

**MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE CURRICULUM AND THE ENACTMENT
OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY**

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ABSTRACT

This case study describes and examines the pedagogical practices of urban middle school teachers who execute multicultural literature unit plans with students of color. Culturally relevant theory guides the analysis of the teachers' planning and pedagogy. The data gathered include; semi-structured curriculum director, teacher and student interviews; field notes of classroom observations; student reflective journals as well as curriculum artifacts. Data were analyzed and coded for findings, and implications for further research are given. Findings show teachers enact some, but not all principles of the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy.

This dissertation and all of my academic achievements
are dedicated to the memory of my father, David,
who passed away shortly before my completion of this work.

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Multicultural Literature Curriculum and the Enactment of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When I first began teaching seven years ago, I was the bilingual (Spanish) teacher of a fourth grade English language learner self-contained classroom. Every day, twice a day, students split up into homogeneous groups based on their academic ability, and I read from a scripted lesson for reading and mathematics. The program meant to “correct” the gaps students had that prevented them from reading or performing math at their grade level. To me, we sounded like robots. I always wondered, as a new teacher, how I was being valued as a professional with an advanced degree when all I did for a majority of my day was read from a script word for word. Furthermore, as their teacher, I did not feel as though the program challenged my students to think critically, thereby increasing their academic levels. Not surprisingly, the program did not last very long, and my mostly Latinx students still read below grade level by the end of the school year. I understood clearly why students of color across the country lag significantly behind academically than their white counterparts (NCES, 2016).

The following year I began teaching sixth grade literacy at a turnaround elementary school of majority African American and Latinx students. A turnaround school takes over a failing public school and attempts to improve the academic achievement of the students by focusing on a direct instruction model and a no excuses discipline approach. At that time, I did not receive a curriculum to reference or plan from. I created each of my lessons daily and located the texts I was teaching on my own. I had

anchor novels that I could choose to read with my students, but they were not required nor the focus of the class. I also participated in professional development and coaching. I taught my students the “steps” to figuring out literary terms or elements like character trait or theme of several passages that mirrored the state standardized tests. I returned and returned to this notion that reading cannot be taught in steps because it is comprehensive and all encompassing, but my principal insisted. The “steps” are what I would continue to teach. After all, according to my principal, research indicates that this direct instruction approach helps raise test scores.

It eventually became very time-consuming creating my own lessons each day and, as a result, the quality of my instruction suffered. Reading passages like the state standardized tests also did not engage my students in the daily lessons. Ironically, even though my students fell far behind in reading the year before, they made reading gains with me (as indicated on their standardized test results). Some passed their sixth-grade reading benchmarks although I knew that they read on a second- or third-grade level. It was alarming to me that my students could compensate for their reading levels to pass a test. However, I realized that this was only a short-term solution. On paper, it appeared that they were making improvements. But my students lacked the critical thinking skills they would need as they moved up in grade. Unfortunately, over the next few years, I received updates from my administration that many of my prior students withdrew from the secondary school to attend a neighborhood public school. The main reasons were for behavioral issues or being held back to repeat the grade due to academic achievement.

Similar to my own findings, the network in which my school was a part of also saw a plateau in scores at several schools after experiencing initial big gains the first few years after the turnaround. They also noticed that, while many students who graduated from our schools were accepted to college, they lacked the independence and ability to critically think and problem solve that helped them persevere through college. As a result, many students dropped out of college after only their first semester or year. The central office started to question the direct instruction model and whether it would get students college ready. What students would need to be truly college literate, they thought, were more critical thinking courses and a more hands on approach. Simultaneously, the Common Core shifts were beginning in the state and the urgency increased to develop a more rigorous curriculum because the standards were generally more rigorous. A neighboring state already administered the first round of Common Core assessments. The results showed charter schools that traditionally scored very high on standardized tests had huge dips in their scores. One charter network however, scored above and beyond all the other charters in math and reading. Once these results became public, our charter organization wanted to collaborate and understand what model this school was using and how it was so successful. My principal was one of the collaborators who visited the school in 2013. He came back with an understanding that teachers can implement conceptual inquiry or a more progressive approach and still have a standardized and structured classroom environment. According to the literacy curriculum director, what that charter shows is “you can have novice teachers and if you train them

really clearly and lay out a clear path, they can be successful with progressive pedagogy” (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17).

Our school became the first school in our network to pilot a new literacy curriculum and implement what I now conceptualize as culturally relevant pedagogy halfway through the academic year. Our principal thought it was too urgent not to wait until the following year to execute the change. We included high quality literature with themes and topics relevant to the race and culture of our students and other cultures. We did have novels to read from previously, however, they were not the focus of class since we mainly read test passages instead. With the new pilot, the novel served as the anchor text for the unit. The novels focused on a different culture or race each report period and then we would supplement the novels with other relevant texts such as articles and poems. Since we only had two report periods remaining in the school year, the two anchor novels we read that year were about a Vietnamese refugee during the Vietnam War and about a Mexican migrant worker and her family’s experience in California during the Great Depression.

At first, not all teachers accepted this change. Some felt comfortable with the way they were teaching and thought such drastic change in pedagogy and curriculum halfway through the school year was disruptive. Some teachers also expressed concern to the principal regarding conversations about race and culture. However, my principal insisted that each teacher have an open mind and at least give it a chance. The principal and vice-principal collaborated and created the new unit plan, which focused on the anchor novel as well as supplemental texts to increase prior knowledge and better help students

understand the themes of the novel. We spent one week on each supplemental text, teaching the literal and deeper meaning and then asking students to make connections to the novel and write. Instead of answering multiple-choice questions with one correct answer, students discussed and debated topics from the texts and then wrote their responses providing textual evidence.

Each week the fifth and sixth grade teachers met together along with our principal and planned out the lessons using the unit plan. Since we taught a new supplemental text each week, we focused on a deep understanding of the text as teachers and then discussed potential questions and discussion topics for our students, as well as potential challenges. This provided an opportunity for teachers to clarify misunderstandings for one another and hear different perspectives on the interpretation of the literature. By the end of the unit, the students read several texts related to the novel. They then synthesized the texts and wrote a final essay incorporating the novel and showed their ability to connect several texts. This was a skill that students could not do successfully previously because they only read texts in isolation. Teachers now helped the students make those connections to think critically across several texts.

The central team from our charter organization observed the lessons in action in our classrooms. They reported that they noticed more student engagement and, when they spoke to the students directly, the students emphasized excitement about the new curriculum. Benchmark scores also increased during those two report periods. The organization then decided to implement the pilot into all of the schools in the network. The following year the 2.0 model derived from the pilot was implemented in all schools.

Our charter network literacy team, led by the curriculum director, created the unit plans centrally for all grades and all schools and provided all the texts teachers needed for each report period. The unit plans included the texts, the objectives and the essential understandings of each day of the report period. The reasoning behind this was so that teachers spent less time looking for resources and more time diving into the texts and planning for the lesson. It also gave teachers flexibility in using the unit plan to cater to the needs of their own students. The short-term goal for this approach was to increase student engagement. According to the literacy director, “we wanted students to develop the stamina to persevere through challenge, to engage with complex texts, to engage with the common core standards and all of the shifts of the common core” (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17). The long-term goal was to support students in positive racial identity development and have schools be a positive influence rather than a detractor of identity development. However, the network never solidified how the long-term goal would be measured.

When determining the texts for the unit, the literacy team wanted to make sure students had both windows and mirrors in their experience so they would see texts that were more reflective, something that felt familiar to them as a mirror but would also give them windows to other experiences. While most students in the schools are African American and Latinx, one school in the network has a higher Asian American and immigrant population. Therefore, a book about the Chinese American experience was chosen for seventh and eighth grade. However, students were also responding positively to seeing narratives about overcoming oppression and overcoming prejudice and hardship

that are not just about the African American experience. They're obstacles that happen across racial and ethnic groups. According to the literacy director:

The struggle around racial identity development which is a core theme around *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006) was something that students were really interested in and were interested in particularly because it was not the same old song that they were hearing about black identity development, which is not to say that we had not fully addressed black identity development at all, but I think it provided additional perspectives and places to make connections (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17).

Therefore, texts were chosen that represented a variety of racial, religious and cultural groups including White Americans, African and Black Americans, Latinos, Asian and Asian Americans, Native Americans, Jews and Muslims.

The types of texts we taught forced me to hold conversations about race and culture and push my students to question and debate societal issues. For the first time in my teaching career, I heard questions from my students like “if Brown v. Board of Education desegregated schools, why aren't there any white kids in our class?” I was teaching my students about truly deep topics such as redlining and deliberate governmental policies that impacted and continue to impact my student's lives. Students used the lessons from the texts we read along with my questioning and discussion prompts to critique historical events and apply their own personal experiences to understanding the text. For the first time in their elementary schooling, students thought deeply about, critiqued and critically debated relevant racial and cultural issues that mattered to them and shared their own racial and cultural experiences as young people of color.

While I felt comfortable addressing race and culture in my own classroom, the network recognized that some teachers would find it challenging. Therefore, cultural context work eventually became the forefront of English Language Arts. The organization recognized teachers needed more than a multicultural unit plan and expect them to execute it with ease. The literacy team collaborated with the cultural context director to design and report professional developments that were about the connection between culturally relevant teaching, racial identity development and literacy instruction and teachers received those PDs best. Additionally, the collaboration and focus on cultural context supported the literacy team in addressing their own blind spots when creating the unit plans. For example, one of the members of the literacy team was creating an oppressive and one-sided narrative for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* (Curtis, 1996) when writing the unit plan. However, once cultural context became the focus, she started to reflect upon the idea of a more empowering narrative. When the unit plan came around again, the literacy team made those changes as they reflected on their own learning.

To also support teachers in the execution of the unit plans, each school implemented routine planning meetings wherein school leaders supported teachers on topics they anticipated they might feel uncomfortable addressing. Additionally, each school formed cultural context professional learning communities to give teachers the opportunity to talk as adults about race and identity. These professional developments allowed teachers to better understand their own blind spots and tendencies and to be more thoughtful and careful readers and teachers of reading.

The literacy curriculum director acknowledged that how effectively teachers and school leaders had conversations about race were not normed across the network. Also, during planning meetings it was not possible for teachers and school leaders to talk about every line of every text. Therefore, teachers would sometimes miss opportunities in the texts. For example, in teaching *The Watsons go to Birmingham* (Curtis, 1996), some teachers interpreted the family being so meticulous in their packing and not wanting to make any stops down South as them just wanting to be prepared for their trip. Actually, the reason was that they didn't want to put the family in danger since they were a black family traveling in the South during the time of Jim Crow laws. This was a missed opportunity for students because their teacher misinterpreted the text since she was reading it from her own cultural and racial perspective. However, planning meetings gave teachers the opportunity to confront such misunderstandings and blind spots. An example is with the poem "Nikki Rosa" in which the literacy curriculum director stated:

I had teachers that when they first read it because they read it, making connections to their own experiences particularly, were like 'wow her childhood sounds really hard' because she gave a lot of details about things that could have been perceived as hardships but she literally also said 'please don't take this the wrong way in saying my childhood was hard, I was also very happy' (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17)

The director followed up:

I think the conversations that came out of that were really helpful but that's one really obvious example where anyone's own racial identity and lens you can't help but have that factor into your work as a reader and as a teacher. I think that's why the work that we were able to do around making those connections was really important because it helped teachers realize that your race and identity is an influence on how you yourself read and interpret texts (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17).

Therefore, while the network works towards helping teachers confront their own biases and understand their own racial trajectory to become more careful and culturally aware reading teachers, it can also continue to properly train and develop teachers to lead racial and cultural conversations.

The curriculum director in this study played a large role in the commitment to develop and implement a multicultural curriculum that focused on challenging students to think critically about topics that directly relate to their lives and maintaining high academic expectations. Her goal was to challenge teachers to adopt a culturally relevant pedagogy approach and to reflect upon their own racial identity. By utilizing current research, collaborating with other schools and teachers and developing a cultural context lens, the curriculum director relentlessly continued to reflect and develop a curriculum that considered the race of the students and how their perception of the world and the texts may differ from that of their teachers because of the cultural experiences they may bring to the classroom.

Statement Of The Problem

As of 2010, the U.S. Census reports that people of color make up almost 40 percent of the U.S. total population (U.S. Census Bureau). According to the U.S. Population Projections from 2010-2050, the 2008 projections show that people of color will make up over 50% of the total U.S. population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau). U.S. classrooms also show a significant shift in demographics. In 2007, racial/ethnic minority students made up 44 percent of the total public school population (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). For years, students of color in public schools have continuously

underachieved, particularly in reading. The first major study post-*Brown v. Board of Education* to establish that Black children achieved at a lower level than White children was the *Equality of Educational Opportunity* (1966) (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The racial gap in achievement is documented as early as kindergarten/first grade and by the time racial/ethnic minority students reach high school, they are significantly behind White and Asian students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; NCES, 2016).

Scholars argue that a large challenge to ensuring that racial/ethnic minority students achieve is the preparation of teachers to effectively teach students whose cultural backgrounds are different than their own (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, 2011). According to Ladson-Billings (1992), students of color are also often subjected to the assimilationist approach to teaching that “sees fitting students into the existing social and economic order as its primary responsibility” (p. 314). Ladson-Billings (1992) argues although this approach to teaching isn’t necessarily poor, it doesn’t challenge the way that schooling “has historically kept African Americans and other ethnic and social class groups in the lowest social categories, allegedly based on objective academic performance” (p. 314). More recently, Milner (2011) suggests teachers play a critical role in how students engage, learn and achieve in urban classrooms (p. 88). According to Milner (2011), “while it is well established that the ability of teachers to build cultural competence is a critical aspect of their work especially in urban and highly diverse settings, the kinds of experiences that help them build cultural competence is less clear” (p. 86). Furthermore, he suggests that it is necessary for teachers to experience learning opportunities in teacher education “that consider the strengths of those in urban schools”

(Milner, 2011, p. 88). The continuous implementation of comprehensive school reforms and standardized test scores to measure academic achievement continue to perpetuate the problem. Such reforms are based on the belief that a single systemic process will help schools increase the achievement of all students (Shippen, et al., 2006). Furthermore, it fails to view students as individuals with unique academic needs and cultural experiences.

Instead, some scholars contend that an approach that considers the culture and race of students would engage and motivate more students of color. Pedro Noguera (2003) argues, “high performing students of color are more likely to be successful if they attend schools that support and affirm their racial and cultural identities” (p. 57). Multicultural scholars argue “immersing students in their culture, by espousing culturally affirming teaching practices develops children who see themselves as cultural workers and leaders. These practices, in turn, reverse the current trend of low performance among these groups” (Durden, 2008, p. 410).

Significance Of The Study

This study is particularly significant because, throughout the nation’s educational history, people from minority groups have been left out of the historical narrative or portrayed as victims. Texts, curriculum and pedagogy tended to reflect the dominant culture. On the one hand, an issue exists of leaving out whole groups of people from the curriculum, which brings about negative effects on students of color (Ladson-Billings, 2009). According to Ladson-Billings (2009), “the negative effects [of the dominant culture] are brought about, for example, by not seeing one’s history, culture, or

background represented in the textbook or curriculum” (p. 17). According to Milner, (2011):

This idea of seeing oneself in the curriculum and through instruction helps students understand the important way in which their culture has contributed to various genres of curriculum content and also to the fabric of U.S. society (p. 69).

Furthermore, students reading about their own culture may be learning about characteristics and perspectives that they were not familiar with before. While it is significant to incorporate texts that reflect the culture of the student, it does not necessarily call for omitting texts about the dominant culture or books about other cultures. This simply highlights the importance, as called for in multiculturalism, of students reading and learning about a variety of different cultures throughout their educational experience. To teach students how to think critically on an intellectual, social, emotional, and political level, they gain advantage by being exposed to texts of all different cultures and from multiple perspectives, not just that of the dominant culture or their own culture.

An increasing amount of research has examined culturally relevant pedagogy and multiculturalism. Culturally relevant pedagogy incorporates students’ culture to help them make meaning and understand the world through academic, social and cultural success (Ladson-Billings, 1992; as cited in Milner, 2011). However, a challenge presented is the idea that students are not engaged in “provocative thinking about the contradictions of U.S. ideals and lived realities” but rather singing ethnic songs, eating ethnic foods, and doing ethnic dances (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 22). While teachers may take into account children’s cultural backgrounds, “the kinds of experiences that help

them build cultural competence is less clear” (Milner, 2011, p. 66). Milner (2011) cautions that when race is concerned, the term “culture” is often misused by “collapsing all individuals in a particular race together” (p. 71). For example, the term African American refers to “an ethnic group of people-not a singular, static cultural group; there is a wide range of diversity among and between African Americans although there are some consistencies as well” (Milner, 2011, p. 71). According to Robinson (2013), discussing multicultural education “requires clarification of how *culture* relates to children, and their understandings about themselves, and about others” (p. 46). An individual may have many layers to his or her culture. Multicultural education recognizes these multiple cultural differences (Robinson, 2013).

Therefore, a challenge for teachers of acquiring knowledge about varying cultural groups is confronting stereotypes and biases (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2011). Applying the practices of successful culturally relevant teachers to professional development and teacher preparation programs is extremely critical. If teachers are trained about how to confront biases and develop critical thinking and perspectives among minority students, they can effectively empower and help their students connect with their own culture in the curriculum as well as develop connections and disconnections with people whose culture differ from their own. Furthermore, teachers can provide innovative opportunities for their students that “allow them to meaningfully understand the sociopolitical nature of society and how society works” (Milner, 2011, p. 70). This includes not only having an awareness and knowledge of multicultural literature and providing multicultural texts for their students, but also knowing “how to use

materials to teach social justice ideas and global citizenship” (Robinson, 2013, p. 45).

For this reason, it is particularly important to study teachers’ enactment of curriculum and multicultural texts to understand the thought processes and behaviors that undergird successful culturally relevant pedagogy. One example: teachers who are responsible for implementing standardized curriculum. According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011):

While teachers must practice in the context of this standardized curriculum, they can also embrace the opportunity to incorporate or cultivate additional views of achievement that will allow those who do not experience achievement through the standard curriculum to obtain success through these additional methods, ones that recognize and value who children are and how they learn best. (p. 76)

This study will examine the ways in which literature teachers enact culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching a prescribed multicultural literacy curriculum. Furthermore, I will examine how the pedagogies of two teachers teaching the same unit plan compare and contrast. The following research questions guide this study:

- 1) In what ways and to what extent do the teachers enact culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching a unit on *Night*?
- 2) What similarities and differences are evident in the pedagogy of the teachers?

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Definition of Terms

- 1) *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*- Ladson-Billings (1995) specifically defined culturally relevant pedagogy as:

a pedagogy of opposition not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order. (p. 160)

- 2) *Culture* – According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) if culture is defined as

the ways in which persons perceive, believe, relate to, and evaluate the world around them then how people see themselves can be viewed through these same lenses. Language, behavioral expressions, interpretations of actions, and societal expectations are all culturally born and implemented. Culture includes ethnicity and race, as well as gender, class, language, region, religion, exceptionality, and other diversities that help define individuals. (p. 72) For this study, I will be addressing ethnicity and race in regards to cultural consciousness.

- 3) *Multiculturalism*- Morrell and Morrell (2012) defined multicultural literature as that which:

represents people from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds that have traditionally been oppressed or marginalized in our society (p. 11).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Researchers describe culturally relevant pedagogy as an effective means of meeting the academic and social needs of ethnically diverse students (Durden, 2008; Gay, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995; Lipman, 1995). Ladson-Billings

began investigating “culturally relevant teaching” in 1989 by talking with, observing, videotaping, analyzing, and interpreting the practice of successful teachers of African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1992). She began with a group of eight teachers in a small predominantly African American elementary school district in Northern California (Ladson-Billings, 1992). The criteria for effectiveness was student achievement, student attitude towards themselves, others, and school, parent-teacher interactions, and classroom management (Ladson-Billings, 1992). During the first phase of the study, each teacher participated in an ethnographic interview and was observed and videotaped in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1992). The teachers then viewed the videotaped segments, discussed their decision-making, and defined areas of culturally relevant teaching that were important to their teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992). During 1990-1991, Ladson-Billings began to focus more closely on two of the teachers and their teaching of language and literacy (Ladson-Billings, 1992). She wrote several articles and books presenting the findings of her investigation over many years. From this work, she developed the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP).

According to Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant is “pedagogy of opposition that recognizes and celebrates African American culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 314). For African American students, the school experience should be liberating and the main liberating tool in culturally relevant teaching is literacy (Ladson-Billings, 1992). She defines culturally relevant teaching as a “pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 382). The goal of this pedagogy

empowers minority students to think and critique society by learning to possess a variety of literacies (Ladson-Billings, 1992). This theoretical model not only addresses student achievement, but it helps students to develop cultural identity and critical perspectives that challenge school and institutional inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is based on three propositions of what contributes to success for all students, especially African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2001). These propositions are: “(a) successful teachers focus on students’ academic achievement, (b) successful teachers develop students’ cultural competence, and (c) successful teachers foster students’ sense of sociopolitical consciousness” (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 144). In a culturally relevant classroom, the teacher focuses on the students’ academic needs rather than making them “feel good” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160). For example, Ladson-Billings uses the example of a teacher she studied that focused most of her attention on the African American boys in the class who were the numerical majority (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The teacher challenged the boys to demonstrate academic power by drawing on issues they found to be meaningful (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore, this teacher channeled the boys’ skills and abilities towards academic achievement, which then set a positive example for other students in the class (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Another proposition of culturally relevant pedagogy is cultural competence. According to Ladson-Billings, culturally relevant teachers ‘utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning to help students maintain cultural integrity (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161). An example is encouraging students to use their home language to express

themselves in speaking and writing while they are learning “standard” English. They are then required to “translate” to Standard English, which aids in better use of both languages (Ladson-Billings, 1995). According to Milner, “cultural competence seems to concern the ability of teacher to help foster student learning about themselves, other, and how the world works in order to be able to function effectively in it and also how to contribute to their communities” (Milner, 2011, p. 72).

The third proposition is critical consciousness, which requires students to “develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, pp. 162). For example, in the classrooms of culturally relevant teachers, students are challenged to critique the knowledge in texts they read (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Rather than teach their own political and social agendas, teachers intentionally introduce students to texts that represent counter knowledge in order to help them to develop multiple perspectives on a variety of societal and historical topics (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Most recently in 2012, Django Paris offered the term “culturally sustaining pedagogy” (CSP) as an extension of culturally relevant and culturally responsive pedagogy. According to Paris, culturally sustaining requires “that our pedagogies be more than responsive of or relevant to the cultural experiences and practices of young people- it requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (Paris, 2012, p. 95). The goal of CSP is to support multilingualism

and multiculturalism and to “sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling” (Paris, 2012, p. 95).

In “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the Remix,” Ladson-Billings (2014) suggests it is time for a “remix” of her original theory by supporting culturally sustaining pedagogy as proposed by Paris (2012) (Ladson-Billings, 2014). She acknowledges that scholarship, like culture, is fluid and it is important to take previously developed ideas and synthesize them into new forms. Although culturally relevant pedagogy is a well-regarded theory and has been cited by many scholars, Ladson-Billings addresses her dissatisfaction with “what seems to be a static conception of what it means to be cultural” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 77). Through her classroom visits, she noticed teachers with good intentions who wanted to embrace culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). However, “they rarely pushed students to consider critical perspectives on policies and practices that may have direct impact on their lives and communities.... there was no discussion of issues such as school choice, school closing, rising incarceration rates, gun laws” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 78). To her, the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy was distorted and reduced to “adding some books about people of color, having a classroom Kwanzaa celebration, or posting ‘diverse’ images” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 82). Ladson-Billings welcomes the theory and research on culturally sustaining pedagogy to push forward her “original goals of engaging critically in the cultural landscapes of classrooms and teacher education programs” (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 74). She believes CSP considers what people think of as culturally relevant pedagogy and incorporates the

“multiplicities of identities and cultures that help formulate today’s youth culture”
(Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 82).

Critical Race Theory and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Although Ladson-Billings’ CRP takes place in classrooms, she similarly writes about the larger contexts of schools and the society in which classrooms sit through critical race theory (CRT). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued for a critical theory of race in education to “theorize race and use it as an analytic tool for understanding school inequity” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48). They suggest that, although other scholars study race as a tool to explain social inequity, “the intellectual salience of this theorizing has not been systematically employed in the analysis of educational inequality” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 50). Their discussion of school inequity is based on three central propositions: 1) “Race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the United States, 2) U.S. society is based on property rights, and 3) the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 48).

When it comes to critical race theory (CRT) and education, the authors argue that the cause of African American poverty along with the condition of their schools and schooling is a direct result of institutional and structural racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Racism is so deeply ingrained in US society that it is a significant reason why a high proportion of African American students continuously fail in public schools. Critical race theory also challenges claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and

meritocracy by establishing a theme of “naming one’s own reality” or “voice” (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995, p. 56). Giving a voice to people who have traditionally been oppressed is the “first step on the road to justice” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate, “without authentic voices of people of color (as teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community members) it is doubtful that we can say or know anything useful about education in their communities” (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58).

Critical race theory suggests current instructional strategies assume African American students are deficient. Therefore, “instruction is conceived as a generic set of teaching skills that should work for all students” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 19). Furthermore, when these strategies fail to achieve the desired results, students rather than the techniques are viewed as lacking (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Culturally relevant pedagogy theory responds to this tenet by assuming minority students are assets to the learning community. It focuses on the enactment of culturally relevant curriculum and practices within a (literacy) classroom to empower and encourage minority students’ cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences. It is a pedagogy that is intended to oppose educational inequity among minority students in the U.S. educational system. According to Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) “it is important to include race and race consciousness in the multicultural classroom, especially in environments where race and culture could be dismissed as student deficiency” (p. 69). Irvine (1990) focuses on the racial aspect of culture. The distinct culture of African Americans can sometimes conflict with the

dominant culture (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Therefore, Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) state:

Cultural misunderstanding and cultural aversions can result among teachers, administrators, students, and parents within our nation's classrooms. While culture and race share some similarities, we propose that focusing solely on culture negates the reality of race and racism in American society. Moreover, we expand the work on culture and race to be inclusive of more than just Black Americans (p. 69).

Therefore, they stress the need to consider race in how culturally relevant pedagogy is enacted. According to Gay (2002), teachers learn someone else's culture by obtaining detailed facts about the cultural particularities of specific ethnic groups (p. 107).

Furthermore, information about ethnic groups and multicultural education is widely available, "it just has to be located, learned, and woven into the preparation programs of teachers and classroom instruction" (Gay, 2002, p. 108). Gay suggests prospective teachers take courses on the contributions of ethnic groups to the content areas that they will teach and on multicultural education (Gay, 2002). Teachers can also obtain information about ethnic groups when they prepare to teach a new text in order to identify their own biases and misconceptions.

In developing a conceptual framework of CRP, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) suggest the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy should include a critical analysis of race and racism as acknowledged by Ladson-Billings across her scholarship. They state:

The history of the U.S. has informed us that race is very central to how people perceive and relate to the world. While CRT provides a framework and for some a tool of analysis for examining educational practices and structures that continue to subordinate groups of people, culturally relevant pedagogy offers a model of theory to practice and examples of how such instruction can be delivered. When CRT is related to CRP, the centrality of race to American culture is acknowledged. (p. 71)

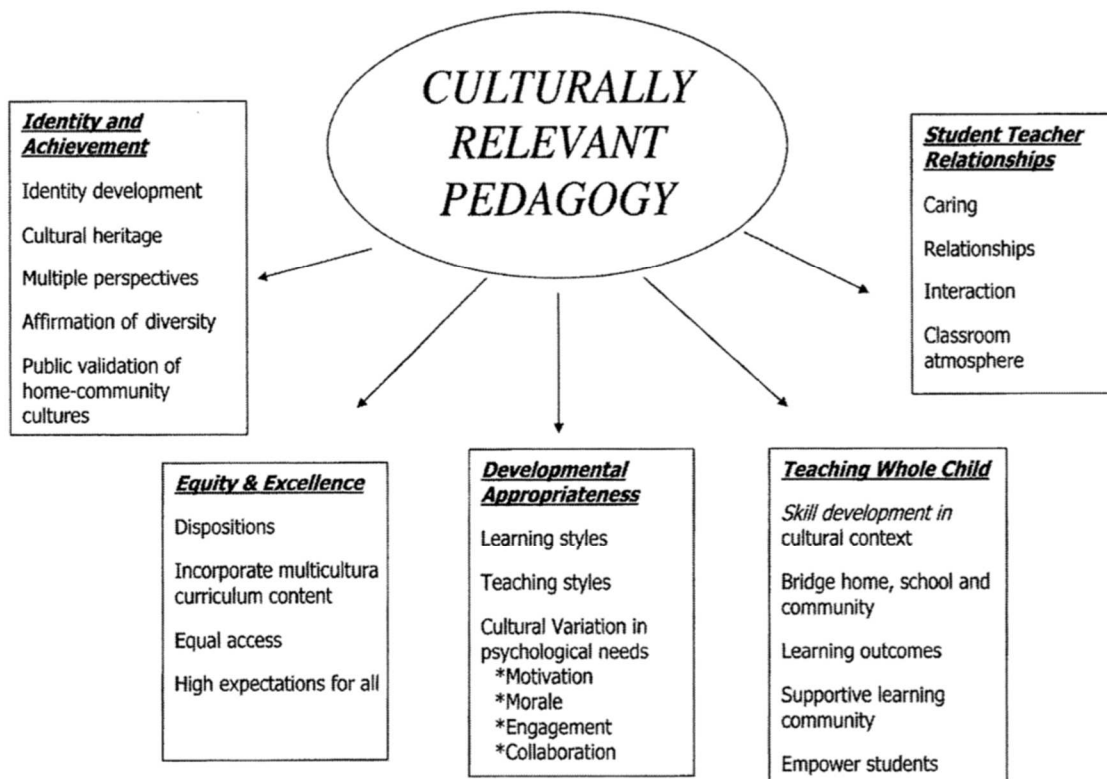
Therefore, the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy should include an analysis of race and racism (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011)

A Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Using the research of Gay (1994, 2000), Ladson Billings (1994) and Nieto (1999) Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) developed a conceptual framework of culturally relevant teaching behaviors which incorporate critical race theory and contains five themes: identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching the whole child, and student-teacher relationships (p. 71).

Figure 1

The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011)



The theme of identity and achievement considers both the identities of students and teachers (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Identity is considered a cultural construct and it is the teacher's responsibility to realize that minority students may see, view and perceive themselves and others differently than those who are of the majority group (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). According to Gay (2002), teachers need to acquire a detailed knowledge base of the cultural particularities of different ethnic groups (p. 107). Additionally, Nieto (1999) acknowledges that teachers should be aware of their own identities and that "by reconnecting with their own background, and with the sufferings as well as the triumphs of their own families, teachers can lay the ground work for students to reclaim their histories and voices" (Nieto, 1999, p. 3; as cited in Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Howard (2003) argues, "the development of culturally relevant teaching strategies is contingent upon critical reflection about race and culture of teachers and their students" (p. 195). Critical race theory adds that cultural awareness should not include colorblindness or race-neutral policies (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Brown Jeffy and Cooper (2011) argue:

When teachers acknowledge that the system is racist, they can move forward to not only avoid socially reproducing the racism, but also to rethink the system, recognize their actions in it, change them if need be, and embrace all cultures as equally important. (p. 73)

This includes insisting diversity is an asset and validating students' cultures rather than viewing them as a deficit and publicly acknowledging and validating student cultures as valuable (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

The theme of equity and excellence includes treating student equitably by affirming their cultural capital. According to Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011), "claiming to

be color-blind is not an equitable approach to teaching and learning” (p. 74). It also includes incorporating multicultural content in curriculum and instruction because students may not always perceive themselves positively in the traditional curriculum presented in schools (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2001). Gay (2001) says teachers need to learn how to convert their knowledge base about ethnic and cultural diversity into culturally responsive curriculum designs and instructional strategies, which is inclusive of all cultures represented in the classroom (p. 108). Often, students read about historical events and concepts from viewpoint of the victors, which ignores the perspectives of those who have traditionally been oppressed and causes many students of color to feel left out (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Critical race theory adds; “equity and excellence clearly focus on realizing that race is a significant factor in inequality” (Brown-Jeffy & Coopers, 2011, p. 75). CRT “debunks the belief that equity and excellence are solely defined as the property interest of Whites” and uses counter storytelling as a critique of the mainstream narrative (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 75). Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) insist the focus not be on “cultural inclusions during a specific time of year (such as Black History Month), but interweaving the acknowledgment and inclusion of culture throughout the entire academic process” (p. 75). Moreover, the practice of CRP recognizes that equity and excellence should include students of color as well.

Development appropriateness refers to recognizing the importance of children’s cognitive and psychosocial development by acknowledging and utilizing knowledge students bring with them to school (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Brown-Jeffy and

Cooper (2011) believe that the process of student age in development should “carry on through the higher grades as it moves from considering is this appropriate for a student at a certain age to how does diversity of culture impact developmental appropriateness” (p. 75). CRT adds that developmental appropriateness must consider the prior knowledge a student has when he enters school and whether the student has experienced racism (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). According to Brown-Jeffy & Coopers, 2011, “part of developmental appropriateness is taking students where they are and getting them where they need to be with innovative teaching methods and assessments” (p. 76). Furthermore, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) state:

Critical race theory forces teachers to critique liberalism and challenge the dominant ideology. This includes the development and use of diverse assessment opportunities which begins with high standards and expectations for all. CRP teachers have to advocate for and perform a paradigm shift in assessment (p. 76).

In sum, developmental appropriateness focuses on implementing curriculum to meet the cognitive, emotional, social and psychological needs of students so they are engaged in learning that they can transfer across various contexts rather than engaging rote memorization.

The theme of teaching the whole child means teachers are remembering the needs of the whole child, including being “sensitive to how culture, race, and ethnicity influence the academic, social, emotional, and psychological development of students” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 77). By teaching to the whole child, teachers are acknowledging cultural group behaviors as well as interacting with students as individuals (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Teachers must consider the idea that cultural influences affect how students perceive, receive, respond to, categorize, and prioritize

what is meaningful to them (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011),

The CRP practice of teaching to the whole child expands teachers' knowledge base of instructional strategies and also heightens their cultural sensitivity and recognition of the definitive link between culture and schooling. Moreover, through the lens of CRT, CRP supports the child as an integrated human being where culture and schooling are key to his/her development (p. 77).

Children bring with them to school various cultural experiences and culturally relevant teachers scaffold those cultural experiences in order for students to make meaning (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). This allows students to embrace their own culture as well as the culture of all students in the classroom (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

The fifth principle of the culturally relevant pedagogy framework is student-teacher relationships. Relationships between students and teachers are critical in promoting student achievement. According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011), "students need to know teachers care and teachers should recognize and respect their students for who they are as individuals and as members of a cultural group" (p. 77). CRP teachers recognize students' individual value and importance as well as what students have in common (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). CRT can be infused into CRP when teachers consider and value their students' counterstories, "for their perceived realities of lived experiences can unveil the historic and continuing presence of racism and its effects on students' and families' lives" (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 79). CRT also cautions teachers to critique the programming of educational systems, curricular development, and barriers to equal education access because of racism in our society (Brown-Jeffy &

Cooper, 2011). CRT informs teachers to maintain high expectations for all students regardless of their academic placement.

The framework of culturally relevant pedagogy synthesizes the literature on CRP by Ladson-Billings (1994), Gay (1994, 2000) and Nieto (1999) into five principles and infuses it with the tenets of critical race theory. However, what is missing from this framework are the practices of teachers working within the principles and how the framework would operate within the classroom as I take up in my study. This is important so teachers have tangible practices to implement in their classroom when enacting CRP.

Prior Research

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

A growing body of research examined culturally relevant pedagogy in diverse classrooms (Brown, 2004; Esposito, Davis, and Swain, 2011; Hefflin, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Lipman, 1995; Lynn, Johnson & Hassan, 1999; Milner, 2011). Lipman (1995) conducted an ethnographic study focusing on the role of exemplary African American teachers of African American students at two restructuring junior high schools in a southern city (p. 203). The goal of the school restructure was to improve the academic performance and educational experience of students labeled “at risk” by focusing on organizational change, teacher empowerment, and professional collaboration (Lipman, 1995). Based on the observations and interviews of three teachers of predominately African American students, Lipman (1995) found that although the teachers all chose different teaching styles and methods, they shared similar

commitments, student expectations, and connections with students, families and communities (Lipman, 1995). Indeed, their exemplary practices were “characterized by support for academic excellence *and* cultural integrity of African American students” (Lipman, 1995, p. 205). According to Lipman (1995):

In a Eurocentric context, they celebrated the richness of African American language, culture, and experience. At the same time, they explicitly taught “the discourse of power” to students who did not have access to it. They relentlessly coached students in the nuances of the dominant discourse without denigrating their home culture or challenging their identity (p. 206).

Lipman found that these teachers had the ideological beliefs, cultural knowledge and pedagogy to offer an alternative to dominant beliefs and practices (Lipman, 1995).

However, Lipman also found that the “pedagogical wisdom” of these teachers was not acknowledged in the restructuring of the schools (Lipman, 1995).

Pedro Noguera (2003) argues, “high performing students of color are more likely to be successful if they attend schools that support and affirm their racial and cultural identities” (Noguera, 2003, p. 57). This includes connecting learning and classroom experiences to children’s home discourses and experiences (Durden, 2008; Gay, 2002; Howard, 2003) Furthermore, Howard (2003) states culturally relevant pedagogy challenges teachers to

acknowledge how deficit-based notions of diverse students continue to permeate traditional school thinking, practices, placement, and critique their own thoughts to ensure they don’t reinforce prejudice behavior. Second, culturally relevant pedagogy recognizes the explicit connection between culture and learning and sees students’ cultural capital as an asset. (p. 198, as cited in Durden, 2008)

Therefore, teachers must look through the lens of their students in order to implement pedagogy that is culturally relevant to the child’s experience (Durden, 2008).

From her study of two culturally relevant teachers, one white and one African American, and their teaching of language and literacy, Ladson-Billings (1992) noticed specific characteristics in both classrooms; the teachers legitimate African American (and Latino) culture by making it a frame of reference for all texts, they do not avoid issues of race and culture, and students are appreciated and celebrated as individuals and members of a specific culture (Ladson-Billings, 1992). To answer the ongoing question of “why become literate?” the teachers in this study “assert that literacy is a tool of liberation, both personal and cultural” rather than “attempt to tie their students’ literacy to vocational aspirations (‘You need to learn to read so you can get a job’) (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p. 318). From this study, Ladson-Billings draws several conclusions about what it means to be a culturally relevant teacher. Teachers with culturally relevant practices 1) have self-esteem and high regard for others 2) see themselves as part of the community, see teaching as giving back to the community, and encourage their students to do the same 3) see teaching as an art rather than a technical skill that require minimal training 4) believe all students can succeed and failure is not an option 5) help students make connections among their community, national, and global identities 6) build upon the knowledge of their students and make them the focus of curriculum inquiry (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Lynn, Johnson and Hassan (1999) conducted a participatory study that examined the pedagogical practices and beliefs of an African American teacher at a private middle school in an affluent African American community (p. 42). The study’s findings are consistent with Ladson-Billing’s (1994) research on culturally relevant teaching that showed African American children do better academically when the curriculum is

culturally appropriate (Lynn, Johnson & Hassan, 1999). The study also showed the positive correlation between racial identity development and school achievement, as well as feelings and self-efficacy. It further “asserts that African American educators who seek to empower African American students have a belief system that supports their emancipatory pedagogy” (Lynn, Johnson & Hassan, 1999, p. 52).

Howard’s (2001) study draws upon and extends the work on culturally relevant pedagogy for African American students by describing and examining the pedagogical practices that four African American elementary school teachers enacted with African American students in urban settings (p. 181). The teachers in this study “sought to use their pedagogical practices to create a learning environment that did not encourage students to disconnect from their cultural identities while pursuing high academic achievement” (Howard, 2001, p. 181). The study found three major pedagogical themes: holistic instructional strategies, culturally consistent communicative competencies and skill-building strategies to promote academic success (Howard, 2001). Consistent with the findings of Ladson-Billings (1994), Howard found:

Instructional strategies situated in a cultural context consistent with African American students’ home setting offer them a more equitable opportunity for school success. As indicated by the findings in this study, personal experiences or familiarity with African American cultural values and norms seemed to influence many of the practices used by the teachers. Even though African American culture was a framework for many of the practices each teacher used, each applied them in her own unique way. (p. 197)

Therefore, the study found although the teachers were influenced by familiarity of African American cultural values and norms, their methods of applying such a framework to their practices varied.

Hefflin (2002) conducted a study that described the process of using African American children's literature through culturally relevant pedagogy. The author observed how two teachers planned a lesson using the literature and how one of the teachers enacted the lesson using pedagogy relevant to the students' cultural background (p. 231). By tailoring instruction to fit the textual, social, cultural and persona lives of students, students' verbal and written performance "indicated that they engaged and performed more fully with the culturally relevant approach" (Hefflin, 2002, p. 247). Students were more responsive during the read aloud, wrote more elaborate responses in their dialogue journals and engaged in longer, richer discussions about African American heritage and traditions (Hefflin, 2002).

Brown (2004) interviewed thirteen urban educators teaching 1st through 12th grade selected from 7 cities across the United States in a qualitative research study to determine if the classroom management strategies they used reflect the research on culturally responsive teaching (p. 266). The teachers were from different ethnicities, including Sri Lankan, African American, Hispanic America, and White. Through the interviews, participants revealed using several management strategies that reflect culturally responsive teaching: development of personal relationships with students; creation of caring communities; establishment of business-like learning environments; use of culturally and ethnically congruent communication process; demonstrations of assertiveness; and utilization of clearly stated and enforced expectations (Brown, 2004, p. 266).

Morrison, Robbins, & Rose (2008) examined 45 classroom-based research studies from 1995 to 2008 analyzing culturally relevant pedagogy as enacted in classrooms. Review of the studies showed culturally relevant teachers demonstrate high expectations for student achievement through implementation of challenging academic curriculum and also assist students' achievement by: modeling, scaffolding, and clarification, using student's strength as instructional starting points, investing and taking personal responsibility for students' success, creating and nurturing cooperative environments, and having high behavioral expectations (Morrison et al., 2008). Studies also suggested culturally relevant teachers develop in students a sense of cultural competence by reshaping the prescribed curriculum, building on students' funds of knowledge, and establishing relationships between school and the children's homes (Morrison et al., 2008). In a number of studies, culturally relevant teachers cultivated students' critical consciousness through critical literacy, "inviting students to question, examine, and even dispute the power relations between writers and readers," encouraging students in social justice work, making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society, and sharing power in the classroom (Morrison et al, 2008, p. 442).

Of the studies discussed above, except one (Lynn, Johnson & Hassan, 1999), all used qualitative methods and analysis to examine the cultural relevant pedagogy of the teachers. Many participant teachers in the studies regarding the teaching of culturally relevant pedagogy were African American with the exception of nine teachers in Brown (2004) and one teacher in Ladson-Billings (1992). However, what made them successful teachers of students of color was their commitment to culturally relevant pedagogy.

Although they had different teaching styles and methods, these teachers held high academic expectations of all of their students, tailored their instruction to incorporate the race and culture of their students, and cultivated personal relationships with their students. The teachers all shared a philosophy and belief that accounting for the culture and race of students when implementing their pedagogy is significant to their students' academic achievement and success. Their ideological beliefs were also similar in that they perceived their teaching as a pedagogy that empowers students of color.

Developing Student Cultural Competence Despite High Stakes Testing

Prior studies examined how teachers of culturally diverse classrooms develop their students' cultural competence despite standardized testing (Esposito, Davis, and Swain, 2011; Woodward, Vaughan, and Machado, 2017; Zoch, 2017).

Esposito, Davis, and Swain (2011) conducted a phenomenological study to examine urban teachers' perceptions of school reform models (SRMs) and culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Esposito, Davis & Swain, 2011). They specifically "examined how urban educators altered mandated reform models in the best interests of their culturally and linguistically diverse students" (Esposito, Davis & Swain, 2011, p. 235). The participants included seven African American teachers who ranged in age from 25-43, six of whom were female with 4-6 years of teaching experience (Esposito, David & Swain, 2011). The first theme explored in the study was how participants defined culturally relevant pedagogy (Esposito, Davis, & Swain, 2011). According to the authors, "without exception, all participants viewed CRP as a way to empower African American students and level the playing field with White students" (Esposito, David &

Swain, 2011, p. 243). The second theme explored was the belief by participants that SRMs were “informed by racist assumptions and stereotypes about Black teachers and children” and ultimately hurt African American children (Esposito, David & Swain, 2011, p. 246).

From the perspectives of participants in this study, their goal as teachers was to “try to implement culturally relevant pedagogy despite the constraints inherent in the school reform models” (Esposito, Davis & Swain, 2011, p. 249). The third theme explored from the data was the ways in which participants adapted and modified their lessons in the best interests of their students (Esposito, Davis & Swain, 2011, p. 249). Students in this study openly discussed racial and class disparities with their students with the intention of empowering African American students to “face the burden and make positive changes for the next generation” (Esposito, Davis, & Swain, 2011, p. 253). Additionally, participants in this study “articulated how the scripted curriculum inherent in many school reform models left little room for critical thinking activities, which then leaves students ill equipped for careers that required critical thinking skills” (Esposito, Davis, & Swain, 2011, p. 253). Furthermore, all the participants believed the SRMs made it difficult to incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy because of the scripted curriculum and prescribed nature of many of the reforms’ practices (Esposito, Davis & Swain, 2011). Rather than interrupt the status quo, reform models perpetuate the inequalities faced by minority students and stifle their critical thinking skills (Esposito, Davis & Swain, 2011). Therefore, teachers must be well equipped to modify and alter their curriculum to be culturally relevant to their students despite constraints.

Woodward, Vaughan, and Machado (2017) examined how nine urban elementary and middle school writing teachers reported their enactments of culturally sustaining theory in teaching writing. This study found many of the teachers engaged in writing pedagogy that focused on language, culture and power in the writing curriculum and problematized dominant culture (Woodward, Vaughan & Machado, 2017). The teachers did this often by “recognizing, appreciating, and centering elements of their students’ heritages, languages, or interests, and sometimes by pushing back on or subverting official curricula” (Woodward, Vaughan, & Machado, 2017, p 12). They recognized their students’ multiple languages and dialects and encouraged linguistic plurality as well as acknowledged that language is not neutral (Woodward, Vaughan & Machado, 2017). They also pushed back on the curriculum by using texts by authors of their students’ backgrounds and by “recognizing nondominant forms of cultural capital” (Woodward, Vaughan & Machado, 2017, p. 6). For example, teachers reported the importance of recognizing students’ knowledge and interests for engagement as well as dropping an assigned class period to discuss a topic important to students such as the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson (Woodward, Vaughan & Machado, 2017).

Zoch (2017) used the theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy to examine how four urban elementary teachers supported the development of students’ cultural competence in literacy instruction despite expectations to prepare students for high-stakes testing. The study found teachers complied with test preparations by covering text features and using testing language and skills. However, they supported meaning making through building on students’ identities as minorities with authentic reading materials and

used dialogue to encourage critical consciousness about unfair social issues to interrupt the dominant curriculum (Zoch, 2017).

The studies above involved teachers of culturally diverse urban classrooms subjected to standardized testing and school reform models. The studies show how the teachers modified or altered their prescribed curriculum in order to develop students' cultural competence despite the constraints.

Multiculturalism

Some scholars advocate for multicultural literature and the choice of readings as well as for the applications for the study and teaching of it (Holland & Mongillo, 2016; Morrell & Morrell, 2012; Robinson, 2013; Sleeter, 2000).

According to Morrell and Morrell (2012), multicultural literature represents people from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic and religious backgrounds that have traditionally been oppressed or marginalized in our society. Morrell and Morrell (2012) support an approach to teaching multicultural texts that “allows students to consider issues of oppression, marginalization, and resistance in all texts that they read that allows them to draw both on their own cultural reservoirs of knowledge, but also from empathy and solidarity with the experience of others” (Morrell & Morrell, 2012, p. 12). They further suggest that while a multicultural text may focus upon race, gender, or differences, ultimately, the teaching of the text allows students to think critically about oppression, marginalization, resistance and empathy (Morrell & Morrell, 2012).

Robinson (2013) argues the need for educators to regard critical multicultural pedagogy for promoting social awareness. Furthermore, she argues children's

appreciation of diversity depends on the opportunities they are given to be critically and emotionally engaged with multicultural texts and that critical understanding of multicultural themes is promoted through interactive practices (Robinson, 2013). A multicultural curriculum includes texts from multiple perspectives that gives voice to students and allows them to “tap into their schema, prior experiences, and verbalize these experiences to communally construct and deconstruct meaning” when teachers provide those opportunities (Robinson, 2013, p. 50). Multicultural texts also allow students to “reflect on social and cultural phenomenon, revealing their feelings of empathy, personal connections, and democratic values” (Robinson, 2013, p. 50). Therefore, multicultural readings not only give students a voice and encourage them to use their own cultural experiences, but also encourage them to read from the perspective of others (Robinson, 2013). This only can occur when teachers actively engage students critically and emotionally with the texts.

Holland and Mongillo (2016) studied twenty-six elementary school teachers across the country to determine how teachers used and perceived multicultural literature. Furthermore, they examined how the beliefs of the teachers shape their perceptions, selection and interpretation, and the teaching of multicultural literature (Holland & Mongillo, 2016). Their findings suggest that mandating multicultural education alone does not increase the reading of multicultural literature in elementary schools and strong administrative support promotes the use of multicultural literature in schools (Holland & Mongillo, 2016). Similarly, to studies by Gloria Ladson Billings, some teachers of this study appeared to “narrowly interpret the meaning of a multicultural curriculum by

limiting supplemental text selections to holidays or special days” (Holland & Mongillo, 2016, p. 23). Other teachers reported being uncomfortable using books on diverse subjects they were unfamiliar with or were unknown to them (e.g. sexual orientation, diverse cultures). (Holland & Mongillo, 2016). According to the authors, when teachers stray away from multicultural texts, students may assume that the perspective of the text is important or correct because it is their teachers’ preference (Holland & Mongillo, 2016). Therefore, they suggest preservice for teachers to be exposed to and discuss difficult cultural topics that they otherwise might avoid in the classroom, thereby denying their students the opportunity for uncomfortable yet significant discussions and the opportunity to learn about different perspectives from that of their teacher (Holland & Mongillo, 2016).

Sleeter (2000) examined the central ideas that should undergird a multicultural curriculum that empowers. From personal experiences, classroom observations and previous literature, she finds the substance of the curriculum that teachers create and teach is highly influenced by the beliefs teachers have about what is worth teaching, and about diverse people, society, the students in the classroom and the various academic disciplines (Sleeter, 2000). She argues “multicultural curricula must focus on key issues surrounding exclusion and power, and tie diverse experiences to those key issues in order to create citizen coalitions who are able to identify common concerns, common sources of marginalization, and common strategies for action” (Sleeter, 2000, p. 183). Like in the studies by Morrell and Morell (2012), Robinson (2013) and Holland and Mongillo

(2016), Sleeter (2000) also shows the importance of teachers creating experiences and opportunities for students to confront exclusion, marginalization and power.

Studies examining multiculturalism show multicultural literature allows students to think critically about oppression, marginalization and resistance from their own perspectives and experiences and from the empathy of others. However, it is up to the teacher to provide the texts and opportunities to explore such topics in class. Studies show what teachers create and teach is highly influenced by their own beliefs about diverse people, society and the students in the classroom. Some teachers avoid topics that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable for them. Therefore, the studies also suggest the most successful teachers are those who have strong administrative support and who receive preservice where they need it and discuss difficult cultural topics they might otherwise avoid in the classroom.

How Teachers Engage In Curriculum

Some studies observed how teachers engage in curriculum and how curriculum shapes teachers' instruction (Holland & Mongillo, 2016; Parsons, Metzger, Askew & Carswell, 2011; Siuty, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016; Stodolsky, 1999; Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006; Woodward, Waughan & Machado, 2017). Much of the early research on curriculum materials has focused on textbooks and how teachers use them. According to Susan Stodolsky (1999), teachers vary in how they teach a curriculum based on their own convictions and preferences, the materials they use, the school context in which they teach, the particular students in their class, and the subject matter and grade level they are teaching. Although the study focused specifically on math and social

studies teaching, Stodolsky infers from the literature that reading instructors “make more comprehensive and ordered use of materials” than in math or social studies (Stodolsky, 1999, p. 181).

Valencia, Place, Martin and Grossman (2006) conducted a longitudinal study to learn how beginning teachers understood and used curriculum materials for teaching reading and how the materials shaped their thinking and practice over time. The four teachers in this study worked in schools with a variety of curriculum materials ranging from scripted reading programs to supplemental materials without teaching guides (Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006). The authors of the study found that what teachers learned from the curriculum materials, how they used them, and, ultimately, how effectively they met the needs of the readers in their classrooms depended on two factors. The teachers of the study were highly influenced by the curriculum materials provided to them and they were also influenced by their own knowledge and dispositions about reading instruction and by the school cultures in which they worked (Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006). The authors also determined the two teachers with more restrictive curriculum materials and environments and with weak content knowledge were least able to adapt instruction to meet the needs of their students. The two teachers with stronger content knowledge, access to multiple materials and support for decision making regarding materials and instructional strategies learned the most and were most able to adapt instruction (Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006). In sum, the study found curriculum materials both fostered and inhibited teachers’ practices and learning. The authors concluded teachers not only need “the support of good curriculum materials,

but they also need the knowledge, resources, and support to use the materials thoughtfully and effectively” (Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006, p. 118).

Stiuty, Leko, and Knackstedt (2016) investigated the influence of curriculum on eleven middle school teachers’ decisions regarding reading instruction for middle school age struggling readers. They specifically looked at how teachers make curricular decisions based on their access to a prescribed, research-based reading intervention curriculum (Stiuty, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016). They found for teachers with a lack of mandated or prescribed curriculum, their instruction lacked a clear scope, sequence, and purpose and their decision-making process relied mostly on their own beliefs, assumptions, and prior experiences rather than on student needs (Stiuty, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016). Teachers who use a prescribed, research-based reading intervention curriculum spent less time deciding what to teach or where to access engaging, age appropriate materials (Stiuty, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016). Instead, their decisions were based on how to “to make the curriculum work best in their contexts and how to leverage it to promote individualized instruction” (Stiuty, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016, p. 14).

Although some studies have shown the influence of curriculum on teachers’ practices, others have looked how teachers make the curriculum their own. Parsons, Metzger, Askew and Carswell (2011) examined how teachers at a Title I elementary school taught “against the grain” and, despite the current high-stakes testing environment, implemented project-based literacy instruction rather than adopting a literacy program (p. 1). The teachers, in collaboration with one another, had the autonomy to implement a variety of projects to cover curricular content. Overall, the study found the teachers in

this school were generally willing and able to “teach against the grain” despite teaching in a high-poverty schools with pressure to raise standardized test scores (Parson, Metzger, Asker & Carswell, 2011). Additionally, the teachers were satisfied with the professional development and believed using project-based literacy instruction “enhanced student engagement, learning, collaboration, and independence” (Parson, Metzger, Asker & Carswell, 2011, p. 12). However, the teachers also faced challenges to using project-based literacy instruction such as time, resources, classroom management, and teacher restraint (Parson, Metzger, Asker & Carswell, 2011). All in all, the decision to adopt project-based literacy learning was a school-wide implementation with support from administration. Similarly, in the study by Holland & Mongillo (2016), teachers were more willing to implement multicultural curriculum and literature when they had strong administrative support. The authors also suggest professional development and preservice as a way for teachers to be introduced to a variety of multicultural populations to empower teachers to discuss uncomfortable topics with their students (Holland & Mongillo, 2016).

Studies regarding how teachers engage in curriculum found curriculum materials both fostered and inhibited teachers’ practices and learning. The instruction of teachers without a prescribed curriculum lacked a clear sequence and purpose and made decisions mostly based on their own beliefs, assumptions and prior experiences as opposed to the needs of the students. The teachers in the studies with a prescribed, research-based curriculum made decisions based on the individualized needs of their students. Prior literature also shows strong administrative support is a large factor in teacher’s

willingness to teach “against the grain” despite pressure of standardized test scores.

Furthermore, prior literature shows teachers incorporate culturally sustaining pedagogy and push back on the curriculum by introducing texts and writing that focus on language, culture and power and critique the dominant culture.

Student Perspectives of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

While much research has focused on culturally relevant instructional strategies for African American and other culturally diverse students, little research has examined students’ perceptions and interpretations of these pedagogical practices (Howard, 2001). Some scholars have studied the inclusion of students’ viewpoints on the instructional practices of teachers of African American students (Giroux; 1988; Hollins and Spencer, 1990; Howard, 2001; Lee, 1999; Miron and Lauria, 1998; Nieto, 1994; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994; Slaughter-Defoe & Carlson, 1996; Waxman, 1989; Waxman & Huang, 1997). Waxman and Huang (1997) indicated that understanding how students perceive and react to their learning environments is more significant than outsider analysis (as cited in Howard, 2001; Waxman and Huang, 1997). Waxman (1989) urged researchers to study student perspectives because it may differ drastically from the observed or intended pedagogy (as cited in Howard, 2001; Waxman, 1989). Nieto (1994) further supports the call of greater student voice in educational research that students spend the most time in schools and classrooms yet are the most silenced voice (as cited in Howard, 2001; Nieto, 1994).

Giroux (1988) found that student perspectives provide insight into components of teaching and learning that are otherwise not obvious to teachers and researchers.

Additionally, Giroux (1988) also indicated the importance of giving a voice to those who have been silenced or marginalized by schools (as cited in Howard, 2001; Giroux, 1988). Hollins and Spencer (1990) conducted a study in which they found African American elementary and secondary students stated that “positive relationships between teachers and students affected academic achievement; that teachers’ responsiveness to students personal lives generated positive feelings that led to increased effort in school; and that they preferred for teachers who enabled them to actualize their own ideas in completing assignments and becoming engaged in class discussions” (as quoted in Howard, 2001, p. 133; Hollins & Spencer, 1990). Slaughter-Defoe and Carlson (1996) examined third-grade student perceptions of school climate and found that that teacher-child relationships were the most important aspect of school climate for African American students (as cited in Howard, 2001; Slaughter-Defore & Carlson, 1996).

Lee (1999) conducted an ethnographic study of low achieving urban African American and Latino high school students that found that three factors led to their underachievement: teacher-centered classrooms, perceived racism and discrimination, and lack of personal teacher-student relationships (as cited in Howard, 2001; Lee, 1999). Miron and Lauria (1998) found that, for many African-American students, teachers’ lack of caring, negative talk about African American students and lack of concern for academic success contributed to their poor academic performance (as cited in Howard, 2001; Miron & Lauria, 1998). Phelan, Yu, and Davidson (1994) conducted a two-year study with ethnically and academically diverse high school students and found that the students who felt as if their teachers didn’t care about them tended to be withdrawn from

the learning experience and avoided their class work. Students of teachers who did not capitalize on their strengths had difficulty achieving academically (as cited in Howard, 2001; Phelan, Yu, & Davidson, 1994).

Howard (2001) did a case study of elementary students in four inner-city elementary schools in the northwestern United States (Howard, 2001). The purpose of the study was to determine African American students' perceptions of their teachers' pedagogical practices. The study found the teachers were culturally relevant for African American students because they incorporated features of the students' "cultural capital into their pedagogical practices" (Howard, 2001, p. 145). According to Howard (2001),

Absent from the students' constructions were explicit mentions of practices or norms that they considered part of African-American culture of direct reference to their ethnic group experience. More important, the students' characterizations of their teachers' practices were consistent with several of the key principles of culturally relevant pedagogy (p. 145).

One of the most significant references students made was their teachers' ability to create a schooling environment that is not conflicting of the student's cultural background, which is consistent with culturally relevant pedagogy (Howard, 2001).

Past research has shown culturally relevant pedagogy is effective in increasing the academic achievement of students of color. Research specifically regarding the culturally relevant pedagogy of teachers reveals that successful teachers of students of color share similar philosophies of teaching. Their goal is empowering their students to critique and think critically about historical, cultural and societal topics. They develop personal relationships with their students to understand their cultural perspectives and experiences. They then consider the cultural and racial backgrounds of their students when

implementing their pedagogy. Past research also examined multiculturalism and its role in enhancing the critical thinking of students regarding oppression, marginalization, resistance and empathy from their own perspective and the viewpoints of others.

Literature on multiculturalism also shows the beliefs teachers possess about multicultural texts influences the opportunities they provide for students to engage critically and emotionally in the curriculum. Other research examines how teachers adapt and modify curriculum and the factors that come into play when executing curriculum. Such research shows teachers with a prescribed curriculum have more opportunity to adapt the curriculum to the needs of their students. Other factors include the support of administration as well as the prior beliefs, assumptions and experiences of the teachers. While prior literature has examined culturally relevant pedagogy, multiculturalism and how teachers engage in curriculum separately, this study investigates how teachers engage their students in multicultural curriculum using culturally relevant pedagogy despite constraints of standardized testing. While the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) focuses on a collection of principles that represents CRP, this study focuses on the practices of the framework in the classroom.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Research Design

I employed a qualitative research methodology to gain insight into the nature of how two teachers implemented their teaching and whether their pedagogy was culturally relevant for students. More specifically, the design includes multiple case studies since I completed an in-depth examination of two particular teachers and their classrooms over a set period of time (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), good case study research involves a description of the case as well as themes that emerge in each case. Therefore, my first research question sought to identify the principles of culturally relevant pedagogy as indicated in Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's (2011) framework that were most salient to each teacher. Then, I sought to develop themes that show a comparison of the teachers' pedagogies.

My questions ask:

- 1) In what ways and to what extent do the teachers enact culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching a unit on *Night*?
- 2) What similarities and differences are evident in the pedagogy of the teachers?

Study Site, Access, and Selection Rationale

I conducted the study in a grades 7-12 secondary charter school consisting of approximately 750 students in a large Northeastern city. All students identify as African American, Latinx, or biracial and 100% of the students qualify for free lunch. The school is part of the charter network where I taught literacy for five years. It is the receiving

school from the K-6 elementary school in another part of the city. I purposely chose this site because the school implemented a multicultural literacy curriculum in all grades and I previously taught the sixth grade literacy curriculum. I also participated in the monthly cultural context professional developments and professional learning communities that address student cultural and racial needs in the classroom. All teachers in the network participate in the professional developments that support in the development and enactment of what I conceptualize as culturally relevant pedagogy. I chose the seventh and eighth grade teachers because the texts taught during the study timeframe consisted of multicultural novels. The seventh-grade teacher, Ms. James, was a first-year teacher at the school, while the eighth-grade teacher, Ms. Holson, was a fourth-year teacher at the school. Both teachers, however, taught the same unit plan and the same texts at the same time. To gain access to the site, I emailed the principal directly and provided an abstract of the study. He granted me permission to complete the study at his school. Both teachers also agreed to participate in the study. In addition, I received a signed permission letter from the CEO of the charter network.

Curriculum

The decision behind having the central office create the unit plans for all of the teachers came from the idea that putting together really robust and thoughtful unit plans requires a lot of time that many teachers don't necessarily have. Additionally, the network noticed a lot of variance among the rigor and literature choices of teachers (Stituty, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016). Standardized test scores across the schools plateaued and the common core standard shifts created a sense of urgency around a curriculum

shift. The charter network wanted teachers to focus mainly on their pedagogy and instruction rather than using their valuable time searching for texts and lesson ideas. They also wanted to include more culturally relevant texts and implement culturally relevant pedagogy in order to increase the academic rigor and critical thinking and problem-solving skills of all students. Therefore, they assigned a literacy team at the central office the role of creating all multicultural unit plans for all literacy teachers in the network.

Each individual unit plan starting from scratch took about 35 to 40 hours to create. The team first created the book list. The priority was to make sure students had both windows and mirrors in their experiences so they saw texts that were more reflective, something that felt familiar to them as a mirror but also gave them windows to other experiences and cultures. The second consideration was making sure students read high quality pieces of literature, particularly award winners. The third consideration was whether the text was an appropriate reading level for the students. One of the challenges the curriculum director noted when thinking about windows and mirrors and thinking about building background knowledge through texts was finding novels in which the protagonist was of the same race and culture as the students. For example, according to the curriculum director, when looking for a novel about the Underground Railroad, which was a time period in history that they wanted to address:

There was an overwhelming amount of young adult novels where the protagonist in the Underground Railroad story is a White kid. That just felt really inappropriate when talking about a story of resistance and dignity and trying to maintain your own sense of autonomy and yet somehow White people end up being the center of the story (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17).

After determining the book list, the literacy team then looked at the common core standards. The literacy team considered not only the state standards but also what made sense in the text. After that, they determined the themes or questions of the unit and found supplemental texts that addressed these to make the unit feel cohesive. Any given unit plan had about nine supplemental texts to build sufficient and reliable context for the novels. When they chose the supplemental texts, the team considered that different perspectives were honored. However, they thought not only about the cultural and racial identities of characters and protagonists, but also of the authors. Therefore, they made sure an entire unit didn't have just White authors or just male authors (Woodward, Vaughan & Machado, 2017). Another factor implemented a few years after the start of the unit plan shift was the idea of whether or not the oppressor in a text was named. For example, in locating a text building knowledge around the Native American experience for the seventh and eighth grade units, the director wanted the students to gain knowledge about the reasons Native American communities on reservations are in deep poverty. One text that she almost included in the unit plan was about current Native American youth overcoming the odds of their experience and going to a summer program. While the article was extremely positive, it only talked about how impoverished and oppressed the communities were but never addressed why. The article failed to address that the reason for the impoverishment and oppression was the result of deliberate actions of the United States government. According to the curriculum director:

In celebrating individual kids for overcoming their situation, it doesn't really address the systemic factors that are holding them back. And I think that's something that's true in a lot of texts so it's hard to find texts that will name the

systemic causes that are underlying impoverished communities (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17).

The goal was to make sure the students did not draw conclusions solely about the individual, but rather the idea that there are systems in place that collude to give some people an advantage over others. Therefore, more recently, the network made sure to look for supplemental and paired texts that named the oppressor and clearly stated the reasons why a group is oppressed.

Once the team found and sequenced the texts, which was a bulk of the time, they then thought about the objective and the standards. They put the standards into the calendar and thought about what objectives teachers would address and what culminating question demonstrated control of the standard with the text of that day. Once the team distributed the unit plans to the schools, they avoided making mid-report period adjustments to the plan to not disrupt the teachers. They did take into consideration the feedback from teachers and, based on their own learning from year to year, sometimes made adjustments to the unit plan for the following year.

The central office essentially provided teachers the unit plans as well as the texts, the objectives and the culminating questions of the lessons. The organization didn't create central unit plans for quite some time because according to the literacy director:

There is no way that I or anyone on my team or the central office knows exactly what students at one particular class need or are working on. So, we really encourage teachers to have logical flexibility and make adjustments as they see fit to meet the needs of their students (curriculum director interview, 5/12/17).

Once the teachers received the unit plans, they were expected to read the texts and determine the most important understandings that students needed of the text as well as

the anticipated challenges that students may face. Then, teachers created the questions they considered to ask to help unlock the text for students. Teachers also determined places where they might need to model or demonstrate or explain because asking questions might not be enough. While the unit plans and the bones of the lesson were considered tools and a default path for teachers, according to the literacy director, there was a lot of flexibility in teacher pedagogy and an ability to make logical decisions to meet the needs of the students. However, she also acknowledged teachers often felt constrained because the unit plan was so cohesive. This was also a reason the central office decided to only provide unit plans and not full lesson plans as well.

The unit plans all also included possible extension activities for teachers to bring the lessons and themes of the texts to life for the students. While the unit plans gave teachers ideas, the literacy curriculum director indicated it was up to the teacher to go above and beyond and create the time to prep to make those activities happen. One example was a fourth-grade classroom that read an immigration story about a girl from Kosovo. The novel was about building bridges and immigration, and the community in which the school was located had a large Latinx immigrant population. The teacher helped the students organize a silent protest about anti-immigration sentiment in their community and the students wrote signs about the need to build bridges. In an eighth-grade classroom, students read a novel about the lost boys of Sudan and at the end of the unit, the students organized a fundraiser to sponsor a well in a drought-stricken community in Sudan. Another example is eighth graders at a school who read a novel about a poetry slam and self-expression and sponsored a poetry slam of their own where

they invited students from other schools in the network to share their ideas and poems. The literacy director emphasized that whether or not teachers created such opportunities for their students depended on having a leadership team and a school community that supported the teachers.

The curriculum director demonstrated commitment to the complicated aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy and critical race theory. She thought it was important for students to read texts from their own racial perspectives as well as from the experiences of other cultural groups. She understood that race continues to be a significant factor in inequality, and she focused on including texts about stories of marginalized groups and individuals. She also encouraged teachers to incorporate social justice opportunities in the curriculum. However she expressed the challenges that occurred with developing and preparing teachers to adopt a culturally relevant and critical stance when executing the literature curriculum.

Texts

At this school site, seventh and eighth grade teachers taught the same curriculum and the same texts in the same order and at the same time. The seventh- and eighth-grade teachers followed Unit Plan A and, the following year, they followed Unit Plan B with a different set of texts. The intention behind this was so the seventh graders were exposed to a variety of multicultural texts. The seventh- and eighth-grade literacy classrooms read four anchor novels throughout the school year, one per report period. During this study, the anchor novels were as follows: *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park (2010); *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes (2002); *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen

Yang (2008); *The Outsiders: A Full Length Play in Two Acts* adapted by Christopher Sergel (1990); and *Night* by Elie Wiesel (1985). The texts the seventh and eighth graders read the following year were as follows: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros (1991); *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (2007); *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry (1994); and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck (1994). The seventh and eighth graders who attended fifth and sixth grade at the receiving school also read a set of eight multicultural texts over two years including: *Freak the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick (1993); *The Watsons go to Birmingham* by Christopher Paul Curtis (1996); *Ninth Ward* by Jewell Parker Rhodes (2010); *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (1993); *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli (1999); *Trouble Don't Last* by Shelley Pearsall (2002); *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan (2000); and *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry (1989). The anchor novels and texts depict several different cultural groups and “provide students with both a window to other cultures and a mirror reflecting their own” (Glazier & Seo, 2005, p. 686). Therefore, these books provide multiple perspectives that allow students to see their own cultures as well as other cultures represented throughout the curriculum (Milner, 2011). The texts were also mostly coming of age novels about identity development. The following table outlines the synopses of the anchor texts for grades 5-8.

Table 1

Texts and Synopses

	Report period 1	Report period 2	Report period 3	Report period 4
Grades 5 + 6 Unit Plan A	<i>Freak the Mighty</i> by Rodman Philbrick is a fictional novel about Kevin Dillon, nicknamed Freak, a middle school boy with Morquio's syndrome who is extremely intelligent, and Max, a middle school boy who is always bullied because of his size and learning disability. As outcasts with absent fathers, the two characters bond and soon become inseparable. The novel is an account of their friendship and adventures and struggles together.	<i>The Watsons go to Birmingham</i> by Christopher Paul Curtis is a historical fiction novel about a Black family living in Flint, Michigan in 1963. The family includes the mother, Wilona, the father Daniel, and their three children Byron, who is 13, Kenny, who is 10, and Joetta, who is 5. The oldest brother, Byron, is constantly getting in trouble, so his parents decide to take a road trip down to Birmingham to spend the summer with his strict grandmother. While in Birmingham, their youngest sister Joey becomes the victim of a church bombing carried out by white supremacists.	<i>Ninth Ward</i> by Jewell Parker Rhodes is about twelve-year-old Lanesha, who lives with her grandmother in a poor, tight-knit community in New Orleans' Ninth Ward. The novel is about Lanesha's hope and strength as she tries to help herself and her grandmother survive Hurricane Katrina and her experience in the aftermath of the storm.	<i>The Giver</i> by Lois Lowry is written from the point of view of Jonas, an eleven-year-old boy living in a futuristic society that has eliminated all pain, fear, war, and hatred and has made every look and act the same. Each member of the community is assigned a job based on his or her interests and abilities. Jonas is assigned the Receiver of Memory and receives the memories of the past from the man known as The Giver. The story is about Jonas' revelations about his society and his internal conflict of dispersing the memories and changing the society forever.
Grades 5 + 6 Unit Plan B	<i>Maniac Magee</i> by Jerry Spinelli is a novel about 11-year-old Jeffrey Lionel Magee who lives with his Aunt Dot and Uncle Dan because his parents were killed in a trolley accident	<i>Trouble Don't Last</i> by Shelley Pearsall is historical fiction about eleven-year-old Samuel who was born as a slave on a Kentucky farm. The novel takes place in 1859 and tells the story	<i>Esperanza Rising</i> by Pam Munoz Ryan is about 12-year-old Esperanza who is the daughter of a wealthy landowner in Mexico. In 1930, bandits murder	<i>Number the Stars</i> by Lois Lowry is historical fiction that takes place in 1943 in Copenhagen, Denmark. It is about ten-year-old Annemarie Johansen and her Jewish best friend Ellen Rosen.

Table 1, continued	When he was three. Maniac decides to run away and ends up in the racially divided fictional Pennsylvania town of Two Mills. Maniac goes back and forth between the East and West End, making friends and enemies along the way, completely ignorant to the sharp racial boundaries in the town. The novel is about Maniac's pursuit to find a family where he eventually can fit in.	of Samuel and a fellow slave, Harrison's, escape to Canada on the Underground Railroad.	her father and the family loses all their money after Papa's stepbrother takes over Papa's land and burns the house down. The family then must make the difficult decision to move to the United States in the hopes of a better life. The novel is about Esperanza's identity development as she confronts her new life as a poor Mexican migrant worker subjected to unequal wages and working conditions.	The Nazis have occupied their country for the past three years. When the Nazis are going to "relocate" the Jews, Annemarie and her family help the Rosans escape into Sweden as part of the resistance movement against the Nazis.
Grades 7 + 8 Unit Plan A	<i>A Long Walk to Water</i> by Linda Sue Park is a true story about Salva Dut, a part of the Dinka tribe and a Sudanese Lost Boy and the fictional story of Nya, a young village girl part of the Nuer tribe. Salva is an 11-year-old boy separated from his family during the Second Sudanese Civil War. The story is about his journey with 1500 fellow lost boys to a refugee camp and seven years later, to America. Eventually, Salva ends up in Rochester, NY,	<i>Bronx Masquerade</i> by Nikki Grimes is about a high school literature class at a school in Bronx, NY where students share their personal stories through poetry. Their teacher sets up a poetry slam that they participate in weekly in their class. Through their poetry, the students reveal glimpses of their lives and they start to learn about the struggles and dreams of their fellow classmates. They soon learn that they all have more in common	<i>American Born Chinese</i> by Gene Luen Yang is a graphic novel about three separate tales; one based on the legendary folk tale of The Monkey King, the second tale is the story of Jin Wang's struggle to fit in within his new school and within American culture and the third tale tells the story of a white American boy named Danny whose Chinese cousin comes to visit every year	<i>Night</i> by Elie Wiesel is an account of Elie Wiesel and his family's experience at Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps during the Holocaust. Elie tells the story of the change in his beliefs, faith, innocence and identity as he witnesses and encounters the atrocities of the Nazis, including the death of his entire family.

Table 1, continued	where he starts a charity that drills wells in South Sudan	than they thought and develop a strong bond as a class.	and displays American racial stereotypes of the Chinese. The three tales connect by the end of the book. <i>The Outsiders: A Full Length Play in Two Acts</i> adapted by Christopher Sergel is told through the eyes of the main character, Ponyboy, and his territorial battles between the rich kids and his tough underprivileged family and friends.	
Grades 7 + 8 Unit Plan B	<i>The House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros is a series of vignettes over the course of a year. It is about the life of Esperanza, a twelve-year-old Mexican American girl who moves with her family into a house on Mango Street, a crowded Latino neighborhood in Chicago where many of the poor areas are racially segregated. The novel is a record of Esperanza's life as she matures into a teenager and begins to write to express herself and escape the neighborhood.	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie is a first-person narrative from the perspectives of Native American teenager Arnold Spirit, Jr, "Junior" who is a 14-year-old aspiring cartoonist. The book is about Junior's life on the Spokane Indian Reservation and his decision to go to an all-white public high school in the off-reservation town of Reardan, Washington.	<i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> by Lorraine Hansberry is the story of a black family's experiences in the Washington Park Subdivision of Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood and their attempt to improve their lives with an insurance payout following the death of the father.	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> by John Steinback is the story of George Milton and Lennie Small, two displaced migrant ranch workers who move all around California in search of new job opportunities during the Great Depression in the U.S.

At the time of this study, the unit plan focused on the text *Night*. There are some costs and affordances to this particular novel. This text is considered a window for students because it represents a different cultural and religious group. This allows for opportunity to read from the perspective of another cultural group, which is one of the goals of multiculturalism. However, the book is also about a significantly traumatic event that most students mostly likely cannot entirely relate to as students of color living in the United States. Nevertheless there are themes of the novel that do foster critical thinking of societal issues and can be connected to the experiences of marginalized groups such as discrimination, racism, dehumanization, resistance, maintaining dignity, etc. While the novel can be considered multicultural, some may argue that it is not considered culturally relevant to students of color. However, the study aimed to determine how teachers enacted culturally relevant pedagogy even when teaching texts that did not always reflect the race and culture of the students.

Teacher Participants

The school site employed one literature teacher for seventh grade and one for eighth grade, both white females. At the time of this research, Ms. James, the seventh-grade literature teacher was a first-year teacher at the school but a fourth-year teacher of middle school literacy overall. Prior to this position, she taught seventh- and eighth-grade literacy to mostly Latinx English Language Learner students in another state. Her teaching philosophy embodied the belief that educators must show students love and support to make sure youth know they are cared about and that every student, no matter their reading level, has the potential to improve. She believed the purpose of literacy

instruction is to ensure that students have the critical thinking and reading and writing abilities to achieve success in a post-secondary environment, which doesn't necessarily mean college. Ms. James expressed that she spent most of her first year at this school trying to learn the systems and curriculum. She believed that she held more autonomy at her other school in the curriculum and could incorporate additional relevant topics and texts for her students.

Ms. Holson, the eighth-grade literature teacher was a fourth-year teacher at the school and a fifth-year teacher. Her first year at the school she held a long-term substitute position. She also held the role of the eighth-grade team lead. Her teaching philosophy focused on making sure she addressed real world connections within her classroom, to make sure all students get the time they need with the teacher and to make sure instruction is differentiated to meet the needs of the students. She believed the purpose of literacy instruction is to be able to interact with the world daily through both the ability to read and with the ability to dissect and analyze and make assumptions of the world based on tools learned through literacy. Except for some texts that have changed, Ms. Holson taught the unit and texts from this study before.

The following table described the background of the teacher participants including where they live and their teacher preparation.

Table 2

Teacher Participants

Ms. James	Ms. Holson
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seventh grade literature teacher • White female • Mid twenties • Fourth year teacher, first at this site • First year teaching this particular multicultural curriculum • Lived and taught in another state prior to this study • Always taught middle school literacy • Became a teacher through an alternative teacher preparation program • Lives in Hillwood but in a different neighborhood than where the school is located 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eighth grade literature teacher • White female • Mid twenties • Fifth year teacher, all five years at this site (was a long term sub at the school her first year of teaching) • Taught this multicultural curriculum her entire tenure at the school • Eight grade team lead • Lives in a neighborhood adjacent to where many of the students are from • Majored in education in college

Focal Students

For this study, I wanted to obtain additional insight from student perspectives about teacher pedagogy. There were three focal students of color chosen at the start of the study, one student from seventh grade and two students from eighth grade. Since most of the students at the school are African American, I chose students who are African American for the study. I originally aimed to study two students from each grade; however, only three students returned consent forms from their guardians. Before I chose the students, I inquired with Ms. James and Ms. Holson about which students they believed would be willing to participate in the study and whose guardians would give consent. I purposely chose students who attended fifth and sixth grade at the prior receiving school because they already studied the culturally relevant curriculum and

could make connections to previous lessons and texts they read. I used the data from the focal students to triangulate and provide more insight and evidence of teacher pedagogy.

Data Collection

According to Creswell (2013), a good qualitative case study presents an in-depth understanding of the case through the collection of many forms of qualitative data. For this study, data collection took place in the form of classroom observations; student, teacher and curriculum developer audio-recorded interviews; the *Night* unit plan and annotated texts; teacher artifacts including exemplars (teacher writing samples and models) and thinking questions, as well as student journals. *Night* was the text that the curriculum focused on in the fourth report period when this study took place. The research questions sought to determine aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy most salient to the teachers. Additionally, I analyzed the data and developed themes that compare across the teachers' pedagogies.

Classroom Observations and Field Notes

I observed each teacher's classroom once a week from March 1, 2017- June 7, 2017. I observed Ms. James' classroom every Tuesday from 11:20 AM- 12:24 PM, except for three weeks in April when state standardized testing took place, for a total of ten observations. I observed Ms. Holson's classroom every Friday from 11:54-1:00 PM, except during state standardized testing for three weeks in April, for a total of ten observations. I recorded classroom observations through field notes. I collected fourteen pages single-spaced of field notes for my observations with Ms. James. I collected twelve pages single-spaced of field notes for my observations with Ms. Holson. The field notes

enhanced the study because they offered first hand descriptions of what occurred in the classroom. Field notes described the pedagogical practices observed, context of the classroom, questions asked by both the teacher and student, personal interactions between the teacher and students, and descriptions of the discussions.

Director of Elementary Literacy Curriculum Development Interview

I recorded and transcribed an interview with the literacy curriculum director. The interview took place on May 12, 2017 and lasted about forty-five minutes. This qualitative interview sought to understand the intention behind creating the unit plan for teachers instead of having them create their own plan. I also sought to understand the thinking behind the selection of texts and the organization of the unit plan. I used the transcribed responses to the interview questions to create a description of the school context, curriculum and texts.

Teacher Interviews

I conducted two interviews with each participating teacher, one at the start of the study on March 8, 2017 and one at the end on June 13, 2017. Each interview was approximately thirty minutes. I recorded and transcribed each interview. The face-to-face interviews sought to understand the thoughts and rationale of the teachers' selection and pedagogical decisions of the texts as well as their teaching philosophies. The interviews also assisted in providing contextual information about the teacher, the school and the students. I coded the transcribed responses to the interview questions related to emerging themes.

Student Interviews

I conducted one interview with each of the three focal students. I originally intended to conduct two interviews, however due to time constraints in obtaining parental consent, I only conducted one long interview of approximately twenty to twenty-five minutes. I consulted the teachers beforehand and together we determined the best time and day to pull the students for the interview considering the least disruption to their schedule and missing minimal instructional time. The interview with the seventh-grade student, Deirdre took place on May 12, 2017 after her lunch period. I conducted the interview in the classroom of a teacher on his prep period. The interview with the eighth-grade student Anton took place on May 26, 2017. I conducted the interview in the classroom of a teacher on his prep period as well. The interview with eighth-grader Bianca took place on May 26, 2017 in the empty office of the principal. I asked open-ended questions to seek an understanding of student perspectives and opinions about their teacher's pedagogy and the texts they read that year. I coded the transcribed responses to the interviews related to emerging themes.

Student Journals

I asked the three students to write in a reflective journal about their thoughts and opinions of the lesson and how and what their teacher taught. I asked the teachers to monitor the students and remind them to write in their journals when I wasn't present. The students wrote one entry a week for six weeks. They did not write in their journals during the three weeks of state standardized testing. The questions that the students reflected upon in the journal were: 1) What did you like about today's lesson? What

didn't you like about today's lesson? Why? 2) Did you enjoy teaching the text for the lesson? Why or why not? I analyzed the student journals to determine whether their teacher's dominant instructional pedagogies had any influence on their perceptions.

Data Analysis

I organized the data into computer files by field notes, interviews, and journal entries. To answer how the teacher enacted the unit plans, I read the field notes and determined what strategies the teacher employed in her instruction. Then, I used the Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) model to determine which aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy were most salient to the teacher's instruction. I took notes in the margins and formed initial codes. Initial codes included multiple perspectives, affirmation of diversity, high expectations, equal access, learning styles, teaching styles, relationships, interaction, bridge home, school, and community, empower students, etc. I then organized the codes into categories of identify and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching whole child, and student-teacher relationships. Once overarching codes were determined, I next identified multiple forms of evidence to support each code from the interviews, unit plan and teacher artifacts such as the annotated texts, thinking questions and exemplars (Creswell, 2013).

To determine how the teachers' pedagogies compared, I debriefed with my advisor regarding my initial categories and themes. I changed and dropped some codes based on further analysis of the aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy most dominant to each teacher's instruction. I then formed new codes and categories which included empathy, dehumanization, assessments, high-level questioning, real world connections,

personal connections, community, collaborative learning. Once I developed the code, I formed themes from the codes. Examples include: developing ideas of empathy and dehumanization, fostering high-level thinking to cultivate text and real world connections, providing a variety of assessments for students to show understanding, and developing classroom community to encourage collaborative learning. Once I identified themes from the code, I completed a cross case analysis and identified themes across the two teachers. I developed generalizations of what was learned and then presented an in-depth picture of teacher pedagogy.

Table 3

Data Overview

Research Questions	Data Sources	Analytic Process	Trustworthiness/ Validation
1) In what ways and to what extent do the teachers enact culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching a unit on <i>Night</i> ? 2) What similarities and differences are evident in the pedagogy of the teachers?	1) Classroom observations and field notes 2) Personal semi-structured audio-recorded teacher interviews 3) Lesson plans 4) Unit plans 5) Annotated texts 6) Thinking questions 7) Exemplars 8) Student interviews 9) Student journals	1) Organized field notes, interviews, lesson plans, unit plan and annotated texts into data files 2) Read the files, took notes, and formed initial codes 3) Organized codes into categories of the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy 4) Described, classified, and interpreted data into themes 5) Completed a cross-case analysis and identified themes across the two teachers.	1) Triangulation 2) Debriefing with advisor 3) Clarify researcher bias 4) Member checking

Research Access to the Site and Researcher Role

I conducted my research as a non-participant where I watched and took field notes from a distance (Creswell, 2013). Teachers and students at this site often have teachers, administrators and outside visitors in their classrooms, so my presence did not impact the dynamic of the classroom. I did not interact with the students unless they directly asked me a question or said hello to me. I recorded field notes during observations of classroom activities focusing on the pedagogy of the teachers including the texts taught, line of questioning and discussion prompts as well as how students responded.

Trustworthiness and Validation

Triangulation is a validation strategy in which researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to confirm evidence (Creswell, 2013). To confirm my evidence, I used a variety of sources including observations, interviews, lesson and unit plans and teacher artifacts such as annotated texts and exemplars. I utilized validation strategies to provide corroborating evidence, including advisor debriefing, clarifying research bias and member checking. Member checking occurred in teacher interviews.

Positionality and Reflexivity

I understand the role of research bias in the interpretation of the study. I was a middle grades text study teacher in this organization for five years and watched the evolution of a multicultural curriculum. This study examined how teachers enacted a culturally relevant literature unit plan. In my personal and professional opinion, it is the teacher's responsibility to push the cultural and sociopolitical consciousness of students

through the types of texts and the pedagogy that the teacher chooses to engage with. In my classroom, students were encouraged to discuss race and culture and read about and develop multiple perspectives of a topic. Color blindness did not exist because that sends the message to the students that I didn't acknowledge a large part of their identity. Therefore, I made sure to exercise caution in the interpretation of the teacher pedagogy I witnessed.

Since my three focal students are students who attended the school where I taught, I already had an established relationship with them. During the interviews, I was conscious of not asking leading questions or making the students feel pressure to respond to please me. I spent four months with the participants to establish my trustworthiness. Since I was a master teacher within the organization for five years, I thankfully received access to the research site, too. Since I never personally taught at the school where I completed the study, I did not have a working relationship with the teachers, so it was important for me to establish trust with them. I made sure to assure them that the work I was completing was to better understand the context of the school and the curriculum and their pedagogy. I made it clear to the teachers that the findings would not impact their status as a teacher within the organization. Finally, since I was employed by the organization at the time of data collection, I made sure to be very professional when collecting data at the school site.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The first research question this study sought to answer asked: In what ways and to what extent do the teachers enact culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching a unit on *Night*? I collected data from the teachers' enactments of the *Night* unit plan. To determine how the teachers used the unit plan, I collected fieldnotes from classroom observations; the teachers' annotations of the novel *Night* and supplemental texts; the unit plan from the novel *Night* provided by the central office; the lesson plans and teacher artifacts for each day of the report period; and student journals. The lesson plans and artifacts for each lesson included annotated texts, essential questions, reading strategies, and exemplars that the teachers planned for each lesson. I conducted interviews with the teachers about all the novels taught this year as well as their teaching philosophies. I also conducted interviews with the students to determine their perspectives of teacher pedagogy and the texts. To identify what aspects of the pedagogy were culturally relevant, I analyzed my fieldnotes from the teaching of the book *Night*. First, I determined what instructional practices the teacher carried out in the classroom. I then determined the aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy using the Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) model that were most salient to the teacher as evidenced in her instruction.

Following a summary of *Night*, I present the analysis.

Night Summary

Night by Elie Wiesel is narrated by Eliezer, a Jewish teenager who lives in the Hungarian Transylvania town of Sighet at the start of the memoir. Despite warnings

about the Nazi's intentions, Elie's family and the other Jews in his town decide not to evacuate. In the spring of 1944, the Nazis occupy Hungary and take Elie and his family from their home and force them into small ghettos within Sighet. Soon after, they are transported to Birkenau, the gateway to the Auschwitz concentration camp. In Birkenau, Elie and his father are separated from his mother and sisters, whom they never see again. The Nazis then evaluate them to determine whether they should be sent to the gas chambers and killed immediately or are fit to work. Elie and his father pass the evaluation and are stripped, shaved, disinfected and marched to the main camp, Auschwitz. In Auschwitz, they are assigned to a work camp. In the camp, the Jews are subject to slave labor conditions, beatings, malnourishment, and repeated cruelty. Eventually, many of the prisoners, concerned only with personal survival, begin to abandon and abuse their own family members. Elie starts to lose faith in humanity and in God. After months in the camp, the Nazis decide to evacuate all the prisoners because the Russians are advancing. Elie and his father are forced to run for more than fifty miles in the middle of a snowstorm to the Gleiwitz concentration camp. At Gleiwitz, they are transported on cattle cars to the concentration camp Buchenwald. In Buchenwald, Elie's father dies. Elie survives the ordeal and is liberated by the American army on April 11, 1945. In his memoir, Elie details the memories "of the death of his family, the death of his own innocence, and his despair as a deeply observant Jew confronting the absolute evil of man" (Wiesel, 2006, *Night* back cover).

Ms. James, 7th Grade Literature Class

At the time of this study, Ms. James, the seventh-grade literature teacher, was a first-year teacher at the school but a fourth-year teacher of middle school literacy overall. Prior to this position, she was a seventh- and eighth-grade literacy teacher of mostly Latinx English Language Learners (ELL) in another state. Her teaching philosophy included the belief that educators must show students love and support to make sure young adolescents know they are cared about and that every student, no matter what their reading level, has the potential to improve. She believed the purpose of literacy instruction was to ensure that students have the critical thinking and reading and writing abilities to achieve success in a post-secondary environment, which doesn't necessarily mean college.

The following discussion identifies and analyzes the principles of the model that were frequently evidenced in Ms. James' pedagogy and stand out as most important to her (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The two principles include identity and achievement and developmental appropriateness.

Principle One: Identity and Achievement

The principle of identity and achievement incorporates the concepts of identity development, cultural heritage, multiple perspectives, affirmation of diversity and public validation of home-community cultures, including the social and cultural capital students bring to school with them (Cooper & Brown-Jeffy, 2011). Identity and achievement considers both the identities of student and teacher and recognizes that minority students may see, view and perceive themselves and others differently than those of the majority

group. It means teachers embrace all cultures as equally important and validate students' cultures and refrain from including colorblindness (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

Teacher Identity Development

One concept that aligns with the principle of identity and achievement is identity development of the teacher. Ms. James recognized and acknowledged how her racial identity as a White woman impacted her instruction and interactions with her students of color. According to Ms. James, "I'm a very reflective person so I'm consistently thinking about race, class and privilege and thinking in terms of discipline and how my race impacts my expectations or how my conversations with students go" (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). She believed the cultural context professional developments with teachers from other schools were important and helpful to her identity development because she had the opportunity to hear other teachers' perspectives from different campuses and formed an understanding that "everyone is on their different journey of identity formation" (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). Cultural context professional developments (PDs) included teachers from diverse backgrounds from all over the network, grouped by content area and grade level. The purpose of the PDs was to connect culturally relevant teaching, racial identity development and literacy instruction. These PDs provided teachers opportunities to discuss cultural and racial nuances in the texts and address teacher misconceptions and implicit biases. However, they only occurred sporadically throughout the school year and were, according to Ms. James, "far too infrequent" (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). Professional learning communities (PLCs), on

the other hand, were teacher-led small groups created within each school, comprised of teachers from different grade levels and content areas. PLCs occurred more often and were essentially a space for teachers to elaborate on and discuss the topics from the cultural context professional developments. Ms. James expressed that the professional learning communities (PLCs) in her school never changed. According to Ms. James:

I hear the same voices every time and it's not to say the people in my group aren't excellent. But it would be nice to hear how somebody else thinks about x.y.or z. It would just be nice to have more voices represented (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17).

Therefore, collaboration with teachers of diverse backgrounds supported Ms. James in her identity development as a teacher. However, she would have also appreciated more diversity in the teachers she heard from at her school meetings.

Over the course of the school year, Ms. James reflected more specifically upon how her own racial identity and that of her students impacted her classroom management and community. She quickly realized her misconception of how to develop relationships with her students. She stated:

This was my first year in Hillwood. I didn't know what to expect. I went from being in a school where I had awesome relationships with kids. I kind of expected that to happen really quickly and it didn't (Ms. James interview 6/13/17).

Furthermore, Ms. James expressed racial tension when she disciplined students. She said:

I definitely think my racial and cultural identity impacts the way they see me. I think their perception is 'OK; Ms. James lives in a fancy place, she wears nice clothes. She can't relate to us. She doesn't know what we go through.' I think those moments come out in moments of tension. If I reprimand a kid, they are thinking to themselves, she has no idea about my life. So, I think kids don't think I understand their lives so there can be this tension that exists (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17).

She acknowledged that, although she didn't have the same lived experiences as her students and didn't know much about "being black and living in North Hillwood," Ms. James tried to learn from her students and get to know them personally (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). She also was invested in their success and explicitly communicated to them her determination to help them succeed (Morrison, et al, 2008). She reflected upon the need to develop meaningful bonds with her students based on authentic social interactions (Brown, 2004). According to Ms. James:

I feel like a lot of time this year I've given punitive consequences and not told kids why. As a result, I think there's more tension that is incrementally worse as a result of racial difference. Having that conversation with a kid is so important and I wasn't doing that for a long time. As a result, I think they even more so saw me as this white lady in the front of the room who is just this bad guy. I wanted to be the person who the kids understand 'we know she doesn't have the same lived experiences as I do but she wants what's best for us.' That's what's most important to me. The kids knowing that I love them and want what's best for them (Ms. James interview 3/8/17).

In response to her reflections, as the year went on, Ms. James fostered opportunities to develop personal relationships and learn about students' lived experiences. She started to coach the boys' basketball team and many of her own students were on the team. She held office hours frequently and allowed students to come help clean her classroom after school to spend time with her (fieldnotes, 3/8/17). She ate lunch in the cafeteria with the students and maintained a strong hallway presence during transitions. She was also intentional about telling students she cared about them and gave them hugs often (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). For example, Ms. James stopped a male student on his way into class one day, gave him a hug, and told him how proud she was of his work quality lately (fieldnotes, 3/7/17). She also distributed mindset points to students when they displayed

high quality work. For example, she gave ten mindset points to a student for correctly utilizing a new vocabulary word (fieldnotes, 3/7/17) or ten mindset points to the entire class for their effort on an essay (fieldnotes, 3/13/17). She recognized the need to avoid power struggles in her classroom (Brown, 2004). For example, instead of addressing a student's behavior in front of the class, Ms. James asked the student to step out into the hallway (fieldnotes, 2/28/17) and provided the student an "escape route to save face in front of peers" (Brown, 2004, p. 284).

According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2004) "in order for teachers to be culturally attuned to the identities of their students, they should be aware of their own identities, as well as how those identities may be divergent from the identities of their students" (p. 73). Cultural context professional developments and professional learning communities provided opportunities for Ms. James to reflect upon how her own racial identity impacted her interactions with her students. Gradually, she implemented culturally relevant classroom management strategies and developed personal relationships with her students. She made herself accessible to students before and after school, including lunch, and communicated her commitment to student success (Morrison, et al., 2008).

Multiple Perspectives

Consistent with the principle of identity and achievement, Ms. James exposed her students to texts from multiple perspectives throughout the year. In doing so, she developed students' ideas about empathy. According to Ms. James:

I try to have the kids see the text through the lens of empathy, trying to teach them that just because you don't have the same experiences as someone else doesn't

mean you can't try and take a walk in their shoes, explaining to them why books are so important, and it's because it allows them to see the world from a new perspective" (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17).

Night was a novel about a different cultural group than the students; therefore, when discussing multicultural texts, Ms. James focused on "demonstrating empathy and trying to understand the world from another person's perspective. So rather than judge or make statements that we don't really know to necessarily be true, let's just try to see the world from Elie's perspective" (Ms. James interview, 6/13/17).

One example of how Ms. James developed the idea of empathy was when she organized a gallery walk before the class started reading *Night*. The gallery walk was not an activity specified in the unit plan. Ms. James first wanted to determine the students' prior knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust, so she asked students to complete a "Know, Want to know, Learned" chart. She used the information from the KWL chart to set up the gallery walk with different stations centered on WWII and the Holocaust. Doing so would build background knowledge and expose students to ideas about the Holocaust that they would later encounter in the novel (Ms. James interview, 6/13/17). One station included ID cards of real people who were killed in the Holocaust; here, she asked students to obtain three facts about each victim. Another station about propaganda showed how it could influence the mindsets of German citizens. A different station focused on religious attire where students were asked to identify religious attire with which they were familiar. (Ms. James already considered that some of her students knew garb such as khimar or kufi.) Then, she asked them to explain the significance of religious attire and of an individual forced to no longer wear their religious garb. Ms.

James drew on the connection between her students and the experiences of another cultural group to advance multiple perspectives while developing the idea of empathy.

Another example of how Ms. James developed the idea of empathy was in the culminating portfolio she assigned at the end of the unit. The unit plan suggested students write an analytical essay about what one does with memories. However, since Ms. James developed ideas about empathy in the unit, she required students to work collaboratively to “create a newspaper that displays a deep understanding of the impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish community, as seen through the lens of Elie Wiesel’s *Night*” (Portfolio prompt). The different components of the project were a summary of the memoir, historical context of the Holocaust, theme analysis and call to action, a literary review and research about Elie’s life after the Holocaust. This project required students to exemplify their understanding of the unit from the perspective of the author.

Ms. James’ instructional focus on reading from another character’s perspective influenced her student, Deirdre. According to Deirdre, when the class struggled to connect to or understand the ideas in the texts, Ms. James connected a thought or idea to real life or a situation the students were familiar with by asking questions such as, “How would you feel if someone just told you ‘OK, nope, you can’t be this religion, you have to be this one now?’” (Deirdre interview, 5/12/17). Deirdre showed an understanding of multiple perspectives when she stated, “This year I’ve been learning a lot about culture, different cultures and how everyone feels especially when they first move here or anywhere else. It’s really interesting to learn how everyone feels” (Deirdre interview, 5/12/17). The texts Deirdre identified most with throughout the year were those wherein

she empathized with the characters of the novel and tried to understand their perspective. In her journal, she indicated that, of all her studies of the Holocaust, she'd never read from the perspective of a Jewish person in such detail (Deidre journal, 5/25/17). She stated, "I've come to realize that during the Holocaust some people were so emotionally, mentally and physically broken that they watched their parents or relatives get beaten or abused or sometimes even die, yet they did nothing" (Deidre, 5/25/17). Ms. James' instructional strategy of developing ideas of empathy influenced Deirdre to read from the perspective of the Jews and understand their desperate situation. According to the framework, culture includes ethnicity, race, gender, class, language, region, religion, exceptionality and other diversities that help define individuals (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Culture is defined as "the ways in which persons perceive, believe, relate to, and evaluate the world around them" so the way people see themselves can also be viewed through these lenses (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 72). Therefore, it is important for students to receive exposure to multiple cultures and multiple perspectives to help shape their multicultural identities.

Affirmation of Diversity

Ms. James affirmed the cultural diversity of her students as an asset in her classroom (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011). She did this by fostering critical thinking and connections of oppression and resistance of the Jews during the Holocaust to that of people of color in modern day, which carried significance for students. Ms. James explained that the *Night* unit plan didn't do a good job of drawing the "connection

between oppression of the Jewish people compared to, historically speaking, people of color” (Ms. James interview, 6/13/17). According to Ms. James,

I tried to draw the connection between dehumanization of the Jews and how it’s affecting people in modern day as well. So that’s not specifically flushed out in the unit plan for you to do...I tried to incorporate some articles that weren’t in the unit plan that kind of tried to draw that connection between treating people like they aren’t human beings (Ms. James interview, 6/13/17).

In one lesson, the objective for the day from the unit plan was for students to determine the central idea of the text “Introduction to the Holocaust” using the chunk, paraphrase, put together strategy (fieldnotes, 5/2/17). In her model of this strategy, Ms. James used a text entitled “Philly protestors to march against Trump immigration order” (fieldnotes, 5/2/17). The article discussed the upcoming protest against the presidential immigrant ban on people from primarily Muslim countries and for better treatment of Muslim communities. The goal of the march was to show support for Muslims. Ms. James said:

The reason I did that was because I felt like teaching students of color about the Holocaust is very important but if you’re going to ignore the fact that they themselves live in a society where they are being oppressed, I don’t think that’s the right move to make. So that was the reason why” (Ms. James interview, 6/13/17).

Ms. James introduced this particular article that wasn’t in the unit plan to connect oppression and resistance of Muslims, which is inclusive to most of the cultures represented in the classroom, to that of Jews during the Holocaust (Gay, 2001). In doing so, Ms. James not only recognized, but also validated the varied identities of her students.

Prior research suggests that while multicultural texts may focus upon race, gender, or differences, ultimately it is the teaching of the text that allows students to think critically about oppression, marginalization, resistance, and empathy (Morrell & Morrell,

2012). Ms. James not only introduced multicultural texts, she encouraged students to draw from their own experiences and, by doing so, she sent the message that she affirmed or respected their life experience. One lesson asked the students for examples from the text that show how the Nazis tried to make the Jews feel like they were not human beings (fieldnotes, 5/30/17). Student responses included, “They were assigned numbers instead of being called by their names; they were placed in barns with barn animals; they were removed from their home and placed in ghettos; their valuables were stolen; their hair was shaved; and their families were split apart” (fieldnotes, 5/30/17). The following week, Ms. James asked students to give an example of dehumanization that they themselves had seen or experienced. One student mentioned that he saw footage during the Civil Rights Movement of white officers spraying black protestors with hoses. Ms. James then tied that thought to the idea of police brutality in present day and stated, “police brutality against people of color is absolutely an example of dehumanization” (fieldnotes, 6/5/17). Another student mentioned being told by a white girl at the playground that she, who is black, is dirty and not her kind. Ms. James responded with, “stereotypes and judgments based on race, gender, or religion are examples of dehumanization” (fieldnotes, 6/5/17). Ms. James validated students’ identities through teacher questioning and during classroom discussions, in her choice of texts that related to students’ lives, and by activating student’s prior knowledge and experiences and working to connect their knowledge to the curriculum. In doing so, she acknowledged their cultures as valuable and created an equitable learning environment (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011).

Ms. James not only focused on oppression of marginalized groups, but also the way these groups resist oppression and ‘speak their truth.’ In *Night*, she asked, “How does the anecdote about the Blockalteste forcing prisoners to clean the block from top to bottom relate to the central idea of Elie’s preface that he is a ‘witness who believes he has a moral obligation to try to prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing his crimes to be erased from human memory?’” The class reread that page of the book and discussed how, by forcing prisoners to clean the block, the Nazis tried to hide the inhumane treatment of the Jews from the rest of the world. This passage was also the first time Elie noticed he was referred to as a human in general (Ms. James annotation on page 84 of *Night*). The thinking questions prompted a discussion about how revealing this anecdote exposed the Nazis’ crimes (fieldnotes, 6/5/17). Ms. James further challenged her students to consider how this also allowed Elie to regain some humanity despite the cruelty he was exposed to for such a long time. In her exemplar response (exemplars are Ms. James’ responses to the questions that she previously wrote out as the product of the lesson) to the thinking question, she wrote:

The anecdote about the Blockalteste forcing prisoners to clean the block before leaving to prove ‘men lived here and not pigs’ relates to the preface because it shows the importance of Elie telling the truth so the Nazis wouldn’t get away with the torture they put the Jews through. They wanted to cover up the terrible treatment of the Jews so Elie included that story to regain his humanity and not allow the Nazis to lie about what really happened (Ms. James exemplar).

In her exemplar, Ms. James showed the anecdote passage was a form of resistance; it wasn’t only about exposing the Nazis and their crimes and recording the memories of the Holocaust but, in doing so, it was also a way for Elie to name the oppressors and regain the humanity he was denied. This is an example of the importance of Elie’s voice in the

novel to name his own truth and empower him (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 56). By also portraying a narrative of empowerment, Ms. James considered the identities of her own students. She did not want her students to solely focus only on dehumanization and oppression, but also on resistance and empowerment.

Principle One Summary

One principle in the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy most salient to Ms. James' instruction was identity and achievement. Within this principle, the concepts of teacher identity development, multiple perspectives and affirmation of diversity emerged as most evident in Ms. James' pedagogy. Ms. James' participation in cultural context professional developments and professional learning communities at her school required that she reflect upon her own identity development as it related to her interactions with her students. In effect, she implemented more culturally relevant management strategies including genuine social interactions, communicating her desire to help students succeed and avoiding power struggles. Ms. James also taught her students how to read from the perspectives of the characters in the text and connect their personal cultural experiences to shape their own multicultural identities. Finally, Ms. James validated students' cultures through teacher questioning and during classroom discussions, in her choice of texts that related to students' lives, and by activating students' prior knowledge and experiences and working to connect their knowledge to the curriculum (Morrison, et al, 2008).

Principle Two: Developmental Appropriateness

The principle of developmental appropriateness includes the concepts of learning styles, teaching styles, and cultural variation in psychological needs (motivation, morale, engagement, collaboration). Developmental appropriateness refers to implementing curriculum to meet the cognitive, emotional, social and psychological needs of students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). In addressing developmental appropriateness, “the teacher should be interested in what is culturally appropriate or relevant for the culturally diverse students in his or her classroom” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 75). After each of the report periods, Ms. James analyzed the benchmark data to determine what standards her students still needed support with. She modified the unit plan if she felt as if her students needed more time on a concept by incorporating current event texts, changing the wording of some prompts, and by allowing more student choice in assessment format. Additionally, this principle focuses on integrating teaching styles and student learning styles. According to this principle, teachers embrace opportunities to incorporate “additional views of achievement that will allow those who do not experience achievement through the standard curriculum to obtain success through these additional methods, ones that recognize and value who children are and how they learn best” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 76). According to Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011), culturally relevant pedagogy teachers must “advocate for and perform a paradigm shift in assessment” (p. 76). Rather than view her students as deficient because they failed the benchmark, Ms. James critiqued the assessment tool instead and considered other ways in

which her students can achieve academic success in her classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Student Learning Styles

Ms. James recognized the various learning styles of her students and provided opportunities for those who did not display achievement through standardized testing to demonstrate success through additional methods (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). The school relied heavily upon the benchmark assessment at the end of every report period to measure student achievement and growth. In many instances, Ms. James felt that her informal assessments showed what students learned although they performed poorly on the benchmarks. The benchmarks reflected the common core standards; when the unit plans were created, the standards were incorporated into the plan along with what made sense in terms of the themes of the books. However, Ms. James firmly believed the benchmarks were not a reliable measure of student growth (Ms. James interview 6/13/17). According to Ms. James, “I think when we stop forcing kids to take these inaccessible exams and we give them more tangible goals, that it will be more meaningful for them” (Ms. James interview 6/13/17). As stated earlier, her teaching philosophy was that all students, no matter what reading level they are at, have the potential to improve (Ms. James, 3/8/17). Therefore, Ms. James intentionally provided her students varied ways to show their understanding of the content and thinking questions rather than only by relying on the benchmark exam.

One way she assessed students was through their annotations and notes as they interpreted texts independently. She also assessed students during their discussions of texts. According to Ms. James:

I thought a lesson that we just did a week and a half ago on symbolism went really well. We were comparing Genesis to the book (*Night*) itself. So, I think that went really well because I gave them the text itself and I asked them to do the heavy lifting of figuring out what “night” might represent and try to connect it to Elie Wiesel’s text itself. And we just had a really fruitful discussion about it so I thought I’ve done a way better job of allowing us time to discuss. There’ve been a couple moments throughout this report period where they just asked tons of questions about the novel and about the Holocaust and tried to connect it to other things. Just allowing time for that. I think in previous units, I’ve been like answer one or two questions and move on. We’ve spent like a full twenty-five minutes talking about the Holocaust itself and like certain events and why X would happen or why Y would happen or why Ellie would say or do this. It was such a fruitful conversation and like fifteen kids participated and were answering each other’s questions” (Ms. James interview, 6/13/17).

For Ms. James, students asking questions and responding to one another through discussion allowed students to build off one another’s ideas and challenge one another’s thinking. She was also able to informally assess student understanding through discussion. She also incorporated dialogue as a “way of building community and examining multiple perspectives” (Zoch, 2015, p. 630).

Ms. James used most of the ‘thinking questions’ from the *Night* unit plan since she felt that they were high level. However, she sometimes modified the questions to adapt to her students if she thought the wording would be illogical to them. For example, a thinking question on the unit plan stated, “What is the impact and significance of the repeated questions, ‘Where is G-D? Where is he?’” Ms. James modified the question to read, “How does Elie Wiesel’s repetition of the phrases: ‘Where is God? Where is He?’ reveal his point-of-view at this point in the text?” (Ms. James exemplar journal). In

addition, instead of addressing every single thinking question from the unit plan, Ms. James spent a couple days on some of the questions on which she anticipated her students would need more time. For example, a thinking question for one day of the unit plan required, “Describe how arriving at Auschwitz causes Elie and his father to change. Use specific evidence from the text to explain what has changed.” Ms. James spent three days on this question. She also scaffolded by breaking the prompt up into parts. First, the students created a beginning, middle and end graphic organizer to record how Elie changed from the beginning of the book to after arriving at Auschwitz. The students completed a similar chart for Elie’s father. Then, students formed a summary describing what Elie and his father witnessed when they arrived at Auschwitz. Finally, students analyzed their charts and determined how the events at Auschwitz caused Elie and his father to change from the beginning of the novel (Ms. James exemplar journal).

Ms. James also provided her students with different opportunities to demonstrate their understanding of the text because she recognized the varied ways in which students prefer to express their learning within her class. Ms. James created a journal booklet with all of the thinking questions from *Night* for the students so they could keep their responses organized in one space. An example of a high-level thinking question Ms. James included from the *Night* unit plan reads, “Moishe’s perspective is in contrast to the leaders in Elie’s community. What specific details describe and explain this contrast? Explain how each detail develops this contrast.” In the student journals, Ms. James wrote, “Moishe’s behavior at the end of section I contrasts with his behavior at the beginning. Create a t-chart that contains quotes to show his behavior at the beginning compared to

the end. Then, write a few sentences describing what caused the change in Moishe.”

Ms. James, therefore, included the high-level thinking questions, but also gave the students other opportunities to show understanding through graphic organizers.

Additional ways students showed understanding of other high-level thinking questions were drawing a visual such as a comic, writing quotes from the novel or making a list.

These examples reveal how Ms. James’ instruction and assessment were developmentally appropriate when teaching the *Night* unit plan.

Cultural Variations in Psychological Needs

Ms. James supported her students’ psychological and social needs, more specifically, through engagement and collaboration. According to Ms. James, “I want kids to have the opportunity to work together and build each other up” (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). To support the psychological and social needs of the students, Ms. James allowed a collaborative work style to emerge. She organized the desks in “U” shapes to encourage more student talk (fieldnotes 5/2/17). In addition, she incorporated partner talks and whole group discussions often, especially when she noticed students did not understand a question or concept (fieldnotes, 6/5/17). For example, in one class, Ms. James asked why Elie Wiesel chose to use personification to describe the violin as a corpse. When nobody responded, she asked students to turn and talk to discuss the question. After the turn and talk, students gave responses such as “the violin probably connects to and reminds him of his father;” “it is a comparison of the importance of the relationship of Juliek and his violin to the relationship between Elie and his father;” and “the violin was a part of Juliek’s soul so once Juliek died the violin died with him”

(fieldnotes, 6/6/17). This instructional strategy supported students cognitively and socially because they had an opportunity to gather and share their thoughts with one another. This was also evidenced in the collaborative culminating portfolio she assigned at the end of the *Night* unit.

Principle Two Summary

Another principle in the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy dominant to Ms. James' pedagogy was developmental appropriateness. The concepts of student learning styles and cultural variations in psychological needs were most evident in Ms. James' classroom. When students in Ms. James' class failed the benchmark, she took responsibility for their success and changed her instructional strategies. She recognized benchmark exams disadvantaged some of her students' academic achievements so she responded by differentiating the way students expressed their learning through varied assessment formats and encouraged learning through engagement and collaboration.

The principles of identity and achievement and developmental appropriateness for Ms. James derive from the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. However, the other three principles were not as evident in Ms. James' pedagogy. For example, Ms. James was a new teacher to the school who expressed that much of her time and attention throughout the year focused on learning a new curriculum and new systems. She admitted that she did not focus on developing relationships with her students to the extent that she would have wanted from the beginning of the year. She also expressed a pressure for her students to perform on their standardized tests. Therefore, student-teacher relationships may not have been as evident in her pedagogy. Prior to this teaching assignment, Ms.

James taught mainly Latinx ELL students. She did not have much prior exposure to teaching African American students. She also, as already stated, did not have the opportunity to develop authentic student relationships where she interacted with students as individuals and learned about their cultural differences. Therefore, she was disadvantaged in connecting her students' cultural socialization experiences to their academic identity, which is a tenet of the principle of teaching the whole child in the CRP framework. However, cultural context professional developments were potentially an opportunity for Ms. James to learn and reflect upon how to connect students' cultural experiences to the curriculum. Furthermore, although teacher identity and student identity are equally as important in the CRP framework, teacher identity was more evident for Ms. James.

The next teacher in this study highlights the model with one of the same principles but also two other different principles.

Ms. Holson, 8th Grade Literature Class

Ms. Holson was a fourth-year teacher at this school and also the eighth grade team lead. As a veteran teacher, Ms. Holson found value in the *Night* unit plan and believed it was significant even for her as a veteran teacher to follow. To her, the purpose of literacy was “to be able to interact with the world on a daily basis through both the ability to read but also with the ability to dissect and analyze and make your own assumptions of the world based on those tools that you learn through literacy” (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17). She was able to do this for several reasons including her having already taught the unit plans before and thus acquiring the resources and general

knowledge of the texts, having strong benchmark data and the support of her manager and developing strong, trusting relationships with her students.

Since Ms. Holson taught 8th grade literature for four years and the units come up every other year, she already taught *Night* in a previous year. Therefore, she possessed deep knowledge of the novel and access to multiple materials to support her teaching. Ms. Holson expressed that her direct manager trusted her to plan on her own as opposed to in planning meetings with her colleagues because of her strong benchmark data and their good professional relationship. According to Ms. Holson, “She knows my best intentions are always going to be in the lesson. Even if the lesson wasn’t great, the intention behind it was” (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17). Similarly, a study by Valencia, Place, Martin & Grossman, 2006 found that teachers with stronger content knowledge, access to multiple materials and support for decision making regarding materials and instructional strategies learned the most and were most able to adapt instruction. Ms. Holson specifically adapted the curriculum to foster critical thinking of the texts.

Ms. Holson felt as if the unit plan was a reasonable starting point for a teacher like her who was the grade team lead and spent a lot of time making sure other teachers on her team were successful. She also viewed the unit plan as a guiding tool. Prior literature on how teachers engage with curriculum also found teachers with a prescribed, research-based curriculum spent less time deciding what to teach or where to access engaging, age-appropriate materials and could focus their decisions on their instruction and student outcomes (Stitutky, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016). Ms. Holson said she felt like

she had more autonomy to adapt curriculum if she wanted to make the curriculum work best in her context and for her students (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17).

To determine the ways Ms. Holson enacted the unit plan, I observed her teaching of the text; collected her unit plan and lesson plans from the novel *Night*; saved her annotations of the text, and conducted two interviews about her teaching of *Night* as well as other novels. I also collected student journals and conducted student interviews. Using these data and the Brown-Jeffy and Cooper's Conceptual Framework of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, the following discussion looks at the principles of the model that stand out as dominant in Ms. Holson's pedagogy. The principles that were the most important to the instruction of the students in Ms. Holson's class include: Identity and Achievement, Equity and Excellence and Student-Teacher Relationships.

Principle One: Identity and Achievement

Within the principle of identity and achievement, Ms. Holson focused mainly on the identity development of her students. According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011), "teachers should realize that students who are racial or ethnic minorities see, view, and perceive themselves and others differently than those who are of the majority group" (p. 73). When teaching the multicultural texts, Ms. Holson considered the race and cultural backgrounds of her students as well as the youth culture of her teenage student.

Identity Development

To Ms. Holson, although the texts read throughout the year can be defined as multicultural, they were also coming-of-age stories, so she tried to encourage students to read from the points of view of the characters. According to Ms. Holson:

I really just try to show them that all teenagers experience these things. All teenagers around the world have issues at home or issues where someone is discriminating them for whatever reason it is. So, I really just try to make them feel like they aren't singled out as young black children and make them see that young Asians are going through that, young females are going through that and just really try to make them make personal connections (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17).

Ms. Holson stated that she tried to have students connect their own experiences to those of the characters in the novel because of their similar ages. Furthermore, she showed her students teenagers of all cultures struggle with identity development. Prior literature on multiculturalism finds the teaching of multicultural texts allows students to use their own cultural understandings, also encouraging them to read from the perspective of others (Robinson, 2013). She also thought it was important that her Black students were not only seeing themselves as members of an oppressed group in the texts (Ms. Holson interview, 6/13/17). According to Ms. Holson:

Working in this school, we focus a lot on ill treatment of African Americans but some of the books we've read have shown two African tribes in conflict with one another or two white gangs in conflict with one another. And that it's not always people against them as African American youth. (Ms. Holson interview, 6/13/17).

This instructional strategy resonated with some of Ms. Holson's students. For example, when teaching *A Bronx Masquerade* (Grimes, 2002) in the second report period, Ms. Holson knew she had a lot of athletes in one class who also were highly performing academically. She deliberately made connections to the "smart jocks" in the novel as well (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17). This connection resonated with her student, Anton, who identified most with the novel *A Bronx Masquerade*. Anton self-identified as an athlete who knows he is smart and never had a problem showing that he is smart (Anton

interview, 5/26/17). However, he sometimes felt pressure to act differently in his neighborhood where he stayed to himself as opposed to in school where he felt he could show his true personality (Anton interview, 5/26/17). Anton said he was particularly drawn to the novel because it was about teenagers who felt as if they had to hide their true identity but, through poetry, could eventually be themselves (Anton interview, 5/26/17). He most identified with the character Devon:

Devon was the one that played basketball in *A Bronx Masquerade*. And back then people that played basketball were a little smarter. And he was smart and he would sneak to the library. So, people would call him like ‘O, you a smart basketball player’ and make fun of him. But then he finally stood up and he was like ‘Yeah; I’m going to the library and Imma read this book.’ He like built confidence in the book and I respect that (Anton interview, 5/26/17).

Prior to reading the novel, Anton said that he tried to show off to other people but, after reading it, he knew not to be afraid to show his real self around other people (Anton interview, 5/26/17). He also believed Ms. Holson definitely cared about the characters in the novel because “like how Devon resembles me, there are other characters that resemble other students in eighth grade, so she probably sees her students in the characters” (Anton interview, 5/26/17). Anton also expressed that he enjoyed the lesson where the class read about Genesis and connected the meaning of night to the meaning in the novel *Night* because it helped Anton learn more about Judaism and “relate to Elie” (Anton journal, 6/5/17).

Bianca was also an eighth grader in Ms. Holson’s literature class. She shared that as a student whose parents were immigrants of Africa, she often got made fun of by other students. After the election of Donald Trump, students would say to her comments like

“get back on the boat” or “go back to Africa” or mention something about Trump. In Bianca’s case, she enjoyed the book *American Born Chinese* the most because it included many stereotypes of Asian Americans. She identified with the character Danny because he tried to change his identity and who he was. She stated, “He’s Asian, but he wants to be white so he changes himself to white. Sometimes when people call me African or names like that I feel like less sometimes” (Deirdre interview, 5/26/17). Bianca also stated that after reading the novel *American Born Chinese*, she wouldn’t say some of the stereotypes she once had of Asian Americans. Anton mentioned that when they first started reading the novel that students would laugh at some of the stereotypes but “as we got through the book they’re like that’s not funny. There was [sic] people in the class encouraging them not to laugh” (Anton interview, 5/26/17).

The students in Ms. Holson’s class showed that they connected to the characters based on their coming-of-age experiences. Anton connected to the main character in *A Bronx Masquerade* because he was considered a ‘smart jock’ and Anton self-identified himself in the same way. Bianca connected with the main character of *American Born Chinese* because he was an immigrant who was misunderstood by his classmates in the same way that Bianca’s classmates misunderstood her identity as the child of immigrants from Africa. Therefore, Bianca and Anton connected to the characters through varying points of identification.

Principle One Summary

Ms. Holson capitalized on the idea that her students who were racial and ethnic minorities view and perceive themselves and others differently than those from the

majority group. Therefore, not only did she help them connect to racial and cultural experiences in the novels but also to lived experiences as teenage youth. Ms. Holson also thought it was important that her students read about the identify development of characters from all different cultural backgrounds. She did not want her students to only perceive themselves in the curriculum as members of an oppressed group. Two students in Ms. Holson's class connected to the characters based on their coming of age experiences. Therefore, Ms. Holson fostered her students' varying identities.

Principle Two: Equity and Excellence

The principle of equity and excellence includes the concepts of dispositions, incorporation of multicultural curriculum content, equal access, and high expectations.

According to Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011):

Critical race theory adds that equity and excellence clearly focus on realizing that race is a significant factor in inequality...too, multiculturalism in the curriculum can turn racism on its head and use race as the springboard for equality (p. 75).

Ms. Holson not only incorporated multicultural content in curriculum and instruction, but also displayed high expectations for student achievement with a rigorous curriculum and various supports to address the varying needs of her students. Doing so, her students learned to break down stereotypes and perceive their identities as similar to those of other minority youths, successfully using race to show equality as Brown-Jeffy and Cooper stipulate must happen in using this principle.

High Expectations

Ms. Holson demonstrated "high expectations for student achievement through the use of challenging academic curricula" as well as various supports (Morrison, et al, 2008,

p. 435). She ensured an already challenging prescribed curriculum was even more rigorous by focusing on deeper meaning within comprehension. At times, when the unit plan focused on literal comprehension and the central idea, Ms. Holson chose to employ structured struggle and focus more on the deeper meaning of the text, such as author's craft and use of imagery and tone to foster high-level thinking. She utilized a strategy called "Notice-Connect-Interpret" to scaffold for students and also offered modeling of the strategy (fieldnotes 5/11/17). In this strategy, she challenged students to "notice when an author makes an interesting move (author's craft), connect to what they know within the text or in the real world, and interpret why the author made this move" (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). In addition, she encouraged students to collaborate with one another to determine the deeper meaning of the text (Morrison, et al, 2008).

In one lesson, the class read a poem called "The Butterfly," a poem written by a child in the Terezin Concentration Camp who was later deported to Auschwitz where he died (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). The thinking question in the unit plan for this lesson asked, "What is the central idea of this poem and how is it conveyed?" Instead, Ms. Holson asked, "What is the central idea of the text? Why did the author use the symbol of butterflies?" (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). In this lesson, Ms. Holson had students use the "notice, connect and interpret" strategy. She provided students with a graphic organizer with different shapes to organize their thoughts. The students first read the poem on their own and marked up their notes. Then, for "notice," Ms. Holson asked students to focus on the lines, "Butterflies don't live in here / in the ghetto" (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). Ms. Holson asked, "What do you think of when you think of butterflies?" (fieldnotes, 5/11/17).

Students responded by offering adjectives such as “beautiful and fragile” (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). She also asked the students to consider what symbol “butterflies” represented. Some students said, “Positivity and hope.” Ms Holson wrote, “Literal Understanding: Something as beautiful and fragile as a butterfly does not live in the ghetto” (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). Then the class moved on to “connect.” Ms. Holson asked, “Why wouldn’t a butterfly want to live inside this ghetto?” (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). A student responded, “A butterfly wouldn’t want live inside this ghetto because it would feel penned up” (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). Ms. Holson wrote in her graphic organizer in the connect box, “Butterflies don’t want to be “penned up” in the ghetto is a prison and they want freedom” (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). Then the class moved on to interpret. Ms Holson asked, “Why did the author use the symbol of butterflies?” (fieldnotes, 5/11/17) At that point, Ms. Holson had students collaborate in their groups to interpret the poem. According to Ms. Holson’s annotations, the author of the poem used butterflies as symbol of the loss of hope and freedom in the Jewish ghettoes during the Holocaust (fieldnotes, 5/11/17). This poem was also a depiction through the eyes of a child of what life was like in the ghetto and exposed the students to the oppression of children from another cultural group. It is an example of “counter storytelling as a legitimate critique of the mainstream master narrative” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 75). Furthermore, Ms. Holson allowed students to think critically about racism and oppression.

Another scaffold Ms. Holson provided to maintain high expectations of the rigorous curriculum was modeling “unseen” nuances in the text (Morrison, et al, 2008). For example, Ms. Holson instructed students to focus in on a passage in *Night* where the

main character talked about the stars being extinguished in the sky. She knew that students would most likely glaze over this paragraph during their homework reading and appeared confused when she announced that they would focus in on it. She used the “notice, connect and interpret” strategy and provided students with a graphic organizer of different shapes to track their connections and interpretations. Eventually, she guided students to the understanding that stars represented a symbol of the Jews, and the stars were being extinguished in the same way the Jews were being extinguished or killed (Ms. Holson lesson plans). This paragraph occurred in the middle of the book, and Ms. Holson chose to focus on this paragraph because she knew the symbolism of stars would be recurring and significant throughout the rest of the novel. According to Ms. Holson, “for the rest of the book they looked for imagery and the symbolism and metaphors a lot more” (Ms. Holson interview, 6/13/17).

Ms. Holson built upon students’ prior knowledge of the Holocaust and required students to complete an independent project at the start of the unit by researching and obtaining background knowledge on the impact of the Holocaust. The unit plan began with articles about current events related to vandalism of Jewish cemeteries in the neighborhood where most of the students live and an article entitled “Introduction to the Holocaust”. However, Ms. Holson noticed little emphasis in the Unit Plan on the historical context of how the Holocaust impacted the world (including the United States) and not just Jewish people and Germany. More importantly, she felt it was important for her students to understand why the Holocaust occurred and what events led up to it rather than only focusing on what occurred between the Nazis and the Jews. Most of the

students were aware that the Jews were killed but couldn't explain why this took place by using historical contexts. Therefore, she incorporated a timeline project at the start of the unit. She provided them with aspects of the timeline that they could use but then she asked them to incorporate their own information derived from their own research. Students first submitted the five dates they chose to focus on and decided the type of project they would complete. Ms. Holson gave the options of a creating a poster board, making a diorama, writing a song, filming a video or creating a PowerPoint. Ms. Holson integrated an independent project that required students to connect their prior knowledge of what occurred during the Holocaust to a higher-level prompt of why it occurred. She also gave students choices in their presentations of the content. In doing so, students had to cultivate their own assumptions about the reasons the Holocaust occurred.

Principle Two Summary

The principle of equity and excellence incorporates the concepts of dispositions, incorporation of multicultural curriculum content, equal access, and high expectations. Ms. Holson incorporated the multicultural curriculum throughout the entire academic process. She also demonstrated high expectations of the rigorous curriculum by focusing on deeper meaning comprehension and provided supports such as modeling, questioning and scaffolding with graphic organizers. In addition, she challenged students to develop their own conclusions of historical contexts after completing an independent research project. Even this project supported Ms. Holson and her students by providing aspects of the timeline for the students' reference.

Principle Three: Student-Teacher Relationships

Student-teacher relationships include the concepts of caring, relationships, interaction and classroom atmosphere (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). This principle refers to authentic relationships between teachers and students that promote learning, maintain high expectations and create a community-like environment (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). In addition, it relates to teachers maintaining high expectations for all students regardless of their placement in academic programs (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). According to Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011), CRP teachers “facilitate learning, validate learners’ knowledge construction, and empower learners’ individual and collective learning capacity” (p. 78).

Interaction and Classroom Atmosphere

Ms. Holson’s priority in her classroom was on creating and nurturing cooperative environments. This encouraged students to “learn collaboratively, teach each other, and be responsible for each other’s learning” (Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011, p. 163). She often required higher-level thinking during the *Night* unit. Therefore, Ms. Holson required peer interaction and discussion rather than direct instruction to support students in meeting high academic expectations. To encourage and foster positive group interaction among the students, during the teaching of *Night*, the classroom tables were organized into groups of six. Ms. Holson often allowed the students to work in partners at their table groups to complete class work, which supported her beliefs about cultural norms of group interaction (fieldnotes, 3/17/17). The classroom community also

encouraged students to be more open to the high-level thinking and connections Ms. Holson required of them because they were supporting one another's learning.

Ms. Holson held her students to high behavioral expectations and gave them a considerable amount of power in the classroom (Morrison, et al, 2008). Students, for the most part, ran the classroom, with student jobs including organizing and distributing materials. Students were also in charge of tracking behavior with the class DOJO, which sounded for both positive and negative reinforcement. The DOJO was a classroom communication application on the ipad that Ms. Holson used to track student behavior and communicate with parents. The feel of the classroom was very casual, with students talking amongst themselves when materials were handed out. Once it was time to start class, students immediately quieted down and gave Ms. Holson their attention so there was still a sense of urgency (fieldnotes, 3/3/17, 3/17/17, 5/30/17).

Ms. Holson often praised students and celebrated their academic achievements. In one class, she gave a shout out to a student about the quality of her work. She saw that the student was embarrassed, so she followed up with, "I love you and I want you to know that" (fieldnotes, 3/3/17). In another class, the teacher shouted out a student's essay and said it was the best essay she's ever read in all her years of teaching, which drew a reaction from the other students. She asked the student if she could make copies of the essay and distribute them to the class because "it would do everyone else a service to see what they are capable of" (fieldnotes, 5/30/17). Her genuine interactions strengthened the sense of community in her classroom.

Ms. Holson recognized her students as individuals, communicated her behavioral expectations and enforced rules if they were violated (Morrison, et al 2008). Ms. Holson rarely had to address individual behaviors and when she did, there was never student backtalk. This was most likely because Ms. Holson was very fair with her behavioral expectations. For example, in one class, while students were working, Ms. Holson started to make an announcement. Other students began to talk. Instead of reprimanding them for talking, she said, “I started talking, that’s my fault.” The students then stopped talking and got back to work (fieldnotes, 3/3/17). When I asked her about addressing student behaviors, she said, “There might be a day where by brain is ticking and I’m a little upset and I’ll have a negative interaction with a kid where usually I’ll say, ‘Right now; she’s a teenager, she needs a moment.’ And I’ll actually say it out loud. So, a lot of times, that helps because then they realize that I’m thinking of their feelings and not just of the classroom” (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17). Ms. Holson knew that if her students were to meet her high academic expectation, her classroom environment had to focus on learning rather than behavior management (Morrison, et al, 2008).

Relationships

Ms. Holson was very strategic in the way she built relationships with her students and offered many moments of empowerment and student expression. For example, she praised students often because she too liked to be praised as a 33-year-old woman. Every Monday, she did a public shout out for each classroom and gave students the space to shout out to each other. She gave out her cell phone number so the students could text her about school-related questions. She made herself available to students outside of class

time. According to her student Bianca, “I was struggling with open-ended responses and I went upstairs before school with her and she helped me through them” (Bianca interview, 5/26/17).

Ms. Holson also created opportunities for independence and freedom in the classroom by building a culture of trust. Throughout the school year, students had to earn opportunities to do more partner work or chat more while getting their work done. She gradually built up the process of letting the students have such freedoms. She expressed that this let her create more personal relationships with her students. According to Ms. Holson, “the true reason is, yes; they earned it – but the big reason of me letting them talk is because I want kids to ask me questions and they might not ask if the room is silent” (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17). She believed, often, students just want to be heard and what they want to say might not be relevant to the whole class. Therefore, when other students talked amongst each other, the student who felt their issue irrelevant to the entire class could share it. Also, if a student wanted feedback on their work but they didn’t want the whole class to hear, they might be more willing to ask if the rest of the class was not paying attention. While it seemed as if her classroom was very lenient, the intention was very strategic for students to build confidence and trust in Ms. Holson to feel comfortable enough to ask her questions.

Students constantly worked together and held responsible for each other’s learning. In a classroom where Ms. Holson fostered higher-level thinking, students had to work together to challenge their thinking around the texts. Building a community of learners and a collaborative classroom environment influenced some of Ms. Holson’s

students. Anton was a student in her class who said that he enjoyed collaborative learning, especially when Ms. Holson had the students participate in literature circles and discussions around the text, because they “made everyone contribute and I like hearing other people’s thoughts” (Anton journal, 6/9/17). He also believed the thoughts of his classmates “made me understand the lesson better” (Anton journal, 5/9/17).

Principle Three Summary

Prior research, such as Brown’s (2004) study, shows management strategies that reflect culturally responsive teaching, such as development of personal relationships with students, creation of caring communities, and utilization of clearly stated and enforced expectations (Brown, 2004). Ms. Holson had clearly established personal relationships with her students. She also created a caring community of learners in her classroom. Finally, she had clearly stated and enforced expectations, evident in how seldom she had to discipline student behavior or, when she did, the lack of backtalk by students. Ms. Holson created a bond with all the students and created a community of learners as a priority and encouraged the students to learn collaboratively (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Thus, students expected to work together and felt responsible for each other’s learning, creating a community where students felt nurtured and safe and sending the message that students could meet high academic expectations.

The principles of identity and achievement, equity and excellence and student teacher relationships for Ms. Holson derive from the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy. Since Ms. Holson was a teacher at the school for five years, she already taught the curriculum and familiar with the systems of the school. Therefore, developing student

teacher relationships came more naturally to her. She tended to focus more on student identity when teaching the curriculum. However, for Ms. Holson, teacher identity was not as dominant. While she did address that she was well aware of the racial differences between herself and her students, she only briefly mentioned how this impacted her pedagogy. Both Ms. James and Ms. Holson faced the constraints of standardized test scores, which may also prevented the teachers from enacting culturally relevant pedagogy to the extent in which the framework implies.

How the Teachers' Pedagogies Compare

The second research question this study sought to answer asked: What similarities and differences are evident in the pedagogy of the teachers? To answer this question, I derived themes from the codes I developed to answer the first part of the question. Once I identified themes from the codes, I carried out cross case analysis and compared the pedagogies of the two teachers. The following themes show how the pedagogies of the two teachers compare: Fostering reader connections to the texts based on cultural- and youth-lived experiences, developing the critical literacy of the reader and unit plan modifications despite high-stakes testing.

Theme One: Fostering Reader Connections through Student Identities

Both teachers built on student identities and provided opportunities for students to “tap into their schema, prior experiences, and verbalize these experiences to communally construct and deconstruct meaning” (Robinson, 2013, p. 50, Zoch, 2017). However, their approaches to fostering reader connections to the texts differed. While Ms. James focused on race and broader aspects of culture (connected to race/ethnicity), Ms. Holson focused

on these but also on youth culture. By considering student identities when connecting to multicultural texts, the teachers acknowledged their students' different lived experiences (Zoch, 2017).

Ms. James stressed that her students demonstrate empathy when reading culturally relevant texts and understand "the world from another person's perspective" regardless of whether the race or culture of the characters were similar or different to those of her students (Ms. James interview, 6/13/17). According to Ms. James, "It seems like there's more of a connection to the characters because of their lived experiences" (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). One instructional strategy she employed to teach her students how to demonstrate empathy was the gallery walk at the start of *Night*, where she challenged students to connect their own cultural and religious beliefs and rituals to that of the Jewish people. Another strategy Ms. James incorporated was the culminating portfolio at the end of the unit, wherein students created a newspaper that displayed a deep understanding of the impact of the Holocaust on the Jewish community, as seen through the lens of Elie Wiesel. As such, Ms. James taught students to connect with their cultural and lived experiences to demonstrate empathy.

Ms. Holson also encouraged reading from the viewpoints of the characters but she connected the characters to her students' youth culture, such as age. Although the cultures of the characters sometimes differed from that of the students, Ms. Holson focused on the idea that the texts were coming-of-age novels. She talked about the characters as teenagers who experience struggle in the same way that her students experience struggles as teenagers of color (Ms. Holson interview, 3/8/17). According to

Ms. Holson, while students were not always able to connect to some cultural experiences of the characters, they were able to connect to emotions, ideas or themes, such as the idea of loss (Ms. Holson interview 3/8/17). One instructional strategy she utilized to make such connections was the ‘notice-connect-interpret’ strategy when reading texts. Another instructional strategy was her questioning of the texts. For example, in one lesson, the class read a part of the text where Elie and his father started to connect despite their horrific situation because they both started to question God and their religion. Elie saw a tear on his dad’s face and immediately understood what his dad was thinking. Ms. Holson then asked the class if they had someone in their life that they could just give a look to and that person knew what they felt in that moment (fieldnotes, 5/30/18). Although the students might not have grasped the severity of the situation Elie and his father were in, Ms. Holson helped them connect to the emotions of the text and the idea of relationships through her questioning.

By fostering reader connection to the texts, Ms. James and Ms. Holson relied on connecting the diverse lived experience of their students to that of the characters of the multicultural texts to develop their literacy (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Ms. James connected her students’ own cultural experiences to those of the characters, while Ms. Holson also connected her students’ experiences as teenagers to that of the characters in the books, thereby acknowledging that “their experiences were varied and pluralistic” (Zoch, 2015, p. 630).

Theme Two: Developing the Critical Literacy of the Reader

Both Ms. James and Ms. Holson sought to develop the critical literacy of their students by encouraging a “critical stance toward the content of their literacy instruction” (Morrison, et al, 2008, p. 441). Ms. James used the texts “not as the sole source of information but as a springboard for critique” (Morrison, et al, 2008, p. 441). In teaching the *Night* unit plan, she used classroom discussion, guided open-ended questions and provided alternative reading materials and writing assignments to critique societal issues that stemmed from the unit, such as oppression and resistance (Zoch, 2015). In doing so, Ms. James encouraged her students’ critical consciousnesses (Zoch, 2015). Ms. Holson, however, focused on textual-based critical thinking to “scaffold students’ developing critical literacy skills” and to teach students to “construct alternative perspectives” (Morrison, et al, 2008, p.441). By fostering critical thinking of the texts, she gave students tools to interact with, analyze, and cultivate their own assumptions of the world.

Ms. James expressed a need to connect oppression and resistance of the Jews during the Holocaust to that of people of color today. In doing so, she fostered critical thinking of societal issues as they related to her students. For example, Ms. James brought up the protest against the immigrant ban on people from primarily Muslim countries (fieldnotes, 5/2/17) and dehumanization and resistance as they related to modern day. When Ms. James asked the question, “How does the anecdote about the Blockalteste forcing prisoners to clean the block from top to bottom relate to the central idea of Elie’s preface that he has a moral obligation to try to prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing his crime to be erased from human memory,” she

challenged students to consider how significant it is for the victim to have a voice and expose his oppressors. Ms. James helped students recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities to foster their critical consciousnesses (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ms. James employed variations “in the form the critical literacy instruction” in her classroom, including “selecting texts with critical perspectives and providing critical thinking prompts before reading a text” (Morrison, et al, 2008, p. 441).

Ms. Holson also fostered critical thinking of societal issues; however, she focused more on analysis of the text. In some instances, when the focus of the unit plan was about literal meaning comprehension and the central idea of the text, Ms. Holson instead concentrated on the deeper meaning of the text, such as author’s craft and use of imagery and tone, to foster high-level thinking. Ms. Holson’s philosophy of reading was to be able to dissect, analyze, interact with the world, and make assumptions of the world based on what is learned through literacy. She improved her students’ development of critical literacy skills by utilizing a notice-connect-interpret strategy (Morrison, et al, 2008). She also provided critical thinking prompts before reading the text and allowed students to discuss controversial topics such as racial stereotypes and anti-Semitism (Morrison, et al, 2008). By introducing students to higher-order thinking about multicultural texts, Ms. Holson challenged students to critique the knowledge in texts they read and to develop multiple perspectives on societal and historical topics (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Theme Three: Unit Plan Modifications Despite High Stakes Testing

The school where this study took place relied heavily on benchmark data to determine student growth and readiness for the state standardized tests. Benchmark data

partly determined teacher effectiveness each report period. Both teachers expressed pressure to meet the expectations for benchmark scores. As a first-year teacher, Ms. James spent a significant portion of the first half of the school year familiarizing herself with the systems, procedures, curriculum and culture of the school. At least for the first report period, Ms. James followed the unit plan 100% as it was intended. According to Ms. James, “I think feeling the pressure to follow the unit plan is something I’ve never felt before. And this benchmark, benchmark, benchmark is something I’ve never felt before” (Ms. James interview, 3/8/17). After every report period, Ms. James analyzed the benchmark data to determine what literacy skills, strategies and standards her students needed more support with. She then adjusted her pedagogy to meet student needs in the following report period. For example, from the first report period benchmark score results, Ms. James noticed that her students struggled with identifying viewpoints, so she modified her instruction to teach students how to read from the points of view of the characters in the novel. She also felt discouraged because the benchmark data didn’t reflect, in her opinion, the growth her students made based on her own informal assessments. Therefore, she incorporated more collaboration to build student investment in and relationships of the texts and heightened her students’ critical consciousnesses by considering issues of oppression, dehumanization, resistance and naming one’s oppressor. Therefore, since the unit plans addressed the state standards, Ms. James still found a way to comply with test preparation by following the unit plan. However, she also supported her students’ identity development with authentic reading materials,

collaborative projects, different formats for assessment, and critical thinking prompts (Morrison, et al, 2008; Zoch, 2017).

Ms. Holson also felt the pressure of her benchmark data. She acknowledged that any thinking questions in the unit plan she skipped in the past were the questions her students didn't do well in on the benchmark. Her priority was for her students to have equal access on the benchmark as all other students in the network while also meeting their needs. Therefore, in teaching the unit plan as it was intended, Ms. Holson also complied with test preparation. Despite the high-stakes testing, Ms. Holson considered student identity development when implementing the curriculum by focusing not only on cultural identity, but also on youth culture identity. She used open-ended questions to facilitate classroom discussion as well as deeper meaning critical thinking. She also scaffolded student understanding of critical literacy through structured struggle and graphic organizers.

Although Ms. James and Ms. Holson often felt pressure by high-stakes testing and having to prepare their students, they still made some modifications to the unit plans based on what they believed were their students' needs. Since this was the first time Ms. James taught the unit plan, she took more risks when she altered the unit plan. Ms. Holson, however, had taught the unit plan before and knew where her students struggled in the past, so she made modifications accordingly. The director of literacy curriculum development did specify that teachers were encouraged to modify their unit plans while maintaining critical thinking and high expectations. Therefore, teachers could modify the unit plans as they saw fit even though the unit plans were well made.

The three themes that emerged when analyzing how the two pedagogies compared and contrasted were fostering reader connections to the texts based on cultural and youth lived experiences, developing the critical literacy of the reader and unit plan modifications despite high-stakes testing. While there were many similarities between the pedagogy of the teachers, their instructional approaches and styles differed. Both teachers considered the identities of their students when teaching the multicultural texts. While Ms. James focused on race and broader aspects of culture (connected to race/ethnicity), Ms. Holson used these themes but also that of youth culture. Both teachers also tried to develop the critical literacy of their students – thus, Ms. James used the text to critique societal issues that emerged from the themes of the text, while Ms. Holson focused more on using the text to think critically about societal issues. Finally, both teachers complied with the benchmark and state testing by following the unit plans. Ms. James took more risks when modifying the unit plan since she was teaching it for the first time. Ms. Holson already taught this specific unit plan, so she had more knowledge and resources to modify as she saw fit.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Prior research suggests culturally relevant pedagogy and multiculturalism support the academic and social needs of ethnically diverse students (Durden, 2008; Gay, 2002; Hefflin, 2002; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1992, 1995; Lipman, 1995). Students of color experience advantage in seeing their own cultural group in the curriculum as well as learning about a variety of different cultures. They also experience advantage when their teachers' pedagogical practices connect their own funds of knowledge to the curriculum. In this case study, I was interested in examining how two literature teachers enact culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching a prescribed multicultural literacy unit plan. The study took place across four months in two seventh- and eighth-grade literature classrooms in a northeastern urban charter secondary school serving mainly students of color. To answer my first research question about what aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy were most salient to each teacher, I collected field notes from classroom observations; the *Night* unit plan; teacher annotations of the novel *Night*; thinking questions and exemplars for each lesson of the unit; and teacher and student interviews. I then determined the aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy using the Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) model that were most dominant to the teacher as evidenced in their instruction. Through a cross case analysis of the two teachers, I next derived themes of the similarities and differences in their pedagogy to answer my second research question.

Table 4

Summary of Findings

	Ms. James	Ms. Holson
Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity and Achievement • Developmental Appropriateness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity and Achievement • Equity and Excellence • Student-Teacher Relationships
Theme One: Fostering Reader Connections through Student Identities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Fostered readers' connections to texts based on race and broader aspects of culture (connected to race/ethnicity). 2) Taught students to connect with their cultural and lived experiences to demonstrate empathy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Fostered readers' connections to texts based on culture as well as youth culture. 2) Taught students to connect to youth emotions and values of the characters.
Theme Two: Developing the Critical Literacy of the Reader	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Developed the critical literacy of students. 2) Used the texts as an anchor for classroom discussions, guided open-ended questions and writing assignments to critique societal issues. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Developed the critical literacy of students. 2) Fostered critical thinking of societal issues through analysis of the text.
Theme Three: Unit Plan Modifications Despite High Stakes Testing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Expressed pressure to meet benchmark expectations. Complied with test preparation by following the unit plan. 2) Modifications to support students' identity development including authentic reading materials, collaborative projects, varied assessment formats and critical thinking prompts. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Expressed pressure to meet benchmark expectations. Complied with test preparation by following the unit plan. 2) Modifications to support students' identity development including open-ended questions to facilitate classroom discussion and deeper meaning critical thinking, structured struggle and graphic organizers.

The seventh grade teacher, Ms. James, was a White female who was a first-year teacher at the school, but a fourth-year middle school literature teacher overall. The principles of culturally relevant pedagogy that were most dominant to Ms. James' pedagogy were 1) identity and achievement and 2) developmental appropriateness. The eighth grade teacher, Ms. Holson, was a White female who was a fourth-year middle school literature teacher at this school. The principles of culturally relevant pedagogy that were most salient to Ms. Holson's pedagogy were 1) identity and achievement, 2) equity and excellence and 3) student teacher relationships. In my cross case analysis, the themes

I derived across both teachers were 1) fostering reader connections through student identities, 2) developing the critical literacy of the reader, and 3) unit plan modifications despite high stakes testing.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this case study and suggestions for future research. This study took place over one full report period, so I was unable to study the teaching of the entire multicultural literacy curriculum over the course of the school year. Future research should study teachers over several report periods to gain more of an understanding of how teachers enact the unit plans depending on the text. Future studies may also analyze teachers of difference races across more schools teaching the multicultural curriculum. I originally set out to not only analyze how teachers enact culturally relevant pedagogy, but also to determine what informs the teachers' enactment of the unit plan by collecting field notes from teacher planning meetings as well as teacher journals. However, Ms. Holson did not participate in planning meetings so I only collected field notes from Ms. James' planning meetings. Ms. James did not write in her journal so I only received a teacher journal from Ms. Holson. Therefore, I disregarded that data for this particular study. Future research should study what informs the teachers' enactment of the unit plan as well as how teachers enact the unit plans. This study also sought to examine the perspective of students of color. I planned to collect data for four students; however I could only obtain parental consent from three students. I interviewed the three students and they also wrote in student journals to prove their insight. I did not collect enough data to draw conclusive findings of student perspectives. Future studies

should include more students to observe the variety of perspectives students of color possess. Finally, the goal for this school in implementing a multicultural curriculum and providing cultural context training for teachers was not only to increase the academic achievement but also to support the development of positive racial identity. Future studies can continue to examine how culturally relevant pedagogy supports the development of racial identity of elementary and middle school students of color over longer periods of time.

Implications

The results of this study have implications for theory, research and practice. The results support previous research as well as provide new insight to the research about culturally relevant pedagogy, multiculturalism and how teachers engage with curriculum.

Theoretical Implications

For this study, I applied the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy by Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011 to determine the ways in which the teachers enacted culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching multicultural texts. The conceptual framework was helpful in that it incorporates a collection of principles that represent culturally relevant pedagogy while also incorporating the tenets of critical race theory (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). This framework allowed me to analyze which principles were most relevant to the teachers' instruction. While there was overlap between the principles, the principle that was most dominant for both teachers was identity and achievement. Developmental appropriateness was also extremely dominant to Ms. James' pedagogy while equity and excellence and student teacher relationships was also very dominant to

Ms. Holson's pedagogy. However, for both teachers, there was some evidence that showed the teachers worked within all of the principles of the framework to some degree, which is not always evident in pedagogy.

While all of the principles of the framework are necessary, the framework should be further developed in three ways. One way is to classify the principles, identity and achievement, equity and excellence, developmental appropriateness, teaching whole child, and student teacher relationships within the tenets of CRP, high expectations, cultural competence and critical consciousness. Another way is to provide a synthesis of classroom-based research and specific examples of each principle in order to operationalize the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom. Specific examples of each principle can assist teachers and teacher educators in developing a holistic connection between theory and practice. This study began to analyze and apply the principles of the framework to practices in the classroom. Another limitation of the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy is the vagueness of how critical race theory is infused into each principle. The framework can be further developed by explicitly portraying how each principle of culturally relevant pedagogy is informed by critical race theory.

I also employed Ladson Billing's (1992) theory of CRP to examine and interpret teacher pedagogy. Django Paris (2012) offered a new stance to CRP. He proposed the term "culturally sustaining pedagogy" as an alternative that seeks to foster and sustain linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism, including within-group and across-group cultural practice (Paris, 2012). According to Paris, culturally sustaining pedagogy seeks

to include “all of the languages, literacies, and cultural ways of being that our students and communities embody- both those marginalized and dominant” (Paris, 2012, p. 96). Therefore, CSP goes beyond what it means to be culturally relevant because “it requires that they [the pedagogies] support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence” (Paris, 2012, p. 96; as cited in Zoch, 2017). While Paris’ theory of CSP incorporates “the multiplicities of identities and cultures that help formulate today’s youth culture,” he does not address considerations of race in the theory that the framework of culturally relevant pedagogy does (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 81). For example, Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) propose, “focusing solely on culture negates the reality of race and racism in American society” (p. 69). Therefore, tenets of critical race theory that are considered in the framework of CRP are missing from Paris’ culturally sustaining pedagogy.

Research Implications

The findings of this study show that teachers must promote students’ varied identities through authentic texts and curriculum. For example, Ms. James fostered connections between the characters and students’ race and broader aspects of culture related to race and ethnicity. Ms. Holson connected the characters to students’ race as well as youth culture. The students of this study showed they connected to the characters from various points of identification. Multiculturalism argues for students to read from their own perspective and from the perspective of others (Morrell & Morrell, 2012; Robinson, 2013). As previously stated, Milner (2011) cautions, however, against misuse

of the term “culture” to collapse members of a racial group together. For example, the term “African American” refers to “an ethnic group of people-not a singular, static cultural group; there is a wide range of diversity among and between African Americans although there are some consistencies as well” (Milner, 2011, p. 71). According to Robinson (2013), discussing multicultural education “requires clarification of how *culture* relates to children, and their understandings about themselves, and about others” (Robinson, 2013, p. 46). In this study, the teachers acknowledged the wide range of diversity among their students including cultural and racial, as well as youth culture identity and human values. This suggests a need to further classify multicultural literature to not only include the cultural and racial identify but also youth identity.

While student identity is very significant, my findings suggest that teacher identity development is equally as important. Dedication to maintaining students’ cultural pluralism and cultural competence requires teachers to learn about “elements of students’ culture through their own research” (Morrison, et al. 2008, p. 438). Teachers cannot and should not “solely base an individual’s behavior on what s/he believes his or her group culture to be, for those beliefs may be stereotypical” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 77). The teachers in this study were both White teachers of students of color. They consistently took part in mandatory cultural context professional developments and professional learning communities throughout the school year. The PDs and PLCs supported them in their teaching of a multicultural curriculum, in identifying cultural and racial misconceptions and bias in the texts and in their classroom environment. However, the findings show there is opportunity for both teachers to continue to develop as

culturally relevant practitioners. The conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy is useful for pre-service as well as in-service teachers. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) insist however, that “teacher educators must be knowledgeable of the framework in order to demonstrate it in their professional practice” and “it must be explicitly taught and modeled in our schools of education by teacher educators” (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011, p. 80). The framework, therefore, needs to continue to evolve with further research that connects the principles of the framework to classroom practices. Cultural context professional developments ought to include conversations among teachers around identity development and institutional policies that lead to racial inequalities in society. They should provide teachers with tools to obtain their own resources about various cultural groups. For example, several organizations can provide insight and resources for teachers to implement in their classroom. Teachers should also read texts from multiple perspectives beyond the texts they teach and hear from leaders and activists from the communities in which they teach. The context professional developments also need to focus on social justice and the way in which teachers can support students in social justice projects that stem from the curriculum and support students to become activists in their communities. Since many teachers don’t live in the communities where they teach, teachers should participate in community events where their schools are located. Cultural context professional developments can also be a time where teachers collaborate to develop community events and projects.

The teachers of this study had prescribed multicultural literature unit plans aligned to the state standards already created for them each report period. This allowed

the teachers to invest more of their time planning robust lessons based on their classroom contexts and students' needs rather than spending their time searching for materials and texts (Stiutky, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016). Since the unit plans were a cohesive plan with related themes to the texts and high level thinking questions, the teachers' instruction also possessed a clear scope, sequence and purpose (Stiutky, Leko & Knackstedt, 2016). However, the teachers also had the freedom to modify the unit plans to meet the needs of their students as long as they maintained high academic expectations. While the unit plans here provide more time for teachers to focus on planning the actual lessons and spending time in the texts, they also should feel as if they can modify the plans according to the needs of their students. Every classroom context varies and students' identity development is multifaceted and complicated. As teachers develop personal relationships with students, they must use their lived experiences to "build bridges between these funds of knowledge and the curriculum" (Morrison, et al, 2008, p. 438).

The texts across the two-year curriculum were mostly coming-of-age stories that addressed several cultural groups, including that of the students. As indicated by Ms. Holson, the students not only read about texts that always presented their own cultural group in a light of oppression. For example, *Bronx Masquerade* was a text about students of color writing and reciting poetry to reveal their struggles and dreams, which ultimately led to strong relationships among the classmates. *A Long Walk to Water* relayed how a Sudanese refugee teenager of the Second Sudanese Civil War eventually creates a nonprofit that provides water to the people of South Sudan. While some of the texts

focused on ideas of oppression and marginalization, they also emphasized empowerment and positive identity development. Research shows mandating a multicultural curriculum is not enough, that it is up to the teachers to create opportunities in the classroom for students to think critically about such issues (Holland & Mongillo, 2016). Both Ms. James and Ms. Holson created some opportunities for students to critique relatable societal issues. They also helped students identify with the characters and reflect upon personal concerns such as nostalgia, loss, adolescent challenges, gender and culture. The findings suggest multicultural texts alone do not encourage critical thinking of the literature; consideration of both student and teacher identities in pedagogy is also imperative.

The findings of this study suggest that students of color should be provided with opportunities to read about their own cultural group in contexts other than that of oppression or marginalization. Ms. James and Ms. Holson welcomed texts from other cultural groups and also emphasized a narrative of empowerment and resistance when reading texts about dehumanization and oppression. The students in this study showed they connected to the characters in the texts based on different points of identification. I only collected student interviews and student journals from three students of color. Future studies should focus on more students' perspectives to identify development and the way in which students use their lived experiences to connect to characters of multicultural texts on a larger scale. This is because there is a void in the research of students' perceptions and interpretations of culturally relevant pedagogical practices (Howard, 2001). Scholars argue when students of color connect to texts, it "helps students

understand the important ways in which their culture has contributed to various genres of curriculum content” (Milner, 2011, p. 69) and can “reverse the current of low performance among these groups” (Durdan, 2008, p. 410).

Missed Opportunities by the Teachers

While there are several examples in this study of principles of culturally relevant pedagogy, there were also missed opportunities by both teachers. According to Brown-Jeffy & Cooper (2011) in reference to the framework:

even though we believe that working independently on any one of these areas is a necessary step toward adopting a culturally relevant pedagogical style, the combination of these elements is what truly makes one engage in and a more comprehensive practitioner of CRP (p. 80).

The examples presented in this study are just a sample of the various approaches to culturally relevant pedagogy in accordance with the framework. While both teachers are developing a culturally relevant pedagogical style, I would not consider the teachers in this study to be exemplars of CRP teachers. Based on the evidence of the study, the teachers worked more independently in some of the areas of the framework rather than in combination of the elements, which according to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper, 2011 is a necessary step towards becoming a culturally relevant practitioner but does not constitute a comprehensive practitioner of CRP. However, the emphasis on standardized tests scores, which is a large measure of student success in this particular organization presented constraints that may have prevented both teachers from enacting culturally relevant pedagogy.

There are three specific missed opportunities for the teachers in this study. Culturally relevant pedagogy research calls for encouraging relationships between

students' school and communities to build cultural competence (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Morrison et al, 2008). There was little evidence besides occasional phone calls home to parents that the teachers made efforts to connect home and community experiences to the curriculum. This connection is significant because it tells students that the various cultures of the classroom are valued. While the findings of this study revealed that the teachers possessed critical literacy stances, they did not engage students in social justice work to cultivate critical consciousness (Morrison et al, 2008). Social justice work connects the ideas, critiques and dialogue of social issues addressed in the classroom to real world contexts in order to foster student critical consciousness. Finally, considering the political climate when this study took place and the many controversial governmental policies and actions implemented against marginalized groups, the teachers could have engaged their students in more “dialogue about why such policies are created and how it affects them” and their communities (Zoch, 2017, p. 632).

Practical Implications

This study also has implications for teacher education and practitioners. Teachers need to adopt an inclusive stance “that acknowledges that cultures and the practices of how communities shift and change over time” (Zoch, 2017, p. 631). Providing teachers opportunities in cultural context professional developments to discuss their positionalities is a start, but teachers also need time to develop personal, meaningful relationships with their students. Strong administrative support, especially in high stakes classroom contexts, is especially important in supporting teachers to foster cultural competence and critical consciousness (Parsons, et al, 2011; Holland & Mongillo, 2016). Finally, the

multicultural unit plans of this study provided teachers with some optional ideas for social justice work and required teachers to implement social action. This requires more planning time that teachers don't necessarily have. However, social justice work should be the catalyst of curriculum and pedagogical decisions. Then, "preservice teachers can help their students speak to and challenge dominant discourses and policies that impact their lives" (Zoch, 2017, p. 632).

Conclusion

This study examined how teachers enacted culturally relevant pedagogy in a multicultural curriculum. This study differed from prior research by utilizing a conceptual framework that also infuses the tenets of critical race theory (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). A more recent theory of culturally sustaining pedagogy introduced by Django Paris (2012) considers the multiple cultural identities of students while maintaining dominant cultural competence. However, the framework must also include consideration of the students' race. Multicultural texts provide students an opportunity to use their own cultural knowledge to connect to multiple perspectives, showing that "just because you don't have the same experiences as someone else doesn't mean you can't try and take a walk in their shoes" (Ms. James interview). However, multiculturalism must also include a consideration of the various identities that students develop, including youth identity, because students connect to texts using their multiple identities. Students must not only read texts that view their own cultural group in a negative light: "all teenagers around the world have issues at home or issues where someone is discriminating them for whatever reason it is....they [the students] aren't singled out as young black children" (Ms. Holson

interview). These considerations are significant to the development and implementation of pre-service and in-service teacher education and professional development.

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APPENDIX A**INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS**

Director of Literacy Curriculum Development Interview Questions

- 1) What is your role as the Director of Elementary Literacy Curriculum Development in this organization?
- 2) How long have you held this position?
- 3) Why did the organization decide to have the central office create the unit plan for all teachers?
- 4) What was the intention behind how the texts are chosen?
- 5) What is the process from start to finish of creating the unit plans?
- 6) How important is it to understand the race and culture of the students when creating the unit plans?
- 7) What are your expectations for teachers in planning their lessons from the unit plan?
- 8) What are your expectations for teachers in executing the unit plan?
- 9) What are the short-term goals for student outcomes? What are the long-term student outcome goals?
- 10) How often do you adapt or modify the unit plan? How do you determine what changes to make?
- 11) What challenges, if any have you faced in this position? With colleagues? With students? With parents?

Teacher Interview Questions

Start of the study:

- 1) How long have you been teaching and to what capacity?
- 2) What do you believe is the purpose of literacy? What is your teaching philosophy?
- 3) To what extent do you follow the unit plan provided for you? How do you make decisions to deviate from the unit plan?
- 4) How do you engage your students in the texts? How do you make the texts relatable to the students?
- 5) To what extent do you take into consideration the race and culture of your students when planning your unit plan?
- 6) To what extent do you believe your own racial and cultural identity impacts how you teach?
- 7) How do you learn about the racial and cultural identities of your students?
- 8) How do you build relationships with your students?
- 9) How do you confront issues of race that students may bring up in discussing the texts?
- 10) Do you find the planning meetings to be helpful? Why or why not? Is there anything you would do differently?
- 11) Do you find cultural context professional developments and professional learning communities to be helpful? What changes have you made in your pedagogy based on those conversations?

End of the study:

- 1) How did you prepare for this novel? How was it different than your preparation last report period?
- 2) Do you find that you had to prepare for the two novels differently, given the different cultures? Explain.
- 3) The text that you taught confronts different cultures than that of your students. How did you engage your students and build their background knowledge?
- 4) How comfortable are you addressing and discussing controversial racial, cultural, and political topics with your students?
- 5) What were the advantages and disadvantages of having a unit plan provided to you by the network?
- 6) Did you find the planning meetings to be helpful to the planning of your lessons? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 7) Did you adapt or modify the unit plan in any way? If so, why? If not, why not?
 - a) How do you make the decision to make changes to the unit plan?
- 8) Did you notice differences in your students when discussing, reading or writing about topics or texts that matter to them? Explain.
- 9) What challenges did you face in teaching the texts of this report period?
- 10) If given the opportunity, what changes would you make to the curriculum or the texts that you taught this report period?

- 11) What lesson went really well in this unit? Why do you think it went well, how did you prepare for it and how do you think the students responded?
- 12) What was a lesson that you didn't think went so well and why?

Student Interview Questions

- 1) What was your favorite text so far this year? Why?
- 2) Are you engaged in the daily literature lessons or do you find yourself bored? Why?
- 3) Do you honestly participate in the classroom discussions? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 4) Are you able to make connections between the lessons in the texts and classroom discussions to your own personal life? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 5) Do you like the characters in the novels you read?
- 6) Are the characters similar or different to you? Why?
- 7) Do you think your teacher cares about the characters in the novels you read?
- 8) Which book do you think your teacher liked the most? Why do you think?
- 9) Do you feel safe and welcomed in your classroom by your teacher and classmates? If so, why? If not, why not?
- 10) Describe your relationship with your teacher.
- 11) Do you ever use the lessons you learn from the texts and classroom discussions outside of school? If so, how?

APPENDIX B**IRB FORMS**

Teacher Consent Form

Title of research: Making Spaces: To What Extent and In What Ways Do Teachers Enact “Culturally Relevant” Pedagogy in a Multicultural Curriculum?

Investigator and Department: Wanda M. Brooks, EdD and Tal Meirson, Department of Teaching & Learning

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are a middle grades literacy teacher in a high-needs urban school serving predominantly African American and Latinx students.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, contact Dr. Wanda M. Brooks, Department of Teaching & Learning, Temple University, 1301 Cecil B. Moore Ave., Hillwood, 19122-6091, wbrooks@temple.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or e-mail them at: irb@temple.edu for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to analyze the planning, preparation and execution of teacher pedagogical practices in order to understand the thought processes that undergird successful culturally relevant pedagogy. The goal is also to examine students' perceptions and interpretations of their teachers' pedagogy. ***This need for culturally relevant pedagogy in literacy classrooms within Hillwood schools not only demands an approach that is not just targeted to the specific needs of a high-need district and its schools, but it highlights the significance of this pedagogy to high-needs schools that serve a largely African American and Latino population across the entire country. If we are to improve student achievement and develop the cultural competence and critical consciousness of students of color, we must understand how to effectively implement culturally relevant pedagogy even for teachers who teach a standardized curriculum.***

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that you will be in this research for until the end of the academic year (June 2017).

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 7 people will take part in the research.

What happens if I agree to be in this research?

If you agree to be in this research, we will be observing your classroom one day/week for approximately two text study lessons each day for the remainder of the academic year. We will also be observing your weekly text study planning meetings. Observations of your classroom and planning meetings will not be recorded. We will ask you to participate in three face-to-face audio-recorded interviews regarding your thoughts and rationale for your pedagogical decisions. Finally, we will ask you to write in a teacher journal in which you will share your reflections about your pedagogical decisions and execution of your lessons.

Will being in this research help me in any way?

Taking part in this research may help you become more reflective and aware of effective instructional practice of culturally relevant pedagogy in middle grades urban settings.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

To the extent allowed by law, we limit the viewing of your personal information to people who have to review it. We cannot promise complete secrecy. The IRB, Temple University, Temple University Health System, Inc. and its affiliates, and other representatives of these organizations may inspect and copy your information.

If during the course of this study we are made aware of abuse, neglect, or reportable diseases, please be aware that we are mandated by state law to report it to the appropriate authorities.

Your name and personal information will not be shared with anyone other than the PI and Co-PIs. Any results that are published will be anonymous and written to ensure your confidentiality. The original data files with names will be encrypted and password-protected. Any paper copies with names will have names blacked out or covered with opaque tape after an anonymous ID number is written on it. Any data with names will be destroyed one year after the study's completion.

Signature Block for Adult Subject Capable of Consent

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of subject	Date
Printed name of subject	
Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
Printed name of person obtaining consent	

Parent Consent Form

Title of research: Making Spaces: To What Extent and In What Ways Do Teachers Enact “Culturally Relevant” Pedagogy in a Multicultural Curriculum?

Investigator and Department: Wanda M. Brooks, EdD and Tal Meirson, Department of Teaching & Learning

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

We invite your child to take part in this research study because your child is middle grades student in an urban charter school.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to your child.
- Whether or not you take part is up to your child.
- Your child can choose not to take part.
- Your child can agree to take part and later change his/her mind.
- Your child’s decision will not be held against him/her.
- Your child can ask all the questions he/she wants before he/she decides.

Who can I talk to about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, contact Dr. Wanda M. Brooks, Department of Teaching & Learning, Temple University, 1301 Cecil B. Moore Ave., Hillwood 19122-6091, wbrooks@temple.edu.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or e-mail them at: irb@temple.edu for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to analyze the planning, preparation and execution of teacher pedagogical practices in order to understand the thought processes that undergird successful culturally relevant pedagogy. The goal is also to examine students' perceptions and interpretations of their teachers' pedagogy. ***This need for culturally relevant pedagogy in literacy classrooms within Hillwood schools not only demands an approach that is not just targeted to the specific needs of a high-need district and its schools, but it highlights the significance of this pedagogy to high-needs schools that serve a largely African American and Latino population across the entire country. If we are to improve student achievement and develop the cultural competence and critical consciousness of students of color, we must understand how to effectively implement culturally relevant pedagogy even for teachers who teach a standardized curriculum.***

How long will I be in this research?

We expect that your child will be in this research until the end of the academic year (June 2017).

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 7 people will take part in the research.

What happens if I agree to be in this research?

If you agree for your child to be in this research, I will be observing your child's classroom two days/week in text study for the remainder of the academic year.

Observations of your child's classroom will not be recorded and the classroom teacher has granted permission. I will ask your child to participate in three face-to-face voice recorded interviews about the texts that he/she reads in class and the discussions that he/she has with his/her teacher and classmates.

Will being in this research help me in any way?

Taking part in this research may help your child voice his/her opinion about what he/she learns in the classroom and the texts he/she reads.

What happens to the information collected for this research?

To the extent allowed by law, we limit the viewing of your child's personal information to people who have to review it. We cannot promise complete secrecy. The IRB, Temple University, Temple University Health System, Inc. and its affiliates, and other representatives of these organizations may inspect and copy your child's information.

If during the course of this study we are made aware of abuse, neglect, or reportable diseases, please be aware that we are mandated by state law to report it to the appropriate authorities.

Your child's name and personal information will not be shared with anyone other than the PI and Co-PIs. Any results that are published will be anonymous and written to ensure your child's confidentiality. The original data files with names will be encrypted and password-protected. Any paper copies with names will have names blacked out or covered with opaque tape after an anonymous ID number is written on it. Any data with names will be destroyed one year after the study's completion.

Please indicate below your consent for your child to participate in any parts of the study:

CIRCLE FOR EACH.

1) YES or NO Indicate whether you grant permission for your child to participate in two face-to-face interviews over the course of the study.

2) YES or NO Indicate whether you grant permission for the interviews with your child to be voice recorded.

Signature Block for Child Subject

Your signature documents your permission for the child named below to take part in this research.

Printed name of child

Signature of parent or individual legally authorized to consent to the child's general medical care

Date

Printed name of parent or individual legally authorized to consent to the child's general medical care	
Signature of second parent	Date
Printed name of second parent	
If signature of second parent not obtained, indicate why: (select one)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is deceased	<input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is incompetent
<input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Second parent is not reasonably available
	<input type="checkbox"/> Only one parent has legal responsibility for the care and custody of the child
Signature of person obtaining consent	Date
Printed name of person obtaining consent	
Assent	<input type="checkbox"/> Obtained <input type="checkbox"/> Not obtained because the capability of the child is so limited that the child cannot reasonably be consulted.

Student Assent Form

Title of research: Making Spaces: To What Extent and In What Ways Do Teachers Enact “Culturally Relevant” Pedagogy in a Multicultural Curriculum?

Investigator and Department: Wanda M. Brooks, EdD and Tal Meirson, Department of Teaching & Learning

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are a middle grades African American student in an urban charter school.

We are doing a study to learn about student perspectives of the texts their teachers choose and how they teach their lessons. We are asking you to help because we don't know very much about whether kids your age enjoy and can connect with what you read and discuss in class.

If you agree to be in our study, we are going to ask you some questions about the texts you read in class and the discussions that your teacher has with you and your classmates. For example, we will ask whether you participate in the classroom discussions or to tell us about which texts you enjoyed reading the most and the least and why. These interviews will be voice recorded.

You can ask questions about this study at any time. If you decide at any time not to finish, you can ask me to stop.

The questions we will ask are only about what you think. There are no right or wrong answers because this is not a test.

You will also be asked to write in a student journal for this study. In the journal you will write reflections about the text study lessons and discussions you had in class. You will also write your opinions and connections to the texts you read.

Please circle whether you are comfortable participating in the following:

YES or NO I would like to participate in two face-to-face interviews.

YES or NO I am comfortable with the interviews being voice recorded.

YES or NO I am willing to write in a journal daily about classroom discussions and the texts we read.

If you sign this paper, it means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you don't want to be in the study, don't sign this paper. Being in this study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you don't sign this paper or if you change your mind later.

Your signature: _____ Date _____

Your printed name: _____ Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent: _____

Date: _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent: _____

Date: _____