited to the cultural content encountered in the text. She provided clarity related to referenced allusions and time periods as well. Additionally, she actively engaged her students in discussion and motivated and nurtured them. Ms. Villanelle's feeling of responsibility was witnessed in her concerns with her students' abilities to exist and work harmoniously in their classroom and world; she did not allow demeaning depictions or racist or sexist language presented in the stories to go unchecked (Manning, 2000).

Ms. Glass

I observed Ms. Glass teach one text identified by LMS as multicultural, *A Raisin in the Sun* (Lorraine Hansberry, 1959). The text description is provided in Chapter 4. There were five observations of *A Raisin in the Sun*; Ms. Glass taught two sections of

eighth grade students, and I observed her teach one section twice and the other three times. There were a total of ten instructional episodes observed.

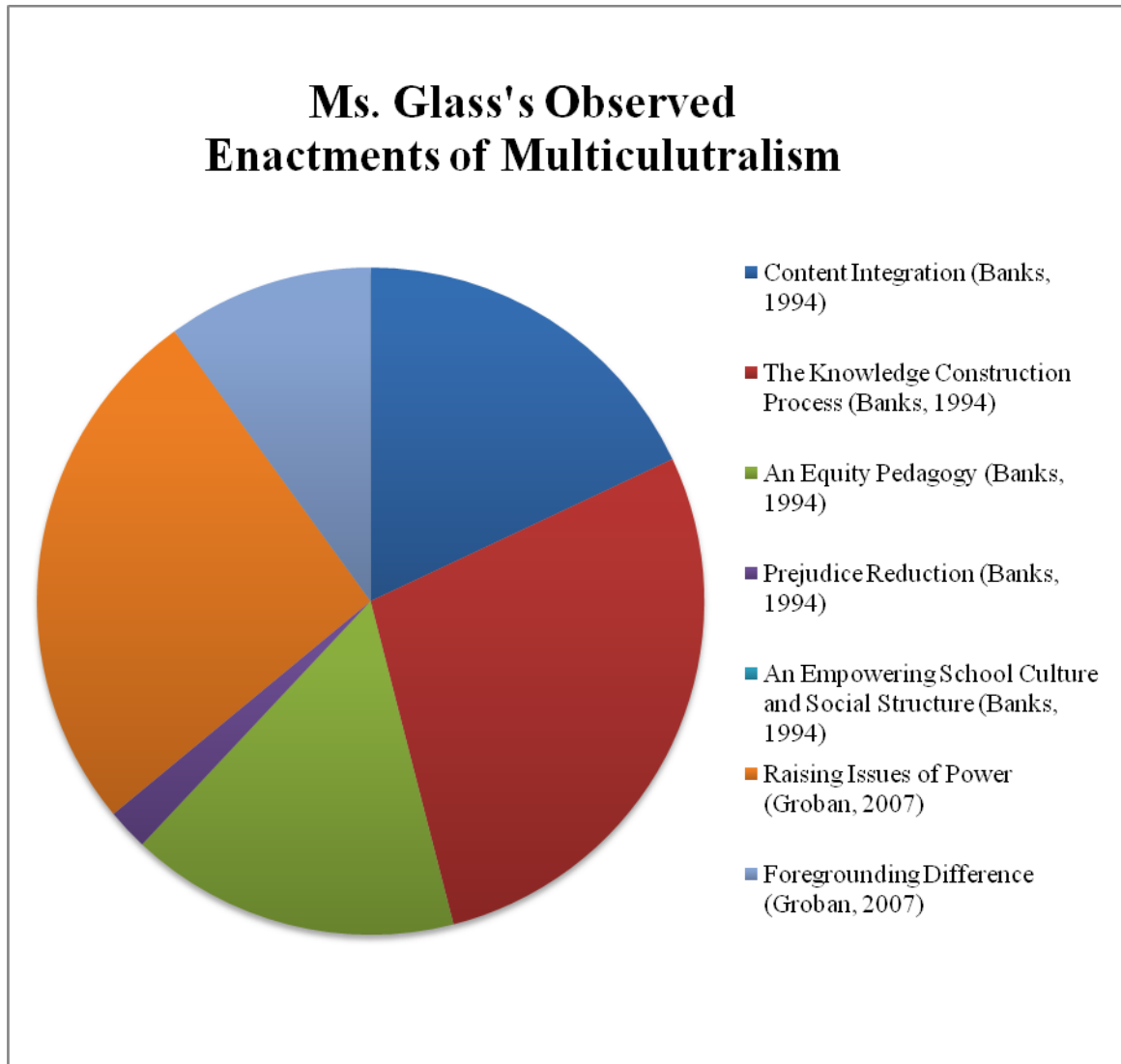


Figure 4: Ms. Glass' Observed Enactments of Multiculturalism

A Raisin in the Sun is replete with cultural content; Ms. Glass maintained a relaxed classroom atmosphere as she led them in a dramatic reading of the text. *A Raisin*

in the Sun was only read during class meetings; no reading of the text was done outside of the classroom. Ms. Glass assigned roles each class meeting, and most of the students eagerly volunteered to read. This required Ms. Glass to keep track of which students had participated in the dramatic reading during the previous class meeting.

Ms. Glass primarily enacted the knowledge construction dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994). This dimension was witnessed fourteen times, content integration a total of nine times, and prejudice reduction were witnessed on one occasion. The tenets of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) were also employed in her teaching. Ms. Glass raised issues of power thirteen times and foregrounded difference on five occasions. The only dimension of multiculturalism that was not witnessed during my observations of Ms. Glass' teaching was an empowering school culture and social structure. This should not be viewed as a missing component of Ms. Glass' teaching as the focus of this study was not The Lynn Morgan School.

I observed Ms. Glass teach *A Raisin in the Sun* to two sections of eighth grade students on five occasions; the observations included ten instructional episodes. Ms. Glass primarily enacted the knowledge construction process dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) throughout the observed teaching. This occurred a total of fourteen times, the content integration dimension was utilized nine times, and prejudice reduction was enacted once. Ms. Glass utilized the content integration dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) throughout the observed teaching. She called upon students to "recap... because we have several different conflicts going on" (observational field notes, March 8, 2010). She not only she drew students' attention to the conflicts

presented in the text, but she discussed the use of metaphor as well as literal and figurative meanings.

Content integration (Banks, 1994) deals with the degree to which teachers use content and examples from cultures and groups to exemplify key concepts, generalities, and issues in the subject areas. During my observations of Ms. Glass' teaching of *A Raisin in the Sun*, her enactments of content integration included identifying conflicts presented in the story, clarifying character relationships, literary devices, theme identification and symbolism.

During one of my observations of *A Raisin in the Sun*, Ms. Glass halted a class discussion to ensure that all of the students had a full understanding of a derogatory term used in the text. She asked the students if they knew and understood what it meant to refer to someone as an Uncle Tom. In addition to posing that question, she informed the students that they needed to know where the term came from and understand the significance. During this discussion, a student shared information she learned in history class about the term. Ms. Glass encouraged the students to share such information and commended them for their accuracy. It appeared that if Ms. Glass had not intervened, the students would have continued to read and not address the use of the term.

Additionally, Ms. Glass explained the difference between Africans and African-Americans. She stated that Africans were not introduced into the American slave culture and that, therefore, although there was a shared racial past, the two cultures were fundamentally different. She went on to say, "What we are talking about here is the amount of difference that can come into cultures that people would lump together" (observational field notes, March 10, 2010). Again, she addressed an assumption and led

students to consider that simply because people were of the same race did not mean that they were alike.

Ms. Glass intervened in a discussion about the use of a song title in the text. The students made reference to “Owimoweh” as a song from the popular Disney movie, *The Lion King*. The students began to sing the song Enthusiastically. Ms. Glass enacted the knowledge construction dimension of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) by providing her students background information about the term and the song. She told them that the word “Owimoweh” was made popular in the 1950s. She challenged the students’ assumption that the term was humorous and the song relatively new. The information she provided and the impact will be discussed in the experiences of teaching multicultural literature section that follows.

Raising issues of power (Groban, 2007) was the primary enactment of critical multiculturalism in Ms. Glass’ observed teaching. During a discussion of a conflict between married characters in the text, she called students’ attention to stereotyping of the abilities of males and females, pointing out that men were viewed as more capable than women and that such thoughts established a significant power differential. Ms. Glass also highlighted additional issues of power related to the marital relationship; she led the students in a discussion about who held the power in the relationship.

Ms. Glass drew the students’ attention to one of the supplemental readings related to the portion of the text in which issues of power (Groban, 2007) were addressed. She asked the students if they understood the metaphors presented and highlighted the power women had in regard to bringing life (a baby) into the world. She led the students in a discussion to deepen their understanding of the author’s purpose for including various

topics in the text. Ms. Glass also intervened to highlight the differences between the two texts that had been read at that point in the school year. She pointed out that in one of the texts the character conflicts were about class and gender; she asked the students to consider the racial conflicts presented in *A Raisin in the Sun*.

As the students read the play dramatically, the conflict between Walter and Beneatha became apparent. Ms. Glass stopped the discussion and asked what new conflicts were going on. “There’s this new conflict between Walter and Beneatha. What do find is going on?” Students shared what they believed the conflict was about. She wrote on the blackboard as she spoke, creating a chart with each character’s ideas about what should be done with the father’s insurance money. A student asked, “Isn’t it kind of funny that Walter is blaming Ruth for not supporting his dream and he’s not supporting his sister?” Ms. Glass added, “Right, she’s a woman and he’s a man... according to Walter’s theory, what?” A student responded, “Women support men.” Ms. Glass continued, “Yea, women support men and men go on and become a success... with this idea that when they become a success, they have something to bring back to the family. But here is Beneatha, she’s saying I’m gonna go and be a doctor. And what is the thing that Walter says to her?” Several of the students read the excerpt with Walter’s words. Ms. Glass emphasized the fact that Walter added that his sister should just be quiet. One student said, “He’s not very nice.” Another said, “He should shut up!” Another added emphatically, “He’s very chauvinistic.” (Observational field notes, March 8, 2010). Ms. Glass posed questions that led to vigorous discussions as illustrated in the abovementioned example.

Ms. Glass foregrounded difference (Groban, 2007) in her teaching; she intervened during the dramatic reading of the text to highlight the government's role in segregated housing. She addressed the students' assumptions that individuals determined housing and neighborhood selection and that the process was fair. Ms. Glass also provided background information related to the GI Bill, neighborhood ranking, and loan acquisition. She added that people of color were not able to live in white neighborhoods.

The government itself made laws that made housing in the suburbs available for people for cheaper than it cost to live in the city but it was also at that point there were a lot of neighborhoods that were specifically only available if you were white. So that you couldn't get access to the neighborhoods themselves if you were a person of color and then beyond that they rated neighborhoods based on color right and then the likelihood of getting a loan or how easy the loan would be or how good the loan would be depended on the kind of neighborhood you were living in or wanted to move into. (Personal communication, March 9, 2010)

Ms. Glass provided this information in an attempt to assist the students in understanding various aspects of the text being read. She also called her students' attention to "multigenerational deferral of dreams" (observational field notes, March 10, 2010), when she addressed the assumption that the family in the text could fulfill their dreams with little challenge. She led them in a discussion about the inequity that hindered blacks from obtaining certain things and reaching equal status with whites. Ms. Glass repeatedly referenced the similarities and differences between the previously read text and *A Raisin in the Sun*; one such reference was to the issues of classism, which surfaced in both texts.

Relationship between Philosophy and Pedagogy

The focus of Ms. Glass' teaching was largely upon addressing students' assumptions (based upon background or prior knowledge) related to text content; significant attention was paid to clarification and explanation discussions.

Ms. Glass said that developing critical thinkers who are capable of dissecting assumptions that affect understanding was important to her. She stated that it is her goal to assist her students in

analyzing maybe character motivation but where it comes from being able to understand what the author was saying about that particular person and why we might imagine what that person would do what they do and does it and where do motivations come from?... We spent a ton of time in class talking about that and figuring out what he was actually saying and trying to understand the significance in perceiving yourself not as an individual but as a part of human development. So really trying to deal with it on two levels of the universal human issues and while at the same time thinking about the way that race plays a role in how you experience our humanity within this time period, within this culture. (Personal communication, April 15, 2010)

Ms. Glass' description of her philosophy of language arts teaching can be found in Chapter 4. The classroom observations afforded me the opportunity to witness the links between Ms. Glass' stated philosophy and her actual teaching. When asked to explain the manner in which she preferred to teach literature, Ms. Glass replied:

I almost always taught in a discussion-based class preferably a round table set up as much as possible as oppose to like desk or rows a setting of all of us sitting together conversationally and so yes most classes are discussion based oriented around the study of the text but then allowing the external world to come into those world or personal ideas and anecdotes to come into those discussions so most classes do function that way. (Personal communication, April 15, 2010)

The philosophy stated by Ms. Glass and her teachings were directly related. Her classroom atmosphere was relaxed; students sat at their desks or on the floor as they engaged in the dramatic reading of *A Raisin in the Sun*. During each of my observations, Ms. Glass sat at a student desk and was positioned in the classroom as facilitator.

Ms. Glass did not hesitate to interject clarifying information into classroom discussions as she addressed the assumptions students brought to the reading and discussion of the text. She interjected information that required students to think

critically, and develop deep understandings of the text. It is interesting to note that Ms. Glass viewed her teaching of all texts as similar. She shared that her approach was:

basically exactly the same. That's what we do. They have questions that they're supposed to read or think about and then we just discussed and it's a pretty free form discussion that is based around the themes that I give to them or that they unearth from the text themselves. (Personal communication, March 15, 2010)

Disconfirming evidence existed; there was difference in the manner in which the two texts were taught. Ms. Glass pointed out that *A Raisin in the Sun* was only read in class, while the other text was primarily read for homework.

When asked the reason she chose to teach *A Raisin in the Sun* using dramatic reading, Ms. Glass explained:

Well, time, and also because it is a drama to have the opportunity to see it enacted and to be part of the enactment and to hear different voices and to be able to associate different characters with different voices and also to be able to hear the words spoken I think made it. I guess to treat its genre as an important factor. (Personal communication, March 15, 2010)

In addition to reading *A Raisin in the Sun*, the students were given supplemental reading materials, which were utilized to enrich the experience, and provided necessary background information. Ms. Glass provided the students with an allusion worksheet; each student was expected to research the allusion and provide information when the allusion appeared in the text. In addition to the allusion worksheet, students were also provided a packet of poetry that was assembled by the language arts teachers.

When students struggled with proper application of the allusions or misinterpretations of poetry connections, Ms. Glass did not hesitate to provide accurate information. The allusions were utilized to assist in providing text clarity and deep understanding. Ms. Glass shared her concerns about students accepting stereotypes and generalizations; she stated that when such issues occurred, she would stop the discussion

and remind the students not to generalize. As with one of the teachers in the Marusza (1998) study, most of the points of view expressed by Ms. Glass were her own. She often reinterpreted the students' shared perspectives of the text as well as their points of view.

Examination of Ms. Glass' pedagogical artifacts revealed significant emphasis upon quote identification, explanation, context, and allusion as well as author intent. The culminating project assignment related to *A Raisin in the Sun* was a quote test. Students were expected to identify the speaker of individual quotes and explain them. The explanations were to include theme, content, and context. Two of the focal students were in eighth grade and commented on the short period of time spent on *A Raisin in the Sun*, approximately three weeks as opposed to the three months spent reading *Jane Eyre*.

When asked to explain the rationale for the disproportionate amount of time spent on *A Raisin in the Sun*, Ms. Glass replied, "Jane Eyre a much more difficult text, more difficult and dense text that required a little bit more time" (personal communication, April 15, 2010). She continued to note that *A Raisin in the Sun* was an eighty-page text and *Jane Eyre* contained more than three hundred pages. The students did not miss the difference in the length of time spent on the two texts. Ms. Glass acknowledged that fact: "They did comment on the fact that they're like we took 18 months to read *Jane Eyre* and we read *A Raisin in the Sun* in like 2 1/2 weeks. What is up with that? So they did notice that it went much quicker" (personal communication, April 15, 2010). Ms. Glass seemed to believe that the students understood and agreed with the disparity; however, the focal students did not view this as a sign that Ms. Glass valued multicultural literature. However, Ms. Glass believed that the fact that since the reading of *A Raisin in the Sun* was coupled with a civil rights unit in history, the students viewed multicultural literature

as prioritized at LMS. The students of color who participated in the focus group discussion did not corroborate this thought.

When students mispronounced words while participating in dramatic readings, Ms. Glass did not correct their pronunciation. On one occasion, she defined the word without addressing the mispronunciation. The use of dialect was not addressed; some students read using the written vernacular and others did not. When a student prematurely asked questions about new characters introduced in the text, Ms. Glass simply said, “Just keep reading, it’ll make sense” (observational field notes, March 8, 2010). Ms. Glass appeared to highlight gender issues repeatedly, sometimes to the neglect of racial issues during the reading of *A Raisin in the Sun*.

Experiences of the Teaching of Multicultural Literature

Ms. Glass stated that *A Raisin in the Sun* was supplemented with related African-American literature, “poems, short stories, and non-fiction civil rights stuff” (personal communication, April 15, 2010). Students were assigned various readings, which were incorporated into class discussions throughout the reading of the text. Ms. Glass felt her students enjoyed reading *A Raisin in the Sun* more than *Jane Eyre* (the previously read text in the eighth grade curriculum); she considered their affinity for *A Raisin in the Sun* was primarily due to the fact that, “... it’s more modern... easier to read... They like the experience of doing it as drama together in class” (personal communication, April 15, 2010). The reading of *A Raisin in the Sun* was coupled with a civil rights unit in history.

Ms. Glass considered her experiences with the teaching of multicultural literature had been positive. She added:

Again I try to be conscious of the whole idea that these are just texts and that any culture that we find in a novel is multicultural to the extent that it's not us. And so

I guess I do try to see texts that way... that every culture that we encounter in fiction is in some ways the other. That said, I'm certainly aware of it when I'm teaching outside of my own race more so than I am when I'm teaching outside of my own class or gender or even I guess I would put sexual orientation and race on the same level for myself when I think about my own being the other and how the conscious effort that I have to put into making sure that I am not speaking from an unconscious place in myself. I think that those are the two, race and sexual orientation places, that I have to make sure that I'm being conscientious and conscious in things that I say and ways that I offer ideas to the class. But beyond that, my real hope is to for students to be able to experience it in the same way that they would experience any other text. At the same time learning to talk about subjects that are not always easy or comfortable to talk about because there is taboo around talking about things like race, class, gender, all of that stuff. So trying to acknowledge the taboo but then defuse it a little bit and say you don't have to be freaked out about talking about this stuff. It's there, it is, just talk about it. It's a part of life and if you try to push it away, it's going to come back in ways that you can't anticipate and that you won't be in any kind of control of. (Personal communication, April 15, 2010)

The above is another example of Ms. Glass' thoughts that were not corroborated by the focal students during the focus group discussion. One of the students said that the things Ms. Glass shared with me and the way that she acted during my observations were for my benefit and not commensurate with her actions when I was not present (personal communication March 20, 2010).

One of the sections of eight grade students did not have any students of color.

When asked if there were differences in the way that she addressed the cultural content in the text, Ms. Glass shared that she is conscious of the fact that some text discussions needed to be handled differently. She acknowledged her concern:

I have to make sure it doesn't turn into an objectification of the other. I feel that--and students are naturally more sensitive when there are students of color in the class. It's a real life reminder that this is people that we're talking about. Not just characters, not just objects. And so just to--can be sort consistent in the reminder that feeling doesn't enter the room--the objectification feeling. You bring it back to the text and the people in the text but then also to make sure that generalizations aren't occurring that can be without stopping and saying, well let's not generalize or whatever. So yeah, I would say trying harder to avoid objectification. (Personal communication, March 15, 2010)

During a class discussion of *A Raisin in the Sun*, Ms. Glass highlighted the issue of abortion mentioned in the text. It did not appear that the students were going to ask any questions about the reference; I asked Ms. Glass to share her rationale for interjecting and bringing the discussion of abortion to the fore, and she responded, “I guess maybe the fact of it being so quickly glossed over when it is such a big deal. And it is so lightly touched upon and really only vaguely alluded to in the text” (personal communication, April 15, 2010). She pointed out that, at the time of the story, abortion was illegal, and led the students in a discussion of the dangers of a woman seeking an abortion. In an attempt to address the erroneous assumptions about abortion and the issues surrounding the topic.

Ms. Glass asked the students to share their thoughts about female doctors possible willingness to perform abortions. One student shared, “Because a if male doctor was arrested it would be really bad for his practice but if a she doctor was arrested... nobody would probably really go to her because men were superior and people thought they would do a better job anyway so it really wouldn’t have made a difference”. Ms. Glass responded, “Even if you’re a woman and you may not be doing a lot of business, you wouldn’t want to go to jail... why do you think a woman doctor would risk it more than a man?” In an attempt to clarify her statement, the student added, “They [female doctors] can’t get any other kind of job because no one would want to go to a female doctor... they know how it’s a tough choice and they could help people go through it”. Ms. Glass asked, “Okay so you’re saying either that they’re not getting much business as a lady doctor anyway or that the female doctors would understand better what the mother’s were going through”. Another student shared, “Could it have to do with like women how

they're not given much opportunity?" Ms. Glass asked, "So like they say I think I'll become an abortion doctor?" The student responded, "If it's the only thing they could be..." Ms. Glass reminded the class, "But, its not something you can be, its illegal" (Observational field notes, March 11, 2010). She provided additional information about the makeup of the Supreme Court and how that appeared to be the reason that a woman's right to have control of her body was minimal.

During a text discussion about a character's actions and behavior, a student mentioned the reference to the word, Owimoweh. This led to a discussion of the popular play and film, *The Lion King*. The students all assumed that the song was from the movie and assumed that it was an African war song. Ms. Glass stopped them, and asked if they knew when the song was written. She explained that it was written in the fifties and asked if they had any idea of who had written the song. In her attempt to address assumptions the students had about the song, she explained:

to take something from its original roots of being a war song and turn it into a like a cute little pop song, there's something somewhat offensive about that. It's kind of like how we call cars by Native American names or call... to take a culture that you have dominated and then be like, not only do we dominate you but we're going to take your words and name our products and sports teams after them. (Observational field notes, March 11, 2010)

Her use of the term war song was incorrect, in actuality; the term is 'Owimoweh' and was based upon an African doo-wop song recorded by an African artist, Solomon Linda, in 1939 (Erlmann, 1991). The fact that she misinterpreted the nature of the song did not negate the point she attempted to make. As she emphasized the inappropriateness of the dominant cultures, the careless and insensitive use of others' terms and language, the students sat pensively and appeared to understand how such behavior was reprehensible.

Ms. Glass appeared to appreciate the empowering nature of *A Raisin in the Sun*; she utilized the personal connections she experienced with the text in her teaching (Mathis, 2001). Ms. Glass repeatedly directed her students to recognize the feelings of and reasoning behind character's actions to ensure student understanding of what produced their behaviors. At times, Ms. Glass' presentation of critical views appeared to be based upon her personal political perspective, and this is similar to one of the findings of the Marusza (1998) study. While she appeared to attempt the modeling of multiple perspectives and the importance of cultural diversity, some of her impassioned responses seemed lost on her students, but their failure to fully comprehend her emotion did not hinder Ms. Glass from freely expressing her thoughts.

The LMS Teachers

Through affirming culture and attempting to challenge hegemony in the multicultural literature observed in this present study, the teachers at LMS endeavored to incorporate the guidelines for critical multicultural practice described by Nieto (1999). The multicultural literature at LMS was used to explore hard topics such as diversity, gender equity, and power through explanations and discussions that allowed the students to hear and consider the perspectives of others. Doing so proved to complicate pedagogy; the teachers' enactments of multicultural education (Banks, 1994), and critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) described in this chapter shed light upon their beliefs. By fostering opportunities for reading and responding to texts, the LMS teachers provided opportunities for their students to make sense of both text worlds and their lived worlds through discussion (Gala & Beach, 2001). According to Fang, Fu & Lamme (2000), in order to engage students in vibrant discussions related to multicultural

literature, teachers should engage in their own critical and analytical experiences with such texts. Teachers cannot be expected to know everything about the cultures encountered in the texts they teach but it is important for them to develop the habit of questioning and wondering about the literature they teach. The LMS teachers appeared to enact the aforementioned; however, some of the text discussions that derived from their pedagogical decisions at times placed them in predicaments that were negatively interpreted by the students of color they taught.

Summary of Findings

To answer the first research questions posed in this study, *How do private school teachers conceive and incorporate multicultural literature into their language arts classrooms?*, the following were examined: teacher's enactments of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) and dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 1994), the links between their philosophy and pedagogy, and their responses to experiences of teaching multicultural literature. The results have been identified and described in this chapter. Through examination of their pedagogical practices, classroom interactions, and responses to two types of interviews, the abovementioned were explored.

The findings suggest while each of the four teacher participants approached the teaching of language arts and literature similarly, significant differences in their enactments of multiculturalism were observed. Each teacher engaged his or her students in reading, discussing, and writing about multicultural literature. The differences in enactment were primarily related to the participant teacher's philosophy of language arts teaching and multicultural literature. Additionally, the participant teachers' responses to

cultural content present in or related to the books differed as well. Finally, teacher work artifacts revealed connections between the enactments of multiculturalism and classroom use of multicultural literature.

These four middle grade teachers' experiences provide insight into the encounters between teachers and the texts they teach. The LMS teachers understood the importance of discussion and allowed their students to lead discussions at times. Some of their classroom activities afforded students opportunities to experience how racism, classism, and sexism can be made visible and discussed (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003).

Multicultural practice is a form of social interaction that changes through interactions over time (Marusza, 1998).

The LMS teachers experienced teaching multicultural literature in a variety of ways: discomfort, self-awareness, responsibility, and empowerment. It is fair to assume that all teachers go through similar experiences at different times. In middle school, peers and teachers have significant influence due to the developmental stage of adolescence. What teachers exclude and include influences middle grade students, and these influences color students' perceptions (Landt, 2007). In Chapter 6, the influence of both teachers and peers are discussed through the perspectives of the students of color who participated in this study.

CHAPTER 6

EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS OF COLOR WHO READ

MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

Presented in this chapter are the findings of the secondary focus from this present study, gaining insight into the way middle grade private school students of color experience multicultural literature. The research question guiding this investigation was, *What are the experiences of middle grade private school students of color who read multicultural literature in their language arts class?*

Twelve students of color agreed to participate in the focus group for this study. On the sign-in sheet for the focus group, nine of the student participants self-identified as Black, one self-identified as Asian, one self-identified as Indian, and one self-identified as Latin American. Eight of the student participants were in the seventh grade, and two each were in sixth and eighth grades. The number of years each student participant had been enrolled at the study site ranged from one to six years at the time of this study. Eight of the student participants were in the seventh grade and were in sections taught by Ms. Villanelle. Two of the student participants were in the sixth grade, one in a section taught by Mr. Frank and the other in a section taught by a non-participating teacher. There were two eighth grade student participants, one in a section taught by Ms. Glass and the other in a section taught by Ms. Villanelle, which was not observed.

The data were gathered from student focus group transcripts, observational field notes, and student work artifacts. Work artifacts were collected by voluntary submission from nine of the twelve student participants. A total of seventeen student work artifacts

were collected. Focal student demographics are presented in Tables 3 and 4 in Chapter 3. After describing the students' participation during language arts class, I present the following themes that capture their experiences of reading multicultural literature. These themes include: pondering pedagogy, multicultural mindsets, and dealing with diversity.

The focus group meeting is described in Chapter 3. Students were asked to reflect upon their experiences at LMS relating to their teachers, their peers, the multicultural texts assigned in school, and their participation in language arts class. In addition to the aforementioned, the student participants shared information about their out-of-school reading, parent participation in their schooled literacy assignments, and their thoughts about the diversity of LMS. The student focus group discussion lasted one hour and forty-eight minutes, and was digitally recorded and transcribed. All of the students participated enthusiastically during the focus group discussion. At times they needed to be reminded that they were being recorded and needed to speak one at a time. The following figure represents their participation illustrating the number of times they contributed during the focus group discussion.

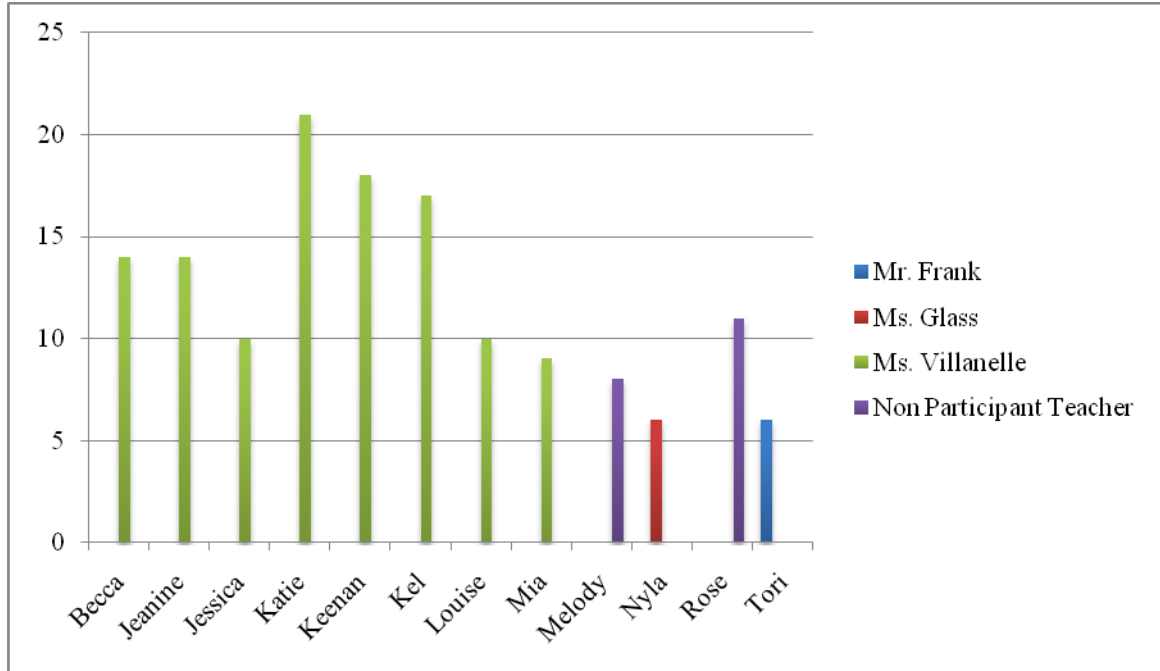


Figure 5: Frequency of Student Participant Focus Group Responses

During the focus group discussion, the student participants were asked to describe their level of participation during language arts activities related to the multicultural texts. Their responses varied from not always participating to taking the lead during discussions. When asked about language arts class participation, Tori said that her participation is purposeful:

I think I really participate in class... I try to put as much in class as I possibly can so I can try to get my point across, I really like to get my point across... [my classmates participate in] class but they don't get into depth with it. They just sit on the surface. But I feel as though you really need to go in depth... keep it shallow but they don't go deep. I don't feel that's good. They should really open their feelings; open their minds... . (personal communication, March 20, 2010)

Another student, Nyla, stated “I participate a lot but the other person [of color] in my class doesn't like... at all” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). She went on to

say that most of the students in her class participated in literature activities related to the multicultural text being read. Another student, Rose, agreed regarding overall student participation and offered the following comment about her participation: “I’m not the most participating person in my class but I participate because when we are participating and saying things about the book, we have to find a specific quote that centers on what we’re talking about” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). In a similar manner, Louise stated, “I don’t participate the most of my class but I do participate, especially if I have something important to say” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Becca added “I participate a lot and I think that a lot of people’s participation it depends on their ethnicity” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). There was a consensus in the room that a number of the dominant culture students did not take the cultural issues in the texts as seriously as the student participants thought they should. Mia said, “I feel like certain people don’t pay attention unless we’re talking about them or they get to talk about themselves... they’ll get off topic” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Others confirmed this sentiment in the focus group.

When asked if participation varied according to the text being read, the majority of the focal students said that their participation varied slightly but they were committed to expressing themselves in all literature discussions. Students were witnessed actively participating during this study’s observed classroom activities.

Figure 6 below illustrates the number of times the student participants were witnessed contributing to classroom literature discussions during the classroom observations, which took place between November 2009 and March 2010. During the classroom observations, the focal students whose classrooms I observed were regular

participants in their language arts classroom activities related to the multicultural texts read. Their participation varied during the observed classroom discussions; however, the willingness to participate was apparent. The contributions of the student participants were varied in form; class discussions (whole class and small group), text related presentations as well as posing and responding to questions.

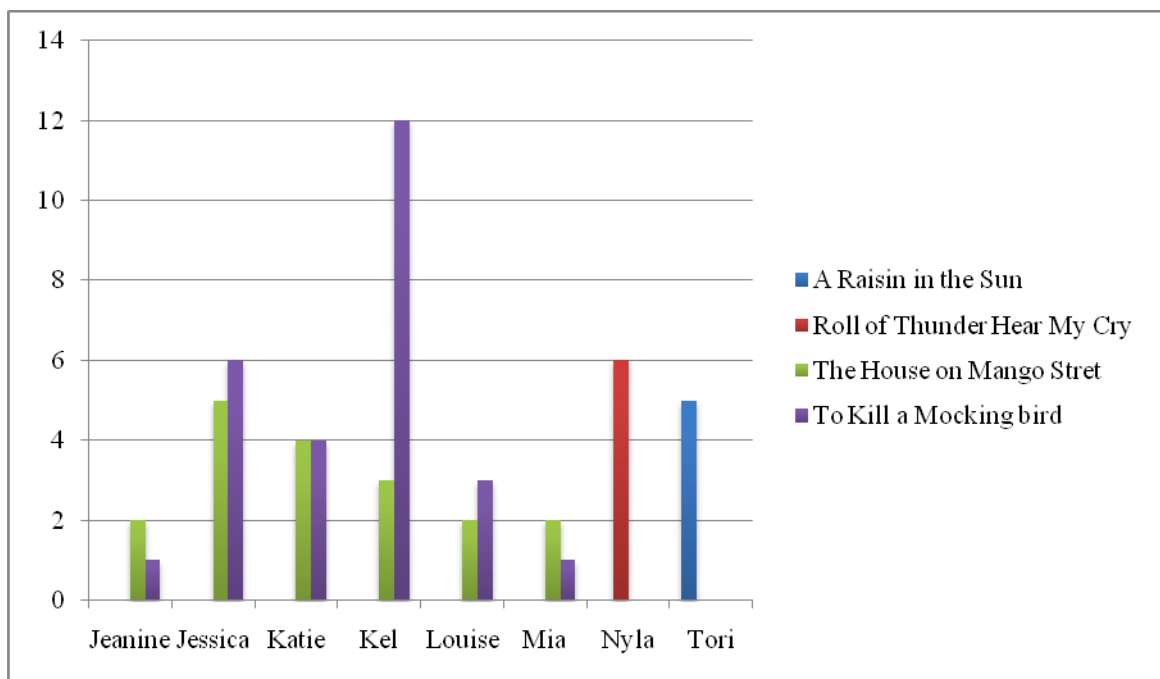


Figure 6: Number of Observed Contributions to Literature Discussions

The Table 12 below represents the three major themes that emerged from the student participant data collected: Pondering Pedagogy, Multicultural Literature Mindsets, and Dealing with Diversity. Pondering pedagogy relates to the student participants' views of their teachers' pedagogical decisions associated with the multicultural literature. It describes the students' thoughts about their teachers' use of text

discussion, the ability to convey comprehension of the cultural content presented in the texts as well as pedagogical decisions that demonstrated the perceived importance of multicultural literature in the language arts classroom. Multicultural Literature Mindsets relate to the student participants' perception of peer-related experiences with multicultural literature. Specifically, it addresses the manner in which their dominant culture classmates participate in discussions of multicultural literature and the level of sensitivity enacted by the dominant culture peers. Finally, Dealing with diversity relates to the student participants' opinions of LMS' attempts to show the importance of diversity, explicitly the way the students' perceive the school's diversity statement practically enacted and any evidence of LMS' commitment to diversity shown through cultural inclusion.

Table 12: Themes Representing Student Participants' Experiences with Multicultural Literature

Overarching Theme	Definition	Sub Themes	Example
Pondering Pedagogy	Students' views of teachers' pedagogical decisions associated with multicultural literature	-Appreciating text discussion - Questioning comprehension of cultural content - Demonstrating the importance of multicultural literature	-“I like how in our classes... we had this discussion and I liked how everyone had their own opinion and we like argued it out” -“I think that my English teacher tries to interpret... but she really doesn't know. Like she pretends like she knows and she tries to feed that to us” - “It kind of made me upset how we spent like so much time on like the other books then we went through <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> in like three weeks”
Multicultural Mindsets	Students' perception of peer-related experiences with multicultural literature	-Dominant culture classmate participation - Presence or lack of cultural sensitivity	-“I feel like certain people they don't like pay attention unless we're talking about them or they get to talk about themselves and they'll get off the topic” -They don't really know how what they say really affects people and how their question might be serious, how they didn't phrase it in the right way to make it not hurtful or offensive to other people”
Dealing with Diversity	Students' opinion of LMS' attempts to show the importance of diversity	-Thoughts about the middle division's value statement - Thoughts about cultural inclusion	-“You have to do more than just say that [the diversity statement]... you have to do stuff to show that you mean it” -“And I don't want it to just be about Africans, I want it to be about Chinese, Spanish or French and like all different kinds of races and cultures”

Pondering Pedagogy

The student participants shared their thoughts about the manner in which their teachers approached the teaching of the assigned multicultural texts. Overall, they agreed that assignments related to the multicultural texts were fair and the associated classroom activities were helpful in assisting with comprehension. Additionally, participants said

that they valued the use of classroom discussion as the primary means of addressing the multicultural texts. Although the teachers at LMS enacted similar pedagogical practices in the language arts classroom, as stated in Chapter 5, the reactions of the middle grade students of color who participated in this study varied.

Appreciating Text Discussions

The chosen method of literature instruction at LMS at the time of this study was text discussion. Cindy, the English Department chair, shared the rationale for the focus on discussion:

our primary focus is on teaching... how to read closely and meaningfully... we do it as a whole class, sometimes we break them up into groups and say you guys look at this, you guys look at that and then we'll come back together... sometimes through acting it out or doing little skits to get them to understand for the most part we do a lot of class discussion... the reason that we do that is because we want to hear their voices and we want them to take academic risks. Our goal is to make an environment where if the girl is answering a question and she doesn't really feel certain about her answer that she will still give it a shot and feel like even if she's wrong... it's okay to throw in a different point of view, that we want to teach them... when we're teaching literature, there's no one right answer and there are different ways of looking at text and interpreting them... sometimes... there is a right and wrong answer, but as far as interpretation is concerned we let them understand that there are different ways to interpret and there are different lenses to read which we get more into critical theory in eighth grade (personal communication, April 16, 2010).

As stated in Chapter 5, discussion was an integral part of all of the teacher participants' pedagogy. The literature teaching philosophy of LMS was enacted consistently by each of the teacher participants. At least one instructional episode during each observation involved some form of text discussion (large or small group). This emphasis on discussion and the sharing of various views and opinions is encouraged by Banks (1994), who argued the importance of teacher encouragement in having students view ideas from multiple perspectives and contexts.

The pedagogical decision by LMS to engage students in discussion appeared effective and did not go unnoticed by the student participants. The student participants valued the focus upon discussion related to texts read in class. A significant amount of time during the focus group interview was spent upon the students' perception of the benefits classroom discussion had upon their text comprehension. In addition to feeling that literature discussion assisted in their understanding, students agreed that the exposure to the opinions and perspectives of their classmates affected the way they interpreted the stories. Rose stated, "It was nice because we had all different opinions but hearing other people's... it kind of changed our minds about things" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Mia added, "I like how in our classes... we had this discussion and I liked how everyone had their own opinion and we like argued it out" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Jeanine stated:

We read a lot of different books... talking about the book that we had read and we went from... talking about symbols... to talking about different cultures and how it would be like to live in a different place like. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

Rose added, "everybody does a fair amount of participating and I think that's what I like about my section because we all have something good to say about what we're talking about" (personal communication, March 20, 2010).

Furthermore, some of the student participants found the text discussions useful following at-home readings: the discussions served to provide clarity in addition to providing various opinions and perspectives. Mia stated, "I really liked how we were assigned these chapters to read each night and then we had questions to answer and it helped me to see what's happening... so I understand more" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Classroom discussion about the homework questions appeared to create

deeper text understanding for the student participants. During several observations, I witnessed teachers posing clarifying questions related to the reading assigned for homework.

Overall, the student participants felt that their teachers valued literature discussion and created classroom environments in which students felt comfortable enough to express themselves on most occasions. Jeanine stated, “my English teacher really takes it [multicultural literature discussion] very seriously and she wants everyone to contribute and think about what they're going to say and things like that” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Engaging the students in the reading, writing about, and discussing multicultural literature, the teachers at LMS provided opportunities for significant change, increasing students’ willingness to view things from different perspectives (Thein, Beach & Parks, 2007). The students agreed that during classroom discussions hearing the ideas and thoughts presented by their classmates helped to shape some of their thoughts related to the stories.

Furthermore, the student participants stated that their teachers contributed to literature conversations, but the teacher contributions were primarily as a participant and not necessarily as dispenser of knowledge. Tori said that Mr. Frank would ask for student input and encourage them to share their thoughts about the text. She stated that he posed questions such as, “What do you guys think about this?” (Personal communication, March 20, 2010) By providing multicultural education experiences that addressed diversity, the middle grade teachers in this present study assisted in promoting harmony among their students (Manning, 2000). During the classroom observations, the students appeared comfortable expressing themselves even when what they shared was unpopular,

with the exception of the incident described in the previous chapter related to the heated discussion in Mrs. Sojourner's classroom. Overall, the manner in which the students interacted during the observed literature discussions was encouraging.

Questioning Comprehension of Cultural Content

Despite their appreciation of the discussions, at times the student participants expressed concerns relating to their teachers' ability to convey their understanding of the cultural content encountered in the texts. This concern was related to the manner in which the teachers addressed or failed to address what they perceived as important cultural information. Louise was concerned with her teacher's pedagogical decisions in the teaching of *To Kill a Mockingbird*; she questioned the manner in which her teacher interpreted the cultural content found in the multicultural text. She felt that her teacher's inability to successfully address the cultural content presented in the text was influenced by the teacher's own lack of cultural competence. "I think this is a part of a like teacher code where you have to be like accepting of all cultures but I really don't think that our English teacher is fully" (Louise, personal communication, March 20, 2010).

Additionally, the students lacked some confidence in their teachers' abilities to expound upon some of the text's cultural content. Louise stated, "I think that my English teacher tries to interpret... but she really doesn't know. Like she pretends like she knows and she tries to feed that to us..." (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Tori added, "In my class... I feel like I kind of take over the class discussion. I think I do better than the teacher does. They [her classmates] always ask me questions" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Melody stated that during class readings and text discussions, her teacher had difficulty explaining the Klu Klux Klan and information

about lynching.

People were like what is that? And so the teacher doesn't really understand either... when she [the teacher] asks us [the class] a question... a lot of people will go like, well... well... and I'm like I know the answer. I understand and so we [she and another student of color] basically tell the whole thing. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

Katie said “sometimes when she's talking about racial differences and like in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, like Becca was saying sometimes she sounds like unsure and she's not very competent almost about what she says” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). As the student participants were developing their meta-cognitive abilities, due to their developmental stage, they were thinking about thinking and felt that in the attempts to discuss cultural content embedded in the texts, their teachers lacked the tools necessary to scaffold their understanding of difference (Moje & Sutherland, 2003).

It is important to note that at no time during the classroom observations were any of the aforementioned concerns witnessed by me. The only related example of misinterpretation of cultural content was witnessed in Ms. Glass' classroom as she pointed out the insensitivity of utilizing culturally based information casually. This example is presented in the preceding teacher analysis chapter. Perhaps, the student participants misunderstood the pedagogical decisions of their teachers to enact the philosophy of LMS related to literature discussion. According to Bolgatz (2005), “few teachers are taught to be racially literate” (p.12); perchance the student perceptions about their teachers' ability to convey their understanding of the cultural content embedded in the texts was not only connected to the school's philosophy but the teachers' inability to demonstrate racial literacy.

The perceived difficulty may have been connected to lack of training. It was not apparent during observations that the teacher participants lacked understanding of the multicultural texts; rather, it appeared that some teachers chose to allow the students to come to their own understandings of the cultural content as a result of the discussion. Conversely, Mr. Frank repeatedly took the time to explicitly explain background information that would assist in text comprehension related to Jim Crow laws; Ms. Villanelle provided clarity to derogatory language used in the text, which the students appeared not to notice.

From the perspective of the student participants, at times most of the teacher participants appeared to lack comprehension of the cultural content presented in the texts during the classroom observations for this present study. Interestingly, this perception was also shared by some of the parent participants as well. During my parent focus group interview, Beedo stated:

Some things that are said in the teaching of the literature are really said in good faith. They really think that they're doing a jam up job or whatever. But they're not making the right connections. They think they are. So you have some children who are sitting there who are feeling, 'Oh my God this is bad, really bad' ... and then you have another group of kids going apologizing to everybody, "I'm so sorry about slavery." So they are feeling guilty when they shouldn't. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

The outlooks parents bring to their daughters' curriculum are based upon their schooling and interactions, which shape their beliefs and values (Chan, 2006). It is unclear whether the student participants influenced the thoughts of their parents related to teacher competence or if the parent participants influenced the thoughts of their children. However, it is important to note that the teacher participants did not appear to attempt to promote their personal opinions during the observed text discussions. On one occasion,

when attempting to clarify cultural content, Ms. Glass gave misinformation regarding the origin of an African chant. The decision of LMS to enact fairly open ended text discussions as the primary pedagogical focus of their language arts teaching may have affected the interpretation of the student participants. The lack of understanding of teacher competency may have stemmed from the differences between pedagogical practices in the lower division at LMS and previous educational settings.

Demonstrating Importance of Multicultural Literature

The student participants' perception of the importance/value of multicultural literature as demonstrated by their teachers' pedagogy varied. The student participants shared views that ranged from feeling that the teachers valued multicultural literature to feeling that the teachers were fulfilling an LMS requirement. The student participants read various genres of literature for leisure; many of them read books that would be identified as multicultural for pleasure. They agreed that multicultural literature was important and should be valued.

Regarding Ms. Villanelle's demonstration of the importance of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Keenan stated "it's obviously a really important book... because we're supposed to write an essay on it and before the previous books we were only supposed to write an analytical paragraph on it. Obviously there's something different about this book" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Other student participants did not feel that their teachers' pedagogical practices communicated the importance of multicultural literature use in their language arts classes. Becca said:

It kind of made me upset how we spent like so much time on like the other books then we went through *A Raisin in the Sun* in like three weeks. We spend five months on *Jane Eyre*, which I think was ridiculous, and three weeks on *Raisin in the Sun*. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010).

Mia added, “I really don't think our teachers care that much. They don't really... I feel sometimes they don't really care about what we say [during multicultural literature discussions] and they don't pay attention, they just don't care” (personal communication, March 20, 2010).

The student participants sometimes questioned their teachers' valuing of multicultural literature because, in their view, importance was not always demonstrated in teachers' actions. Katie stated, “I think if they did value it [multicultural literature], they would be showing it more” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Becca added, “I know my teacher does it [teaches multicultural literature] because she has to” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). One teacher, however, stood out to the students as valuing books. Several of the student participants felt that not only did Mr. Frank value multicultural literature but also that he regularly participated in multicultural activities at the school. It is interesting to note that while the students felt that Mr. Frank valued multicultural literature and events, she said, “Ok well... It's hard to tell. I cannot tell what my English teacher is thinking. He's very hard to read. I was talking to my mom about it and she's just like he's an interesting one. He's really hard to understand” (Tori, personal communication, March 20, 2010).

One of the student participants in eighth grade stated that she felt the manner in which the history teachers addressed cultural issues and their importance surpassed that of the pedagogy of their language arts teachers. Comments varied, as discussed above, but the overarching view was that their language arts teachers' appeared to value multicultural literature.

Multicultural Literature Mindsets

The second theme, multicultural literature mindsets, refers to the participants' perceptions of the experiences with their peers related to the multicultural literature read. Responses to questions about the texts read varied; the student participants were overwhelmingly positive about the multicultural literature assigned in their language arts classes. They did not overlook the intensity of the cultural content in the multicultural texts, even though there were where instances they felt that their teachers might have missed opportunities to do so. They expressed their thoughts about the lack of background knowledge their dominant culture counterparts held. Specifically, the two African-American texts seemed to present significant issues. The student participants agreed that knowledge of the issues and conditions faced by blacks during the 1930s appeared to hinder the seriousness with which their white counterparts approached the reading and discussion of the texts.

Dominant Culture Student Participation

The student participants' opinions varied about their dominant culture peer participation during the reading and literature discussions related to multicultural texts. Some of the student participants expressed satisfaction with the amount and nature of their dominant culture classmates' participation while others felt the lack of peer participation. Jessica stated, "I feel like for most of the part everyone tries to participate, everyone tries their best" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). While the amount of participation was wide-ranged, the manner in which their dominant culture peers participated caused concern for some of the student participants.

Several student participants felt that their dominant culture classmates failed to take the cultural content seriously and stay on task when engaged in certain activities related to the multicultural texts. This lack of seriousness was not only demonstrated during language arts class. Kel stated that the lack of focus and participation at times was apparent in other content areas. “It's not just English. It's every single class. They're like more than once I had to like say in the middle of the class I had to be like ‘guys come on’, I'm trying to actually like learn something” (Kel, personal communication, March 20, 2010). The student participants discussed the frustration they felt regarding the self-centeredness of their classmates. Mia added, “I feel like certain people - they don't like pay attention unless we're talking about them or they get to talk about themselves and they'll get off the topic.” (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

Jeanine described an instance when her language arts teacher addressed the lack of focus and attention being paid to the books being read. Students were “laughing and joking around” during a discussion and Ms. Villanelle intervened, telling the students to focus on the content and consider the gravity of the text excerpt. This elicited approval and appreciation from the student participants. Regarding comments that were insensitive, Keenan said, “I don't know if the teachers take into consideration what they hear out of the mouths of some children who say racist or offensive things” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). It appeared that the participants desired more from their teachers in facilitating participation and addressing insensitive comments during book discussions.

On a few occasions, the lack of focus and side conversations was witnessed during my classroom observations. The teachers were witnessed calling the students to

order when such behavior occurred. The teachers allowed the students to share voluntarily during the book discussions; however, when the students were unfocused, the flow of the book discussion was stunted. Unfortunately, there were moments in all of the classroom observations when teachers responded to their own questions because of student silence. According to Fine (1995), participation in classroom discussions ought to be monitored by teachers. Perhaps the teachers could have monitored discussion participation differently, which might have enabled all of the students to engage in the discussions.

Middle school students are maturing at varying rates; their relationships with peers and adults become progressively more important and educating them is a complicated task (Simmons-Morton, Crump, Haynie and Saylor, 1999). Due to their developmental stage, middle grade students “come face to face with challenges and opportunities in embracing difference” (Moje & Sutherland, 2007, p.159). The students observed in this present study were no different. The dominant culture students were possibly faced with trying on new perspectives and may have been struggling with the tensions between the beliefs they brought with them (from home) and the new perspectives that they were encountering as a result of reading, writing about, and discussing multicultural literature (Thein, Beach & Parks, 2007). This possible struggle may have begun the altering of their perspectives and made contributing to discussions difficult and awkward. If the LMS teachers had designed strategies “to help students develop perspective-taking as a habit of mind through which they acknowledge, respect, understand, and possibly still disagree with alternative perspectives,” at times their dominant culture students might have been able to make sense of the social and cultural

worlds they encountered in the multicultural literature and participated differently in the text discussions (Thein, Beach & Parks, 2007, p. 59).

Presence or Lack of Cultural Sensitivity

Several student participants felt that their dominant culture classmates sometimes lacked sensitivity and awareness of how their comments could be taken offensively. Becca stated “some of the students didn't understand like the dialect of how they spoke back then.” Jessica added, “Sometimes... people don't understand what African-Americans were going through during the Great Depression.” Louise stated, “I don't think a lot of people in our class realized what it was like for African-Americans at the time and how they were really treated really harshly” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). According to some participants, the lack of dominant culture peer understanding often lead to awkward moments in text discussions. Nyla, Becca, Keenan, and Katie shared the discomfort they felt during discussions that involved sensitive language encountered in the text. The “N” word appeared to cause both students and teachers discomfort. A description of Mr. Frank’s dealing with the word as it came in the text is illustrated in Chapter 5. Katie said, “... sometimes is a little bit awkward when you're reading books about that because when they use like the N word everyone in the class turns and looks at you...” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Louise interjected, “We have a lot of ignorant people in our class, I don’t know how to say it politely but we have a lot of ‘blonde’ people and they don't really know how what they say really affects people and how their question might be serious, how they didn't phrase it in the right way to make it not hurtful or offensive to other people” (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

Several of the black student participants discussed their discomfort with their classmates' reactions toward them while reading literature about African-American struggles. Keenan stated, "I think that we aren't exposed to a lot of different cultures like specifically *To Kill a Mockingbird* was like based on like the stereotypical black in the 30s and it kind of makes people feel in an awkward position like when people who the book's cultural is kind of based on" (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

Kel added, " person asked a really weird question... that it was like would you be offended if I called you black or something... I'm like well why can't you just call me like by my name?" (Personal communication, March 20, 2010) In addition to the student participants' discomfort with issues related to sensitive language, Keenan mentioned her concern about cultural lumping:

I had people come up to me after class and say, I know we look at you and they say the N word and we say black and I just want to know, do you get offended when we say black or African-American? I'm like I'm Jamaican, I'm not African-American, I'm Jamaican and Native American and I think... it crosses the line and becomes offensive... (Personal communication, March 20, 2010).

Louise added,

I think a lot of people in our class make what we're talking about really awkward and make it so like you feel like you want to disconnect yourself from your own culture cause they make it so it sounds like stupid or funny or like and they don't even realize that's the culture you're from and they just make it like you want to disconnect yourself from it. Which is hard. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

During the portion of the discussion related to cultural sensitivity, it was interesting that the student participants were able to share their feeling without becoming overly emotional. The participants shared eagerly but did not appear angry or upset in any way. The atmosphere in the room during the focus group discussion came across as serious but

not tense. The level of maturity the student participants displayed while discussing their feelings and concerns related to cultural issues surprised me.

Unfortunately, the student participants said that oftentimes, their teachers failed to address the insensitive comments or actions made by their white counterparts during discussions. Jeanine stated, “I feel though that there could be a lot more respect” (personal communication, March 20, 2010). As a way of expressing the overarching theme related to the lack of respect for culture among their dominant culture peers the participants described behaviors exhibited during an African-American focused school-wide assembly. When asked if the information shared depicted the manner in which their peers reacted during the reading of diverse books, they concurred. Katie explained, “I think it's an unintentional form of racism that's in our grade but I just think people are just ignorant” (personal communication, March 20, 2010).

When giving an example of how her classmates fail to show respect for the texts being read, Tori added,

people might snicker or snort or something like that or giggle. They take it as a joke and I'm like, it's not a joke really. It's like you wouldn't like it if we laughed at something that happened to you or something like that or something that was mainly focused on your cultural or something like that. I think they would take it very seriously. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

While acknowledging that their classmates might have simply been ignorant to the information encountered in the stories read, Keenan's quote demonstrates how teachers failed to address the racist tone in some student commented,

I don't know if the teachers actually take into consideration what they hear out of the mouths of some children who say racist things or offensive things... I think that some teachers, I don't know if they hear the things and they don't do anything. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

During my classroom observations, the dominant culture students gave no inappropriate comments, nor were any overt racist behaviors witnessed. Some of the comments came across as misguided; however, the discussions appeared to provide clarity and correction. The fact that I did not hear any insensitive or racist comments does not negate the experiences expressed by the student participants in any way. My presence may have affected the classroom dynamics and certain kinds of comments may have been filtered. Nyla expressed the reality of a researcher's presence possibly altering conduct:

I mean occasionally they [teachers] can be kind of fake about it [multicultural literature]. Especially like our English teacher. She was kind of acting a little bit differently when you were there. When you were taking notes and stuff, she was being a little bit more like she cared... a little bit more... maybe to get on your good side. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

The ways in which my presence affected classroom interactions remains unclear; however, if students shared comments that were offensive or insensitive, it is my hope that the teachers would have expressed their disapproval. According to Fine (1995), "attitudes and beliefs that in any way repress or discriminate against social groups" should not be tolerated. (p. 71). The information in the multicultural texts and the manner in which the teachers addressed the cultural content often led to discussions that may not have been comfortable for the teachers or students. While the teacher participants may not have always been successful in conveying their understanding of the cultural content presented in the texts, they did not appear to avoid allowing discussion of related uncomfortable topics

Dealing with Diversity

The student participants shared their views about the manner in which diversity was addressed at their school. As noted in Chapter 4, LMS asserts its commitment to diversity

on its website. It appeared that the participant teachers assumed that the entire student body realized the school's commitment to diversity. Ms. Villanelle stated, "... our students are used to feeling that the community is very inclusive. That's their perception" (personal communication, March 11, 2010).

Thoughts about the Middle Division's Value Statement

While discussing the books throughout their focus group, participants voiced their concerns about the seriousness of the school's value statement, which reads as follows: "The LMS Middle School community embraces respect, honesty, dedication, and understanding. Through these core values we build positive relationships, develop intellectual curiosity, and encourage creative expression so that we may thrive in and contribute to a diverse world."

The student participants said that the value statement was posted in their classrooms and was recited regularly at school gatherings. They agreed that the school and teachers viewed the value statement as important; however, the importance appeared to be in word only. Several student participants expressed concern that while the language of the statement expressed fostering respect and understanding, many (students and teachers) in the school functioned as if the statement had no influence. Louise said, "you have to do more than just say that [the diversity statement]... you have to do stuff to show that you mean it" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). There was a clear desire to have the school's diversity statement incorporated into the life of the school and put into action.

An example of doing the value statement versus simply saying it was given in both focus group discussions. Louise, an Asian student, had an experience with a teacher

that was of concern to her and her parents. Louise stated that while the school was preparing for a multicultural event, a teacher (not a language arts teacher) asked her to participate in a dance from “her culture.” After learning that it was a traditional Japanese dance, Louise told the teacher that she would not feel comfortable doing the dance because she was not Japanese; in fact she was Chinese. According to Louise, the teacher shrugged her shoulders and told her that it was okay for her to do the dance because it was Asian. Louise said that she was concerned that the teacher seemed not to understand (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Neither Louise nor the other students of color who participated in the focus group discussion felt that the teacher showed either understanding or a commitment to diversity. The student participants shared Louise’s dismay with the lack of sensitivity displayed.

During the parent focus group, Louise’s mother, Foster, mentioned the same misguided event:

Last spring they had a concert and they were doing songs from around the world and they did music and they did some dance. And my daughter came home and she said, "the teacher kept saying I want you to do the Japanese dance or do the Asian dance that they're doing on stage... my daughter said, “why?” She [the teacher] goes... well you're Asian... you should do it. And so Louise said, “Actually I'm Chinese and this girl over here, she's actually Japanese and she would probably enjoy doing it”. The teacher didn't seem to have a sense. She wasn't trying to be mean. The child needs to know that these dances aren't actually derived from China, they're derived from Japan and my daughter explained it... (Personal communication, March 2010)

The parent participants were unified in expressing the need for in-servicing of LMS teachers for the purposes of greater diversity sensitivity. Beedo said, “I do think they need some in-servicing on... you know how some people can be offensive and they don't realize it. They really don't know and they mean to be the best do-gooders in the world

and don't get me wrong. But they just don't know" (personal communication, March 20, 2010).

The student participants and their parents had concerns about the manner in which LMS dealt with issues of diversity. The focus group sessions for this present study were the first time that the students of color and their parents had been invited to discuss their experiences at LMS. The parents stated that their interactions with the teachers had been relegated to parent-teacher conferences and invitations to school-wide multicultural activities. The enthusiasm witnessed by both student participants and the parent participants during the focus group discussions appeared to be partly due to the feeling of being valued and heard.

Thoughts about Cultural Inclusion

On the topic of the curriculum, the student participants felt that more inclusion of various cultures into the language arts curriculum at LMS was necessary. The student participants perceived the focus of the language arts literature curriculum at LMS was primarily on African-Americans. Furthermore, they voiced a concern that the inclusion of culture in the curriculum should not be relegated to specific times of the year, (i.e. incorporating all African-American cultural activities during Black History month) but incorporated throughout the school year. Katie shared, "I feel like that we're not emphasizing on what happened to like other races. I feel like that we could be getting into other races too;" Jeanine agreed: "I feel like we aren't learning a lot of different cultures" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). Katie continued, "I don't want it just to be about Africans, I want it to be about Chinese, Spanish, or French and like all different races and cultures" (personal communication, March 20, 2010). It is important to note that one of

the multicultural texts read in the sixth grade was an Islamic text. In addition to expressing concerns about the cultural inclusion in the curriculum, the students were challenged by the lack of cultural diversity in the teachers at LMS. The students felt that inclusion of more teachers of color would show commitment to the value statement and would provide greater sensitivity in the classroom. Louise stated:

I think it would be helpful if we had maybe an African-American like a teacher of that culture teach us about that culture because they really know what it's like. And then they also know how to say things like politically correct things... in a way that it's not hurtful or disrespectful to the people of that culture. (Personal communication, March 20, 2010)

Louise echoed what researchers have previously argued (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Nieto, 2003). These researchers argued that given familiarity with a similar context, teachers of color are better able to influence and reach students of color.

The majority of the student participants in this present study were of African descent; their feelings of a singular focus on African-American culture was likely related to the discomfort they experienced during discussions of African-American texts. They shared their feelings of awkwardness related to being the culture of text characters, particularly when portrayal was stereotypical or sensitive language was used. The reactions (positive and negative) of their dominant culture caused discomfort. They shared instances of being apologized to for the incidents that took place in texts and the anger they felt when laughter was the response to some of the atrocities faced by African-Americans in the reading. Katie summed up their feelings of discomfort, "It just gets annoying" (personal communication, March 20, 2010).

As depicted in Figures 5 and 6, the student participants were highly engaged in the classroom and focus group discussions related to race. While the student participants

in this present study did not express the relief shared by those in the Glazier & Seo (2005) study related to open discussion of race in the classroom, they appeared to share their opinions openly and honestly. Utilizing multicultural literature in the middle grade classrooms of LMS appeared to significantly impact the students of color who participated in the focus group discussion for this present study.

Summary of Findings

To answer the second research question, *What are the experiences of middle grade private school students of color who read multicultural literature in their language arts class?*, the findings presented in this chapter connected to the student participants' perspective of their teachers' pedagogy and their experiences with the multicultural literature utilized in their middle grade language arts classes. Three major themes emerged: Pondering Pedagogy, Multicultural literature Mindsets and Dealing with Diversity. According to the data collected from the student participants, their perceptions include the thought that their school has not ensured teachers' full understanding of cultural content presented in the books they taught. This is evidenced by the comments regarding teachers' failure to consistently address culturally sensitive issues in explanation or inappropriate commentary from dominant students. The student participants' thoughts fluctuated extensively depending upon the teacher and related to the manner in which multiculturalism is embraced and reflected in the curriculum and school environment.

Presented in the final chapter of this study will be the conclusions, which include practice-based policy and research implications of my findings. Additionally, further details about the findings will be expanded upon. Several questions will be addressed in

the final chapter, which will include: What do the findings presented throughout this dissertation say to educators and researchers about middle grade private school teachers' incorporation of multiculturalism into their language arts classroom multicultural literature pedagogy? What do the findings presented throughout this dissertation say to educators and researchers about how middle grade private school students of color experience their teachers' incorporation of multiculturalism? How might the findings from this research enlighten teachers of private school students of color who utilize multicultural literature in their language arts classrooms? Can an approach to teaching all texts through a multicultural lens be developed from this study's findings? Finally, how might this study contribute to future research in the areas of multiculturalism and students' experiences with curriculum?

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

According to the United States Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, Private School Universal Survey 2007–2008), the student percentage distribution of private schools by racial/ethnic background was: 72.7 percent white and 27.3 percent minority; 11.3 percent black, 7.1 percent Hispanic, 8.1 percent Asian Pacific Islander and 0.9 percent American Indian/Alaska Native. At start of data collection for this current study, 2009–2010 school year, approximately 10 percent of our nation's children were enrolled in private schools (NCES, 2011). As previously noted, many private schools have made increasing their student of color enrollment a priority; however, there has been little change in enrollment. While students of color still remain the minority in private schools, their presence, voices, and experiences cannot be ignored.

This qualitative dissertation has investigated the use of multicultural literature by middle grade teachers in a private school. In this investigation, the aims were to describe teachers' experiences with the teaching of multicultural literature and the experiences of their students of color related to the texts and teacher pedagogy. This investigation was theoretically supported by the lens of multiculturalism, more specifically Banks' (1994) dimensions of multicultural education and Groban's (2007) tenets of critical multiculturalism.

Banks (1994) contended that K–12 schooling has addressed multicultural education using three major approaches: curriculum reform, achievement, and intergroup education. Curriculum reform incorporates content about diverse groups and their

perspectives into the curriculum. Focus on improving the academic achievement of students from various cultural backgrounds through the development of practices and theories is addressed when the achievement approach is focused upon. Finally, the endeavor to develop positive thoughts and perspectives about people from different cultures is the goal of intergroup education. The observed middle grade language arts curriculum at LMS utilized each of the major approaches as described by Banks (1994) to some degree.

The multicultural literature utilized added diverse voices to the curriculum, at each of the four grade levels; the students in grades five through seven read two texts and the eighth grade students read one text defined by LMS as multicultural. The cultures represented in the multicultural literature were African-American, Latina, Mexican, Middle Eastern, and South American. Numerous articles, commentaries, and studies (Adams, 1995; Brown, 2002, Manning, 2000; Marusza, 1998; Schultz, Buck and Niesz, 2000) have focused upon multiculturalism in schools. Following this strand of research, this present study investigated teachers' enactments of multiculturalism in the classrooms of four middle grade private school teachers related to multicultural literature and the responses of the students of color they teach. Numerous studies (Andrews, 2009; Carter, 2006; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, Fordham, 1991, Horvat & Lewis, 2003) have investigated students of color in private schools; however, this research focused upon their experiences unrelated to curriculum. Similar methodology has been employed in the abovementioned studies; however, the focus of this present study continues to be underexplored. This study seeks to address the gap in the literature related to students of color experiences with curriculum.

Review of Findings

As a non-participant observer (Creswell, 2009) using an interpretivist paradigm in a qualitative case study (Merriam, 1988), I investigated the manner in which four middle grade teachers in a private school used multicultural literature. The data collected over a period of seven months within one school year (2009–2010) were coded and analyzed using modified analytic induction, descriptive activity codes (Bogdan & Bilken, 2003), and cross-case analysis (Strauss & Corbin). The data collected included: digitally recorded and transcribed observational field notes, two types of teacher interviews and focus groups, as well as student work artifacts and teacher pedagogical artifacts

The literature-based language arts pedagogy adopted by the LMS middle division created opportunities for the students of color to achieve academically through teaching that reached various learning styles. The student participants at no time expressed any concerns about academic achievement or their inability to comprehend their teachers' pedagogy. Ultimately, the literature discussions enacted in each of the observed classrooms appeared to be designed to enable students to develop understanding about the cultural groups represented in the texts read. However, peer response and the teachers' enactment of critical multiculturalism (Groban, 2007) and dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) appeared to affect the student participants' views of cultural understanding.

Six major groupings of findings emerged from the data collected related to each of the research questions and were presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The three groups of thematic findings related to teachers include: enactments of multiculturalism, relationship

between philosophy and pedagogy, and experiences of the teaching of multicultural literature. The thematic findings related to the students of color who participated in this research study include: *pondering pedagogy*, *multicultural literature mindsets* and *dealing with diversity*.

I began by creating four teacher profiles. Analysis of the teacher participants' enactments of multiculturalism through classroom observations, observational field notes, interviews, and teacher work artifacts was used to create these profiles. Four of the five dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 1994) were witnessed at various times throughout this investigation; each of the teachers enacted the dimensions of content integration, the knowledge construction process, equity pedagogy, and prejudice reduction in their teaching; however, these were not prominent. The teachers' primary enactments of multiculturalism were identified as content integration and the knowledge construction process (Banks, 1994). One of the teachers had no primary enactment of critical multiculturalism; the other three teachers were found primarily to enact the tenet, raising issues of power (Groban, 2007) in their teaching.

The theme of the relationship between philosophy and pedagogy emerged from the data collected from the teachers through digitally recorded classroom observations, teacher pedagogical artifacts, and semi-structured and stimulated recall interviews teacher interviews (Gass & Mackey, 2000). This theme revealed that teachers' pedagogical decisions related to multicultural literature teaching depend upon two factors, their individual philosophies of language arts teaching and definition of multicultural literature. The teacher participants demonstrated significant links between their stated philosophy and pedagogy. Their view of language arts and its teaching weighed heavily

upon the decisions they made in the teaching of literature. The manner in which they assessed student understanding of literature was related to their philosophy as well. Each of the four teachers engaged their students in class readings of the texts and numerous text discussions (both large and small group). Cooperative learning techniques were also incorporated in each of the classrooms. Student presentations and dramatic readings afforded the students the opportunities to engage with the texts in a variety of ways. Each of the teachers utilized “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 1994, p. 29).

While the language arts pedagogy of the four teacher participants was similar, there were differences in the addressing and incorporation of the cultural content embedded in the books. The variance could be contributed to teachers’ beliefs about the role of discussion in text engagement and or philosophy. Teachers’ incorporation and addressing of cultural content could also be related to their comfort with issues related to stereotypes as well as classism, racism, and sexism (Manning, 2000). Teacher behavior sets the tone for classroom interactions and students’ perceptions of their pedagogy.

Finally, I examined how the teacher participants experienced the teaching of multicultural literature. Their experiences were as diverse as they were themselves, ranging from discomfort to empowering. According to Sleeter (1993), “Teachers bring to the profession perspectives about what race means, which they construct mainly on the basis of their life experiences and vested interests” (p. 157). It is interesting to note that the teachers who primarily enacted tenets of critical multiculturalism in their teaching were all white. Perhaps the life experiences of the teacher participants affected their

incorporation of multiculturalism into their teaching. Two of the teachers, Mr. Frank and Ms. Glass, had spent time teaching living in settings in which they would have been considered the minority. Although each of the teacher participants were asked how much multicultural literature they have read, I did not ask about their engagement in discussions of multicultural literature on a professional level.

According to Dietrich & Ralph (1995), participating in discussions of literature with adults provides the opportunity to interact with literature beyond preparing for instruction. Teachers have the opportunity to assist teachers in deepening “their own understanding and appreciation of the works and at the same time, discuss[ing] theoretical issues relevant to teaching multicultural literature and culture” (p.4). Having such opportunities may increase the level of comfort teachers have when engaging students in discussions, which may at times become charged with emotion due to the nature of cultural content embedded in the books they teach.

Unlike the teachers and administrators discussed in Adams (1995), none of the LMS teachers appeared to detach issues of multiculturalism from the texts they taught. Each teacher made at least one attempt to relate contemporary local and community concerns to text events for deeper understanding. The discussions and explanations related to the multicultural literature utilized by LMS could possibly lead to changes in the students, the school, and society at large.

In Chapter 6, the student of color participants’ experiences, interpretations, and responses are described. The results of this investigation revealed that while the student of color participants’ responses varied, they were united in their thoughts about their teachers’ pedagogy, the multicultural literature, and the manner in which LMS dealt with

diversity. The themes of pondering pedagogy, multicultural literature mindsets, and dealing with diversity emerged.

Teachers hold significant power in their classrooms related to multicultural literature (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995); therefore, it was important to investigate student responses. Overall, the results of the data collected for this current study revealed that the teachers' cultural competency was not obvious to the student participants and influenced the way the student participants viewed their teaching. The student participants questioned their teachers' valuing of multicultural literature and the manner in which they attended to the reactions of their dominant culture peers as well. In addition to their reactions about their teachers and peers, the student participants discussed their views of cultural inclusion in the LMS curriculum. As they discussed their perceived need for more cultural inclusion into their language arts assigned reading and the curriculum, this led to questioning of the LMS' overall commitment to diversity beyond the words of the middle school value statement. While participants' thoughts about diversity were not the focus of this current study, the manner in which the students presented the argument could not be ignored. The students felt that their perceived lack of diversity in the language arts curriculum was directly related to the school's overall lack of commitment to diversity.

Implications for Practice and Policy

According to the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2011) 45.9 percent of the students in our nation's schools in 2009 - 2010 was students of color. As US schools diversify, the need increases for a curriculum that respectfully and equitably includes the various cultures represented in schools. The

inclusion of multicultural literature and multicultural education into curriculum cannot be ignored due to the impact they can have upon our students. Nieto (2004) contended: “if one of the primary purposes of education is to teach young people the skills, knowledge, and critical awareness to become productive members of a diverse and democratic society, a broadly conceptualized multicultural education can have a decisive influence (p. 390). Our language arts classrooms provide inimitable opportunities to teach and experience the uniqueness of our pluralistic society through pedagogy that is reflective of respect and open-mindedness (Stallworth, Gibbons & Fauber, 2006).

In light of the above, the findings of this investigation have significant implications for future practice. All schools will have the responsibility of educating children from various races and ethnicities in ways that promote harmony in our classrooms and in the world. Gaining understanding of how students of color respond to aspects of their school’s curriculum is necessary. Since LMS, like many other private schools, proclaims the development of globally minded citizens in their mission statement, the LMS administrators can utilize the findings of this study to assist in gaining important knowledge of how their students of color experience aspects of the curriculum. More studies of this type are needed, as much of the research focused on students of color in private schools is related to the achievement gap, “fitting in,” and social experiences. Minimal research focus is placed upon students’ experiences of teacher pedagogy and curriculum. The methodology utilized in the present study makes replication feasible.

Teaching young adolescents to respect diversity depends upon the teacher’s commitment to the modeling and transmission of the attitudes, knowledge, and skill

necessary for positive discussions. The teacher participants in this present study failed to convey to students their commitment to and understanding of cultural content embedded in the multicultural literature read in the middle grade language arts classrooms. The incorporation of multicultural education experiences during the middle grade years is important and could affect how young adolescents think about and treat others (Manning, 2000).

Middle grade teachers have the great responsibility of providing instructional materials that depict accurate and impartial perspectives and information. Addressing stereotypes as well racism, sexism, and classism found in texts is vital; failing to do so could affect students and the classroom environment (Manning, 2000). Moodley (1999) quoted Hatcher and Troyna (1993) as they called for the implementation of critical multiculturalism toward teaching that is both relevant and responsive. They asserted that teachers

find ways in the curriculum to help children engage with how race works in their lives. To reflect cultural diversity positively and to teach about racism in society are both vital, but it is equally important to connect these interventions with children's own lives by bringing children's relationships and the conflicts within them, including racialized forms, into the curriculum itself. (p. 146)

Doing so will not be easy but it is nonetheless important.

While engaging students with multicultural literature teachers should continuously seek student understanding beyond the story, inquiry into student perceptions of pedagogy is needed. Multicultural literature teachers should not assume that the students' participation during discussions and performance on assessments translate into a deep understanding of their teachers' knowledge. Failure to adequately address the cultural content encountered in the literature may lead students to have

misconceptions about the content presented. Teachers' beliefs and values shape the way they incorporate aspects of culture into their teaching (Chan, 2006); as witnessed in this current study, students' perceptions about their teachers' competency related to multicultural literature are significant. These perceptions can impact the students' views related to literature and teacher efficacy. The importance of teacher efficacy extends beyond the classroom; students may view themselves (their culture and cultural histories) as unimportant in the classroom and society due to the nature of their teachers' engagement of cultural content (Bishop, 1992). While teachers encourage critical thinking and reading through questioning and exposure to multiple perspectives, they should also encourage their students to question their pedagogical decisions.

I believe all literature could be viewed through a multiculturalist's lens. All students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, benefit from multiculturalism (Nieto, 2008). Teachers should view the teaching of literature as a built-in opportunity to raise issues of power and foreground difference (Groban, 2007) and regularly enact the dimensions of multicultural education (Banks, 1994). If the issues of race, class, and gender are not explicitly addressed, teachers should pose questions for discussion that enhance them. Students could regularly be challenged to examine stories for issues related to race, class, and gender. In classic texts, questions can be posed regarding what groups are missing from the story and students can be expected to consider and discuss those reasons. Issues related to race, class, and gender presented in stories could be further explored through current events.

This study offers considerations for teacher education that include training pre-service teachers to examine their beliefs about multiculturalism, increasing the exposure

to multicultural literature in teacher preparation programs, and incorporating multiculturalists teaching in all teacher courses. The findings of this research study further suggest that pre-service and in-service teachers be provided with techniques to assist them in creating classroom environments where they are not viewed as the only dispensers of knowledge nor completely responsible for the cultural information shared in their classrooms. Sensitivity to and affirmation of students' background knowledge and cultural experiences is a necessary part of practice in our diverse classrooms. As society diversifies, teachers must be equipped to encourage and validate students' background knowledge in open discussions about literature and other curricular aspects.

The inclusion of examples of multiculturalism and multicultural education is vital in our nation's teacher education programs. Pre-service teachers should be taught to identify and evaluate their beliefs about multiculturalism, multicultural literature, and the multicultural classrooms they will find themselves in. Exposure to and discussions of the above may not change individuals' thoughts immediately, but as Thein, Beach & Parks (2007) found in their study examining transformative practice in teaching multicultural literature to a group of white students, gradual change can occur. Texts that embody diverse cultures and experiences unfamiliar to pre-service teachers can provide alternative perspectives that may assist in grappling with tensions the students face between their personal beliefs and the perspectives of others found in texts or encountered in discussions. Providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to examine their beliefs is crucial.

As a teacher educator, my encounters with undergraduate students and their limited exposure to multicultural children's literature are equally bleak. My attempts to

expose my undergraduate students to multicultural literature that could be incorporated into their future classrooms reveals the students' lack of knowledge about good multicultural literature and how its incorporation could go beyond food, holidays, and fun. Pre-service teachers need to understand that multicultural literature is useful for language arts and content area teaching and they have numerous opportunities to practice utilizing such literature. Students tend to view the literature used in teaching as important; therefore using multicultural literature regularly in teaching could encourage their students to read such texts. The incorporation of multicultural literature should be emphasized in all areas of teacher preparation programs. Such incorporation would expose pre-service teachers to books they may not have been exposed to in their childhood as well as provide opportunities for them to gain practice in reading and discussing cultural content presented in such texts. Teacher preparation programs are designed to prepare future educators for service in our nation's schools; part of this preparation should include providing practice in reading and discussing multicultural literature essential in raising awareness and understandings of others (Piper, 1986; Tway, 1989).

Due to their often-limited exposure to multicultural literature, teachers need to be educated in the effective use of multicultural literature in their classrooms (Beach, 1998; Beach & Finders, 1999). Teacher preparation programs must provide this training to ensure that the cultural views of future teachers are broadened and consequently those of their students can be as well. The importance of discussion related to multicultural literature was discussed in Chapter 2; such discussions cannot occur if teachers are unprepared to assist their students in cross-cultural understandings (Louie, 2006). Just as

the teachers in the Tyson (2020) study facilitated growth in their students' understanding of injustice through the reading and discussion of multicultural literature, similar results could be found as pre-service teachers engage with such texts. However, teachers cannot teach what they do not know; teacher education programs must provide the frequent learning opportunities for the pre-service teachers to engage with and learn to confidently and authentically utilize multicultural literature.

Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 2, multicultural education and critical multiculturalism seek to transform institutional spaces and provide skills for living in our diverse world. As the diversity of our nation increases, our teacher preparation programs need to be restructured to include practices that ensure pre-service teachers acquire the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for effective teaching (Banks, 2008). Teacher educators should focus pre-service teachers upon the issues of privilege and power at work in schools (Banks, 1995). The dimensions of multicultural education should be incorporated into teacher education to ensure that future teachers are able to meet the educational needs of the diverse classrooms they will teach in. The comprehensive changes that need to be made in our nation's schools must first be made in teacher preparation programs in order for future teachers to understand how to create classroom environments that meet the needs of all students (Banks, 1993). When such shifts are made in our teacher preparation programs, significant change can begin in our nation's schools.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this investigation provide insight for future research studies. The composition of this study's participants was female middle grade students; the

participants shared their experiences with the multicultural literature utilized in their middle grade language arts classrooms and their teachers' related pedagogical decisions. Investigation of the way that students of color in coeducational, all male schools, and high school settings could be conducted. Additionally, a similar longitudinal study examining possible shifts in student of color thoughts related to curriculum would assist in determining whether some of this study's findings were influenced by the developmental stage of the participants. Through examination of various populations a broader depiction of students of color responses to curriculum could be attained.

Research into the manner in which multiculturalists practice can be incorporated into the teaching of "mono-cultural" literature, literature that is not considered multicultural, is needed. Such investigation can include textual analysis of the absence and presence of cultural content and characters within texts. The results of such research can be used to develop a resource which could assist educators in identifying and addressing cultural content embedded in the texts utilized in their subject area.

Additionally, an investigation into how teachers can effectively convey their understanding of the cultural content embedded in the multicultural texts would contribute to the research. Such research could provide guidelines or suggestions for practice related to multiculturalism, multicultural education, multicultural literature, and pedagogy in the teaching of cultural content. Results of such a study would also provide insight into what influences teachers' choices about addressing cultural content embedded in literature. It would be interesting to understand how students of color (in private and public schools) view their teachers' effectiveness across the span of their middle grade schooling, since, developmentally, they are pliable. Additionally, it would

be interesting to note how teacher effectiveness would impact students' learning and development of positive attitudes about culture.

Another angle for future research would be to provide insight into the experiences of students of color in private schools related to other areas of curriculum. As noted in Chapter 2, review of the literature, much of the research related to students of color in private schools is focused upon achievement, "fitting in," and "acting white." It would be beneficial to examine how students of color experience other areas of curriculum and how their experiences affect and influence their learning. Findings would assist in understanding what goes through students' minds as they participate in classroom assignments and discussions. Again, guidelines could be established to ensure that the needs of all students, regardless of their ethnic and racial backgrounds, are met in private schools. The more we know about the ways students of color respond to curriculum, improvements can be made in curriculum and instruction (Brooks, 2006).

The parent participants in this present study were eager to contribute to this investigation. They remarked that they had never been engaged by LMS related to the curriculum or their experiences at the school. During the focus group discussion, the parent participants shared their experiences with and thoughts about the multicultural literature assigned to their children and teacher pedagogy. Although no question was posed about the school's diversity during the focus group discussion, parents were eager to discuss the issue. Schools could increase their effectiveness with students of color and address the issue of "fitting in" by engaging the parents of such students. Future research could investigate how non-public schools can enhance the manner in which they interact with and educate their small yet growing population of students of color.

Perhaps a study addressing the experiences of the dominant culture students related to multicultural literature and teacher pedagogy would assist in clarifying their participation decisions. Would their participation or lack thereof in literature discussions about cultural content be related to conscious efforts not to appear racist or insult their classmates of color? Do we care about the voices of these students?

Study Limitations

A number of important limitations need to be considered. To begin, the sampling poses some limitations. The teacher selection would be considered a convenience sample; while their selection was somewhat unguided by the researcher, there were only six teachers to choose from. Those in attendance at the departmental meeting when the department chair introduced my study chose to volunteer. It is unclear whether the inclusion of the remaining two teachers would have altered the findings of the study. The student participants would constitute a purposive sample and also posed some limitations. My focus upon students of color limited the sample size due to the small number of students of color enrolled at the study site.

It is important to consider how my presence in the classrooms during observations may have altered student and teacher behavior. For example, some of the concerns shared by the student participants were not witnessed during the classroom observations; it is unclear whether this was due to my presence. Another limitation is the fact that the teachers scheduled the observations to exhibit examples of their teaching that they felt would address the needs of this present research. Therefore, the teacher participants were prepared for my presence.

Additionally, the student participants agreed to submit work artifacts related to the

multicultural texts; nine of the twelve students followed through on the commitment to do so either by delivering the written assignments to the diversity director or allowing their teacher to send them via email. It is unclear whether the students or the teacher selected the assignments sent by email. Some of the assignments submitted failed to give insight into the answering of the student-related research questions. Furthermore, some of the student focus group discussion focused upon teachers whom I did not observe or who did not teach language arts. This information was not useful in enhancing the findings, as it was not possible to corroborate the information shared.

The focus group discussions were semi-structured in order to focus the discussions. However, the structure may have limited the information shared by the participants. Some of the questions would be considering “leading,” as they lead the respondents to talk about specific things in lieu of having an open-ended focus group. The information gleaned from the discussion was guided in a way conversely; insight was given into student of color thoughts about their educational experiences related to curriculum, multicultural literature, and teacher pedagogy.

Finally, while the parent focus group was insightful and each parent participated enthusiastically; assembling the parents of students of color had not previously happened at LMS. The parent participants shared concerns about a number of things that were outside of the scope of this present study, some of which were differing thoughts about diversity, the similarities and differences between the educational settings of their youth and that of their daughters, and their desire to be better prepared for and informed about the cultural content embedded in the texts their daughters were assigned to read. Unfortunately, some of the data collected were coded and found not to assist in

answering part C of the original research question related to student experiences; as a result, this question was eliminated.

Conclusion

According to Nieto & Bode (2008), middle and high school students who were surveyed expressed interest in multiculturalism and learning about cultural differences. In order to address the interests of students related to multiculturalism, curriculum and pedagogy must be focused upon and changed (Nieto, 2008). Attending to such issues in our schools can enhance the education of students in all schools, private and public, and ultimately affect the manner in which diversity is viewed in society.

It is unfortunate that the student participants in this study misunderstood their teachers' pedagogical decisions related to the cultural content embedded in the multicultural texts they read in their language arts classrooms, and viewed their school as saying diversity was valued but not showing it. Nevertheless, the knowledge acquired from this current study contributes to understanding how the middle grade students at LMS responded to the language arts curriculum. Moreover, replication of this study using different populations of students can provide insight for private school curriculum and pedagogy.

This current study portrays the impact of multicultural literature, its teaching and responses to the teaching from female middle grade students of color enrolled in a private school. The impetus for this study was improving the educational experiences of students of color in private schools. Understanding the responses of students of color to curricula has implications for private schools, since much of the research related to these students does not focus upon curricula. First, teachers' competency in cultural content and valuing

of multicultural literature may be misinterpreted due to their enactments of multiculturalism and the relationships between philosophy and pedagogy. Second, teachers' experiences related to the teaching of multicultural literature vary; most teachers experience a variety of feelings during their teaching. Lastly, the manner in which teachers present and teach literature can influence students' thoughts beyond the literature they teach.

The responses of the participants in this study suggest that more needs to be done to ensure that the actions of private school teachers related to curriculum are accurately interpreted by the students they teach. While the faculty and teacher participants in this current study expressed their commitment to addressing the needs of all students, to demonstrating the value of multicultural literature in their teaching, and viewed themselves as educators committed to diversity, most of the student and parent participants did not have the same viewpoints. Interestingly, the teacher who enacted aspects of multiculturalism most often and accurately was viewed as peculiar and hard to read by his students. Additionally, the views of the parent participants corroborated the thoughts of the students; they did not feel that the teachers effectively dealt with the cultural content embedded in the literature they taught. While they expressed similar reasons for enrolling their daughters in the LMS, which ranged from being alumnae to understanding the significance of an elite private school education, and believing that the school's commitment to diversity was authentic, they felt that LMS failed to take their commitment to diversity beyond words.

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APPENDIX A
ROBYN J. MURPHY'S CREDENTIALS

Robyn J. Murphy has worked for many years in the education field with an emphasis on literacy. At the time of this present study, she was the literacy coach at West Philadelphia High School. In that capacity, she assisted content area teachers with the integration of literacy strategies into their lessons. Robyn was previously employed as a seventh and eighth grade language arts teacher, had been a reading specialist and served as a program specialist at Girl Scouts of the USA. She also served as a professional development consultant for the American Reading Company for the middle and high school implementation of the 100 Book Challenge program.

Robyn J. Murphy holds a MS in Reading Education from the City University of New York, Queens College and a BA in Elementary Education/Psychology from Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. She was a certified K–6 teacher and Reading Specialist in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Reading Specialist in New York State at the time of the present study. Her extensive educational background and literacy emphasis enable her to serve effectively in the capacity required for inter-rater reliability.

APPENDIX B
CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

Cisneros, S. (1984). *The House on Mango Street*. New York, NY: Vantage Books

Hansberry, L. (1957). *A Raisin in the Sun*. New York, NY: Vintage Books

Ibbotson, E. (2001). *Journey to the River Sea*. New York, NY: Puffin

Lee, H. (1960). *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York, NY: Harper Collins

Ryan, P. (2000). *Esperanza Rising*. New York, NY: Scholastic

Taylor, M. (1976). *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*. New York, NY: Puffin

APPENDIX C
OBSERVED NON-MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE ACTIVITIES

Teacher	Number of Observations	Number of observed non-multicultural text related instruction	Nature
Mrs. Sojourner	8	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MadLib (parts of speech) - MLK, Jr. Poem sharing - Spelling and grammar worksheets (one each) -Reviewed spelling and grammar homework; students read answers aloud
Mr. Frank	6	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Returned grammar quizzes and discussed retake option -Journaling (alliteration and characterization focused) -Skype Introduction -Sharing journal stories -Returned grammar quizzes and addressed issues present
Ms. Villanelle	9	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Briefly explained grammar assignment -Checked individual grammar assignments in workbooks, briefly discussed next grammar assignment -Handed out homework assignment sheets -Reviewed TKMB assignment sheets, explained Point of View assignment expectations and silent reading of the text -Explained anticipation guide assignment, anticipation guide journal writing and clarified expectations -Returned vocabulary quizzes, stressed the (future) importance of new vocabulary
Ms. Glass	5	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Addressed questions about previous night's homework -Handed out new assignment sheets and explained upcoming <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> quote test -Reiterated coding expectations and discussed reading completed from previous night's homework