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SHARING AFRICAN AMERICAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: MULTICULTURAL TEACHING PRACTICES OF TWO MALE TEACHERS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Schools are becoming more diverse every year; educators need to reach students who do not belong to the mainstream culture. By using African American children's literature in the classroom, teachers can show that they respect and value their African American students' culture and provide the opportunity to explore issues of diversity. The research questions of this study were:

> How do two male primary teachers use African American multicultural literature to address and explore issues of diversity when their class has a majority of African American students in schools whose missions are to support multiculturalism?
>
> How are the teachers' cultural and racial beliefs represented in their practice?
>
> How do the approaches of these teachers reflect their distinct school contexts?

This study, explored how two male teachers, who belong to different cultural groups, use African American children's literature to facilitate discussions about diversity with their predominantly African American students. This case study was based on a theoretical framework that supports social construction of knowledge by participants. A sociocultural lens was used to examine the data pool: observation of conversations and behaviors before, during, and after lessons and read-alouds in the classroom; use of audio and video recordings; interviews with the teachers, and students; and artifacts from participants.

Each teacher was given copies of the same five books to read aloud with his students. They created an activity for students to participate in after the read aloud. During the read alouds and activities, the teachers engaged the students in discussions. One of the major findings of the research was that these two teachers understand the importance of incorporating their students' culture and race into literacy learning. Furthermore, these teachers created learning opportunities for students to co-construct knowledge as well as demonstrated "best practices" (Zeleman et al., 1998) in teaching. Implications for teacher education are discussed and directions for further research are suggested.

Dedicated to my grandparents who are watching over me, my mother,
Shirley J. Mathis and my devoted friend Zack
whose love and support,
helped me realize my dream.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education
Early Childhood Education and Integrated Teaching and Learning

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Schools represent a microcosm of society and are becoming more diverse while the teaching force is overwhelmingly coming from white middle-class backgrounds. During the 1980s, the non-White population in the United States was 25 percent, (which was an increase of 20 percent from the 1970s), and it is estimated that by the end of the year 2000, one out of every three Americans will be from a minority culture group (Grant & Sleeter, 1995). In the future, cultural diversity will continue to increase and educators, multiculturalists, and others in the field of education are concerned about how American schools will be able to meet the needs of all students. Teachers face the enormous task of bridging the two worlds of home culture and school culture. Therefore, school is an ideal place where students can naturally be exposed to the diversity of the world through literature. As educators, we must situate ourselves in a place that might feel uncomfortable and view the world through a new lens that opens us up to a new way of thinking. If we are stagnant and immersed in a culture, often our views and therefore actions are limited (Hinchey, 1998).

Multicultural literature can be used as an origin of action and a vehicle to sensitize children to cultural differences among and between groups that may lead

them to question the realities of a hegemonic society. Through multicultural literature, readers can view the world through a different set of lenses. The reader is given insight to different cultures. By using the concept of story as a common and uniting factor, everyone's life can be affected (Marantz & Marantz, 1994). Books have the power to create a common shared experience that can facilitate dialogue. Rochman (1993) asserts that the best books "break down borders. They surprise us—whether they are set close to home or abroad. They change our view of ourselves; they intend the phrase 'like me' to include what we thought was foreign and strange" (p. 9). Giving students the opportunity to read and listen to literature allows them to experience adventures through words (Harris, 1996). "Reading makes immigrants of us all—it takes us away from home but, most important, it finds homes for us everywhere" (Rochman, 1993, p. 15).

Purpose of this Study and Research Questions

This study will examine how two male primary teachers, one who's white and one who's African American, mediate their students' cultural knowledge with multicultural literature in their classrooms. More specifically, the researcher will examine how these two teachers use multicultural literature with inner-city children to expose them to African American culture via multicultural literature.

The purpose of this study is to explore how two male teachers, who belong to different cultural groups, use multicultural literature to facilitate discussions about African Americans with their predominantly African American pre-kindergarten,

kindergarten, and first grade students. The researcher has chosen this focus because she views literature as a tool that teachers can use to raise issues with students to help them form their own identity. By using multicultural literature, teachers can help students form a strong identity and deconstruct society's view that is often negative and forced upon them. According to Banks and Banks (1995), to effectively help students, teachers should connect literature to the goals of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. Based on the aforementioned, we need to choose multicultural literature that will enhance "the self-esteem of children of all cultures and respect the culture of others, while expanding aesthetic as well as their horizons" (Marantz & Marantz, 1994, p. 1).

Because multicultural literature is an extension of multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 1995,;Nieto, 1992; Sims-Bishop, 1992), teachers need to understand this tenet and use authentic multicultural children's literature to bring about social change. African American children's book writer; Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard supports this belief by stating:

> . . . We must also aim for that authentic body of literature for children which can lead us toward our goals: self-esteem for those previously not reflected in the mirror, and important enlightenment for those who, for too long, have seen only themselves in that mirror; all leading toward the celebration of living in the multicultural society.

If the purpose of literature is to liberate, the purpose of authentic multicultural literature is to help liberate us from all the preconceived stereotypical hang-ups that imprison us with narrow boundaries (pp.91-92 work cited in Harris, 1992).

In this study, various methods of data collection were used such as: observations of conversations and behaviors before, during, and after lessons and read-alouds in the classroom; use of video and audio recordings; interviews with the teachers and students; and artifacts from participants. The information gained from these methods were analyzed to attempt to understand the phenomenon occurring during the read-aloud and the activity that the students are engaged in following the read aloud. The following specific questions were addressed:

1. How do two male primary teachers use African American multicultural literature to address and explore issues of diversity when their class has a majority of African American students in schools whose missions are to support multiculturalism?

2. How are the teacher's cultural and racial beliefs represented in their practice?

Scope of the Study

This study is one of quasi-naturalistic inquiry where the main focus is on the teacher. Specifically, the approaches he uses to construct meaning with his students via African American children's literature will be examined. In order to understand this phenomenon, the terms culture and multicultural literature will be used multiple times throughout this paper. Much debate surrounds the definitions of these two terms. Therefore, it is important that the researcher provide her own personal definitions.

The researcher believes that culture involves more than what can be observed by the naked eye. Therefore, her definition of culture is like that of Harris (1996), "Culture . . . refers to beliefs, attitudes, values, world-views, institutions, artifacts,

processes, interactions, and ways of behaving" (p. 110), by a group of people. This definition of culture influences the researcher's definition of multicultural children's literature. It is my belief that this type of children's literature encompasses information about diversity and the groups that have been traditionally marginalized and not written about in the past. This includes literature about immigrants and their countries of origin, native dwellers on American soil, religious minorities, those who dwell in specific regions of the U.S. such as the Appalachias, members of society with disabilities, people who left their country to seek refuge against persecution, as well as those who were brought to America by force.

Combining Multicultural Education and Multicultural Literature

With more diverse populations than ever before, school districts are reforming curriculum to help students understand ethnic diversity as well as cultural pluralism. Multicultural education advocate, Sonia Nieto (1994) defines pluralism as diversity in "ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender characteristics among others" (p. 272). This definition of pluralism is associated with beliefs about the necessity for diverse perspectives being presented to children through education. Finazzo (1997) explains how multiculturalism connects with child development by stating that:

> In a culturally pluralistic society—one that recognizes and celebrates the similarities and differences of its peoples—it is critical to eliminate ethnic and cultural illiteracy, make students comfortable and capable of functioning well in diverse settings, and encourage students to become politically aware as well as socially active" (p. 6).

This researcher believes that multicultural children's literature can be combined with Finazzo's aforementioned beliefs about cultural pluralism to help create a more tolerant society.

Using Multicultural Literature with Children

Teachers have the opportunity to introduce their students to worlds they have never seen before through literature. There are many reasons to share multicultural literature with children. According to Rosenblatt (1991) reading is a transaction that takes place between the reader and the text. Aesthetic reading focuses on the transaction between the reader and the text. More specifically, the readers' own personal life experiences that influence their comprehension as they interact with the text. Reader response theory is relevant because of the emotional characteristics that the books chosen for this study evoke in the read aloud phenomenon.

Limitations of the Study

Researchers must critically examine their studies and realize that there are limitations. Purposive sampling is a limitation in this study because a school could not be selected at random. The success of this study depends greatly on purposive sampling (Patton, 1980). Two male teachers in two different schools were selected for participation in this study. Central Elementary was chosen because of its commitment to and embracing of the multicultural background of its students, while American Elementary was chosen because of its multicultural perspective that is aimed at educating African American children. The teachers were chosen because of their

commitment to educating African American children, the grade levels they taught, their desire to be better educators by constantly reflecting on their practice, and the relationship that each teacher had with the researcher. The aforementioned reasons, coupled together, create what Patton (1990) refers to as “intensity sampling” (p.171), which manifests itself intensely in the ongoing phenomenon.

In both schools, students are selected to attend from a lottery of applicants. To participate in the lottery, parents must complete an application at the school district office to ensure that their child is part of the pool that will be chosen by a school district official. The researcher must make note that because of the manner that students are selected for each of the schools, not all students in the district have equal opportunity to attend Central and American Elementary.

Another limitation that revealed itself was the selection of books. Because this study took place towards the end of the school year, it was difficult selecting multicultural children’s literature that both teachers had not already read to their students. The teachers and I agreed that it would be best to use books that students had not been recently exposed to.

The final limitation was lack of communication with the teachers after the study ended. One teacher took a sabbatical to complete his doctoral work at the university and the other moved to another state in the Midwest. This was a limitation for the researcher because it was difficult for her to maintain communication.

The researcher has attempted to establish credibility and trustworthiness by revealing limitations of the study which she hopes strengthens her understandings of the phenomena examined in the classrooms she observed.

Significance of the Study

Since research has shown that even infants can recognize differences among people (Katz, 1976; Wham, Barnhart & Cook, 1996), it is imperative that children be exposed to other cultures at an early age to encourage tolerance and help them accept and understand differences (Ramsey, 1987). With this in mind, there is a realization that students entering kindergarten may hold stereotypes about people they presume are different from themselves (Banks, 1989) which magnifies the need to use multicultural literature with young children.

According to Roberts and Cecil (1993), "teachers can replace fear with curiosity and broaden children's awareness of other people, their needs, their hopes, and their dreams" (p. 1). Bieger (1996) encourages teachers to use multicultural literature by stating:

> What cannot be taught through facts may be taught through the heart. Literature can help effect multicultural understandings. Through reading, we briefly share in the lives and feelings of the characters rather than dealing with facts. Literature provides food for both the head and the heart. Books may be used as agents for change, vehicles for introducing concepts, and catalysts for activities (p. 309).

When teachers make the decision to use books that expose children to other cultures, teachers tell students that it is important to know about others. "By involving the

children with characters and situations that they can identify with, books increase children's appreciation of other ways of life and help them see unfamiliar people as individuals" (Ramsey, 1987, p. 69). It is not enough to just expose children to multicultural literature. Readers need to be helped to identify issues, question ideologies that make up the story, and understand how the aforementioned effect the lives of the readers (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997).

The implications for this study are for teaching and learning in the classroom, which will be discussed further in chapter 5. It is the researcher's hope that educators will find transferability to their pedagogical practice.

Research on the Relationship of Response and Culture

There has been a limited amount of research on how culture relates to reader response. Applebee and Langor (1983) purports that ". . . readers of a common age in a common culture will make sense of a work in a similar way, because they will be making sense of the text through a similar screen of linguistic and cultural conventions and presuppositions (p. 89). Therefore, a reader's culture and background cannot be separated from the lens they use to read and make sense of literature.

Research by Purves and Beach (1972), supports the idea that readers find stories that are similar to their own experiences the most interesting. Furthermore, readers search for literature and characters that are similar to them and their experiences. In addition, this research suggests that readers are fascinated by and better understand literature that aligns with their cultural group.

Anthanases, Christiano, and Drexler (1992) examined multi-ethnic students' response to contemporary poets of color. They believed that students "might see more of their own experiences reflected and validated, and they might gain heightened awareness of the diversity in US culture" (p. 43). In the end, the researchers found that by exposing students to contemporary poetry by poets of color gives students the opportunity to examine issues that are pertinent to non-mainstream cultures including "disintegration of traditions; the absence or loss of a parent; the impact of poverty; the importance of the extended family; the struggle for the American dream; the need for heroes and role models; and the impact of war on families (pp. 53-54).

Reader Response Theory

In primary classrooms, children are given many ways to respond to books (Hickman, 1981). These activities include: read-alouds done by the teacher; time when students examine and read books that they choose; discussions amongst and between peers; and literature integration into other subject areas (Hickman, Collinan, & Helper, 1994).

The majority of the research on reader response theory stems from the work of Rosenblatt, (1978). In 1991, Rosenblatt explained the reading process as a transaction that takes place between the reader and the text. "Efferent and aesthetic readings must be reinforced with readings that propagate social change—readings that enable readers to ask questions about situations and ideas they encounter" (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997, p. 447).

Recently, we have learned quite a bit about how children learn "concepts of print" and how they create an understanding of the text (Sulzby, 1991; Sulzby & Teale, 1991). A great deal of importance has been placed on literature and multicultural literature. However, there is very little research on how teachers use multicultural literature as a mediating tool in the classroom and even far less on how culture and race are made salient in the process.

Summary

This quasi-naturalistic, descriptive study situates itself in a constructivist paradigm by using multiple qualitative methods to analyze and describe the responses, actions, questions, and reading of the participants in this study. This research is expected to add to the body of knowledge about multicultural children's literature and the importance of using it with all children.

Furthermore, African Americans students need to be exposed to literature about other cultures. Literature which depicts different places around the world, allows readers to interact with people and places they may not have access to. In addition, readers are given the opportunity to examine realistic daily life in foreign places rather than the stereotypical costumes that used to be an essential element in informational books (Nodelman, 1996). Multicultural literature provides readers with information so that they can form their own values of justice, fairness, and equity. According to Finazzo (1997), "we must recognize that acceptance and understanding of others comes from increased knowledge and the removal of fear" (p. 32). To change the attitudes of students, in a non-threatening environment, teachers can help students

explore preconceived notions about cultures and their biases can come to light with the guidance of a teacher and the support of peers (Barta & Grindler, 1996).

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter Two, I will discuss a review of literature that influenced my research, including critical theory, more specifically multicultural education. Multicultural literature and early childhood education will also be addressed. Chapter Three informs the reader of the theoretical framework that I used to create the research questions that I have chosen to focus on. In addition, the case study approach, design of the study, methods of collecting data, research sites and participants, selections of African American children's literature used, data analysis methods, and issues of trustworthiness will also be addressed. In Chapter Four, the themes that emerge from the data will be introduced and discussed. Data from the data pool will also be provided to support the themes. Finally, Chapter Five will provide the reader with a summary of the research study, conclusions, and implications for teacher education and future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

From 2001 data, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), African American students in grades, 4, 8, and 12 scored significantly lower than their Caucasian peers on standardized testing in mathematics, reading and history. To me, it appears that somewhere along the way, schools have failed to prepare these students. It is hoped that this research will add to the existing body of research and help educate the teachers of African American students on teaching practices that are specifically aimed at educating them.

This chapter includes a review of literature in three major areas: multicultural education, multicultural literature, and early childhood education. These areas are presented because they provide theoretical support for this research that examines one Caucasian male and one African American male teacher's pedagogy surrounding their use of multicultural children's literature in their classrooms.

My fascination with multicultural education and literature began long ago. Growing up, more often than not, I was one of a few minority children in a middle-class environment. This in part has made a large impact on the adult I am today. This

also gave me access to viewing the world I lived in differently than my peers, teachers, and other friends who were not minorities in their schools. As early as elementary school, I recognized that I did not see my culture or ethnicity represented in curriculum, faculty members, or literature used daily. Fortunately, I was born into a strong, proud, African American family which made sure that I knew about my cultural heritage and that I was familiar with people representative of my culture that I could be proud of. At times, this was difficult because like other children, I wanted to be like everyone else. I sometimes just wanted to blend in.

Knowing the impact of this experience on me, I have a strong desire to make those in similar situations, as well as representatives of other cultures, develop an understanding, respect, tolerance, and appreciation for the numerous cultures that exist in the United States.

Multicultural Education

The term multicultural education (Hinchey, 1998; Nieto, 1992) is often used interchangeably with equity pedagogy (Banks and Banks, 1995; 1994), critical pedagogy (Pennycook, 1994; Friere, 1970) culturally responsive pedagogy (Irvine and Armento, 2001; Irvine, 1990) and culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992a). All of these terms support the idea that teachers could use teaching practices that incorporate their students' cultures and be responsive to their students needs. This section will explore some of the terms mentioned above as well as some of the influences of this type of pedagogy.

There are a plethora of definitions to describe multicultural education. These definitions are inclusive in that they encompass several dimensions of human differences besides culture: race, occupation, socioeconomic status, age, gender, sexual orientation and various physical traits and needs; it is relevant to all children; and it is about beliefs and attitudes about people all over the world (Ramsey, 1987).

Nieto (1992) places multicultural education in a sociopolitical context and provides a theoretical framework with a comprehensive definition.

> Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools. As do the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education furthers the democratic principles of social justice (p.208).

Proponents of the multicultural approach argue that the traditional monocultural approach to education reinforces ethnocentrism (Banks, 1993). The monocultural approach to education is effectively termed the “social pathology” by Baratz and Baratz (1970). The social pathology approach has the effect of encouraging children from the dominant ethnic group to stigmatize the members of the ethnic minority group (Hatch, 1988). Additionally, the social pathology approach has also shown to be associated with low levels of self-esteem within the pathological groups (Walker, 1990). Furthermore, there is a consistent correlation between low self-esteem and social prejudice (Pine, 1995). On the other hand, people who have high self-image tend to have a low degree of prejudice (Martin, 1987).

These findings suggest that the multicultural approach to education will reduce ethnocentrism and problems of racism because it seeks to improve both the individual's own ethnic identity and acceptance of other cultures. Some evidence of the literature suggests that as an early intervention, a multicultural approach to education has direct positive achievement results for minority children (Kendall, 1983, Ramsey et al., 1989, Walker, 1990). For the minority child, an early childhood multicultural program can serve as "a transition from the ethnic cultural socialization that occurs in the family to the mainstream enculturation process that takes place during the school years" (Rashid, 1984, p. 12). All children can benefit when multicultural education is viewed as a method to help young children "move from egocentrism to an understanding and appreciation of ethnic diversity rather than being bound by an ethnocentric perspective" (Kendall, 1983, p. 53).

In her ethnographic study, Ladson-Billings (1994) examined the teaching practices of eight teachers at a relatively small elementary school in which the majority of the students were African American. The purpose of her study was to observe and record the pedagogy of "highly effective teachers of African American students" (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 145). From her research she observed specific behaviors and strategies that worked successfully and termed their practices *culturally relevant*. Culturally relevant teaching practices include:

> "the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students' culture but also to use students' culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge. Thus culturally relevant teaching requires the recognition of African-American culture as an important strength upon which to construct the schooling experience" (Ladson-Billings 1994, p. 314).

Social relations differ in a classroom where culturally relevant teaching exists:

- teacher-student relationship is fluid, humanely equitable, extends to interactions beyond the classroom and into the community.
- teacher demonstrates a connectedness with all students.
- teacher encourages a "community of learners."
- teacher encourages students to learn collaboratively. Students are expected to reach each other and be responsible for each other (p.55).

The socialization that exists differs greatly from the social relations in a traditional classroom which Ladson-Billings refers to as assimilationist where the focus is on the individual.

In addition to social relations differing from a traditional assimilationist approach, the conceptions about knowledge are also different. Below is a list of the way in which knowledge is viewed.

Knowledge is continuously recreated, recycled and shared by teachers and students. It is not static or unchanging.

- Knowledge is viewed critically.
- Teacher is passionate about the content.
- Teacher helps students develop necessary skills.
- Teacher sees excellence as a complex standard that may involve some postulates but takes student diversity and individual differences into account (Ladson-Billings, 1992a p. 81).

Au (1980) brought attention to the importance of the congruity between students' cultural norms for listening, speaking and turn taking and school in the study of the Kamehameah Elementary Educational Program (KEEP). She hypothesized and found that by incorporating home practices and literacy discussions, students' participation would be increased considerably. Subsequently, the KEEP project pedagogy included opportunities for students to be engaged that are similar to the

storytelling genre indigenous to native Hawaiians called “talk story.” With the focus on comprehension and drawing on the strengths of the Hawaiian culture, students respond cooperatively in groups of two or more. Kathrine Au’s (1980) work shows that these students were more successful when teachers incorporated their native story telling genre into literacy activities. Prior to Au’s (1980) work, Gallimore et al (1986, cited in Garcia, 2002) studied the scaffolding that occurs in the KEEP project. This type of scaffolding allows “cultural elements that are relevant to the children who enter the classroom . . . Scaffolding enables children to use relevant experiences from the home to move toward the demands of the school (Garcia, 2002, p. 165). During the literacy event, “The first part centered on the children’s experiences. Before reading a book, the children talked about their home experiences and things they knew about in the world. Then the teacher made transitions from those experiences to the book and directed the children to read the text. The students then read the text silently, not aloud, in order to avoid pronunciation difficulties. Now the children have been oriented toward the text. In the end, the children'’ home experiences are linked with the text reading” (Garcia, 2002, p. 165).

There is a presence of social strata in society; class and economic classifications are often reinforced, sometimes magnified in schools. The traditional function of schools has been to reproduce social and economic conditions that exist in the larger society (Kozol, 1995; Kanpol, 1997). Consequently, economic conditions and social class are often passed down from generation to generation. Instead of breaking down social classes, schools reflect them (Nieto, 1992). Critical theorists view schools as a

"cultural concern" (Kanpol, 1994, p.28), meaning schools produce social classes as well as different cultures in school.

Critical theory situates itself in a place that opens us up to new ways of thinking. "The usefulness of critical theory is that it helps open our minds to possibilities we once found unimaginable" (Hinchey, 1998, p.15). Multicultural education is a critical theory about possibilities, hope, and change. It allows us to examine choices that have been made and recognize whose goals the choices served. Critical theory questions issues of power. "If one group holds power over another, it is often because the culture has taught members of the less powerful group to accept a value system that bestows privilege on others" (Hinchey, 1998, p. 18).

Multicultural education is critical pedagogy that can be used to change the role of schools as they exist today. Critical pedagogy is an approach that "seeks to understand and critique the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and to develop pedagological practices that aim not only to change the nature of schooling, but also the wider society" (Pennycook, 1994, p. 26). Multicultural education is more than an awareness and appreciation of differences. It can be used as a tool to fight inequities that exist. For too long, the voices of those marginalized have been silenced by those who hold the power to control schools and keep them as places of cultural reproduction. Multicultural education gives a voice to those who were once silenced and allows their stories to be a part of a shared heritage. With this form of liberatory education, students learn to challenge and change the world, not adapt and conform.

> A teacher's inclusion of multicultural pedagogy and an active engagement with diverse ethnic, racial, and national issues is critical to America's social well being. . . We must put our beliefs into practice, aware that the defining

> characteristics and enabling understanding of ethnic, racial, and national groups can and ought to be taught. Teachers must acknowledge uniqueness and difference as they also applaud similarity, for the strength of small communities and also society at large derives from celebrating our diversity" (Carson & Friedman, 1995, p. 67).

Culturally responsive teaching is a liberating critical theory that can be used to help students embrace their identity and make changes in the larger society. In graduate classes where multiple types of transformative pedagogy were discussed, I noticed that my Caucasian peers frequently asked the same question, "Isn't that just good teaching to include multicultural pedagogy?" Through sometimes heated discussions with various peers in different classes on this topic, most of us seem to walk away unchanged. In my experiences, my peers who belong to the majority culture, seem to think that any "good teacher" uses culturally responsive teaching in his/ her classroom, while we as members of various minority groups can see a distinct difference. There are a few non-minority teachers who appear to understand how this pedagogy differs.

From research in reading, we know that text is nothing more than marks on the page; it is the reader who activates those marks (Karolides, 1997). In her work, Rosenblatt (1978) discusses the transaction that takes place between the reader and the text. She explains this transaction as "an ongoing process in which the elements or factors are, one might say, aspects of a total situation, each conditioned by and conditioning the other" (p.17). As every child is different, so is every reader. Moreover, she adds, "The reader brings to the text his past experience and present personality. . .A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, a different event—a different poem" (p.13-14). In the early childhood years, "children often react to text by pointing at pictures, echoing the

reader, clapping their hands and/or position themselves close to the book"(Huck et al, 1997, p. 61).

For years, in the education community as well as the general public, reading aloud to children has been touted as having benefits for all children. Numerous studies have looked at increasing multicultural awareness via literature (Bishop, 1992). Wham, Barnhart and Cook (1996) examined what effect if any came from "combining home and classroom reading experiences of multicultural storybooks on the awareness and attitudes of kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade students towards individuals representing other cultures, circumstances or lifestyles"(p. 1). Surveys were administered to the participants' at the beginning and the end of the study that measured their attitudes toward diversity. From their study, they learned that the "number of positive ratings actually declined in the control group" (p.6). This was shocking to the researchers because they hypothesized that the participants' attitudes would be more positive in the control and the "storybook reading group." According to Wham et al (1996), "this finding is alarming because it suggests that, without a diversity program children's appreciation of diversity may actually decrease across the school year" (p. 6).

One study of the impact of African American literature was done by Sims (1983). She explored the views of Osula, a ten year-old African American girl who enjoyed reading. Osula remarked about her favorite type of literature to read which was about African American girls. Sims found that childrens' self-esteem is increased and they realize self-affirmation when they are exposed to literature that has characters with whom they can identify. This study raised several issues: "Whether or not, when Black

children see characters with whom they can identify—people like themselves—such characters can be found" (p. 25). To this Sims suggests that "Black children may be denied access to just those books that could provide important self-affirmation and possibly create lifetime reading habits" (p. 25). Teachers can build self-esteem and encourage students to become lifelong readers by providing literature that has characters to whom students can relate. The second issue raised by this study is the "extent to which a reader's preferences and responses to books relate to needs that arise from the developmental stage in which a reader finds herself" (p. 26). According to Sims, it stands to reason that a child can better relate to a character who has the same psychological characteristics as someone who is close to their age. In other words, a fourth grader is more likely to cognitively comprehend the behaviors of a character who is in the third through sixth grade. The last issue raised in this study was the "limited quantity and applicability of available research on response, particularly the response of elementary school children" (p. 27). I have found that over 15 years later, many studies have examined the responses of children to literature. The trouble I encountered, was finding a large number of studies which specifically examined the responses of African American students to multicultural literature with predominately African American characters.

In another study, Smith (1995) examined three African American fifth graders at a large urban elementary with a unique curriculum focus on international studies. Smith's focus was on "what responses the students had to texts that students self-selected; and specifically, how the African American population of this classroom responded to texts that had themes and illustrations that most closely mirrored their own

life experience and culture"(p. 571). As mentioned earlier, three students, two boys and one girl, were observed as they engaged with African American literature. They responded to literature with the call and response pattern and "frequent use of dialect, particularly in informal situations"(p.574) which was in turn validated by their teacher. Additionally, when allowed to choose their own literature, they selected books that "most closely mirrored their own cultural frame of reference. . ." (p. 574). Moreover, when these students were engaged in writing activities, "Their writing reflected their cultural background and the literature with which they come in contact . . ." (p. 574).

Banks and Banks (1995) define equity pedagogy as "teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society" (p.154). Equity pedagogy changes the power structure in the classroom. Teachers are not the disseminators of knowledge. Instead, teachers create activities that generate knowledge and create new understandings (Banks, 1993). Reflection is a critical part of equity pedagogy. Teachers use reflective self-analysis to examine, identify, and reflect on their attitudes towards people whose ethnicity, race, gender, and/or culture is different from their own (Banks & Banks, 1995). Teachers can use equity pedagogy to ask questions that will help reveal hidden curriculum (Banks & Banks, 1995). "To transform pedagogy, the adults in schools must address the social-class, racial, and ethnic inequalities embedded in the differential levels of support given to different classes and schools" (Banks & Banks, 1995 p. 154).

A transformative curriculum is one that takes foreign and/or abstract concepts and brings them to life. Therefore, equity pedagogy can be referred to as a transformative curriculum. By that I mean that teachers reform curriculum by creating real experiences for their students and situating learning so it is personal, interesting, and meaningful. Students' cultures are validated with equity pedagogy and transformative curriculum, this is done by teaching that reflects the lives and interests of the students (Ladson-Billings, 1992a). Culturally relevant teaching goes a step further than the way we see multicultural education in most classrooms today. "The essential elements of such teaching involve developing conceptions of self and others that are based on accurate historical and social information; encouraging social relations that are communal, interdependent, equitable, and just; and developing conceptions of knowledge as socially constructed and open to intellectual change" (Ladson-Billings, 1992a, p. 389). According to Ladson-Billings, (who coined the term culturally relevant teaching) this type of pedagogy is aimed at African-American students. This type of teaching also helps students attain success by using their culture (Ladson-Billings, 1990b). "The teachers work within three important dimensions: their conceptions of themselves and others, their knowledge, and their classrooms' social structure" (Ladson-Billings, 1990a , p.22). Further, students are affected in that they: experience academic success, develop and/or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness which they act on by challenging the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Culturally relevant teaching is similar to critical pedagogy. The two are different in their emphasis. Critical pedagogy seeks to help the individual examine and change

the social environment, while culturally relevant teaching encourages collective action fixed in understandings, experiences, and ways of knowing the world (Ladson-Billings, 1992).

Teachers who utilize culturally relevant teaching use "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Ladson-Billings, 1992a, p. 382).

With schools becoming more diverse and the teaching force overwhelmingly coming from white middle-class backgrounds, teacher educators face the enormous task of bridging the two worlds. Teacher educators should prepare teachers to meet the needs of all students. As educators, it is helpful if we situate ourselves in a place that might feel uncomfortable and view the world through an alternative lens that opens us up to a different way of thinking. If we are stagnant and immersed in our own culture, often our views and actions are limited (Hinchey, 1998). By teaching in ways that are "culturally relevant" (Ladson-Billings, 1992b) learning will be more purposeful for all students, especially for those who do not belong to the dominant culture.

The necessity for multicultural education grows greater every year. This is due in part to the changing composition of the classroom as well the small number of minority students pursuing careers as teachers. In the past, education was one of the largest areas of study in which African-Americans sought college degrees. Now that all areas of study have opened up to African-Americans, most are pursuing degrees that provide more lucrative employment after graduation. "Diversity within the public

school faculty is a pedagogical necessity, not merely a matter of fair play in the labor market" (Pine, 1995, p. 597).

Colleges and universities are producing teachers whose cultures are not representative of their students. Additionally, Dillard (1992) supports this thought by asserting that:

> understanding the learning style patterns that seem to characterize various ethnic groups is not enough. Teachers must also consider ways to restructure the curriculum to truly allow students to learn in different ways-ways that are grounded in harmony with their cultural backgrounds. This requires broadening our perspectives to see learning styles as an extension of who our students are as individuals (p. 218).

As teachers in the classroom, we are in a position of power. By creating environments that liberate and empower students, they can be encouraged to ask questions and engage in praxis. Praxis is a complex critically reflective activity that calls for action to transform the world (Taylor, 1993). Teachers can empower students with "engaged pedagogy" (hooks, 1994, p.14). To do this, teachers "must be actively committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students" (hooks, 1994, p.14). Creating a classroom community where all students contribute because they feel safe is a goal of this transformative pedagogy (hooks, 1994).

Educators who are truly liberating have moved beyond what Friere refers to as the "banking system in education" (Friere, 1970, p. 53). The banking concept utilizes a style in which the teacher is the keeper of knowledge and students need to absorb knowledge and memorize it (Friere, 1970). In transformative pedagogy, teachers and

students work side by side to co-construct not only book knowledge, but also knowledge about the world we live in.

Critical theorists encourage teachers to show compassion and understanding through dialogue. One of the beliefs of critical theory is that students and teachers should be empowered to recognize their right and responsibility to take action (Nieto, 1992). “Ideally, education should help all students include a perspective of history from the students’ point of view and be selected and constructed in relationship to the students’ desires, visions, descriptions of reality and repertoires of action” (Sleeter 1991, p. 87).

Students can be empowered to challenge hegemony. Hegemony is defined as “a form of ideological control in which dominant beliefs, values, and social practices are produced and distributed throughout a whole range of institutions such as schools” (Giroux, 1981, p.94). Hegemonic control over pedagogy thrusts children of color and of lower economic status into a state of hopelessness over what seems to be their predestined reality (Kozol, 1995). Additionally, hegemonic control is often actualized through a hidden curriculum. According to Nieto, “hidden curriculum refers to those subtle and not so subtle messages that although are not part of the intended curriculum, may nevertheless have an impact on students” (Nieto, 1992, p. 26). When students are empowered, they attempt to create an alternative that goes against hegemonic control. Hegemony is not always a conscious decision. Power holders can be as unconscious about holding power as those who are oppressed (Apple, 1990,
Hinchey, 1998). For example,

> White women can walk into any beauty parlor and find appropriate hair care items and someone to execute any hair style they might choose. Whites don't think of such freedoms as privileges because they have not gone without them. They are just more of the way things are (Hinchey, 1998, p. 32).

Some who subscribe to the dominant ideology look at children and pass biased judgments against them to explain why they dwell in poverty (Kozol, 1995). These judgments are often based upon white middle-class values. The same people who hold these perspectives are in positions of power and utilize different means to control education to ensure hegemony. An example often seen is teaching to standardized tests that measure low level skills rather than encouraging the use of higher order thinking skills which incorporates the students' social and cultural background. In addition, authoritative models of teaching where students are passive recipients of knowledge, reinforce this ideology when teachers stand in front of a class and disseminate the information to students who sit quietly at their desks (Kozol, 1991; 1995). Further, hegemony is also perpetuated when children are forced to attend decrepit schools or over-crowded classrooms because of a lack of funds to provide more space (Kozol, 1991; 1995). Education that is liberatory "encourages students to take risks, to be curious, and to question" (Nieto, 1992, p. 218).

To oppose hegemony is to address the need for change in education. This can be achieved through resistance, either conscious or unconscious attempts to challenge hegemony (Kanpol, 1997). When those who oppose an oppressive curriculum challenge the power structure, they allow students to have a voice in the educational process; a voice that allows them to have input on what may be best for them (Friere, 1970). Green (1991) reminds us that "Even those of us aware of. . . the significance of paying heed to

multiple voices spend too little time thinking about how to engage in authentic dialogue with those outside our professional circles" (p. 543). To successfully challenge hegemony, teachers should recognize how various forms of control affect both the student and teacher, how that control continues to dominate through education, and how the teacher can best help herself/himself and the students move away from these forms of hegemony.

According to Friere (1970), equality cannot be achieved through silence, it can only occur through dialogue. "Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (Friere, 1970, p. 69). Teachers who pass judgment based on their middle-class values and make assumptions about students do not work towards equality. Humanization works against "the negative forces of dehumanization, which, through oppressive manipulation and control, compromise human values for personal gain and power "(Heaney, 1996, p 18). Instead, we can work towards equality by engaging in true dialogue that includes the voices, interests, cultures, and concerns of all those involved. Teachers can promote dialogue by asking students to respond to concepts and ideas based on their own interpretations and understanding.

Teaching from a multicultural perspective allows students to know the history of those who have traditionally been marginalized, why social positions exist, and helps them seek ways to challenge oppression.

> "Rather than viewing the world through rose-colored glasses, antiracist multicultural education forces both teachers and students to take a long, hard

> look at everything as it was and is, which also means considering the effects and interconnections among events, people, and things" (Nieto, 1992, p. 208).

Language can serve as an exclusionary and gatekeeping tactic; those who have a command of language will succeed while those who don't will most likely fail. According to Darder (1991), "what has been traditionally considered theoretical language has also been—almost—exclusively controlled and governed by those who have held power in academic circles; namely elite white males" (p.104). This language and these ideals are often subconsciously introduced to children in the classroom. Textbook and curriculum decisions are rarely made by teachers. Those decisions typically lie in the hands of schools and central office administration. Unconscious and conscious decisions are made about what will best suit the needs of the children in a particular district. These decisions may also be influenced by the textbook publisher that presents the best incentives for the district. Teachers often use texts that reinforce ideas that are sexist, classist, and prejudice. "The greatest number of formal theoretical texts considered as legitimate knowledge reflect conservative, Eurocentric, patriarchal notions of the world" (Darder, 1991, p. 104).

Students need to be given multiple ways to view things. "They have to understand the complexity of the world and of the many perspectives involved" (Nieto, 1992, p. 218). Through multicultural curriculum, students are given the opportunity to develop decision-making and social action skills (Banks, 1987) which allows them to view situations from multiple points of view.

Giroux refers to the conditions in which "both educators and students can rethink the relations between the centers and margins of power structures in their lives"

(Kanpol & McLaren, 1995, p. 178) as border pedagogy. Border pedagogy creates conditions for teachers and students to respect and understand their differences while working towards a common goal. “It presupposes not merely an acknowledgement of the shifting of borders that both undermine and reterritorialize different configurations of culture, power, and knowledge” (Giroux, 1992, p.28). In addition, it also connects the ideas of school and education to a more meaningful struggle for a just society (Giroux, 1992). “As a teacher, then, it becomes a moral responsibility to understand my actions as both oppressed and oppressor, teacher and learner, deconstructionist and reconstructionist, passive bearer of dominant ideologies as well as an active appropriator of counter-hegemonic possibilities. While I can never physically, mentally, or socially be black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, or Asian, the challenge within a multicultural society and a border pedagogy is for me, as a white middle-class male, to locate those intersections of race, class, and gender where individual and group identities are understood through similarities, despite the celebration of multiple differences (Kanpol & McLaren, 1995, p.178).

The aforementioned suggests that there is a need for teachers not only to respect and appreciate differences, but also to examine their own role as the sole distributor of knowledge. Instead of integrating students into existing oppressive structures, teachers should assist students in becoming change agents for themselves (Friere, 1970). Multicultural education helps children to discover and value who they are which can instill pride and self-worth.

Teachers themselves do not empower or disempower students; instead they create climates and conditions for them to empower themselves (Sleeter, 1991). Empowerment takes place when "students acquire the means to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken for granted assumptions about the way we live" (Giroux, 1988, p. 189). Additionally, students see where their place is in society and strive for equality. Multicultural education empowers students through critical thinking, reflection, and action (Nieto, 1992). As mentioned earlier, dialogue is a necessity which cannot occur without love for the world and others (Friere, 1970). It is this love that creates student empowerment which in turn creates dialogue that brings about change.

Friere suggests that students, as well as teachers, must have faith in others. When teachers express faith in humanity, it sends a message to children that the teacher has faith in their ability to bring about change. That message encourages faith and pride in the students as well as faith and love of others.

Critical theory gives students a way to situate themselves in a society that has previously not allowed them to have pride, dignity and self-worth. This can be done by using multiculturalism to oppose hegemony; respect for differences while working together towards a common goal; through student empowerment, and dialogue. These all give a child hope that there is a way to create a just society. Through this type of liberatory education students understand that it is the collective responsibility of the learners as well as the parents, teachers, and the community, to seek empowerment, through dialogue (Martin, 1991).

Education that is emancipating and liberatory can provide students with the ability to bring about change. Many teachers in inner city schools battle against nihilism. West (1993) defines nihilism as "the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness and lovelessness (p. 23). This results in a "numbing detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition toward the world. Life without meaning, hope, and love breeds a cold hearted mean spirited outlook that destroys the individual and others" (West, 1993, p.23). Teachers face the challenge of fostering "critical inquiry by influencing students to question their assumptions about school and society while avoiding the potential danger of inadvertently fostering indoctrination or nihilism" (White, 1988, p. 88).

To fight nihilism, teachers should believe in their students when society would say not to. Educators who challenge hegemony are models of hope, instilling the notion of hope in students who through dialogue, would otherwise be hopeless. According to Friere (1970), hope cannot exist without dialogue.

Friere speaks of the fight to challenge oppression. To successfully do this, it must be done with hope; hope that in the end the oppressed will be undefeated (Friere, 1970). In addition, the teacher can provide hope by opposing hegemony. When this is done, students can be inspired to keep their faith and hold on to the hope for a better future.

Critical theory provides educators with tools to help those children who are hopeless. The role of the teacher is to be a liberator who emancipates students from social, economic, and ideological bondage.

Multicultural education can prepare children for the diverse society that exists in the United States and is growing more diverse everyday. In addition, multicultural education can promote social, political, racial, and cultural equity, and instill new hope for those who have existed in hopelessness. Critical theorists use hope to assure that all Americans, particularly those who have been marginalized, have the equal ability to improve their quality of life for themselves and others while maintaining their culture and beliefs.

A multicultural approach takes a firm pluralist stance regarding cultural diversity, in contrast to the assimilationist or "melting pot" theory of traditional education. Baratz & Baratz, (1970) label the traditional approach to the education of minorities typically subscribed to either (and sometimes both) a genetic inferiority model or a social pathology model.

The commitment to the cultural differences model was acknowledged by the 1973 Commission on Multicultural Education's position paper which stated that multicultural education is targeted at all students: ". . . recognizes cultural diversity as a fact of life in American society, and it affirms that this cultural diversity is a valuable resource that should be preserved and extended. . . ." (Grant and Sleeter, 1995, p. 101).

Further, the cultural differences model was reaffirmed by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in their paper, No One Model American, which stated that:

> "Multicultural education reaches beyond awareness and understanding of cultural differences. More important than the acceptance and support of

> these differences and an effective education program that makes cultural equality real and meaningful" (Ramsey, et al, 1989).

It is clear that the purposes of multicultural education are diverse. Its goal is to both maintain ethnic identities and build acceptance of ethnic differences. Furthermore, it aims to improve the self-esteem of traditionally subordinate ethnic groups while reducing prejudice among the dominate ethnic group (Corder and Quisenberry, 1987). Multicultural education not only educates individuals about cultural differences, but it also helps children to develop competencies within pluralistic systems (Corder and Quisenberry, 1987). The foundation of multicultural education stems from groups who have traditionally been marginalized in American society and who call for reforming the curriculum to include these groups.

If we as Americans truly want to live in a pluralistic society, multicultural education is needed for all students. ". . . all students need to recognize the diversity that defines this society , learn to respect it, and see it in a positive light" (Bishop, 1997, p. 3).

According to Ogbu, (1988) students bring to school understandings of social realities and educational strategies that reflect their home and community. When curriculum is aligned with students' cultural backgrounds, they will see that learning reaffirms their culture, which can be effective for some students. Ferdman, (1990b) maintains that if paper and pencil tasks do not take into account students' cultural backgrounds a rift may be created. As the rift becomes larger, students may work against school learning activities.

The population of students that teachers serve is changing posthaste and will continue to do so in the future. Not only are the needs of students changing, so too are the composition of the classroom. Because of these shifts, we as educators should also change. Multicultural theory shows that creating equity may not mean that all groups are treated the same (Gay, 1993). "It may sometimes be necessary to treat groups differently in order to create equal-status situations for marginalized students" (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 156).

Multicultural Children's Literature

Contrary to early educational practices, we now know that no one teaching strategy will consistently engage all learners. Multicultural children's literature can help students relate lesson content on their own terms and to their background knowledge. To be effective in diverse classrooms, educators can relate teaching content to the cultural backgrounds of their students.

Schools are an ideal place where students can naturally be exposed to and experience the diversity of the world through literature. Multicultural literature can be used as an origin of action and a vehicle to sensitize children to cultural differences among and between groups that may lead them to question the realities of a hegemonic society. According to Olneck (1995), when teachers use strategies of teaching that ignore student norms of behavior and communication, it often provokes student resistance. Teaching that is responsive, respects and acknowledges differences, and promotes student involvement.

Teachers have the opportunity to introduce their students to cultures and places that they have never experienced through literature. There are many reasons to share multicultural literature with children. According to Rosenblatt (1991), reading is a transaction that takes place between the reader and the text. Readers construct personal meanings from text based on their individual schema. “Literature contributes to children’s development of values, and it is important that adults lead them through active discussion of these values” (Aoki, 1981, p. 384). When reading, Rosenblatt (1982) maintains that readers may take two stances; efferent or aesthetic. She defines a stance as “an expression of purpose” (p. 275) the reader’s attitude toward the text (Rosenblatt, 1982). She further explains that efferent reading is when readers look for specific information in texts while aesthetic reading focuses on the feelings that the text provokes in the reader (Rosenblatt, 1991). “Efferent and aesthetic readings must be reinforced with readings that propagate social change—readings that enable readers to ask questions about situations and ideas they encounter” (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997, p. 447).

According to Roberts and Cecil (1993), through literature “teachers can replace fear with curiosity and broaden children’s awareness of other people, their needs, their hopes, and their dreams” (p. 1). Bieger (1996) encourage teachers to use multicultural literature by stating:

> What cannot be taught through facts may be taught through the heart. Literature can help effect multicultural understandings. Through reading, we briefly share in the lives and feelings of the characters rather than dealing with facts. Literature provides food for both the head and the heart. Books may be used as agents for change, vehicles for introducing concepts, and catalysts for activities (p. 309).

When teachers make the decision to use books that expose children to other cultures, teachers tell students that it is important to know about others. “By involving the children with characters and situations that they can identify with, books increase children’s appreciation of other ways of life and help them see unfamiliar people as individuals” (Ramsey, 1987, p. 69). It is not enough to just expose children to multicultural literature. Readers need to be helped to identify issues, question ideologies that make up the story, and understand how the aforementioned effect the lives of the readers (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997).

Many educators mistakenly believe that multicultural education and literature are only for children of color. “If our society is to meet the challenges of democratic pluralism, all students need to recognize the diversity that defines this society, learn to respect it, and see it in a positive light” (Bishop, 1997, p. 3). Not only do children from non-mainstream cultures benefit from multicultural literature, so do those belonging to mainstream cultures. Yokota (1993) maintains that multicultural literature allows children to take part in experiences from cultures other than their own; and these experiences help them understand different backgrounds, thereby influencing their decisions about how they will live in this culturally pluralistic world.

Books also help children find elements in stories that are similar to their own lives. This helps them realize that many feelings they have are common to other children across cultures. Because of this, stereotypes can be seen for what they really are, i.e. generalizations that are often false and sometimes hurtful. According to Finazzo (1997), “Children’s books that are multicultural best explain who children are, why they are here or there, and how they deal with life situations and the environment” (p. 13).

Also, more accurate perceptions and broader knowledge can be gained about other cultures from multicultural literature (Roberts & Cecil, 1993).

A respected authority on multicultural literature, Violet Harris (as cited in Martinez and Nash, 1990) believes that there are many rewards in using diverse literature: it affirms and empowers children and cultures, it shows contributions members of different cultures have made, it gives pleasure and pride to hear stories about characters like themselves, it offers hope and encouragement to those facing hardships because of their culture, and it exposes them to wonderful language and characters. The discussions and understandings that result from using multicultural literature can have long-term effects on how children form opinions and solve problems (Johnson & Johnson, 1992). Furthermore, teachers gain insight into the cultural backgrounds of their students through literature, follow up activities, discussions, and particularly writing (Ramirez & Ramirez, 1994).

Literature from different places around the world allows readers to visualize places they might otherwise never visit, and shows real daily life there rather than the stereotypical costumes that used to be an essential element in informational books (Nodelman, 1996). Multicultural literature provides readers with information so that they can form their own values of justice, fairness, and equity. According to Finazzo (1997), “we must recognize that acceptance and understanding of others comes from increased knowledge and the removal of fear” (p. 32). To change attitudes in a non-threatening environment, teachers can explore preconceived notions about cultures and students’ biases can come to light with the guidance of a teacher and the support of peers (Barta & Grindler, 1996).

This section has addressed many reasons for using multicultural literature in the classroom and the many benefits of sharing it with all children. There have been multiple definitions used to define multicultural children's literature. Teachers should be aware of these differences so they can make wise selections.

Some see the number of definitions used to describe multicultural education as a challenge. There is little consensus on a single unifying definition of multicultural literature. Because multicultural literature is closely connected to multicultural education, this division of thought has also spilled over into the definition of multicultural literature. Yokota (1993) and Marantz and Marantz (1994) have similar definitions that focus on literature about the cultures of various groups. Yokota (1993) defines multicultural literature as "literature that represents any distinct cultural group through accurate portrayal and rich detail" (p. 157). Marantz & Marantz (1994) maintain that multicultural literature includes books that reflect "the way people behave in specific circumstances, what they value and believe" (p. 5). Simplistic definitions are offered by Kruse (1992) and Finazzo (1997). Kruse (1992) simply defines multicultural literature as "books by and about people of color" (as cited in Hillard, 1995, p. 728). Similarly, Finazzo (1997) provides a definition that includes books "that we read and continue to cherish for their richness of information both about ourselves as a people and its children and about others who share our world" (p. 4). Bishop (1992) and Houser (1995) place an emphasis on marginalized groups. Bishop (1992), claims that "multicultural literature refers to literature by and about people who are members of groups considered to be outside the socio-political mainstream of the United States" (p. 37). While Houser (1995) claims that multicultural literature is "literature that is written

by or about those who have been systematically marginalized on the basis of their culture" (p. 2). A more encompassing definition is given by Martinez (as cited in Hilliard, 1995), who specifies that emphasis has been placed on respect for different historical perspectives and cultures in the world (Hilliard, 1995). Sleeter and Grant's definition includes "materials that recognize, accept, and affirm human differences and similarities related to gender, race, handicap, and class" (as cited in Hilliard, 1995, p. 728). To summarize, definitions of multicultural literature vary in scope from being very limited by only including race to all encompassing with the inclusion of characteristics such as culture and sexual orientation.

For me, culture involves more than what can be observed with the naked eye. My definition of culture resembles that of Harris (1996): "Culture . . . refers to beliefs, attitudes, values, world-views, institutions, artifacts, processes, interactions, and ways of behaving" (p. 110). Therefore, my working definition of multicultural children's literature is literature that is written for children and encompasses information about diversity and the groups that have been traditionally marginalized and not written about in the past. This includes literature about immigrants and their countries of origin, native dwellers on American soil, religious minorities, those who dwell in specific regions of the U.S. such as the Appalachian mountain region, members of society with disabilities, people who left their country to seek refuge against persecution, as well as those who were brought to America by force. I believe that this definition reflects the experiences of people that many children would not be exposed to without multicultural education and literature.

Because multicultural literature is an extension of multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 1995, Nieto, 1992, Bishop, 1992), teachers need to understand this tenet and use authentic multicultural children's literature to bring about social change. African American children's book writer; Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard supports this belief by stating:

> . . . We must also aim for that authentic body of literature for children which can lead us toward our goals: self-esteem for those previously not reflected in the mirror, and important enlightenment for those who, for too long, have seen only themselves in that mirror; all leading toward the celebration of living in the multicultural society. If the purpose of literature is to liberate, the purpose of authentic multicultural literature is to help liberate us from all the preconceived stereotypical hang-ups that imprison us with narrow boundaries (pp.91-92 work cited in Harris, 1992).

By using multicultural literature, children are exposed to different ways of doing things. So often, as adults we only surround ourselves with people who mirror us. This is magnified for children who never experience the world outside of where they live. This is why teachers' selection of books can have consequences for their students.

In earlier sections of this essay, rationales have been discussed about the importance of using multicultural literature in the classroom. In this section, multiple ways to share multicultural literature with children will be addressed.

Reading children's literature as well as adult books that depict different perspectives is a way for teachers to learn more about their students. According to research by Au (1993) and Delpit (1988), students connect best with teacher's messages when the students' and teachers' cultures closely resemble each other. We all look at the world through our own cultural lens. Therefore, it is virtually impossible for teachers to experience the world as each of their students does. That is why there is a

need for educators to step outside of their cultural comfort zone and ask questions of their students as well as parents, community members, and other teachers. Therefore, it is important for teachers to help students experience diverse perspectives through literature, discussions and through other opportunities.

Multicultural literature can be used to enhance social studies curriculum and children's understandings of non-mainstream cultures can be increased, because children are given alternative perspectives of diverse people (Houser, 1995). One of the easiest ways to incorporate multicultural literature in the curriculum is in social studies. Social studies curriculum and textbooks can be supplemented with autobiographies, biographies, historical fiction, folktales, fairy tales, and expository texts.

Biographies and non-fiction can be an appropriate place to start. By beginning with non-fiction and biographical literature, children are given the opportunity to read or hear factual information before encountering images in fictional material that might be stereotypical. For "the traditional tales that reflect the basis of cultural development and the extension of a culture through its people are the starting point for any program that deals with cultural diversity" (Finazzo 1997, p. 50). This knowledge provides children with multiple perspectives of factual information that may help them identify stereotypes they encounter when reading fiction. There is a wide variety of literature to choose from that can support and extend social studies topics.

Historical fiction, for example, adds a personal element to the time period or event that is not available in textbooks. In this type of literature, cultural details are presented in natural ways that bring the past into the present. Additionally, cultural details and geographical locations become more significant. According to Walker-

Dalhouse (1992), role playing in groups provides another way for teachers to evaluate their student's understanding of historical concepts covered through multicultural literature.

Thematic units such as children around the world, voting: a democratic freedom, neighborhoods and communities, families, etc. are another effective way to incorporate multicultural literature across the curriculum. A different perspective can be provided for students when multicultural and traditional literature are used concurrently; fiction and nonfiction literature can be used to meet this need. Not only does using such literature provide multiple perspectives, it also may encourage reluctant readers to read when they can identify with characters that are similar to them (Walker-Dalhouse, 1992).

Math, science, and language arts are also areas in which teachers can use multicultural children's literature to promote their student's social development (Houser, 1995). Students can learn about a multitude of topics such as: plants, animals, weather, and habitats from various regions around the world. Keeping in mind that numbers are universal, teachers can introduce students to alternative counting systems utilized by other countries.

Early Childhood Education

A sociocultural perspective allows us to change from a myopic view to a more extensive view that addresses some of the issues in classrooms today. Children give many cues to adults and it is our job to pay attention to where students' interests lie. Teachers should make decisions on developmental and sociocultural concerns that

support the belief that "(1) cognition is socially constructed and shared, and (2) language is the critical link between the social and psychological planes of human functioning" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 12). Teachers who observe children while using a child-centered curriculum use their observations to create a learning environment that is stimulating. A project can begin simply by asking questions and observing children's interests. ". . . successful projects are those that generate sufficient amount of interest and uncertainty to provoke children's creative thinking and problem-solving and are open to different avenues of exploration" (New, 1993, p. 3). "Children can interact naturally with each other and their teachers to learn about collaborative conversation; that they can experience simultaneously, by being part of the event, the social organization established and maintained face-to-face interaction; at last, that they can learn about each other and about topics of interest to them as they explore group conversation" (Kantor, et al., 1989, p. 437).

Learning can play a major role in child development. "When teachers continually offer children problems that they are able to do without assistance or provide experiences that are too distant from children's independent mastery, then they fail to orient instruction so it enhances development" (Berk & Winsler 1995, p. 104). When students are paired with a more capable peer or partner, they maximize learning experiences. Vygotsky's ideas focus on collaboration and how it promotes cognitive development. Developmental psychologists who follow Vygotsky's ideas about constructivist theory, provide a basis for a culturally oriented view of development. More scholars now view development as a collective process in which children help shape and share in their own developmental experiences through their participation in

everyday cultural routines (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Wertsch, 1991; Lave, 1988; Bredekamp, 1992; Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993).

Vygotsky (1978) asserts that children benefit from social interaction at early ages. It is through co-construction that shared understandings are created, and cognitive development is increased (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Wertsch (1991) writes that "it is the sociocultural situatedness of mediated action that is the common thread between the cultural, historical, and the institutional setting on the one hand and the mental functioning of the individual on the other" (p. 152). The relationship between culture, community, and cognition is expressed in the general law of cultural development, where Vygotsky proposed that any higher psychological function appears on two planes (Cole, 1985). Cultural development first appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane between people as an interpsychological category and then within the individual child as an intrapsychological category.

Children's comprehension of situations is increased through the use of guided participation, apprenticeship, and participatory appropriation. Guided participation offers opportunities to learn through different processes of participation. Scaffolding is a technique that focuses on the assistance experts provide novices. The units of analysis in scaffolding are the individuals involved in the activity and can take place in the zone of proximal development.

Social interaction plays a vital role in learning. Teachers utilizing multicultural pedagogy scaffold children's learning and arrange for different levels of participation based on each child's need and ability. In the mind of a child, emotions, thoughts, imagination, and predisposition occur simultaneously and are interdependent (Caine &

Caine, 1990) so, teachers must attend concurrently to children's intellectual, social, and ethical development (Lewis et al, 1995). In order to do that, we can no longer look to the teacher as the sole creator of social culture. Successful students respond to cues given to them by peers as well as the teacher. We should be respectful and conscious of the students' cultures that make up the classroom, including experiences and knowledge students bring to the classroom daily. Teachers should stay abreast of ever-changing cultural dynamics constantly throughout the year as the social dynamics and participants of the classroom change.

For Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, the individuals cannot be separated from the activity in which they are immersed. Individuals are involved in and are part of the activity. One cannot interpret what individuals are doing without being cognizant of how they fit in ongoing events. Teachers working from a sociocultural perspective develop methods that examine contributions of individuals in relation to the course of their participation in that sociocultural activity.

Vygotsky (1967) emphasized the social nature of thought and language as they develop through symbolic play. He believed thought develops as meaning increasingly becomes removed from its anchor in real objects used symbolically in play and these ties to concrete objects become loosened as mental representation of meaning increasingly predominates (Cole, 1985).

The unit of analysis in sociocultural theory is the sociocultural activity. "In sociocultural theories, an individual's cognitive development is thought of as inherently involved with the sociocultural activities in which they engaged with others

in cultural practices and institutions, in mutually constituting relationship" (Rogoff, 1990, p. 701). Early childhood experts believe that

> . . . cognition is a profoundly social phenomenon. Social experience shapes the ways of thinking and interpreting the world available to individuals. And language plays a crucial role in a socially formed mind because it is our primary avenue of communication and mental contact with others, serves as the major means by which social experience is represented psychologically, and is an indispensable tool for thought (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 12).

One cannot make sense of the event that is happening by separating the event from the contexts in which it exists. "The meaning of curricular events derives from the numerous contexts in which they are embedded. At least four contexts are part of the curriculum: the classroom context, the personal and social context, historical and political context" (King, 1986, p. 37). Sociocultural theories can further our understandings of cognition as a collaborative process. They provide teachers with avenues to interpret how children work together to construct meaning.

Children are socially active by nature. When an active child mixes with an active social environment, the child's development is maximized (Berk and Winsler, 1995). Teachers who take a sociocultural perspective make the most of the learning environment socially and academically. According to Weade (1987), separating the words curriculum and instruction does not capture what occurs during the interactions between students and teachers as they work together. Through the interactions between teachers and students, academic and social meanings are acquired and old meanings

become modified or cast aside (Weade, 1987). Students shift their meaning of words from context to context. In their study, Kantor et. al, (1989) observed social behaviors of children and how they had to be negotiated while communicating with others. This study illustrated how communication and learning are embedded in the context in which they exist.

Interactions between students, interactions between teacher and student, artifacts, classroom content and actual lessons all become part of the curriculum. All members of the group, whether acting as active or passive participants, contribute to the group. Students learn how to read verbal and nonverbal cues. At an early age, children learn how to read cues and expectations for different social activities and are able to shift their actions accordingly (Kantor et. al, 1989). "As classroom lessons develop, information is presented, represented, negotiated, transformed, adjusted, and refined, and thus meanings are constructed" (Weade, 1987, p. 19). At a very young age children can shift the meaning to fit the situation correctly from context and by doing so negotiate new ways to be heard (Kantor et. al, 1989).

When curriculum overlaps with the social experiences of the participants, participants create meaning through the integrated and overlapping contexts that exist (King, 1986). All of the participants come to classrooms with prior experiences and background knowledge and this becomes part of the classroom. Everyone works together to create a social context of the curriculum. This all comes together when individuals use their schema to create an understanding of what is being taught. Curriculum emerges as it happens in the classroom; therefore, curriculum development should create unique experiences for each child. Since the teacher is the major

contributor to curriculum, she/he should design and facilitate meaningful activities. The evolution of curriculum is a situated activity in that current curriculum developers work within a situation created, in part, by the efforts of past curriculum developers.

Because change in diversity has been rapid and complex, children today must be educated differently than those in the past. Members of different ethnic groups (Heath, 1995) and members of the same ethnic group interact differently to communicate with each other and address common concerns. “In order to forge a community “attentive to differences” (Greene, 1993, p. 17), we need first and foremost, be less firm in our convictions, and less willing to assume that our values
and beliefs are right for everyone” (Lubeck, 1998, p. 283). Because of the aforementioned, developmentally appropriate practice should not look the same in every classroom.

When members speak or listen in a group setting in the classroom, they become a part of a developing social culture. During this time, students encounter many rules that are communicated verbally as well as nonverbally. Often, rules of the group can be broken. Students learn that if they do so appropriately, a rule may be negotiated (Kantor, et. al, 1989). For example, teachers often use rules that state students may speak only after their teacher has called upon them. Throughout the course of the school year, students learn that if the group is engaging in a group discussion such as brainstorming and a member chooses to contribute to the discussion by calling out his or her idea without being called upon, they may be able to do so as long as the comment is appropriate to the discussion. There are multiple social rules that exist in instructional contexts. “In order to clarify our knowledge of how a child becomes a member of a

social system such as the classroom, we will have to move beyond the past research emphasis of looking only at personality characteristics of primary socializers or at predetermined social rules as determinants of social action" (Wallat & Green 1979, p. 284).

Students learn what is needed to interact successfully in the classroom. Together they develop a culture unique to the participants. A peer culture also develops and it is to the teacher's advantage to use this culture to aid in their children's learning.

Within the classroom the teacher often creates the culture as well as the curriculum. "The culture of a group can be defined in terms of the characteristic substance and forms of the language and discourses, activities and practices, and social relationships and organization which constitute the interactions of the group" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1991, p. 16).

Children have their own agenda and create a culture that suits their needs. "Children produce a series of local peer cultures that become part of, and contribute to, the wider cultures of other children and adults within which they are embedded" (Corsaro, 1997, p. 95). Observant teachers use peer culture (the social curriculum of children) to their advantage. A more detailed definition of peer culture is " . . . a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers" (Corsaro, 1997, p. 95). Teachers who work against instead of working with the social curriculum make life in the classroom harder for themselves. The peer culture thrives and develops outside of the teacher imposed rules. Certain artifacts such as Barbies and violent toys (Jones & Nimmo, 1994) gain status

within the peer culture. If children are forced by adults to do away with the peer culture, it typically remains, but is hidden from the teacher. Even the most experienced veteran teacher may be challenged by the students' peer culture.

The theory of developmentally appropriate practices acknowledges that children grow through physiological stages that require different approaches for different developmental stages. For example, children in kindergarten and first grade need many concrete, hands-on experiences before they can transition to abstract tasks. Programs are often described in terms of generalized goals, rather than specific objectives and implementation strategies. Developmentally appropriate practice includes many practices that are essential to multicultural education. "Early multicultural education is not a curriculum; it is a perspective and a commitment to equity, sensitivity and empowerment" (Whaley & Swadner, 1990, p. 239). Many classrooms have students representing a multitude of ethnicities. Learning should focus on learning about other cultures while not neglecting one's own. This focus should be age appropriate, and extend from the neighborhood, the city, the nation, and the world.

Children are born into worlds of existing patterns, understandings, and relationships. Therefore, the child's language that exists is not just a tool, it is a medium that individuals use to understand their experiences and organize reality (Berk & Winsler, 1995). When teachers teach multiculturally, children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Instead of correcting and reinforcing children, educators provide opportunities for children to expand their language (Bruner, 1983).

According to Vygotsky, word meanings are created socially and with development become personalized as the child comes to hold them as his/her own (Nelson, 1985). Reading is traditionally thought of as a decoding process, where students learn grapheme, phoneme, and written word correspondence. Students learn best by actually reading and writing in meaningful texts (Reutzel & Cooter, 1996). Activities that are literacy enriched encourage children to further explore the relationship between reading and writing. According to Schickendanz (1986), "if we expect print to make sense, we can predict the text as we read along and monitor our decisions about what words there are" (p. 42). By engaging in stories and paying attention to what the story is about, children can learn that reading is a meaningful activity. "Reading is a tool, not a set of skills or concepts to be learned or taught for its own sake" (Griffin, 1979, p. 186). This explains why students are taught reading in different contexts throughout the day. Literacy should be spontaneous and used to meet the children's needs of their everyday lives (Kantor, et al., 1992). Teachers should observe children's abilities and the strategies that they use to read. This will help them understand more about how learning is being done by individual students and by the group. An authority on writing, Frank Smith (1982) explains that text is like a "two-sided mirror rather than a window, with writers and readers unable to see each other but gazing upon reflections of their own minds" (p. 182).

The continuity between children's home cultures and school experiences is critical to the success of children from diverse backgrounds (Bowman, 1990). It is good for teachers to begin by familiarizing themselves with their students' families.

"In order to create a culturally safe classroom, the teacher finds out as much as possible about the families' backgrounds and experiences of all the children, by surveying parents, by reading multiple books on the represented cultures, and by careful observation of children to see what experiences seem to connect with them" (Rosegrant, 1992, p. 4).

When home and school merge, there are often misunderstandings in the classroom. Teachers need to be cautious, examine more than surface features and instead look to the "understanding of rights and obligations and communicative demands of the situation" (Florio & Shultz, 1979, p.234). For too long, educators have only looked at the contributors at school. Research is now showing us that we should examine communities and the cultures that play a part in what is being learned by students. "Knowledge is constructed and shaped by persons within the community" (Berman, 1986). Learning that takes place at home can be very helpful for teachers to examine when trying to examine the learning of young children. Educators should acknowledge and build on cultural differences. If children are to construct a "knowledgeable, confident, self-identity" (Derman-Sparks, 1989), schools should stop making children lose their home language and assimilate into the dominant society.

Currently, the multicultural curriculum seen in many early childhood classrooms emphasizes differences between cultures by focusing on foods, holidays, and customs. According to Derman-Sparks (1992) this type of approach ignores the everyday experiences and problems of other cultures which might lead to stereotyping. Instead,

Banks and Banks (1995) suggest that teachers view multicultural education as a perspective that can be integrated into daily classroom activities.

Children need to understand that all cultures are valued. Early childhood classrooms should include pictures, puppets, dolls, foods, and other objects for dramatic play that represent diverse cultures. A variety of books representing different cultures should also be available for children to hear and examine.

Balanced literacy programs include rich literary experiences, ongoing assessment and evaluation, and personal connections and social interactions. In a classroom with a balanced literacy program, the children are actively involved, allowing the teacher time to work with small groups and gather information for evaluation (Batzle, 1992). A rich literary experience is one in which students are purposefully enjoying and using books. Books for shared or whole group reading, individual or personalized reading, writing, and read-alouds are displayed around the room. This classroom might include the following: a creation station (arts and crafts), a writing center, a word center, an author's chair, a listening center, a drama center, a research area, a math center, a science center, and or a conference table.

Ongoing assessment and evaluation of student work samples by teachers are also parts of a balanced literacy program. Effective classroom management skills are crucial because of the multiple activities going on at one time.

Personal connections and social interactions are a vital part of a balanced literacy program (Batzle, 1992). For educators who operate from a sociocultural perspective, language is an important skill gained through social interactions. When students are in a language rich environment where meaningful interactions among

students and between teachers and students are taking place, language development is encouraged.

Chapter Summary

The review of the literature reviewed previously in this chapter embodies a portion of the research available that builds the foundation for my study. Most of the research is based on multicultural children's literature as a whole, not examining a collection of works that could be identified with a specific cultural, ethnic, or racial group. In these studies, many different positive effects were made on the participants, leading to the conclusion that members of minority groups as well as those who belong to the majority benefit from multicultural literature; which makes our society better for all. In addition, by utilizing culturally responsive pedagogy as both necessary and beneficial teachers can promote student empowerment. There is much evidence that suggests that a multicultural approach to education serves to address a number of social problems and can benefit all students. Literature in this chapter has shown how these teaching practices help in the fight against racism and prejudice among the dominant ethnic group and between ethnic groups as well as the problems of low self-esteem and under-achievement among minority groups.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of this Study

This study attempts to explore how two male primary teachers, one white and one African American, mediate their students' cultural knowledge with multicultural literature in their classrooms. More specifically, the researcher examines how the teachers use multicultural literature with inner-city children to expose them to African American culture through multicultural literature.

The aim of this study was to explore how two male teachers who belong to different cultural groups, use multicultural literature to facilitate discussions about African Americans with their predominantly African American pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students. The researcher chose this focus because she views children's literature as a tool that teachers can use to raise issues with students to help them form their own identity. Through the use of African American children's literature, teachers can provide African American children with opportunities to discover their own cultural identities. By using multicultural literature, teachers can help students form a strong identity and deconstruct society's views that are often negative and forced upon them. According to Banks (1995), to effectively help students,

teachers should connect literature to the goals of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture and social structure. Because of this, we need to choose multicultural literature that will enhance "the self-esteem of children of all cultures and respect the culture of others, while expanding aesthetics as well as their horizons" (Marantz & Marantz, 1994, p. 1).

The information gained from this study was analyzed in an attempt to understand the phenomenon occurring during the read-aloud and during the activity that follows. The following specific questions were addressed:

1. How do two male primary teachers use African American multicultural literature to address and explore issues of diversity when their class has a majority of African American students in schools whose missions are to support multiculturalism?
2. How are the teachers cultural and racial beliefs represented in their practice?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study views learning as a sociocultural process. The goal of sociocultural research according to Wertch (1991), is to ". . . understand the relationship between human mental functioning on one hand, and cultural, historical , and institutional setting on the other" (p.56). By utilizing a sociocultural perspective, I will look at the mental functioning that takes place as well as its relationship to the sociocultural setting in which it occurs. Understandings and connections are made not only in the individual student's mind, but also with the teacher and other students. These interactions critically frame and shape student's cognitive understandings.

A sociocultural perspective allows us to change from a myopic view to a more extensive view that addresses some of the issues in classrooms today. Children give many cues to adults and it is our job to pay attention to where students' interests lie. Teachers should make decisions on developmental and sociocultural concerns that support the belief that "(1) cognition is socially constructed and shared, and (2) language is the critical link between the social and psychological planes of human functioning" (Berk & Winsler, 1995, p. 12). "Children can interact naturally with each other and their teachers to learn about collaborative conversation; that they can experience simultaneously, by being part of the event, the social organization established and maintained face-to-face interaction; at last, that they can learn about each other and about topics of interest to them as they explore group conversation" (Kantor, et al., 1989, p. 437).

Vygotsky's ideas focus on collaboration and how it promotes cognitive development. Developmental psychologists who follow Vygotsky's ideas about constructivist theory, provide a basis for a culturally oriented view of development. More scholars now view development as a collective process in which children help shape and share in their own developmental experiences through their participation in everyday cultural routines (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Wertsch, 1991; Lave, 1988; Bredekamp, 1992; Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993).

Vygotsky (1978) asserts that children benefit from social interaction at early ages. It is through co-construction that shared understandings are created, and cognitive development is increased (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Wertsch (1991) writes that "it is the sociocultural situatedness of mediated action that is the common thread

between the cultural, historical, and the institutional setting on the one hand and the mental functioning of the individual on the other" (p. 152). The relationship between culture, community, and cognition is expressed in the general law of cultural development, where Vygotsky proposed that any higher psychological function appears on two planes (Cole, 1985). Cultural development first appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane between people as an interpsychological category and then within the individual child as an intrapsychologyical category.

Their comprehension of situations is increased through the use of guided participation, apprenticeship, and participatory appropriation. Guided participation offers opportunities to learn through different processes of participation. Scaffolding is a technique that focuses on the assistance experts provide novices. The units of analysis in scaffolding are the individuals involved in the activity and can take place in the zone of proximal development.

In an exemplary classroom social interaction plays a vital role in learning. Teachers scaffold children's learning and arrange for different levels of participation based on each child's need and ability. Personal connections and social interactions are a vital part of a balanced literacy program (Batzle, 1992). The two exemplary teachers in this study operate from a sociocultural perspective where language is an important skill that is gained through social interactions. In the two classrooms studied, students are immersed in a language rich environment where meaningful interactions among students and between teachers and students are take place and language development is encouraged.

Research Design—Qualitative Case Study Approach

In order to evaluate how learning takes place in a whole-group read-aloud activity, it was necessary to be specific about the dialogue during and after the lesson. I chose a qualitative case study approach (Patton, 1990) to describe patterns and differences between each of the two teachers and their students during storybook read-alouds. Marshall & Rossman (1995) assert that when the purpose of the study is to describe a phenomenon of interest and when the research questions include describing the "…salient behaviors, events, beliefs, attitudes, structures, processes occurring in the phenomenon," a case study is a helpful research strategy (p.41).

Patton (1990, p. 384) identifies the purpose of the case study approach to be gathering comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case. A case can take on different forms such as: an individual, a program, an institution or a group. When a study aims to understand a specific situation in great depth, this approach can be especially advantageous. Therefore, I chose to use a case study approach to examine the interactions between two primary male teachers who belong to different cultural groups and their students. As mentioned earlier, I was not able to find any such research when gathering my resources. To explore this phenomenon, I conducted two case studies of two particular teachers and their students in two separate and distinct sites.

Procedures

This study is one of quasi-naturalistic inquiry where the main focus is on the teacher. I refer to the study as quasi-naturalistic because both of the teachers use

multicultural children's literature on a regular basis in their classrooms. For the purpose of this study, the teachers used the same books and the researcher attempted to accurately capture the phenomenon. Specifically, the strategies the teachers use to construct meaning with their students via African American children's literature will be examined as well as interactions. Both teachers use multicultural literature in their classrooms on a regular basis; therefore, this is a routine activity for the students and teachers. Only the books in this study will be manipulated. By this I mean that the researcher controlled the books used by having the teachers read the same five books. The selection of the books will be discussed later in this paper. This study was broken into ten sessions, five read aloud sessions with each teacher. The same five books were read aloud by each teacher, one during each session. Each session proceeded as follows. The teacher read the book aloud to his class. Afterwards, the teacher engaged the students in an activity of his choice. The researcher expected the activities to be different because the teachers were given no directions or criteria to meet for the activity. The activity was one that he felt was appropriate for his class's developmental level.

Design of the Study

Before the sessions began, each teacher was given copies of all five books that were to be used. Both teachers were reminded that the only parameter of this study is that they must read the same books, however, they were free to select the activity that followed.

The following is a sequential description of each session. The teacher gathered the students around him, asked them to be seated and read the story to them. It is during this time that the researcher recorded the phenomenon with audio and videotape, as well as fieldnotes. The videotapes served as the primary source of data and the audio tapes are used to provide clarification of the discussions. Afterwards, the teacher brought each book to a close and gave the students directions to successfully participate in the activity. During the activity, the researcher continued to videotape and audio tape the proceedings.

Later, a debriefing session occurred between the researcher and the teacher which was audio taped. This method of triangulation was used because the two discussed the read-aloud and activity which provided clarification for the researcher.

Selection of Books

Although, there were many challenges associated with this study, careful book selection was the primary consideration. Because this study began well into the school year, many good-quality multicultural books had already been read to both of the classes. The challenge was to find poignant quality books that were age appropriate that neither of the teachers had read. Moreover, Don was job sharing his position (this is when two teachers take on the role of one teacher by splitting the time and days taught equally and share other responsibilities) so he had to make sure that the other teacher had not read the books to the class.

Don, Sam and I collaborated on the books to be used. Each of the teachers suggested two books and I selected one. If the book suggested had already been used,

the person who suggested it was asked to make another selection. Finally, an agreed upon group of what we felt were quality multicultural books with African American characters or based upon African American culture was made. Table 3.1 indicates the books selected for the study.

Title	Who selected the book	Setting	Type of Book
A Country Far Away	Sam	Current Day	Fiction-Picture Book
Carousel	JD	Current Day	Fiction-Picture Book
Flossie and the Fox	Don	Past	Folktale
Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox, and Tar Baby	Sam	Past	Folktale
Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears	Don	Past	Folktale

Table 3.1: Book Selection for the Study

The following is a short description of each of the books used. A Country Far Away by Nigel Gray, is a book that contrasts the life a British child with that of a child who lives in an African village. The primary focus of this story is how the two children are similar. Carousel by Pat Cummings is a story about a little girl, Alex who is celebrating her birthday. She receives a carousel from her father but is disappointed because he is not able to be there for the party. Because she behaves badly, she is sent to bed without a piece of her own birthday cake. She falls asleep and dreams about the carousel animals coming to life. The overarching theme in this book is that there are often disappointments in life and people may disappoint you sometimes, but that doesn't mean that they don't love you. Flossie and the fox is book by Patricia

McKissack that was used. This story is about a trickster fox who is known for stealing eggs. The fox meets up with Flossie, a rather clever girl who is carrying eggs to a neighbor. The fox is no match for Flossie because she frustrates him each time he tries to convince her that he is a fox and he is to be feared. Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema, explores the cyclical pattern of nature. A mosquito unknowingly disrupts the nature of the jungle. The mosquito is blamed for the death of a baby owlet by all animals in the jungle. However, the iguana actually started the chain of events that caused the death of a baby owl. The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales is a collection of stories by Virginia Hamilton. The one chosen for this study was Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox and Tar Baby. This tale is similar to many trickster tales. Doc Rabbit is a handy and clever character who is building a house. Because of the summer heat, Doc Rabbit cools lemonade in the brook to drink and help him cool off. Bruh Fox spends his time trying to out smart the rabbit so that he can have the lemonade.

Sites

This study took place in two urban, public elementary schools located in a large Midwestern city. Central Elementary is a K-5 school that has open-space classrooms, utilizes a whole-language curriculum, and a literature-based reading program. The philosophy of the faculty and staff is one that embraces the multicultural background of its students who are selected from a lottery of applicants.

American Elementary is a K-8 school where the school's philosophy is based on African principles. Therefore, all of the children are African American and so are most

of the faculty members. Because of the African principles, the school also embraces a multicultural perspective that is aimed at educating the African American child. Students who attend this school are also selected from a lottery of applicants.

Two years prior to this study, I supervised student teachers at Central and developed a working relationship with the administrative staff and several faculty members. However, American had previously collaborated with the university in other studies and valued this experience. This working relationship with the participants and issues of access were addressed at many levels (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Kindergarten and first grade were chosen because of my interest in early childhood education. At Central the Pre-K/K class that I chose consists of two special needs Pre-Kindergarten students (one girl and one boy) and 18 Kindergarten students (13 boys and 6 girls). The racial breakdown is as follows: 92 percent is African American, 4 percent is Latino, and 4 percent is white. At American Elementary, the first grade chosen consists of 27 students (10 girls and 17 boys) and 100 percent are African American.

Participants

The selection of the teachers was based on prior professional relationships, the grade levels they teach, as well as their commitment to working with diverse populations in settings that focus on multicultural education and literature. For the purposes of anonymity, the teachers are referred to by the pseudonyms Don and Sam. Don is a White male teacher who teaches a kindergarten/pre-kindergarten split class including special needs students. I observed Don while supervising student teachers two

years ago at Central Elementary. Teaching assistants and educators who are interested in improving their practice meet once a week in a class that is offered each quarter to discuss these issues. Don was one of the teachers who attended classes and earned credit towards his master's degree. During this time, I was able to talk with Don and others informally about the issues they face in their classrooms. Since the beginning of this year, I have observed Don and his class informally many times.

Sam is a first grade African American male teacher who taught the same group of students last year, in kindergarten. He teaches at American Elementary and he and I are enrolled in the same Ph. D. program; therefore, we have had several classes together. Sam willingly offered his classroom as a possible site for me to conduct my research. Students and faculty at both schools are accustomed to having visitors and researchers because both are alternative schools committed to collaborating with the university and educating students from diverse backgrounds.

I solicited "informed consent" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 111) from all participants. At both schools, written permission was elicited from the parent or guardian for each child to participate. Students and parents were informed that participation was strictly voluntary and at any point students could drop out of the study.

Because the teachers already use multicultural literature in their classrooms, the read aloud and activity was a pleasurable extension of what the teachers did prior to this study. Patton (1990) asserts that observations can provide more depth and contextual knowledge that may uncover things that participants are not aware of because they are situated in the activity. The read-aloud sessions and semi-structured interviews took

place in the teacher's classrooms and the majority of the interview questions were based on previous interviews.

Researcher's Role

The role I chose to take in both of these classrooms is that of "observant participant" (Erickson, 1992, p. 10); meaning that I was viewed by the children as another teacher in the classroom. During the first few weeks of observations, I was a resource for teachers and students. "Participant observers are selectively present in that they hold back their words and watch carefully what they say. When they do talk, they strive to attain an optimally non-reactive presence in order to minimize the shaping of research participants' self-presentation in clear reaction to the researchers as stimulus" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, pp. 58-59). As a participant observer, I circulated throughout the classroom, interacting and helping students. This allowed me to have an emic or insider's perspective (Zaharlick, 1992). Being a participant observer also allowed me to learn the classroom culture and gave me the opportunity to participate in it.

Methods of Data Collection

It is my opinion that the classroom is one of the best places to facilitate discussion about multicultural issues through literature. Therefore, I wanted to observe in order to understand, and describe the teachers' and students' interactions when the teacher used multicultural literature to mediate student's learning. To understand this phenomenon, I visited each classroom many times before the read-aloud sessions. I was there so frequently that the students often hugged me as I walked in and around the

classroom. During the initial visits, I took field notes to describe the classroom layout, interactions between the teacher and students as they relate to read-alouds, and the selection of books made available to students in the classroom library. Five read-aloud sessions and discussions afterwards at each site were audio and video recorded. In both sites, the teacher reads aloud to the students; discusses literature daily with the students; and creates activities for them that relate to the book. Therefore, for the students this was a routine activity. During the read-aloud and activity that followed, I observed the interactions between the teacher and students as well as among students. In addition, I made copies of student's work that was produced during the activity time.

The teachers participating in this study were interviewed several times. At the beginning of the study to collect preliminary data, after the teacher read the second and fourth books, and again at the end of the study to supplement any information not previously obtained. Debriefing sessions also took place after the teachers read each of the books and students participated in the activity that accompanied the book. Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and then checked for accuracy. Finally, I analyzed the transcriptions in order to find links that clarified the teacher's use of multicultural literature. Ongoing data analysis was done and I consistently compared and refined analytic themes as new themes and patterns emerged from new data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest, "analysis during data collection lets the fieldworker cycle back and forth between thinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collection new—often better quality—data" (p.49). In addition to the previously mentioned methods, I used ongoing data analysis to determine the questions that needed to be asked and future data to be collected.

The period of data collection for this study was approximately from March through May. Data includes (1) written summaries of field read-alouds and interviews; (2) field notes from classroom observations, read-alouds, and interviews; (3) audio recordings of multicultural read-alouds by the teacher and activities that immediately follow directed by the teacher; and (4) transcribed (full and selective) audio taped interviews. I also kept a (5) self-reflective journal. Copies of student produced work from the activity was also collected. Moreover, during the detailed continuous review of field notes, transcribed notes from audio recordings, and triangulation of data methods, themes and patterns emerged in two ways: as "indigenous or sensitizing concepts" (Patton, 1990, p. 122).

Issues of confidentiality were addressed in the following ways. I gave written assurance to the parents and/or guardians of the students who participated, that their children's names would not appear in the dissertation. Students, teachers, and schools are referred to by pseudonyms.

Although, I worked hard to not include those who chose not to participate in audio and videotapes. The responses of students who elected not to participate but who were inadvertently recorded, were not analyzed.

Selecting African-American Children's Literature

The same standards used to select good children's literature was also applied to the books selected for this study. According to Yokota, (1993): "Cultural information can be present in virtually every aspect of a story: the description of the setting, the

events in the plot, the actions and words of the characters, and the treatment of the overall theme" (p. 156).

The setting of the story should be authentic. The story should be filled with plentiful cultural details that are representative of the time and place in which it occurs. Illustrations should be an accurate and a true representation of the time period portrayed. Any cultural details that are included should be accurate and informative. Past distortions, errors, and omissions should be gingerly connected to the story.

The plot should be believable and enticing to make the reader want to continue reading. Any issues addressed should show depth and reality. By providing multiple points of view, readers are given insight to alternate ways of seeing things. Themes should allow the reader to gain new insights, build self-esteem, increase their understanding, and give them pride not shame in their culture.

Readers should be able to identify with characters because they are authentic and believable. The language and dialects used should be a true representation of their culture. Stereotypes and negative portrayals must definitely be avoided. Ethnic groups should be illustrated with a variety of physical features. Minority characters should be included for a purpose not to add color.

Special attention was paid to the author's experiences with the culture being depicted in the story and the audience for which the story is written. Also, outdated books were not used because they are more likely to contain stereotypes and/or inaccurate information.

Finally, the collection of books used children was balanced. A large portion of literature belonging to some ethnic groups is made up of folktales and historical fiction

"readers need to see the contemporary side of these cultures as well" (Harris, et al, 1993, p. 218). The literature chosen should spread across multiple genres, be appropriate for students, and be books that they are interested in.

Methods of Data Analysis

To better understand the multifaceted dimensions of the teacher's point of view, a constructivist framework was used. The goal of constructivist inquiry is to understand and reconstruct the conceptions that people have (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). To do this, I used a notebook to record field notes during observations, discussions, and activities that accompanied the read-alouds. I recorded video and audio tapes of the read-aloud, discussion and activity, and audio-taped teacher interviews. The audio tapes were later transcribed by a transcriber. In addition, I collected student work samples. During analysis, I immersed myself in the process of "analytic induction" (Ericson, 1986). Although I analyzed some of the data early on as it was collected, after the data collection period ended, I more thoroughly began to examine the pool of data.

After each of the read aloud sessions, I transferred the recording from the eight millimeter video cassette to a standard VHS cassette that could be viewed in a VCR at a later date. I was able to transfer the video and watch it simultaneously and this was my first viewing of each session. I found it important to view each recording before the subsequent one so that I was able to make video camera angle adjustments that were needed to optimize video recording results. After all of the eight millimeter tapes were transferred, I had two VHS tapes. One tape was used for each teacher, in other words all

of Sam's sessions were on one tape and all of Don's were on the other. The VHS tapes were labeled Don's sessions and Sam's sessions.

The first audio tapes from each session was transcribed by the researcher. That left eight audio tapes to be transcribed by an outside transcriber. When I met with the transcriber, I gave her a copy of the transcriptions that I had done, a transcription machine, eight 90 minute audio tapes, a list of all of the participants' names, one three and one-half inch floppy computer disk, and a copy of each of the books used for the read aloud sessions. I sat down with her and carefully went over the transcripts that I had done. This was to make sure that she realized the importance of the transcriptions being as accurate as possible. After the transcriber completed the first transcription, she and I met again to go over any formatting changes that needed to be made. To make best use of my time, while the transcriber was transcribing the audio tapes, I reviewed the video tapes numerous times.

First, I watched the videotapes paying particular attention to the students' behavior and took notes on what I saw. These notes consisted of documentation of the students' behaviors, comments, and questions during the read aloud, the activity, and the transitions between the two. I watched all five video recorded sessions of Sam and his students before I watched any of Don's. The next time I watched Sam's video recording, I paid particular attention to the teacher's behavior. I took notes on any emphasis that was made on certain words, phrases, and sentences by the teacher. I also thought it was important to document the questions that were asked, comments that were made, connections to the teacher's previous experiences, connections made to the student's prior knowledge, home and family, and connections to future learning or

experiences. I followed the same procedures in note taking while watching Don's video tape.

Next, I received all of the transcriptions from the transcriber and assigned a pseudonym to each of the students. Then I went through each transcript and highlighted what the teachers said in yellow. This made it easier for me to differentiate between what the teachers and students said since my main focus was on the teacher. My next task was to listen to each tape and follow along by reading each of the transcriptions while looking for errors. I did this by watching each video tape while reading the transcriptions from the audio tapes filling in any missing words that were inaudible from the audio tapes transcribed by me and the transcriber. I was not successful at making out all of the words, but I was able to fill in most of those that were missing. I watched each tape approximately 21times, after the initial viewing of each of the tapes, I looked for any similarities among Sam's sessions. I created a preliminary list that included the similarities that were seen on Sam's tape. Then, I viewed Don's tape looking for any similarities among his sessions and created a list. Afterwards, I looked at both lists to see if there were any similarities or differences between the two.

Coding the Pool of Data

Methodological coding was used to uncover patterns as they emerged. A methodological procedure was also produced to code and categorize the themes that emerged during conversations from read alouds, and artifacts surrounding multicultural literature. I began my initial coding by creating a file called chapter four themes on my computer where I typed any possible themes that emerged. I found it necessary to add

more themes, abbreviations for the themes and any notes that I had written by hand as notes in this file. This file on the computer would later serve as legend. I think of it as a legend (see table 3.2) because it would be used in the same manner that a legend is used on a map. Legends are included on maps to provide explanations of symbols. For my purposes, this legend was where I kept notes and information that would later provide explanation, clarification, and elaboration for each theme that I and my peer debriefer could refer to as I sifted through my pool of data and we discussed progress. Moreover, this was also a place where I could add themes and notes as needed. As new themes emerged, I added abbreviations, sub-themes, notes and explanations to this file/legend.

The following initial themes were produced: freedom of movement and expression, questions the teachers asked, and student's accessibility to the teacher. As I searched for more themes to emerge, themes were deleted, used as sub-themes, and collapsed and or combined with others. Additionally, I took notes in the margins on the pages of data. Since I utilized a constructivist paradigm, I expected the data to "speak for itself" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As tentative hypotheses were tested, coding was refined and I looked for confirming as well as disconfirming evidence. According to Erickson (1986), "the researcher is looking for patterns of generalization within the case

CODING CATEGORIES

AQ-Aesthetic Questioning
Investigates or gets at the feelings that the text provokes in the reader
EQ-Efferent Questioning
asks questions that get information from the text
CT-Constructivist Teaching
Literacy event imbedded in its social context (overarching concepts of 1,2,and 3 listed below)
1. Student centered **AND** Drawing on prior or background knowledge
2. Social construction of knowledge **AND** Cooperative learning-social collaboration with others
3. Skills taught authentically
4. Scaffolding students understanding by teacher and/or by students (Bruner and Vygotsky)
SA-Social Action
1. Sharing
2. Respecting self and others
3. Collaborative work
4. Sociohistorical aspect of creating a notion of connectedness of students to help them find their place in this world
CTS-Promoting Critical Thinking Skills The ability to question, analyze, compare, contrast, and organize thoughts. Asking Why
ACESS-Teacher Making Self Accessible to Students
1 . models
2. humorous sarcasm
3. role model
PR-Positive Affirmations and Reinforcement and Holding high expectations
FME-Freedom of Movement and Expression students are active participants, this includes the teachers awareness of developmentally appropriate movement and the need of the students to participate

Table 3.2 Legend of Coding Themes

at hand, rather than for generalizations from one case or setting to another" (p. 148).

When reviewing field notes, transcribed sessions, and interviews, I located themes, links and sub-themes that supported my major assertions. In addition, Erickson (1986) asserts that "the task of pattern analysis is to discover and test those links that make the

largest possible number of connections to items of data in the corpus. When one pulls on the top string, one wants as many subsidiary strings as possible to be attached to data. The strongest assertions are those that have the most strings attached to them, across the widest possible range of sources and kinds of data" (p. 148). Some of the data was not coded into the initial or final coding themes. According to Guba (1978) "the existence of a large number of unassignable or overlapping data items is good evidence of some basic fault in the category system" (p. 53 as cited in Patton, 1987).

When a researcher is conducting qualitative research from a constructivist paradigm she makes an effort to allow the data to "speak for itself." As themes emerge they form a "grounded theory" which will further organize and explain the data that was collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As I selectively coded (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) the data, I consistently refined, collapsed and deleted themes, and created sub-themes as new data emerged (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data analysis was conducted on two levels within case analysis to provide insight in each individual case and cross case analysis so that I could look for similarities and differences between the cases. The researcher acknowledges the inability to provide generalizations because of the small sample size of this study. It is hoped that the information gained from this study will enlighten practitioners and help them to improve their practice.

Qualitative methods were used to uncover multi-layered dimensions as they related to the teacher, students, and multicultural literature. According to Erickson (1986), interpretive methods can be used to effectively study classrooms in that they focus on the following:

> the nature of the classrooms as socially and culturally organized environments for learning;
> the nature (and context of the meaning perspectives of teacher and learner as intrinsic to the educational process;
> the nature of teaching as one, but only one, aspect of the reflexive learning environment (p. 120).

The teachers were included as much as possible during data analysis not only for member checking but also so that the classroom teacher would be a collaborator. I believe that a collaborative relationship between the researcher and the teacher gives the teacher a sense of ownership and provides a better understanding from the teacher's point of view. This greatly reduced misrepresentation of the data collected.

Data was analyzed paying special attention to the following:

- How does the teacher show an awareness of multicultural issues represented in the literature and how is this represented?
- Do the teachers use specific language or strategies to raise student's awareness? If so, what are they?
- What issues and/or questions are raised by the teachers and students after and during the read-aloud?
- What effect (if any) does the race of the teacher have on the read-aloud and discussion?
- What are the teacher's racial and cultural beliefs and how if in anyway are they represented in his practice?
- What activities do these two male primary teacher's use when reading multicultural children's literature to their classes?

To interpret the data collected in this study, I used the following analytical frames: reader response theory, sociocultural theory, and a critical perspective. The following quote from Patton (1990), explains how the analysis of information gained is emergent and inductive.

> The strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in the cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be (p. 44).

I did not approach the data searching for themes that had been previously found. As I watched the video tapes and read through transcripts, field notes, and notes taken from the video tapes, I naturally allowed themes to appear.

The legend was used to help visually display the data concretely, I used eight and one-half inch by 12 inch paper, an extra large font size, and I typed each of the coding themes on a sheet of brightly colored paper along with the sub-themes and any notes that I made to help recall thoughts during the coding process. These sheets were taped up high on the walls in the room in which I was working. After coding as much of the data that I could with my themes and sub-themes, I made copies of the coded data. I then began to cut apart the selections I had coded and taped them on the wall under their appropriate themes. I chose this method because it enabled me to be able to manipulate the sections coded on the walls multiple times and place the data under different themes.

Trustworthiness

The case studies include interviews, audio recordings, video recordings, observations, and field notes. The ability to understand the way these teachers use multicultural literature may depend on the selection of the participants (Patton, 1990). It is important to note that by using the concept of thick description (Gertz, 1973), the researcher is not providing information that would allow readers to repeat the study. Instead, the researcher is offering enough details and information so that reader's can take what is applicable and use it in their own situations. The aforementioned is understandable when one thinks about the uniqueness of each child, teacher, researcher, site, and paradigm used to analyze data. Stake (1988) claims that "The case study researcher does not guarantee that the reader will have an equal share in the interpretation, but it is common for responsibility to be shared between the case study and the reader" (p.262).

Furthermore, Donmoyer (1990) maintains that case studies are not created to be repeatable and that its value is derived from the idea that it offers unique, non-repeatable information. "Uniqueness is an asset rather than a liability. . .When we are interested in expanding cognitive structures, the outlier is prized, for the outlier has great heuristic value" (p.194).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss the issue of trustworthiness by focusing on the following questions:

*How can one establish confidence in the truth of the findings of an inquiry for the respondents with which and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?

> *How can one determine the degree to which the findings of an inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other respondents?
> *How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be consistently repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) respondents in the same (or similar) context?
> *How can one establish the degree to which findings of an inquiry stem from the characteristics of the respondents and the context and not from the biases, motivations, interests, and perspectives of the inquirer? (p. 218).

These questions of trustworthiness were reflected on and answered in the following ways. First, there was peer debriefing that occurred multiple times throughout the study. Second, multiple methods of gathering data were used for triangulation. Third, interviews and read-aloud sessions were audio and videotaped and transcribed as quickly as possible. Prolonged engagement was used to build trust, rapport, and learn the classroom culture. Fifth, to add depth to the prolonged engagement, persistent observation was used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Sixth, a reflexive journal was kept by the researcher to provide information about methods used, write down thoughts, and emerging codes and themes. Finally, member checks were ongoing because according to Guba & Lincoln (1985) they are the "single most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 239).

Validity Issues

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe what they refer to as "parallel criteria" for qualitative research that establish trustworthiness: dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability.

Dependability -According to Lincoln and Guba, (1989) the way to ensure dependability is to overlap methods of data collection and theoretical perspectives. This study used multiple sources of data that overlapped.

Credibility was obtained in the following ways: prolonged engagement, member checks, peer debriefing, and triangulation of several types of data.

Prolonged engagement- To establish a prolonged engagement, I visited each of the classrooms more than ten times, approximately one to three times per week for ten weeks. There were audio and video recordings of read-alouds, interviews, as well as transcriptions of the read-alouds and interviews during reflective sessions. Additionally, field notes and/or observational notes taken each time the researcher was in each classroom. The aforementioned provided prolonged and persistent engagement.

Member checks were ongoing because according to Guba & Lincoln (1985) they are "the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 239). Emphasis was placed on the teacher as co-researcher and co-collaborator. There were formal interviews done five times with each teacher. My reflexive journal documented formal interviews, informal interviews, and reflective sessions. In this journal, I also recorded comments or questions that I was not able to ask the teacher immediately. I found this to be an effective tool to help me recall and clarify issues that emerged. Throughout all phases of the inquiry process, I consulted with peers and used them as debriefers to discuss the findings of my research. By getting feedback through conversations and collaboration with others who are qualitatively oriented, this study was continuously scrutinized which helped keep me focused on the purpose and methods. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985):

> . . . the debriefer is essentially a noninvolved professional peer with whom the inquirer(s) can have a no-holds-barred conversation at periodic intervals. The purposes of the debriefing are multiple; to ask the difficult questions that the inquirer might otherwise avoid ("to keep the inquirer honest"), to explore methodological next steps with someone who has not axe to grind, and to provide a sympathetic listening point of personal catharsis (p. 283).

Triangulation-According to Lincoln & Guba (1985), triangulation uses multiple types of data from multiple sources to cross check and validate each other. Various sources of data were used to provide thick description and variance.

Confirmability, according to Guba and Lincoln, (1989) is the extent to which the interpretations of the findings are truly "rooted in the data themselves" (p. 243). Data analysis was an iterative process that will ensure that the findings are based on the data collected rather than from predetermined themes created by the researcher.

Limitations of the Study

During this study, the researcher encountered various limitations. One anticipated limitation relates to all qualitative research. The nature of qualitative research allows a close examination of a particular setting. Because of this feature, the findings from this study may not be transferable to other settings, which is often a critique of qualitative research. In addition, the researcher's control of the books used for this study may also be viewed as a limitation. The researcher attempted to compensate for this by allowing each teacher to choose two books. Arguments may be made that if the teachers were allowed to choose all five books, they might feel more comfortable with them and the discussions might take on a different tone. However, as

previously described, each chose two and I chose one to make the selection process more equitable.

An unforeseen limitation was accessibility to the teachers after the study ended. Neither teacher continued to teach in the setting in which the study took place. Sam took a sabbatical from his teaching position to concentrate on his Ph. D. work on a full-time basis. Don moved out of the state and the researcher returned home to complete her dissertation and teach full time at a university located in the southwestern region of the United States. The researcher was not in close proximity to the teachers, which made communication extremely difficult.

Significance of the Study

As stated earlier, there is a lack of research surrounding the use of multicultural literature as a mediating tool in the classroom. The researcher hopes that this study will contribute to multicultural education and be used to inform future researchers about the findings as well as the lack of knowledge currently available. This study aims to contribute to the current body of knowledge. Additionally, the findings of this study will be significant because children being educated in American schools are representative of society in general. Parents and society alike are demanding that students culture be represented in their overall education. The researcher believes this study can provide useful information for educators, when they use multicultural literature to mediate their students' cultural knowledge and increase their self-esteem. Future research on teacher's use of multicultural literature can contribute to current understandings and provide examples that can be followed by other educators.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Theoretically and methodologically it doesn't make sense to try to understand teachers multicultural work with their students without first understanding their everyday lives together. Mediated storysharing is not separate from relationships between teachers and children, but rather situated within those relationships, (Cochran-Smith, 1984). Further, sociocultural perspectives on teaching and learning define particular aspects of curriculum as "situated" or embedded in the socially constructed contexts of the classroom. Therefore, for this study, care was taken to understand those contexts which include the particular schools these teachers worked in, and their personal stances toward, commitment to, and philosophies about multicultural teaching. In particular it is important to understand the schools as contexts which support or constrain the notion of exploring issues of diversity with students, as well as the teachers themselves who differ in important ways. Further, the discussions of diversity and the sharing of multicultural literature are embedded in daily classroom lives which include teaching practices, relationships between the teachers and students, and a general atmosphere, all of which support or constrain the construction of meanings around diversity. Thus, in the presentation of findings, I start first with interpretations

of the layers of context in which the read-alouds are situated: (1) the missions and description of the schools; (2) the atmosphere of the classrooms and teachers' backgrounds; (3) general ways in which Don and Sam approach teaching; (4) and the nature of Don and Sam's relationships with their students. By building such a layered picture, I am able to interpret the read aloud and discussions from a more informed and contextualized perspective, one in keeping with sociocultural theory and methods.

The purpose of this study was to explore how two male teachers, who belong to different cultural groups, use multicultural literature to facilitate discussions about African Americans with their predominantly African American pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and first grade students. The following initial questions guided my study:

- How do two male primary teachers approach using African American multicultural literature with their students who are mostly African American in schools whose missions are to support multiculturalism?
- How are their cultural and racial identities and histories represented in their multicultural practice?

Category and Theme Development

According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), "Data analysis is the process of organizing and storing data in light of your increasingly sophisticated judgments, that is, of the meaning-finding interpretations that you are learning to make about the shape of your study" (p. 129). In this chapter, I will review the methods of data analysis by providing a more detailed explanation of how I constructed analytical categories and how I interpreted the data in light of research question.

"By putting like-minded pieces together into data clumps, you create an organizational framework" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p.133). The data collected, includes fieldnotes, videotapes, audiotapes, interview transcripts, and classroom observations. These were used as a pool of data resources to sort through, organize, interpret, and write this chapter. As I sifted through the data, it became clear that the best approach would be to describe the patterns I observed in each of the classrooms and provide interpretations in a layered fashion to contextualize these patterns. Selections from audiotape and videotape transcriptions will be used to support my interpretations. "Eventually, you can place the various data clumps in a meaningful sequence that contributes to the chapters or selections of your manuscript" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 133).

In the interview transcripts, I am identified as JD. The presentation of the data will begin with a discussion of each of the schools and how I perceive them to be supportive contexts for exploring diversity with students. Secondly, I will present the atmosphere of each of the classrooms, followed by Don and Sam's philosophies and stances toward multicultural teaching as they articulated them in interviews and as I interpret and represent them and my sense of the relationships that they had with their students. Next, I will discuss my observations of the teaching strategies I observed. Finally, I will end this chapter with my personal commentary about my observations.

Initially, I approached the data using an "open coding" strategy (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) to search for the largest categories to describe my data. After open coding, I followed with "axial coding," which is where "categories are systematically developed and linked with subcategories" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 143). Finally, I proceeded to

"selective coding" whereby I sharpened up categories (Corbin and Strauss, 1998) to reveal subtle distinctions among patterns.

The term "theme" is used to describe the dominant categories that emerged during data analysis. There were three major themes that emerged from the data: the schools as supportive contexts for exploring diversity; the atmosphere of the classrooms; and effective teaching strategies.

THEMES FOR CODING

SCH-Information about each school
- SCH/A-American
- SCH/C-Central

CLS-Atmosphere of the classrooms
- CLS/S-Sam
- CLS/D-Don

EFT-Effective Teaching Strategies Classroom observations
- EFT/DIV-Teaching strategies that meet the needs of diverse learners
- EFT/COACH-Coaching and supporting teachers as readers and writers
- EFT/CTS-Critical thinking
- EFT/IMA-Using imagination
- EFT/CC-Comparing and contrasting

EFT/PK-Prior Knowledge

- EFT/SA-Social Action

Table 4.1 Themes for Coding Data

American and Central Elementary: Supportive contexts for exploring Diversity with Students

As previously described, both of the schools used in this study strongly support diversity and how it can positively impact the lives of the students. The following includes a description of each of the participating research sites.

American Elementary

American is a non-traditional public school that enrolls students from Kindergarten through the eighth grade. In addition, there is a Head Start Program in the building that accepts children from three to five years old. As mentioned in Chapter Three, students are selected to attend this school through a citywide lottery. This school is centrally located just outside the downtown area of a large Midwestern city. American's focus and goals are an example of how this school district values and supports diversity. Moreover, many national and local corporations also support this school's philosophy through their sponsorship.

This school offers students two fields of study that aren't offered at the average public school, Black Studies and the African foreign language, Kiswahili. Furthermore, there are other program approaches that distinguish American elementary from other elementary schools in the district such as students wearing uniforms, participating in a collaborative reading project with the public library (which was rated the best public library system in US News and World Reports) and, Amisa, a program for 8th grade girls that builds self-esteem; leadership programs as well as extended educational tours and field-trips throughout the United States. Parent involvement goes beyond a Parent

Teacher Association (PTA), grade level parent meetings are held throughout the school year; workshops for the state's standardized testing are held to show parents ways that they can help their child be successful; and after school parent science programs are offered to families of fifth graders.

Sam discussed how important these programs are for African American children. He believes that programs that target disciplines not typically entered by African Americans, such as science, math, and technology, offer students awareness and encouragement and motivate them to consider these fields of endeavor. He elaborated further by saying that with teenage pregnancy being so prevalent in the African American community programs like Amisa are critical in building self-esteem of young Black girls. At American, their goals (as stated on their website) are to:

> develop an African-centered holistic education system for students, parents, staff, and community addressing the needs of the total self with the use of the Ma'at and Nguzo Saba as our guide.
>
> Ma'at, the dynamic principles of right, truth, and justice was the source of harmony with self, universe, and the creator. Egyptian men and women knew that they must practice the declarations in everyday life . . .
>
> - Truth: Congruous in thought, words and deeds.
> - Justice: Always showing balance in everything you do.
> - Righteousness: Acting in accord with divine law.
> - Reciprocity: What you give, you shall receive.
> - Balance: the Scales must be equal on all sides.
> - Harmony: Making sure you are in accordance with nature.
> - Order: To put persons or things into their proper places in relation to each other.
>
> **Nguzo Saba consists of seven principles, which embrace both spiritual and scientific concepts:**
>
> - Umoja (unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

- Kujichagulia (self-determination): to define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined and spoken for by others
- Ujima (collective work and responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers and sisters problems our problems and to solve them together.
- Ujama (cooperative economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and to profit from them together.
- Nia (purpose): To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.
- Kuumba (creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.
- Imani (faith): To believe with all our heart in our parents, our teaches, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle (School website, 2000).

According to Sam, the above principles are used to guide instruction and build a sense of self and community at American. From the mission statement, goals, guiding principles, my observations, and discussions with numerous teachers at this school, it is my belief that this school was established to educate children differently than any other school in this district. The aim of the entire school is to create a balance and educate the "whole" African American child. One of the ways American approaches this goal is by breaking down stereotypes, encouraging students to value themselves and their heritage as well as challenging hegemony. This school goes beyond creating a supportive environment to explore issues of equity and diversity: it articulates an explicit socio-political agenda and creates a critical pedagogy to liberate students through a strengthened cultural identity.

An example of this agenda is provided by Sam in his explanation of how American Elementary challenges Eurocentric history by teaching from paradigms other than those held by the majority. This is what Sam refers to as "the real history."

> For instance, we do critical thinking. For instance, say umm how did you, how would you explain, or how would you describe the country's desire to go from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean? You can tell me as an adult how you would describe it. But you could tell me also, how you were taught it. How were you taught it? Was it manifest destiny? . . .Or was it the trail of tears? Or was it hard labor? . . . See there are all sorts of perspectives. The Native Americans would not have said a manifest destiny. Cause they were trampled on killed, so forth and so on. But we we're taught this one view to look at it. This wonderful destiny, to get by we made it manifest. I mean goodness, gracious we gave it all of the flowery language. . . . We're not really teaching the children to think critically. You're teaching them to think assimilatively. Think the way I want you to think. You know what I'm saying? Treat them the way I want you to treat them. But in Kia, we say wait a minute, there were Europeans trying to get to the Atlantic from the Pacific Ocean and there were native landers already here. How did they feel about them moving across to the other ocean. And the kids begin to open their eyes and go oh, it wasn't that good was it? No, it wasn't all good. And don't let them . . . Don't let it be taught that was all good. There is no lesson in life that is all good. Because you can't have good without bad. Good cannot exist without bad. So, there were bad days and everybody didn't view it the same way. They viewed slavery as an economic boost. We view slavery as a horror, an atrocity. The most inhumane human act ever done (Interview Transcript 2000, Sam, p.2).

In summary, Sam and the school seem to place great emphasis on helping students to see representatives of different cultures portrayed in very positive ways. But, Sam and his school go far in their overtly political identity; that it is critical to break down many of the typically held stereotypes. Sam feels that it is his job to help students to make sense of and deconstruct the "world" within which they live.

Central Elementary

Central is a non-traditional public Kindergarten through fifth grade school that also selects students from a city-wide lottery, and is also located in the downtown section

of the same large Midwestern city. It is an "open-space" according to its brochures, school in the Deweyian (Campbell, 1995) progressive tradition that utilizes literature-based "themed" instruction.. Early childhood grade levels emphasize themed instruction. With this approach to literacy, teachers are given the flexibility to combine various materials, activities, and content areas to teach themes and/or ideas. According to Don, he and his teammates integrate multicultural literature into their thematic units when they can find appropriate literature. They search for children's literature that reflects their student population as well as those who have been underrepresented. Au (1993) reminds us that "In multicultural classrooms, teachers may find that students arrive at what appear to be unusual interpretations of a particular text" (p. 22). The students may have different understandings because of their varying types of background knowledge (Au, 1993). Because of this, story sharing in a literature-based classroom is a natural context for multicultural teaching to take place. Students can share their interpretations and understandings with the teacher and each other. No textbooks are used.

All of the grade levels have "pods". In other words there are no walls between home bases, groups or teachers' and students' individual areas. There are only walls between grade levels.

Learning is individualized to support students from diverse backgrounds while respecting their differences. Technology is also an integral part in learning. Additionally, this school places great emphasis on collaboration which exists in numerous ways: between students and teachers, between students, between the university and school, between parents, students and teachers, between the support staff and teachers, and between the community and teachers. Moreover, there is a welcoming atmosphere that

supports the idea of community. This open environment welcomes the public, community, researchers, businesses, and parents. The school also focuses on building a sense of community within the multi-age class area groupings, as well as a respect for individuality and multicultural differences.

Collaboration is encouraged in multiple ways and on many levels. It would be virtually impossible for students or teachers to exist in isolation. The design of this school makes collaboration easier than in a more traditionally designed school. Teachers collaborate with other teachers teaching the same grade level. In addition, teachers collaborate vertically. I think of this as vertical collaboration because teachers plan with other teachers who teach in the grade level that directly precedes and follows their grade level. For example, first grade teachers plan and collaborate with teachers in kindergarten and second grade. It is my opinion that this type of collaboration creates a richer and more meaningful curriculum because units of study may be repeated in multiple grade levels, but are expanded and built on the student's prior knowledge gained. In the areas I observed, students have the opportunity to work with teachers other than their home base teacher. The teachers know the names of all of the students in their pod and are responsible for educating all students.

Parents are encouraged to be active at Central. Some volunteer as grade-level helpers while others tutor students who need additional assistance. Furthermore, some parents come into the school and read to students. During my data collection period, one parent of a child who was in Don's classroom was there every day. Early on, I thought she was an employee of the school. I later found out that she wasn't. Parents are always welcomed and enter freely into Central. Whenever possible, parents are asked to come in

and talk to students about things that they are an expert in, especially culture. Cultural arts play a large role here. Parents collaborate to bring together many different cultural events for the students to be involved in. Some occur during the school day and others after school.

Students collaborate with teachers as well as with each other. Teachers engage students in meaningful activities and build on the students' interests. The curriculum is planned but student directed. This allows for student centered instruction that supports students from diverse backgrounds while respecting differences.

Central Elementary collaborates with outsiders also. Local businesses provide volunteers to tutor children. The university has worked on several projects with teachers at Central. Additionally, this has been the site for many research projects.

The school as a whole reaches out to the neighborhood and creates activities to beautify and clean the community and interact with its members. In the area where I collected my data, they have a person whom they refer to as their "Adopted Russian Grandmother." She is a resident of the neighborhood who volunteers at the school. This grandmother has no grandchildren at the school, she is a community member who helps out in the kindergarten pod.

In comparison to American, Central has no overtly political identity and a broader multicultural perspective. The notion of "community" seems to be a greater emphasis than African American Identity.

Table 4.2 summarizes the comparison between American and Central schools. This side by side comparison allows the reader to see that the schools have a similar student-selection process and non-traditional philosophies.

School	American Elementary	Central Elementary
Teacher	Sam	Don
Location	Outside Downtown	Downtown
School's Student Selection Process	City-wide Lottery	City-wide Lottery
Philosophy as stated on web-sites	To develop an African-centered holistic education system for students, parents, staff and community addressing needs of the total self	Individualized literature-based themed instruction that focuses on building a sense of community and respect for individuals as well as multicultural differences
Grade Levels	Head Start and K-8	K-5

Table 4.1: A Breakdown of the Participating Schools

The Refinement of My Questions

The reader can glean from table 4.2 that both schools, American with its Afrocentric framework, and Central with its literature-based framework, are supportive and conducive environments for multicultural teaching. However, as I came to understand the two schools as different contexts, one which emphasizes cultural identity and one which emphasizes community, I refined my questions somewhat. My original questions were centered on the obvious differences between Sam and Don as teachers: one is African-American and one is Caucasian. I wondered how they would mediate literature differently with respect to their obvious differences culturally and socially. I assumed that I had selected two equally supportive schools. As the differences between the schools became more apparent, I refined my questions to include: How do the approaches of these teachers reflect their distinct school contexts? Thus, the unit of analysis and interpretation shifted from the teachers to the teachers within their schools.

In this section, I describe my first interactions with each of the teachers in their classrooms and my unfolding understanding of the daily lives of the teachers and their students. Included in this layer of context is the overall tenor of the classrooms, Don and Sam's philosophies and stances toward multicultural teaching (as I interpret and represent them) and my sense of the relationships they had with their students.

Atmosphere of Sam's Classroom

Upon entering Sam's classroom, I couldn't help but notice that it was quite different from other classrooms that I had visited in the past. It was extremely large and there were a lot of activities going on simultaneously. Sam was assisting a student while others hurried to complete their assigned tasks. To some outsiders, the classroom might be viewed as chaotic and lacking structure. After talking to Sam and after a few classroom visits, I could see the structure and rules of the classroom that he had in place since last year when they were in Kindergarten with Sam. A few students noticed my presence and called upon the teacher, to make him aware of my arrival, "Baba". He acknowledged my presence by holding one finger in the air, telling me that he would be with me in a minute.

As I waited, I surveyed the room. I observed that most of the items on the walls revolved around promoting African or African American pride. Some of these items were a Cape Verde flag, the American Flag, a bulletin board with Anansi the spider and book covers from several African American pieces of literature, posters with African principles, a bulletin board with famous black Americans, African masks made of paper, and my personal favorite, a bulletin board titled "African American Geniuses" with a

picture of Chief Justice, Thurgood Marshall in the center and students' work surrounding the picture.

As I looked towards the chalkboard, I noticed that there were no desks; just seven rectangular tables, one round table, and a teacher's desk in the corner at the back of the room by the window. Behind the teacher's desk was a small alcove or area that serves as a meeting place for beginning of the day and read aloud activities. It also houses the classroom library and six computers with Internet access for the students to use. In the classroom library, there are many different types of books, biographies, multicultural books, non-fiction books, fiction books, folktales, nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and thematic books as well as expository books in a wide range of reading levels.

When Sam came over to talk to me, he introduced me to his students as "Mama Dyer." This was very different for me because I had always been addressed "Miss" by students. Later, I asked about the term "Mama". He explained that "Baba" and "Mama" are both terms of respect and endearment, and "Baba" is used in place of Mr. while "Mama" is used in place of Mrs., Ms., and Miss.

Sam is an African American male originally from the southern sector of the United States who entered the field of education in a non-traditional manner. He was working in an unfulfilling job at a large retail department store and decided to apply for a position with a southern public school system as a teacher's aide. The faculty and office staff at the school where he was working encouraged him to go back to school and get a degree in early childhood education. With the support of his family, he obtained a full-time position as a preschool teacher and returned to school as a full-time student. After completing his bachelor's and master's degrees, he taught in a southern public school

system. After his first year teaching in public school, he decided to go to graduate school and get his Ph. D. He saw an advertisement for a school district located in the Midwest and since the university he is currently attending was his second choice of graduate schools, he decided to apply. He obtained a job teaching kindergarten and moved to the Midwest where he would also begin his Ph. D. studies. Sam feels like he was well prepared for teaching kindergarten and knows education.

> I've been in education for over ten years. . . . I was an assistant, I mean you know, I don't want to put in a hierarchy but, you know how we are in our society, we do a hierarchy. And, I was at the bottom in the trenches and I moved up as a full-time preschool teacher, teaching preschool skills, kindergarten readiness and then from there I moved into a public school position. Umm, so I know the ropes (Interview Transcript 2000, Sam, p. 1).

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, American is an elementary school whose entire student population is African American and operates from an Africentric paradigm. Sam chose to interview with this school, because he agreed with the principles by which the school is governed. The following is a conversation taken from an interview transcript, where Sam is describing how this school is different.

> Well the hardest thing to do is to come out of your Eurocentric paradigm. You've been taught and raised to assimilate into, so forth and so on into Eurocentricism. So, that's the hardest part of it. But once you are able to see Eurocentric and to see Africentric even though you're still fighting with the Eurocentric paradigm, at least, you know that you're fighting. And that's what you call awareness or enlightenment… knowing there's a battle going on. Umm, and what that battle does is helps you constantly see Africentric things and how it compares to Eurocentric things and basically what it is, is teaching a totally different way. First of all, it is effective by allowing the children, umm allowing yourself to promote the emotional part of the children. The well being of the children, so that they know above all that they can do. To make sure they know that they can do anything they want to. My kids know they can do anything they want to do. I mean, you see how they express that. I mean, they're independent, they are very confident. Because the first thing we do as the Africentric facilitator, I have to imbue in them is you can. And it is not that superficial you can, . . . it's you can, because I did. And I will tell you how I did and in my daily walk, in my daily talk to you, in the way I deal with you. You see what I am saying? . . .And you get

> them effectively, you make sure they're emotionally stable, emotionally strong, and most people don't do that. It is all about academics but we spend a whole lot of time the first couple of months dealing with social issues, dealing with personal issues, dealing with why aren't you doing this, are you all right? What's going on at home? . . . try to get the children to the point where . . Listen, no matter what goes on around you, you can succeed (Interview Transcript 2000, Sam, p. 1).

Sam also addresses issues of equity and gender, via other different venues. As mentioned earlier, in addition to curriculum, Sam teaches social skills. Because of the large number of boys (17) in his classroom, he teaches the boys to respect themselves as well as girls (10). He attributes his thoughts about respect, a form of manners, to being raised in the South. Boys are taught to be gentlemen by taking care of young ladies and doing things such as allowing them to go first in line, being polite and not verbally or physically abusing them (Interview Transcript, Sam 2000). This traditional stance about gender roles is an important part of who Sam is. Being Southern myself, personally, I agree with Sam in that his belief is because of his Southern roots. His beliefs are not atypical; indeed many male and female Southerners subscribe to the same beliefs.

It appears that Sam has very strong liberatory feelings about race. He works hard to free his students from the hegemonic constraints that society wittingly and unwittingly imposes. It is important to this researcher, that she not make assumptions about Sam's beliefs about gender. The data collected supports the belief that although Sam expressed what some might refer to as stereotypical gender roles; he does not see women in a subordinate position to men. Instead, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, he looks at his students as individuals and works to meet their individual needs.

Many studies have shown that students soar academically and socially when there is a connection between home and school (Ogbu, 1988; Heath, 1983; Au, 1992). Sam

realizes the impact this can have on his students, so he discusses the importance of the home and school connection at the beginning of every school year.

> "Once they (the parents [added for clarification by the researcher]) realize who I am and what I'm doing, the home begins to look more like school and school begins to look more like home. I begin to talk like them and they begin to talk like me and the kids are not falling through the cracks (Interview Transcript 2000, Sam, p. 4).

Sam encourages continuity between home and school with children's literature, by encouraging parents to become active participants in their child's education. Some of the parents take their children to the library and take an active part in book selection. Students often bring multicultural books from the library to the classroom that have characters they can identify with as well as themes the students are studying.

> We did a nice big story project with this book (On No, Kojo How Could You?) So, of course when he (the student [added for clarification by the researcher]) went to the library with his mom, he immediately got it because he was familiar with it. That's a plus and a positive and a thumbs up to the literature that we give these children. To the multicultural literature, to them actually listening, actually having fun, actually getting involved in stories that represent them. See and he also brought these because we are going to NASA. He knows we're going to the space center, so he brought space books. And this is what I encourage the children to do when they go out. Pick up stuff that we can use in class (Interview Transcript 2000, Sam, p. 2).

When selecting multicultural literature for the classroom, Sam selects children's books that revolve around the curriculum or issues going on in the classroom. These books have a dual purpose, to teach content as well as a moral or a lesson. Because of his beliefs about social construction and constructivist teaching (Berk & Winsler, 1995;

Cole, 1985; Rogoff, 1990) the children's interest plays a large role in the lessons that take place in his classroom.

> Because I'm a facilitator, I like to take it (the story just read) where they want to go with it. I like that when I read it, every time I read it, I see something different myself. And I go oh. But what I do is I make sure that I have the time frame allotted to spend the time. Now if I plan to read it, I still don't plan, plan, plan. If I know I am going to do an activity after it. Were going to do a project after this. I still wouldn't plan. I would read the story. I know what I want them to do afterwards. But during the story time, I want them to develop the thought processes. I want them to develop and pull out the things that are going on. Pull out the situations and the incidents in the story and then go and do it. For instance, we did. . . . I couldn't have planned it. We did freedom rides when we were talking about Rosa Parks. We talked about how the people were beat with the waterhoses. We discussed everything about Martin King and so we talked about it. I asked them in groups, I got them in groups of four and asked them what would you like to write about? You know what I'm saying? And they began to spill out and I'm thinking I could not have planned this, if I tried (Interview Transcript 2000, Sam p. 4).

While focusing on raising the consciousness of his students, Sam also creates stories from his own life experiences to humanize what might be considered too harsh for children to hear. He believes that incorporating his personal experiences makes the story more relevant and pertinent to his students. Including the story of "others" is also important to Sam. He not only uses storytelling to tell the story of African Americans, he also tells the story of others who have been marginalized in our country.

> I don't just tell stories about African Americans. I also told a Thanksgiving story about Native Americans. I do that based on something I've read and I really can't remember it, but I can remember the essence of the story. So what I do is fill it up, I flower it. I know the theme and what I do is make it work. Right, I just sit down and make it work. I'll sit down and tell stories and they get more engrossed in me telling stories than they do in the reading, because now they have to picture. So right, I do tell stories. I read stories. I try to tell a story at least once a week it's just so much work. Because I have to remember, it's impromptu it's off the hook. You have to know how to get in. It's easy to get in to the story. The development is sometimes wobbly but the hardest part is getting out of the story. It's like okay, how am I going to end this. And you're thinking it while you're talking. So, the kids are still engrossed. And most of the time, I end it like Oh, and stick up my hands and send them back to write about their ending. That gives me time to think up a good ending. While they're thinking and I'll say go over there and write and

> turn it into impromptu writing. If they got so engrossed. They might write something really profound. Okay, push math away. Push this away and go write. And when you come back, I'll tell you what happened (Interview Transcript 2000, Sam, p. 3).

Sam sees himself as "one" with his students. Foster and Peele (1999) identify characteristics that set successful teachers of African American children apart and refer to these characteristics as "cultural solidarity." These teachers "assume responsibility for teaching the knowledge, skills, and values that facilitate school success, self-determination, and a healthy cultural identity; link classroom content to student's out of school experiences; use familiar cultural patterns to organize classroom instruction; and incorporate culturally familiar communication patterns into classroom" (p.177). Sam views himself as an insider, which is an easier task for him than Don because he shares the culture and race of his students. His philosophy about diversity is multifaceted and is reflected in the many different positions and roles he takes as a teacher in his classroom. For example, he sees himself as a role model for his students to look up to and respect. Additionally, he makes himself accessible to his students by allowing them to see that he is a friend, protector, and confidant. During my observations in his classroom, I was able to see how Sam used personal narratives to extend students' comprehension. From our conversations and my observations, I could see that Sam sees his job as breaking down stereotypes, challenging the realities of others, getting parents involved in their children's education, preparing his students for the real world and educating the whole child, mind, body, and soul.

In summary, Sam and the school seem to place great emphasis on helping students to see representatives of different cultures portrayed in a very positive way. He

uses multicultural literature and educational practices as a vehicle. Sam and his school believe that this is critical in breaking down many of the typically held stereotypes. He chose to interview at American because this school's goals closely align with his own. Sam feels that it is his job to help students to make sense of and deconstruct the world that exists around them. Sam's pedagogy is focused on enriching the lives of his African American students. He does this through uplifting and empowering their lives as African Americans. His first priority is to equip his students with the knowledge and skills to become successful adults. Additionally, he feels that it is important to expose his students to the cultures of others, but that is not his primary focus.

The Atmosphere of Don's Classroom

As I have described, Central Elementary is designed with open areas and each grade level is situated in what I refer to as pods. Don's classroom is located downstairs in a large open area. Each teacher has his/her piece of the classroom space and there is a common area in the center of the room. The only walls in this area are on the outside of each teacher's area. There are no partitions or dividers. You can clearly see and hear what is going on in other teacher's areas. Although I was often distracted by the complexity of the environment, I noticed that none of the children seemed to be distracted.

In the center of this large room, there are shelves about waist high to the students that house supplies, blocks, Unifix cubes, base ten blocks, puzzles and other constructivist materials that students use daily. Each pod includes a learning area that is shared across the pods. Don's pod area includes computers that are lined up in a row below the windows. Another teacher's pod houses the dramatic play area with items such

as a play kitchen, clothes and other props that are developmentally appropriate for kindergarteners. Additionally, a third kindergarten teacher's pod has a sofa with an end table and lamp next to it and steps that serve as the meeting place for kindergarten group meetings. There are no desks, instead there are several round and rectangular tables with chairs around them. Students' work is displayed in abundance. Art work, writing, as well as teacher-made bulletin boards are on the walls. These kindergarten teachers are non-traditional in their instructional approach. There are no chalkboards or wipe-off boards, rather each teacher uses an easel. Don uses chart paper as well as a computer for writing. When he works with a small group at a table, he writes large letters on a piece of blank, white copy paper so that all students can see. All of the kindergarten teachers at Central value children's literature, so each teacher has a bookshelf in his/her pod. It is clear that the teachers cooperatively worked together to make wise use of the space and supplies that they have. "The capacity of young children to collaborate, like other abilities in childhood, is a developmental attainment that must be cultivated by adults (Berk & Winsler, 1995 p. 132).

As previously mentioned, I supervised student teachers in this area the previous year, so I had met all of the kindergarten teachers and had the opportunity to see them teach. Don stood out to me because he is one of the few males whom I had seen teach early childhood students.

After contacting Don, he gladly agreed to participate in this study. In February, I began visiting Don's classroom and helping in whatever capacity I was needed. Sometimes I observed, and at other times I interacted with the students. Soon, the students felt quite comfortable with me. They asked me for assistance, wanted to sit close

to me during story time, and wanted me to play with them or watch them while they showed me many of the multiple recreational talents they possessed during recess. I wanted my presence to be matter of fact and not a distraction to the students during this study.

Although Don spent a lot of his childhood in his mother's classroom helping her during the school year, teaching was not his first career choice. He began his college career in a hotel-restaurant program with a focus on culinary arts.

> Somewhere along the line in my freshman year, I kind of like, I'm not sure I want to do this, it's like all those things, do I want to do this or do I want to do something else and I switched my major to early childhood and as soon as I started working in the campus preschool, I really thought I had found what I wanted to do (Interview Transcript 2000, Don, p.1).

Having taught for seven years at many early childhood levels, Don said his favorite grade to teach is preschool. He finds many rewards teaching preschool and went on to say the following:

> I really like preschool. I like the atmosphere of preschool and I like the exploration of preschool. I'm not really thrilled with you know all you have to teach these benchmarks and I don't like that. You know at Central, Central hasn't been such a switch from preschool at least in the beginning, because we're doing a lot more of our own curriculum development and kinds of things and we still do but not as much with the benchmarks and everything (Interview Transcript 2000, Don, p. 1).

Don embraces the challenges of teaching and treats his students as individuals. He articulates that although 19 of his 21 students are African-American, he perceives them as culturally diverse and at different academic levels. Moreover, realizing this, he accepts and uses these differences to meet his students where they are and take them as far as he can during their year together.

> . . . I like kindergarten more as we're going to learn our letters. Some might learn how to read, some of us are going to figure out we can write. Some of us are going to write sentences and some will write words, you know it's everybody's job in this school in particular. We have kids that come to school that have never been to preschool who have never seen a pencil or crayon, who don't know how to treat their books and they have never been read to in general . . .We don't have kids that come in as, I guess the proficiency test assumes that all kids come in and they already know to do all this stuff and it's just not true (Interview Transcript 2000, Don, p. 3).

The population of students has changed during the past five years that he has been at Central. This is evident to Don when he looks at other grade levels in the school. The fifth grade class is more evenly divided racially, however from fifth grade to kindergarten you can readily see a gradual increase in the number of African American students and a decrease in the number of Caucasian students.

Don and I discussed how the demographics have changed in this country and how these changes are also reflected in our schools. Don articulated that because of these changes, his priorities have been refocused. Prior to the 1980s, education ranked high on the list of priorities in most households. The importance of education crossed color and racial lines, socioeconomic classes as well as gender groups. Children were different and not exposed to some of the horrific conditions that our children currently face daily. Violence was minimal compared to today. Parents didn't have to worry about their children being hurt or killed in a drive by shooting or at school. Drugs were not as prevalent, television was not as graphic, and homeless children were rarely if ever heard of. Don sees evidence of our changing society in his students. He has great concern for those who

> . . watch a lot of TV, they watch a lot of inappropriate TV. . . . these kids tell me about "Scream 3" and "Chuckie's Bride". . . . they're five, you know? I've had some real street- wise kids. I've had kids who knew when there was a drug deal on the corner, you but they could hardly write their names. . . . Yeah, so you know its like they learn

> different things so that they can survive the environment they are in. There are other kids in my classroom who wouldn't know what in the heck was going on and would say that there are just some people down there on the corner. Some kids that are tough, they come off the street and boy don't you mess with them and it's like somebody bumps them and whew (Transcript Interview, 2000, Don, p. 5).

Because of this trend, Don sees the purpose of education differently today than in the past. Previously he would have seen his primary responsibility as creating "an informed citizenry." However, today he feels differently ". . .I think we need life-long learners, I think education is more than just that we're going to train people so that they can get a job and just go work in a factory" (Interview Transcript 2000, Don , p. 5).

Don and I have a similar view when it comes to our definition of multicultural literature. We both believe that multicultural children's literature should be reflective of many different cultural groups. "I think it comes from a variety of sources not just the typical type, I would say not only Eurocentric, Afrocentric, but Hispanic. You know I think if you're going to use multicultural literature you need to find books that come from all over" (Interview Transcript 2000, Don, p. 5). Don expands on this issue by saying "I think early elementary school teachers get caught up in using picture books and there are so many more folktales and things that are real appropriate. Sometimes you have to water it down a little bit so that it is not above the kids heads, there is some great literature, if you expand yourself beyond picture books" (Interview Transcript 2000, Don, pp. 5-6). Don's ideas about multicultural books are framed with his school's emphasis on thematic instruction and literature- based instruction

Multicultural book selection should meet many of the criteria that exist for selecting quality age appropriate literature. Don feels that it is not appropriate to use a multicultural piece just for the sake of doing so and goes on to say:

> I kind of like my books fit into what we're doing to either tie in thematically or some element of the story that the kids can make a connection to. I've seen people who just pull out a book and read it and it doesn't really have a purpose for anything but then they'll say I read this book and it an African tale and you're like going so what. . . . I'm not going to say reading stories isn't important, because I like reading stories and I like reading to my kids and I'll just send a kid over to the bookshelf and pick out any book you would have me to read and whatever they bring back whether it's non-fiction or whatever, we will read just for fun and there should be choices of literature that is we are going to read for fun. But I think also it depends on what you want to do with the book as to what kind of book you're going to choose. There is fun reading, reading for information there is reading to tell the story or to learn about something" (Interview Transcript 2000, Don, p. 6).

Don encourages his students' parents to be heavily involved in their child's education. Parents are welcome at anytime in the classroom, and are encouraged to volunteer in any way that they can. There is a reciprocal level of comfort between Don and many of the parents. Because of this relationship, he feels at ease and able to ask questions about many culturally sensitive subjects that he is inexperienced with. For example, after reading Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox, and Tar Baby, Don told his students that he had asked one of their parents about the meaning of "Bruh." The mother explained that those terms originated during slavery when only White people were allowed to be referred to as Mr. and Mrs. Therefore, slaves began to use brother and sister preceding their first names to denote respect, a sense of pride and relationship. He further explained that even today some African Americans still refer to each other as brother and sister and that it is meant to express that we are brothers and sisters in Christ (The People Could Fly, Transcript, p. 4).

Don also verbally expressed his belief that his students could succeed. He feels that he can relate to his students even though he is not a member of their cultural group.

He supports the aforementioned statement by stating that he has not always been middle-class, in fact, he is from a similar background as some of his students. However, Don verbalized that he can relate to his students based on the socioeconomic group that he grew up in (Interview Transcript, Don, 2000).

Don reflected on how the student population had changed over the past few years; he raised mostly negative changes. To me, the characterization of those negative changes align with stereotypical beliefs about people who do not belong to or assimilate into the mainstream of American culture. “Some of us are going to write sentences and some will write words . . . you know where everybody is some place different at this school in particular. We have some kids that come to school that have never been to a preschool, who have never seen a pencil or crayon, and who don’t know how to treat their books and they haven’t been read to (Don, Interview Transcript, 200 p. 2).

It is difficult to be an outsider and discuss issues of equity and diversity when your cultural group is believed to perpetuate the inequities. Don was apprehensive about addressing some issues surrounding diversity and equity, which could be attributed to him being an outsider or what he believed was developmentally appropriate for his students. It is often difficult for anyone to discuss issues that make us uncomfortable with others.

From the data collected, it is my belief that when it comes to discussing issues of diversity and equity, Don is somewhat reticent. He feels that he can’t be an expert on African American culture and traditions, so he invites parents, community members and others who are “experts” to ensure that he is teaching his students accurately. He feels at a disadvantage because his cultural group is believed to have initiated and continues to

perpetuate many of the inequities that exist today. However, he is committed to teaching students from diverse groups and values diversity. Don chose to interview at Central and remain there because he strongly believes and claims that he supports the schools commitment to embracing and celebrating diversity and believes that he can make a positive contribution in the lives of his students.

Don and Sam's Classroom Observations

Read aloud sessions are literacy events that are embedded in their social context (Cochran-Smith, 1984). By that I mean that the events cannot be examined without also examining the social context in which they are situated. Figure 4.1 illustrates how the sociocultural context in which the activity is taking place, teacher and students, and the text all work together, occupying multiple positions that are fluid in motion while working together. In other words, the teacher and students, and the text cannot be separated from each other; they are intertwined and work together to create sociocultural activities.

In these classrooms, each teacher used a student-centered approach to draw upon students' prior knowledge. Additionally, each of the read alouds seemed to be a way that the teachers used "scaffolding" (Berk & Winsler, 1995; Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1985) to assist student's instruction. Reading the text as well as discussions surrounding the books, were used to socially construct discussions and to make meaning out of what was read.

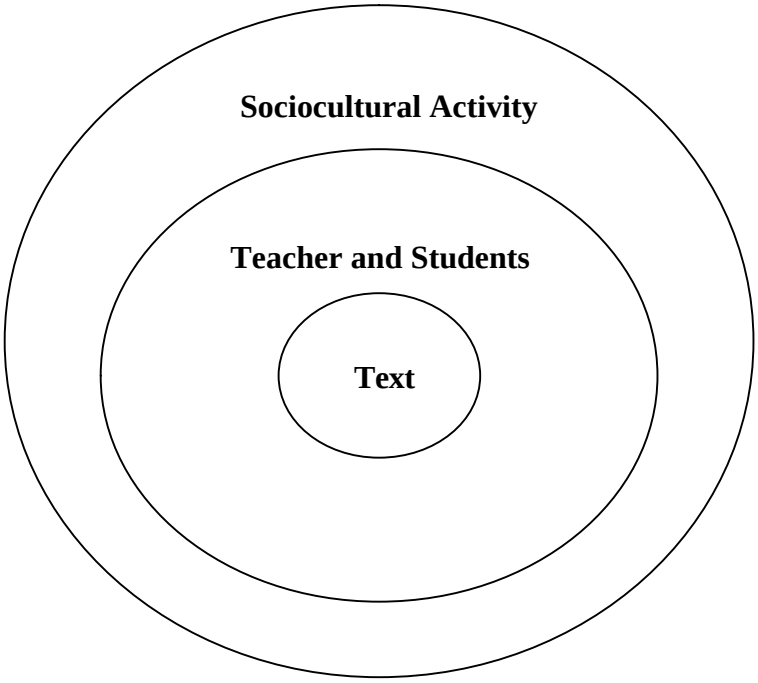


Figure 4.1: Situating the Sociocultural Activities

In the next section, I will focus on a layer of context closer to the story-sharing events by describing and interpreting my observations of both Don and Sam's interactions with students within their classrooms.

Teaching Strategies that Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners

Teachers who utilize constructivist teaching strategies like Don and Sam's create a learning environment that is "learner-centered" (Texas Education Association, 2002). Don and Sam's read-aloud sessions illustrate that they both create an environment that encourages active engagement and participation during the social construction of literacy

events which include time, during, before, and after read-alouds. Table 4.3 lists each book read aloud and the ensuing activity planned by Don and Sam.

In the following example, this negotiated and mediated work can be seen. Sam is aware that his students might have difficulty understanding the story because of the Black dialect used to tell the stories in The People Could Fly. In the folktale, Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox and Tar Baby, there are only two pictures. Sam often uses words to describe the events as they evolve in the stories to help students comprehend and use their own imagination.

Sam	Now we are going to read a story from Virginia Hamilton. And remember how Virginia Hamilton's stories are, sometimes the language is very different it doesn't sound like other stories, sometimes the language is different. Now who remembers what type of language she uses? How do you describe the language? Jessica.
Jessica	Sometimes it's missing words.
Sam	Sometimes it's missing words.
DJ	You can't understand it, how she says it.
Sam	Sometimes it's hard to understand, excellent job.
Crystal	No pictures.

In the example above, Sam prepares his students to get ready to visualize the pictures. He also reminds students that they will have to think differently while listening to this story.

Title and Author	Teacher/Activity
A Country Far Away by Nigel Gray	Don-Did not do an activity because of a lack of time Sam-Students drew pictures similar to those in the story comparing themselves to someone in a far away country
Carousel by Pat Cummings	Don-Students brainstormed information about characters in the story and were given drawings of animals for them to color, create a scene, and write a sentence about the picture Sam-Students were given feelings cards with a smile on one side and a frown on the other and the teacher asked questions about how the main character felt in the book and how they would feel
Flossie and the Fox by Patricia McKissack	Don-Venn diagram comparing themselves to Flossie Sam-Venn diagram comparing themselves to Flossie and created a story similar to the book they had been read and a dramatization of carrying eggs without breaking them
The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales by Virginia Hamilton	Don-Pretended characters in the story were real people instead of animals and discussed what type of person they would be and group retelling of the story with the characters being nice to one another and students then illustrated them Sam-Students rewrote the story in cooperative groups and create puppets to use while sharing their story with the rest of the class
Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema	Don-Students were given materials to create stick puppets and a jungle scene Sam-Students created masks to use to act out the story during a retelling of the story by the teacher while some classmates watched

Table 4.2: Books and Activities

Observations of Strategies that Illustrate Effective Teaching

While in Sam and Don's classrooms, I observed these teachers using "best practices" (Zeleman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998) in their teaching. The following section will illustrate some of the strategies used by these two teachers.

Coaching and Supporting Students as Readers and Writers

After reading Carousel, students in Don's class were encouraged to create a scene from the story or a carousel of their own. As I videotaped the children working, I noticed Don working with one of his students, JR, who was trying to think of a sentence that he could write under his illustration to describe the scene that he had created. JR told Don the sentence that he wanted to write, but was hesitant about writing it. "The animals are trying to run away." Don sat down with JR and as they repeated the sentence, Don held up one finger for each word. Afterwards, he told JR that there were seven words that they were going to have to write. Don asked JR what the first word was and assured him that he could write it on his own and told him to do so. The first word of the sentence was "The." JR wrote "This."

Don How do you spell the?

JR wrote t-h-i-s

Don What word did you write?

JR The

Don That's not the word the. Look at it again. What word is that?

JR began to erase the word.

Don Don't erase it, let's look at it. What word is that?

JR looked at Don while shaking his pencil and doesn't say anything

Don Okay, watch this if we cover up th, (Don covers up th with his finger) what do ya got?

JR i i i (making the short I sound)

Don Is. (dragging the sounds out) So, what word is this (removing his finger from over th)?

JR This?

Don Good (Don erases is at the end of the word). Now how do you spell the? (A long pause).

JR e?

Don Good, okay. The animals (stretching out animals). What are we going to put for animals (stretching the word again).

From a constructivist perspective on literacy instruction, (Clay, 1991) coaching and supporting students is important for optimal learning to occur. In this example, Don is coaching JR's writing. By doing so, Don assisted him in doing a task that he could not do by himself. With coaching, JR was able to write the sentence accurately. Furthermore, Don utilized the negotiated moment between him and his student JR to hone in on the specific needs of this student. He was able to combine JR's interest and needs and help him construct his sentence. Don used this opportunity because he realizes the importance of teaching skills and strategies in the context of real writing, not in isolated skill and drill.

In the following passage, Don and his students work together to deconstruct meaning that lies under the surface of the overarching theme of the story. After reading Carousel, Don's understanding of the direction of the conversation allowed him to use

this teachable moment to connect the text to real-life situations and support their emergent skills in comprehending and interpreting text.

Don	What did you like about that Precious?
Precious	It's nice.
Don	What's nice about that story?
Precious	If you love people that means they love you.
Don	If you love people that means they love you, yeah. Why was Alex so upset?
Precious	Because her father wasn't coming home. His plane was late.
Don	Her father wasn't coming home. His plane was late. What do you think Dad was doing?
Devon	He never comes home.
Don	He never comes home. You don't think he never comes home? Okay. What do you have to say Alexia?
Alexia	He was at work.
Don	He was at work. Yeah he could have been. Does it say in the story what Dad was doing?
Students	No (in unison).
Don	No. It just says just like Precious said, his plane was late.
Alexia	Her mother was mad at her.
Don	Why was her mother so mad at her Khashera? I was asking Khashera.
Khashera	Because she was being bad.
Don	Because she was being bad. What was bad about how she was acting?
Toya	She didn't like the slippers.

Don Now wait a minute, did she like the slippers? Because at the end it says that Alex squeezed her Dad's hand, he was going to love those slippers. You think she like the slippers? What was she really mad at?

John Her dad.

Don Her dad, why?

Crystal Because he couldn't come home.

Don Because he didn't come home. Did he promise?

Students Yeah (in unison).

Don He did say I would be home for your birthday and she was expecting him to come home. How do you think she felt when Dad did come home?

Toya She stomped up the stairs.

Don Yeah and she stomped up the stairs. How do you think the mom feels?

Students Mad (in unison).

Don Right. How do you think the mom feels about Dad not getting on the airplane on time and coming home?

Alexia She was mad.

Don You think the mom was mad too?

Devon Yeah. Sometimes daddy doesn't come home for birthdays.

Don So mommy was mad that dad couldn't be home. How do you think daddy felt?

Students Sad (in unison).

Don Sad. Why do you think he was sad?

Khasherah Because he was missing her.

Chavron He missed the animals.

Don Yeah, because he was missing his daughter. He missed the animals, yeah he missed the animals.

Toya He loves his daughter. He wouldn't be able to hug her and kiss her.

Don Yeah, hugging and kissing. It's hard sometimes when you promise something to somebody that it sometimes hard to keep your promise all the time and its good if you really try hard to keep your promises, but even if you know the airplane doesn't take off, its nothing you can do about it. Okay. It wasn't anything he was going to be able to do about it, but it's a good thing to keep your promises (Carousel Transcript, p. 2-4).

Don listened to the students' comments after reading the story and realized that he needed to help guide his students past just recalling facts toward critical reflections. The above vignette is an example of how Don helped his students co-construct the story and get to deeper meanings.

Sam and Don both coach and support their students learning during read-alouds. The following vignette illustrates Sam doing so while Sam reads and discusses Doc Rabbit and Bruh Fox, and Tar Baby from The People Could Fly with his students.

Students No, he's lying.

Sam Well, why?

Traci He don't want to be burned.

Sam He doesn't want to get burned. So, what is he doing? Probably he says he wants to get burned, but he really doesn't want to.

Traci I think he is doing it because he lied through the whole story. He wouldn't tell the truth. He just tried to trick him through the whole story and I think that he is lying and if he lied it's not good. He shouldn't lie because he doesn't want that to happen.

Sam Okay, well good now, I'm trying to follow you. You're going all

	over the place. Now do you want to give it to me short? You want to give it to me short, Traci, want to say it again? Does everybody else understand what Traci was saying?
Students	Yes, no (in unison).
Sam	She said that he was lying throughout the story, so now he is still lying, so he won't get burned. Is that what you are saying?
Traci	Yes.
Sam	Okay, let's see what is going to happen. Well, then I won't burn you, said the fox. Burning up is too good for you. Ahhhh, went Doc Rabbit, He said no more. Bruh Fox had him in him mouth a dangling down the back. Then he laid the rabbit under his paw so he could see. Well, I think I'll throw you in the thorny briar patch, Bruh Fox said. How would you like that? Oh, mercy me, don't do that Bruh Fox, whatever you do with me don't throw me in those thorny briars. Well, that's what I'll do then Bruh Fox said. Now do you think that rabbit is telling the truth, or do you think he's trying to trick Bruh Fox?
Max	Trick the fox.
Sam	Why do you think he wants to go in the briar patch?
April	Because he lives in there.
Sam	Because he lives in there? You mean he lives in the briar patch? So, he would want him to throw him in the briar? So, what is he doing?
Students	He's lying (in unison).
Sam	He's lying because he wants to go back there. Alright, let's see what happens. And that's what Bruh Fox did.

Sam knows his students' abilities. He realizes that by building on their verbal text, with his guidance, they can co-construct the meaning of the text.

Promoting Critical Thinking Skills

The teachers' belief in the importance of developing critical thinking skills was demonstrated during this study. In many of the observable moments in the classroom, Sam encouraged his students to do what I refer to as "thinking outside the box".

For our first read aloud, Sam read Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox and Tar Baby a folktale from Virginia Hamilton's book The People Could Fly. The student's gathered around Sam as he sat in a chair in the small meeting place in the classroom. Sam instructs the students to sing what he refers to as the story song. "We are sitting, we are sitting quietly, quietly, we are sitting quiet, we are sitting quiet, quietly, quietly (To the tune of Frere Jacques)".This song is a cue for the students that they need to take appropriate steps to prepare for storytime (Cochran-Smith, 1995). Sam introduces the students to the book he will read and reminds them that they have heard other stories by Virginia Hamilton and that the language can be very different. He asks students to describe the language that she uses. "Sometimes it's missing words". "Sometimes it's hard to understand." "She doesn't have as many pictures in her stories". "It doesn't sound like they can talk very well". Sam then reminds students that there aren't many illustrations and they will have to visualize the pictures in their minds. Sam often uses these types of books because they are entertaining but more importantly, they allow students to use their imaginations which enhances their critical thinking skills.

Evoking Imagination

Sam reads a lot of picture books to his students, which are filled with vivid illustrations. This type of reading requires that students engage in an even higher order of thinking.

> Sam Right, she doesn't have as many pictures in her stories. Alright, the title of this story is Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox, and Tar Baby. Remember there are no pictures, so what you are going to have to do. What are you going to have to do? Use your…..
>
> Students Brain (in unison).
>
> Sam There only two of them and I'll show you those two but the other ones, you are going to have to make the pictures where?
>
> Students In your brain (in unison) (The People Could Fly, Transcript p. 1).

Sam empowers students by encouraging them to use their imagination and create their own mental pictures to enhance their comprehension. Sam's goal is to help his students develop critical thinking strategies to use when they read on their own

Sam asks his students to describe some of the pictures they have created in their minds. This is an opportunity not only for him to assess their comprehension but to also help those who are not able to use visual imagery as effectively.

> Sam Ah, you think he is tricking him. Well, let's see. Big Doc Rabbit went down to the brook again. The water was so cool and ripply and it kept the crock of cream so fresh and cold. How many of you can see that brook? Describe it to me because you know we don't have pictures for that. What do you think it looked like down by the brook?
>
> Crystal Long and skinny.

Sam Oh, a nice skinny river with long water. Oh, that's good. Well, how do you think it looks, Drew?

Drew It has waves.

Sam You're looking at the waves. How do you think it feels down there by the wonderful, wonderful brook.

Cyd Warm.

Sam It could be warm. It could be cool. How would you like to be down by that brook?

Marcus Cold.

Sam You want it to be nice and cold. Now, ask the question. Would you want to be working on a hot house or would you want to be by the brook? What would you want to do Jacob?

Jacob By the brook.

Sam You'd want to be the brook, so is that what the rabbit wanted to do? (The People Could Fly, Transcript pp. 3-4).

Sam's facial and physical expressions while reading the story helped his students understand what it would be like to be down by the brook and tired from all of the work. Additionally, why a cool drink would taste good at a time like this. The story doesn't say that lemonade is what is cooling in the brook, but Sam draws on his student's background knowledge to construct what the drink might be. Students must use multiple skills to determine what the drink is. They must think about what is cooling in the brook, which comes from the story and put that together with their prior knowledge of what lemonade is made of, lemon and sugar water.

Sam He went down there. Saw the cream was all gone. He filled up the crock with some lemon and sugar water he had. He knew rabbit was after anything cold and sweet. Who can tell me what is lemon

water and sugar water put together? What's a good name for that? Stacey.

Stacey Lemonade.

Sam Good, it's lemonade (The People Could Fly, Transcript pp. 3-4).

Comparing and Contrasting

Figure 4.2 is a visual representation of a Venn diagram, a visual graphic organizer with two intersecting circles which allows a comparison between at least two things. In the larger part of each circle, there is space to list qualities or characteristics that are different. Additionally, there is a small shared space between the two circles where similarities are recorded. Sam drew a large Venn diagram on a piece of chart paper where students' responses would be recorded from the group discussion.

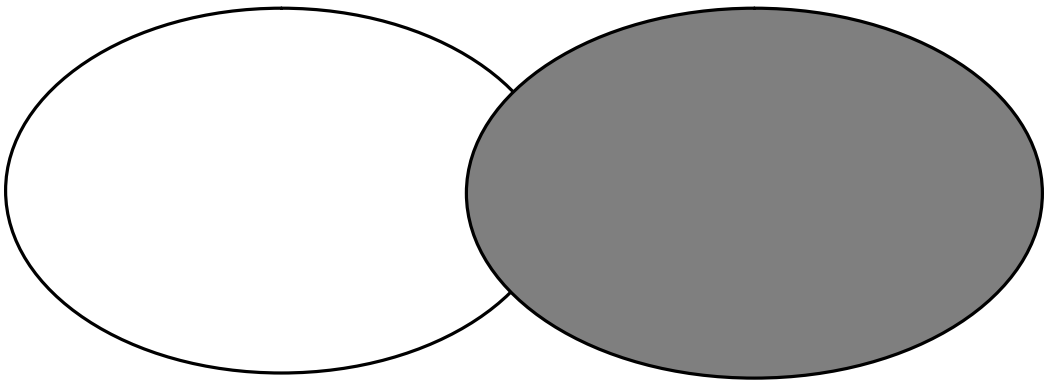


Figure 4.2: Venn Diagram

Sam's students were able to compare and contrast similarities and differences between themselves and Flossie in the story they had just read, Flossie and the Fox. They were

asked to think about what characteristics they had which were similar to Flossie and how they were different.

Sam	Can anyone remember what a Venn Diagram is?
Max	We can compare things.
Sam	It helps us compare things. It helps us to think of things. You can also use it like sort of a thinking mask. . . . It does have a statement.
Jan	Compare same and different.
Sam	Good, we're going to compare what happened a long time ago and what's happening now.
RJ	What's happening in 2000 and what was happening in 19?
Sam	That's what I'm saying. . . that we can use the time and comparing what happens then and what happens now. Like we did before.
Cyd	We can learn what's true and what's not true.
Sam	Right, we can learn what's true and not true. (Flossie and the Fox, Transcript, p. 7).

Sam built on his student's prior knowledge of a Venn diagram to help review what it is used for. The students were visually able to see how they were similar and different from Flossie. The following snippet from a transcript shows how Sam lead the students to make their own discoveries and identify with the character.

Sam	Something that was the same and different between you and Flossie. Let's see. I'm going to make sure I get everybody to answer my questions, give you all a chance to answer a question. Now, Flossie and you, when I say you, I mean when I ask you, you've gotta tell me something about you when I ask the question. We're gonna see what's the same and different between you and Flossie and what's the same. The question you should ask yourself is what is the same and different about how you and Flossie live?

	Think about that question. Remember the setting in the story. Remember who Flossie lived with. Remember what she had to do and where she had to go. Now tell me, give me something that is different, now remember what goes in the middle?
Students	Same (in unison).
Sam	Things that are the same. What goes on the outside?
Students	Different things (in unison).
Sam	Alright. Tell me some things that happen now that you can do that Flossie didn't do, or that Flossie can do that you can do.
Chris	Takin' something to someone.
Sam	Okay, how many of you if your mom and dad say take this to, do you take it or can you take? Discussion. Okay, some of you can take stuff.
Cyd	Be responsible.
Sam	If you have to do something to do you are responsible. You have to be responsible for things at home.
Kevon	I'm responsible for the trash.
Sam	Okay, you're responsible for the trash. Give me something else that is either the same or different. Dominique
Dominique	Hmm, I'm trying to think.
Sam	Let's pick up the story and the setting and tell me something that is either the same or different with you and how you live.
Dominique	She had woods.
Sam	Very good, she had woods. She lived by real woods where there are foxes and stuff in it. Okay, that's different because Flossie lives near the woods. You don't live in the woods. Think about what Flossie did. I want you to put your thinking caps on and think. She lived on a farm. How many of you live on a farm?
Demarcus	Me (teacher and students laughing), a house.

Sam So both of you lived in a house. Let's see what else.

RJ They don't have grass and we do.

Sam Okay, let's think about it.

April There was grass in the pictures.

Demarcus Sure was, it was brown (Flossie and the Fox, Transcript, p. 9).

At this point in the activity, both circles were almost completely filled. Sam saw the opportunity with this book to connect his students' personal lives at home with their lives at school. When Dominique was having difficulty thinking of a response, Sam lead him back to the story and helped him find something in the story that he could relate to. The majority of the students were very excited and waved their hands in the air to be called on. Sam entertained comments from all of the students. One of the students raised the issue of whether or not Flossie went to school. So, Sam polled the students to see who thought Flossie attended school.

Zack We go to school.

Sam Well, let's bring that to a vote because the story didn't tell us. If you think she went to school raise your hand. Only vote once. One, two, three, four, five, six. If you think she didn't go to school raise your hand. One, two, three, four. Maybe her mom taught her, she was home schooled. So to that question, we will put it outside because we just don't know. We can put it right here. (Sam wrote 'Did Flossie go to school?'on the outside of Flossie's circle). Good question. To that, we don't know the answer. Maybe we'll read that in the next book or we could write the author and ask her. We could ask Ms. McKissack? (Flossie and the Fox, Transcript, p. 9).

When asked about the vignette above, Sam explained how he was thinking about connecting letter writing with this book.

> I've been working with them to help them find out answers to questions they have. Usually I direct them towards books and the dictionary. I told them that's research. I thought I could incorporate another resource, the author. What I think we're gonna do is write a letter to Patricia McKissack to ask her whether or not Flossie went to school (Interview Transcript, Sam p. 4).

Sam used this opportunity to discuss differences by having the children attempt to compare themselves to the characters in the book. This was also a good way to enhance their awareness of respecting individuality.

Sam	Do you think you could be Flossie?
Students	Yes, no (in unison).
Sam	The boys say no, but girls do you think you could be Flossie?
Girls	Yes (in unison).
Dominique	Yes. I could be a Flossie because it could be a boy Flossie.
Sam	How does it make you feel that there is a girl your age and she also almost can look like you in a story where she is?
Crystal	I'd be happy.
Sam	Why would you be happy?
Crystal	Because they put me in a book.
Sam	That's excellent (Flossie and the Fox, Transcript, p. 9).

In the above discussion, Sam got the children excited about comparing themselves to characters in the story. He generated an idea for a class project (writing the author). Crystal substantiated the claim made by Sims (1983) that children's self image and self-esteem can be raised by their positive portrayal in children's literature.

Using Prior Knowledge

Literacy researchers emphasize the importance of building on students' prior knowledge (Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1962). Each teacher had discussed issues of equity and diversity with his students since the beginning of the school year. Both Don and Sam seemed to understand the importance of building on students' prior knowledge. The following are examples of how each teacher worked to determine the knowledge base of their students.

To prepare his students for the story Carousel, Don asked "What's another name for a merry go round? Does anybody know?" Don realized that some of his students might not have seen a carousel before, so he asked this question to assess his students'prior knowledge before beginning reading. From the students' responses to the aforementioned questions, Don knew that he needed to further explain the term carousel. Had Don not assessed student's prior knowledge, meaning would have been lost for some students because of the book title, Carousel.

Sam also used his students' prior knowledge after reading Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox and Tar Baby when he asked "Who was the deviant character in that story?" In the initial interview, Sam told me how he helps his students to deconstruct Fairy Tales and examine the deviant character. It was clear that his students weren't thrown by the word deviant because they excitedly raised their hands and waved them in the air hoping that they would be called on to answer the question. Sam called upon one of his students and he correctly defined the word deviant. The following section will illustrate how these teachers worked with their early childhood students to encourage social action.

Dramatic Interpretation

After reading Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears, Sam had his students construct a mask of their favorite character in the story. They were given crayons, scissors, paper plates and yarn to create their masks. Sam told his students that he was going to retell the story in his own words. While he was retelling the story, they were going to act out their parts for non-participants (myself and students in Sam's class) in this research study. Included in this dramatic activity was a conga drum. Sam added sound effects and background music while storytelling. The conga drum was derived from an African drum (Beck, 2002). The students were familiar with this drum because it is used frequently in Sam's classroom as well in school-wide assemblies.

Social Action

The next theme to be addressed from the data is Social Action. The categories that make up the theme social action are making connections, respecting self and others, creating an identity of self and others, and collaborative work. As mentioned earlier, the two classrooms in which this study took place are kindergarten and first grade. "Social action may take many different forms. Essentially it is a proactive engagement to better or change an identified concern for the common good. In kindergarten, social action may mean a conscious effort to share materials" (De Gaetano, Williams, and Volk, 1998, p.6). In addition, social action may take place when an entire school campus works together to create a recycling program for the neighborhood surrounding their school.

The videotapes and time I spent in each of the classrooms gave me multiple opportunities to observe how both teachers encourage social action. These teachers'

versions of social action might be viewed by some as trivial contributions to social issues. However, to me, this is where it all begins. I believe that both Don and Sam take advantage of the teachable moments to promote equality and fairness. What I observed most often was what I refer to as the sub-themes: sharing, respecting self and others, and collaborative work. The aforementioned description supports my idea of the essential elements in good multicultural teaching practices. They should be addressed at all levels but I believe that the early childhood years are the first opportunity for teachers to encourage these actions and make them a part of their students' education.

Respecting Self and Others

Sam used the opportunity to talk about respecting others and differences between his African American students and those who are not of the same culture while reading Nigel Gray's A Country Far Away. In the ensuing discussion, Sam and his students talked in detail about the concept of respecting cultural differences. In conversations prior to beginning data collection, Don shared with me how he did promote social action by using books like White Socks Only by Evelyn Coleman. According to Don, he led students through a simulated activity in which he only allowed students to drink from the water fountain who wore the color blue that day. He then related the simulation to the White Socks Only and discussed the issue of discrimination. The purpose of the following vignette is two-fold. It illustrates the notion of respecting yourself and others as well as serving as an illustration of a call and response pattern.

Sam Everybody does not think like we do, everybody does not live like we do and guess what, just because they don't that doesn't mean it's bad. It just means that it is different. And is different good?

Students Yes (in unison).

Sam Okay, different is good. You have people who live in North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia, and you have children all over the world. Just because they don't eat what we eat are they bad?

Students No (in unison).

Sam If they don't dress like we dress is it funny?

Students No (in unison).

Sam It's just what?

Students Different (in unison).

Sam It's different. Sometimes they do the same things that we do and is that good?

Students Yes (in unison)

Sam Sometimes, can it be bad?

Students Yes (in unison).

Sam Yes, if they do some of the bad things that we do it can be bad too. So all over the world, there are children all, put your hands down, they do the same things that we do and some of them do different things. Some of them have different houses, some of them have different vehicles to get around in, some of them have different food, and some of them have different clothes. And does that make them bad or good?

Students No (in unison).

Sam Just what?

Students Different (in unison).

Sam Is different good?

Students	Yes (in unison).
Sam	Being different is good. Yes, James.
James	When people are in Asia they don't use forks, they use chopsticks.
Sam	Right some people in Asia use chopsticks not everyone. (A Country Far Away, Transcript p. 6).

Call and response patterns like these are constructed between Sam and his students are very familiar in African American cultural groups and are commonly seen in African American churches. Unwittingly, this style of communication carries over into other areas and is often seen in classrooms of African American children. According to Dandy, (1991) "Call-response seeks to bring together the speaker and the listener in unified movement (p. 29)." The call and response pattern is seen in all of Sam's transcripts. Smitherman (1986) in her book Talkin and Testifyin' defines this type of communication as ". . .spontaneous verbal and nonverbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all the speaker's statements are punctuated by expressions from the listener" (p. 104). Call and response is ". . . a set of prosodic characteristics of variation in pitch, intonation, pace, volume, stress, and vowel length and the rhetorical characteristics of repetition, alliteration, and use of metaphor . . . (Foster and Peele, 1999, p. 180)." Some vignettes, including Don and his students, presented earlier in this chapter may read as though they could fit the call and response pattern, but they did not. It is evidenced in the videotape that negotiated response between the speaker and the listener did not exist. Instead, the students sometimes answered in unison.

On another occasion, while discussing Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox and Tarbaby, Sam led students in a discussion about fairness. He helped the students situate themselves in a place that is similar to the one in the story by putting themselves in someone else's shoes.

Sam	**Next, he made a little baby out of tarpaper. The baby looking just like a baby rabbit. He named it Tar Baby and sat it right there on the waterside. Brer Fox went back up the hill and worked on the house. He thought he might keep the house himself. Doc Rabbit was being bad and not working with him at all.** You think the fox should keep the house by himself?
Students	Yes (in unison).
Sam	Why?
Traci	Because the rabbit keeps on making sounds so he can scare him and go down there and get something to drink and that's not fair to the fox that he has to do all the hard work while the rabbit gets all the good stuff and that's why the fox says he should keep the house to himself.
Sam	Oh excellent! Lets see exactly what is going to happen next. **So Doc Rabbit came back for a drink from wherever he was. He spied a new crock full and he spied a tar baby just sittin', gazing out on the water. 'What you doin' here baby rabbit?' Rabbit asked Tar Baby. Tar Baby wouldn't say. 'Too stuck up, huh? You better speak to me,' Doc Rabbit said 'or I'll have to hurt you.'** Is that something good to say?
Students	No (in unison).
Sam	Oh, he's going to get what he deserves, you think?
Students	Yes (The People Could Fly, Transcript, p. 5).

Creating an Idea of Self and Others

While Sam and his students were discussing differences between cultures in Gray's A Country Far Away, one of the students, Mark, was able to compare elements in

the story with some of the cultural differences and racial problems that exist today. Mark questioned if slavery still exists. This book shows how people in different countries do things. Each page is divided into two sections. At the top of the page is a picture of how a child in America does something. At the bottom of the page, there is an illustration of how someone in another country might do the same activity.

Mark	Do white people pick up African people?
Sam	Do white people still pick up African people and take them where?
Mark	To America.
Sam	To America? No, they do not do that anymore. When they did that they were doing what? They were practicing what?
Students	Slavery (in unison).
Sam	Certainly, they were practicing slavery when they used to pick up Africans and take them to America. They don't do that anymore. The people who come to America now are those people who want to come (A Country Far Away, Transcript, p. 8).

Sam used this opportunity to remind all students of lessons they had learned in the past and used positive affirmations and reinforcements to put his mind at ease. Mark's question might be attributed to the Multicultural/Africentric philosophy of Central Elementary where students are encouraged from a very young age to question the dominant culture's reality of the world. There was no evidence from the data collected that Don encouraged his students to question the way that "others" see the world.

Collaborative Work

Sam and Don both created opportunities for students to collaborate during the follow-up activities. By doing cooperative activities, students learn how important it is to work together towards a common goal. Sometimes, students were assigned to groups and other times, they were allowed to form groups on their own. After reading Doc Rabbit, Bruh Fox, and Tar Baby, Sam grouped his students in groups of three. Each member of the group was assigned as an illustrator, writer, or helper. Sam monitored students as they worked. The illustrator drew the picture to accompany the words the writer had created. The helper assisted in any capacity that was needed. Typically, I observed group members taking on multiple tasks to get the job done. The illustrator and helper were both suggesting ideas for the writer to incorporate in the story.

Sam	Okay, show me that you are ready. I'm listening and I'm looking, I'm looking, I'm looking. Ready? When you do your story, I'm going to put you in groups of three, so that means you have a writer, an illustrator, and a helper. So the helper would help the writer and the illustrator. Now what does the writer do?
Students	Writes the story (in unison).
Sam	What does the illustrator do?
Students	Draws the pictures (in unison).
Sam	Good. Now I'm going to put three of you at tables to do that and I have three of you doing the puppet show with me, then I'll say switch, and then you can go off and do each one. You got it?
Students	Yes (in unison).
Sam	Now let's get ready to do our activity and remember you have stick with the story and in your story I want you to have a title just likeVirginia Hamilton had a title. Her title was Doc Rabbit, Brer Fox and Tar Baby. So you need to have a title for your story, as well. When you do your puppet you get to draw them and cut them out and I'll be over there to help you to see how you want to write

it or how you want to draw it and remember nothing is wrong, so whatever you do is correct. You can make look like it. You can do as much as you can do with the drawing and with your puppet. Okay? I have the stuff over there to help you out. You ready?

Students Yes (in unison).

Sam So the first thing we're going to do is to go quietly to the round table and I'll follow you (The People Could Fly, Transcript, p. 9).

Don worked with his students to create text that would be illustrated by individual students to become a class book. Don typed as students gave him words to create the text of the book. Students were sent back to tables where they discussed what they were going to draw.

After reading Flossie and the Fox, Don created a chart where he wrote students'responses to the story. Both teachers felt a responsibility to teach their students to respect each other. Special attention was paid to not interrupting others while they are speaking, waiting your turn, and staying in your own space while keeping your hands and feet to yourself.

Limitations of Self as a Teacher

Good teachers are life-long learners who work continuously to perfect their craft. Their work seems to be never-ending. For them, there is no such thing as perfection because they are constantly evolving to meet the needs of their students who are ever-changing. The aforementioned statements describe Don and Sam. They critically reflect on their practice and make modifications as needed.

One of the limitations that Sam reflected on was the large number of students in his classroom. He finds that cooperative and interactive activities work well for his

students. Because of the large number of students in his classroom, he doesn't get to do as many activities as he would like. Furthermore, he went on to say "I guess if there was more of me, I would have the whole class doing it (the activity) at the same time and if we had a little more time. But, with 27 children, it is very difficult for me to really get them what they need. With 12 or 13, I would change so that all the kids could do it at the same time" (Interview Transcript 2000, Don, p. 8).

On the other hand, Don saw different limitations in his practice. Because Don is Caucasian, he feels that one of his greatest challenges is to effectively address sensitive social issues with his students. Even though he has established an open and positive rapport with his students' parents, he still steps softly because of a fear of offending his students and their parents. As mentioned earlier, he asks parents many questions to help him understand things that are outside the mainstream culture. Additionally, he realizes that one person or family can't speak for all members of a race or cultural group; therefore, he often finds himself asking questions several times. Furthermore, his students are encouraged to bring in artifacts and family members so that he and his students can learn more about each other.

The previous section of this chapter addressed research question two. Data was presented in a manner that illustrated how Don and Sam used African American children's literature to explore issues of diversity with their students. To show what these teachers did, themes were created from the data. The themes were presented here with evidence to support them.

Chapter Summary

Teaching in today's classroom is no easy task. It takes time, commitment, and dedication to be an effective teacher. Both Don and Sam know how important it is for multicultural children's literature to be included in a child's education. It is not only a philosophy that they embrace, they demonstrate their beliefs daily in their instructional practice.

From the descriptions presented in this chapter, one can see that these teachers' eclectic practice draws from many models. The following is a description of some of the theories that these teachers utilize: sociocultural theory (scaffolding, social construction of knowledge, skills taught authentically, student centered instruction, cooperative learning) (Berk & Winsler, 1995), culturally relevant teaching (including student's diversity, culture, and individuality, social construction of knowledge, teachers finding commonalties with their students, believing all students can succeed) (Ladson-Billings, 1994), multicultural education (equity pedagogy, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction) (Banks & Banks, 1995). Don and Sam acquire knowledge from the aforementioned sources to help their students co-construct an understanding of the world we live in by promoting critical thinking skills and helping them to make connections with each other and other cultural groups.

Don and Sam chose to teach at American and Central because each of the school's commitment to diversity and multiculturalism strongly align with their own beliefs. Like other teachers, both Sam and Don encounter limitations at school; however, their commitment to the students is the driving force which helps them to remain steadfast. In these two schools, most of the teachers share Don and Sam's teaching

philosophy and work collaboratively among and across grade levels to achieve a common goal.

Don and Sam make it a point to know their students on an individual basis. Don doesn't allow his race to get in the way of searching for the best way to help his students. He does not shy away from sensitive (racial and diversity) issues that may surface in literature, rather both teachers use these instances to breakdown stereotypes and to build confidence and self-esteem in their students. Because Sam is African American, he often uses his experiences to help his students gain a more positive sense of self. Scaffolding is one of the methods they use to construct student's learning continuously, before, during, and after literacy events. In addition, students' critical thinking skills are constantly being challenged. They are encouraged to make comparisons, use visual imagery, draw on prior knowledge, and value and respect cultural differences. Don and Sam both attempt to prepare their students for life in the real world, because they realize that they cannot exist in the microcosm of school. These teachers work hard to help their students find their place in the world and make connections with others. Some of the data I collected supports my belief that both teachers use multicultural children's literature to discuss and support issues of diversity.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

I will begin this chapter by addressing the research questions, by reviewing the problem statement, methodology, and a summary of the results. Next, I will discuss the research that was influential in my data search and analysis. Then, I will present the significance of my study along with implications for teacher education and for future research, and end with some concluding thoughts.

In this chapter I will focus on discussing my observations about the phenomena that occurred in each classroom. The teachers in my study are in schools that support cultural diversity and the teachers' efforts to explore issues of diversity. Because of this support, this task is easier for these teachers than it would be for teachers in other schools. Discussion will follow the research questions that addresses the methods each teacher used to help their students explore issues of diversity.

- How do two male primary teachers approach using African American multicultural literature with their students who are mostly African American in schools whose missions are to support multiculturalism?
- How are their cultural and racial identities and histories represented in their multicultural practice?
- How do the approaches of these teachers reflect their distinct school contexts?

As American society changes, so do our schools. Today, the children in our schools are more diverse than ever. This change in diversity has been rapid and complex. Members of different ethnic groups (Heath, 1995) and members of the same ethnic group interact differently to communicate with each other. This can be problematic for students when they enter school. Teachers can use multicultural children's literature and culturally responsive teaching strategies to help students understand other cultures, build self-esteem, and find their place in the world.

I believe that while multicultural children's literature provides the opportunity to discuss and support cultural diversity, it is only the beginning. Teachers can bridge the cultural divide by investigating the cultures of the students they are teaching. In addition, I support Ladson- Billings's (1994) belief that preservice and inservice teachers need to be immersed in the cultures of their students and be given the opportunity to examine and reflect on structures that hold some cultures in high regard and disregard others.

The growing number of diverse populations in this country is forcing school districts to reform curriculum to help students understand ethnic diversity as well as cultural pluralism. Multicultural education advocate, Sonia Nieto (1992) defines pluralism as diversity in "ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender characteristics among others" (p. 272). This definition of pluralism is associated with beliefs about the necessity for diverse perspectives being presented to children through education. For the most part, our culturally pluralistic society celebrates similarities and differences. Multicultural children's literature can be used to build students' self-esteem by allowing them to see themselves represented in literature, inspire social action, and

create cultural knowledge. Additionally, multicultural children's literature can help create a more tolerant society. By using multicultural literature with students, teachers can learn more about their students' cultures and use that information to create meaningful activities that explore diversity and equity issues.

Review of Methodology

This quasi-naturalistic study's primary focus was on two male teachers. It was quasi-naturalistic because the teachers were not asked to change their practices. They use multicultural children's literature regularly in their classrooms. For the study, I asked them to use five specific books that the three of us agreed upon. My attempt was to understand the phenomenon that occurred during read-aloud and the activities that followed. More specifically, my desire was to understand what methods these two teachers from different cultures use to mediate their student's understanding of equity and diversity using African American children's literature. Five African American stories were selected; for the selection process to be equitable, Don and Sam were each asked to choose two books and I selected one.

During the data collection period, I used the following methods because they aligned with my research questions: observations of conversations and behaviors before, during, and after lessons and read alouds; audio and video recordings; interviews with the teachers; and artifacts.

I believe that theories such as those mentioned in chapter two (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Beach, 1993, 1997; Banks and Banks, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 1984) can provide teachers with ideas to include in their practice.

Can teachers who belong to a different culture effectively address issues of diversity with students? There is much debate about this question. The data collected for this study suggests that it is an attainable goal if teachers are sensitive to the need of addressing these issues and make a conscious effort to do so. Both Don and Sam make it a point to incorporate this practice in the everyday life of their classroom.

Summary of Results

Multiple interpretations of the layers of contexts in which the read alouds were situated were observed which include: (1) the missions and description of the schools; (2) the atmosphere of the classrooms and teachers' backgrounds; (3) general ways in which Don and Sam approach teaching; (4) and the nature of Don and Sam's relationships with their students. The aforementioned were evident from Don and Sam's teaching styles during this study. In different ways, these two teachers assisted students in the deconstruction of the text via discussions of each book as well as the activities that followed. According to U.S. Census Bureau, it is estimated that by July 1, 2002 Blacks will account for 32 percent of the American population. Considering the estimated figures of minority groups, it is important to discuss issues of diversity with all students.

Sam and Don provide different avenues for their African American students cooperatively, to critically and socially construct and deconstruct various pieces of

African American multicultural children's literature. They also include multiple opportunities for their students to interact with African American children's literature. The sociocultural context in which these activities took place kept students involved and interacting with the text after it had been read.

As part of everyday life in these two classrooms, students are constantly working in cooperative groups. In early childhood classrooms, it is common to see children working together executing many different activities. Although not all work was done in cooperative groups, Sam and Don both used cooperative learning activities to help students learn how to work with and respect others. By working together, students learn how to accept the ideas of others, disagree while respecting the ideas of others and hold true to their own ideas and beliefs; all of which can be viewed as forms of social action and creating an understanding of who they are as individuals on a smaller scale in early childhood.

From my observations and the data collected, I could not answer all of my original research questions. Therefore, as mentioned in chapter four, my questions were somewhat revised as I learned how the two schools differ. At that point, my interpretation shifted from the teachers to the teachers within their schools. At first glance of their web-sites, American Elementary and Central Elementary appear to be similar. The philosophy of each school is where the greatest distinction is found. American's philosophy focuses on an Afrocentric framework based on African principles. The primary focus of these principles deal with addressing the needs of the total self. I observed Sam teaching a more traditional literacy program that was adopted by the district. Additionally, Sam integrated culturally responsive teaching strategies in

his pedagogy. Central's philosophy places emphasis on building a community while attending to individual and multicultural differences.

Don and Sam's teaching methods were both influenced by their schools' philosophies. The physical space, as well as the atmosphere of each classroom was also different. At Central, literacy instruction is individualized, themed, as well as literature-based. Sam on the other hand included a direct instruction literacy model chosen by his faculty to be implemented school wide. Sam selects multicultural children's literature for his classroom based on the student's interests, curriculum, and issues in the classroom. Where as Don's use of multicultural books aligns with his schools emphasis on thematic instruction and literature-based instruction. He also selects multicultural children's literature that ties into themes or issues to which his students can relate.

Both Sam and Don use constructivist teaching strategies which allowed their students to socially negotiate and construct their knowledge. To ensure student success, Sam and Don coach and support their students during literacy activities. Moreover, both encourage students' growth by allowing more capable peers to assist students as well. Students were challenged to use higher order thinking skills during each of the literacy events. They used their imaginations to create images, prior and new knowledge to compare and contrast, and added this information to their existing schema. They also used background knowledge to create new meanings from what had been read. Not only were there multiple activities for the students to participate in, the activities were also different. Each teacher strategically planned activities that he felt would provide the best meaning making events for his students. Sam and Don also illustrated additional

effective teaching strategies that included dramatic interpretations and those which encourage social action.

From my observations and the data collected, I believe that both Sam and Don are effective literacy teachers. However, this study indicates that the way both of these teachers use African American children's literature to teach diversity is largely influenced by the context in which each teacher is situated. Informal conversations with Sam revealed that he probably would never teach at a school where there was not an emphasis on cultural diversity. However, as I indicate in this chapter, Don is now teaching in a middle-class suburban school district. Nonetheless, I believe that even if Don does not include African American children's literature daily in the classroom, his current teaching practices will be influenced by his experiences at Central Elementary.

Influential Previous Research

The research that I read, along with my own observations, confirmed my personal beliefs, which in turn influenced how I approached my study. This section will discuss how my research findings support research by scholars in the field of multicultural education.

Social Construction of Knowledge

Cochran-Smith's research (1984) supports the notion of teachers being mediators of print with young children. Students learn behavior from each other and the teacher as they collaborate to co-construct meaning from print. The read aloud sessions

in this study provided evidence that supports the aforementioned social construction of knowledge.

Vygotsky's ideas played a large part in my analysis of the data and discussion of the read aloud sessions. His work tells us that teachers who operate from a constructivist paradigm create a learning environment for students to be engaged in activities that are interesting to them and that facilitate learning (Berk and Winsler, 1995). It is important to note that these learning environments may not look the same. Both classrooms in this study offered a place for social interactions and construction of knowledge but in different ways. Don and Sam played a large part in their student's social construction of knowledge as they guided them towards problem solving of situations in the books that were read aloud. The teachers and students collaborated to solve problems and ask questions about the text that generated discussion. Additionally, Don and Sam realize the importance of using read alouds to construct understandings and connections that students might not be able to make on their own.

According to Rosenblatt (1978), the reader is an active participant in the reading process. Readers create their own understanding from what is being read and their responses to the text. This understanding is influenced by many contributors other than the text, such as the readers' historical contexts, schemata, and, sociohistorical context.

During and after the reading of the text, Don and Sam used their knowledge about their students and the issues and/or ideas presented in the text to create meaning. In each of the read aloud sessions students were encouraged to share their ideas and understanding as well as listen to the ideas of others. Further, the two teachers connected real-life experiences of the students and their own real-life experiences to

expand comprehension. The self-realization the teachers evoked in their students is metacognition. The teachers are "training" the students to attend to the awareness of their own thought processes as their comprehension changes on a personal and social level. Since the definition of metacognition is one thinking about one's own thinking, I would argue that these teachers were also teaching executive control. I believe this to be the case because these teachers not only want their students to be able to construct and deconstruct text in a social setting, they also want their students to be able to utilize this skill when they are reading alone and transfer this skill to other social contexts.

Multicultural Children's Literature

Harris (1990) reminds us of the opportunity to socialize children by using multicultural children's literature. Social and moral issues can be addressed which can sensitize students to the feelings of others and help them find their place in the world. Sam and Don select multicultural children's literature to share with students on a consistent basis. In addition, there was a plethora of African American children's literature for children to choose from in each classroom. This was more apparent to me, when we were selecting the five books; several times during the selection process, I had to ask one of the teachers to select another book because the one chosen had already been used in the classroom.

Based on the teachers' and schools' philosophies, it was important to select authentic multicultural children's literature. Authenticity addresses the issue of "whether the portrayal of the characters and their cultural experiences ring true, especially to readers who have been acculturated in the group being represented"

(Bishop, 1997, p. 9). Unfortunately, the 1998 event concerning the teacher who used Nappy Hair, (Herron, 1998) is still a concern to many teachers today. A White teacher was criticized by parents for using this book with her students. She used the book, not knowing that the term "nappy" has a negative connotation among African Americans. It was reported that this well-intentioned, unaware young teacher thought that the book could be used to help build self-esteem in her African American students. Unfortunately, this teacher was forced to leave her position even though her intentions were laudable.

As mentioned earlier, when Don had questions about his students' African American culture, he asked the parents of his students for clarification. Several parents volunteered in his classroom on a consistent basis. Don informed me that on many occasions, he would consult his parent volunteers about books that contained nuances that he did not understand.

Sam was constantly searching the market for different pieces of multicultural literature to add to his collection. He told me that with the birth of his new daughter, he was frequently in an African American bookstore looking for new titles to share with her and his students. Students also brought in new selections for him to read aloud to the entire class.

One of my most memorable discussions with Don was during one of our preliminary talks about his participation in my study. In that discussion, Don was very excited about a book they had just read, White socks only by Evelyn Coleman, (1999). He described his and his students' fascination with the book. After reading the book, he created a simulation exercise for his students. Some students were allowed to drink

from the water fountain and some were not; it depended on the color of socks that they wore. He went on to talk about the students' emotions when they argued with him about this newly imposed rule, discoveries that the students made, and the discussion that ensued shortly after he allowed all of the students to drink from the fountain. He connected his knowledge of the civil right's movement, multicultural literature, and equity pedagogy to create an activity that was developmentally appropriate for his students.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy works as a tool to fight inequities that exist. Heath (1983) and Delpit (1988) support the idea that teachers need to understand the diverse cultures of their students. Without knowing the cultures of their students, teachers cannot make adjustments and adaptations in their instruction to accommodate the cultural strengths of learners. By making needed accommodations, teachers can create an environment that maximizes student success. My personal early elementary experiences remind me of the importance of cultural congruity. Reflecting on literature that I was assigned to read during my elementary years, I had difficulty relating to the characters that were depicted in most books. With the knowledge that I now possess, I believe my lack of interest was in part, because Dick and Jane did not look like me and their lives were not like mine.

Don and Sam realize the importance of the knowledge their students bring to the classroom and use it as a spring-board to construct new understandings together. The culturally responsive teaching methods that these teachers use work within the

framework of Ladson-Billings' (1990a) "teaching model: their conceptions of themselves and others, their knowledge, and their classroom's social structure" (p. 22). Data sources from this study revealed many of the ways these teachers utilized all of the "dimensions" listed above. Moreover, outside of the ten sessions that took place in this study, when I was volunteering in each of the teacher's classrooms, I saw both teachers using the students' knowledge, concept of self and others, peer culture and social structure to influence their pedagogy.

The nature of multicultural education is liberating. This type of critical pedagogy challenges the status quo that exists in traditional schools. Students can be encouraged to create social action and challenge forces of hegemony. Don and Sam use simple forms of social action such as sharing and cooperative group work to teach their students that by working together towards a common goal, they can create a positive climate for the group as a whole.

Upon my initial entry into both classrooms, the students' behavior gave me the sense that they felt the classroom was a place where they belong and their voice counts. The culture of the classrooms reflected many characteristics from students' home cultures. Sam made it a point to explain the different ways we use language. His students could distinguish between academic and casual language. On several occasions, I observed Sam reminding students about writing in school language. On another occasion, Dominique, one of Sam's students, asked if she had to write in school language. In my opinion, by familiarizing his students with "code switching," he helps to prepare them for success in environments outside of school. My definition of code switching is being able to use a casual form and formal form of language in appropriate

settings. During one of our debriefing sessions, I asked Sam about "code switching." He expressed how important he thinks this skill is by saying that "it helps them be successful in the real world" (Sam, Interview Transcript, p. 2). In my personal experiences, I also attempted to help students to discern between the two worlds. Because Sam and I are African American, I think it situates us in a unique position from Don and allows us to see how important "code switching" is.

Significance of this Study

Many times in today's classrooms, we find teachers who complain about the deficits of their students. They wonder how and if they are going to be able to impart the knowledge their students need to succeed in the next grade level. By including strategies and literature that are reflective of the diverse American population, teachers can maximize students' success and reach the greatest number of students. Additionally, when teachers use multicultural children's literature, they can motivate their students to want to learn more about their own culture as well as the culture of others. I believe that, when we know more about our own culture and the culture of others, we are more tolerant. This tolerance is created by being able to see similarities between cultures and being able to value, appreciate, and respect the nuances of other cultures.

Additionally, this study is also significant because most teachers want to maximize their effectiveness for the students they teach. Teachers can modify strategies revealed in this study to assist their praxis. Here, I am distinguishing praxis from practice, because to teach from a multicultural perspective requires not only execution of strategies, but a conscious reflection on the strategy and making efforts to improve.

Many examples have been included in this study for teachers to draw from and modify to meet the needs of their students.

Many well-intentioned teachers incorporate multicultural children's literature in their classrooms to celebrate holidays such as St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Thanksgiving, and the entire month of February. Thinking that this is enough, these teachers believe that they do more than the average teacher to provide their students with ways to learn about other cultural groups. This study provides data to support the benefits of including multicultural children's literature consistently throughout the school year and the positive impact it has on students. Furthermore, this study is significant because along with multicultural literature, students need opportunities to discuss and make connections to the experiences that often appear in this type of children's literature. When teachers use particular strategies and create meaningful experiences for students, they come away from the experience with a deeper understanding and greater appreciation than by reading alone. Moreover, students also are more apt to remember what they learned because they were actively engaged in an activity.

Implications for Teacher Education

Currently, neither Don nor Sam continues to teach at their respective schools. Both resigned after the school year ended. Don moved to another state in the Midwest and is currently teaching in a suburban district. It would be interesting to find out why Don chose to teach in a suburban district rather than at another inner city school. Further, since Don has such strong convictions about the importance of including

multicultural children's literature in the classroom, does he still include issues about equity and diversity in his daily practice?

> Sam took a sabbatical to continue his doctoral studies. In a follow up conversation, he expressed a desire to be an administrator. Although he enjoyed teaching, he believes that he can have a greater impact in an administrative position. This will give him the opportunity to effect more students by having a voice in policy and procedural changes.

Teaching at a university has opened my eyes to many of the problems we are facing in teacher education. Currently, across America we are experiencing a teacher shortage. In Texas, we are examining non-traditional methods of teacher certification. At the university, I work with teachers who are certified in many different ways: emergency, field-based, and alternatively. In faculty meetings, when looking at graduation requirements, we are strongly encouraged (by the Dean of our department) to be competitive with other teacher certification entities. To do this, we are forced to look at the total number of hours required for the students. Some courses that we feel would better prepare future teachers have been deleted. This places us in an awkward position between what we feel would best prepare preservice teachers and what we must do to meet the guidelines set by the department. Multicultural studies is one area where the number of required courses has been reduced. The justification is that culturally relevant teaching practices are taught in content areas. However, because of the growing diverse student population and minimal exposure to culturally responsive teaching practices, and issues of diversity and equity, ongoing training is needed.

Teachers need ongoing training in culturally responsive teaching approaches and issues of equity and diversity. To do this, school districts, universities and other teacher preparation entities need to reconceptualize their methods of literacy instruction.

Ongoing follow-up and training could provide teachers with the support they need to meet the needs of diverse students. This support could substantially increase teachers' knowledge base of current research and provide specific strategies for use in the classroom.

Ongoing professional development needs to be made available for teachers. Inservice teachers need to be given ongoing ideas about sharing multicultural children's literature. Unfortunately, it's not enough to just share these books with students. Teachers need specific instruction on activities. This can be done by creating a partnership between school districts and local universities. Local universities are a logical place to get the most current theory and strategies available. District "experts" are also a good resource.

Before my doctoral studies, I was required to take only one multicultural course. That one course was not enough preparation for working with diverse groups. Over the course of my classroom teaching career, minimal if any, staff development opportunities were afforded to me and my peers that would have helped us in teaching diverse populations. Through discussions with current classroom teachers, I have learned that they too have experienced many difficulties understanding the beliefs and customs of their students. I believe that on-going training would help alleviate this problem.

Being an African American female who was raised in the mainstream culture, it is difficult for me to understand why more teachers don't discuss issues of diversity with their students. When I reflect on my own elementary classroom teaching career, I

wonder how effective I was with my own students. Having the knowledge that I gained through graduate course work, discussions with doctoral peers, and the research that I have done, I realize that my own teaching practices regarding diversity and multiculturalism were marginal at best. Like so many other teachers, I was somewhat afraid of offending the parents of my students. At times, teaching issues of equity and diversity became less of a priority for me because I was trying to accommodate state and district mandates while preparing students for standardized testing.

In the midst of my writing, on September 11, 2001 the terrorists' attack took place on New York and the Pentagon. After the initial shock, horror, and disbelief wore off, I like many others began to look at life differently. Surprisingly, this deplorable incident has caused me to look at my research somewhat differently. After questioning why, I began to think about what contribution I could make to foster tolerance during these uncertain times. My thoughts were drawn back to my first research question. If I were conducting my study today, (after September 11, 2001) my question would be different. Reaching outside the narrow constraints of my original questions, now I would ask the following question: How can primary teachers use multicultural literature to address and explore issues of diversity to create respect and tolerance in their students?

Additionally, there is a lack of research on males teaching in early childhood classrooms. It is a rarity to find men teaching in preschool, Head Start, and early elementary grades. These teaching positions are typically occupied by women. I believe the reason for this is that the early childhood years are a time that children need a lot of nurturing. Stereotypical ideas lead us to believe that women are more nurturing and they

would be better suited in these positions. However, economics may play a part in this also, in that males are generally heads of households and early childhood teaching positions do not pay enough to support a family.

Methodological Issues

Upon first glance, the books chosen by the teachers appeared to be good selections. However as my research progressed, I questioned whether or not these books would stimulate the type of dialogue needed to address my research questions. Nonetheless, from the onset, I wanted to make sure that this was a collaborative effort between the teachers and me. I felt that it was most important to give the teachers a voice by using the books that they had selected.

Another issue that I encountered was the inability to maintain an ongoing relationship with the teachers. I found that data analysis was much easier when I had access to the teachers and could do member checks. By going directly to the source, I was able to ask for elaboration. In addition, I was able to tell what I saw from an "outsider's" point of view. When there were discrepancies, the teachers were able to elaborate, explain their underlying reasons, and their goals.

When I lost contact with Don and Sam, I relied heavily upon my peer debriefer. My debriefer and I examined transcripts and field notes and tried to objectively discuss assumptions and beliefs about these read aloud events. Clearly, the most accurate information was obtained from the teachers. In an ideal world, I would have maintained close contact with each of the teachers so that I could provide the most accurate information possible.

Implications for Future Research

The focus of this study was on addressing issues of diversity and equity with students in two early childhood classrooms. In retrospect, an important element is missing, that is, learning how to maintain cultural identity and successfully live and operate in the culture of mainstream America, which is for the most part White and middle class. This was particularly evident when thinking about the conversation that I had with Sam about code switching. During this study I did not observe Don discussing code switching or adapting and/or modifying certain aspects of culture with his students. It is important to note, that I do not mean to imply that Don did not discuss the aforementioned, rather, that I did not observe him doing so. I believe that this is an important skill for students to learn because it will maximize their opportunities for success. Students exhibit behaviors that are appropriate in one venue, but not in another. For example, typically in school, students raise their hands to get their teacher's attention. At home, it would be inappropriate for children to raise their hands to get their parents attention. Further research is needed regarding children's appropriate behavior in school and in other settings.

Additionally, students and teachers can engage in reciprocal learning and learn about each other's cultures. We all need information about other cultures. By learning about others, we can break down many of the stereotypes that exist. This is particularly apparent, since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. Currently many generalizations are being made about people who belong to the Islamic faith. Today the media is filled with information about Muslims and Islam. Prior to this, there was a great deal of misconception that all Muslims were the same; hopefully the current

media coverage will clarify many of the issues surrounding this culture. These recent events provide the opportunity for more children's literature writers to create multicultural children's literature that will provide accurate and authentic information.

Concluding Thoughts

As the landscape of America continues to change, we need to provide multiple experiences for students to be engaged with multicultural children's literature. It can provide students with understandings, increase self-esteem, and validate all of the cultures that make the United States a diversely-rich nation. Teachers will have to acknowledge the importance of those who have had minimal representation in children's literature in the past, but are important to the fabric of our society, today. I believe that this includes all of us, even those whose lifestyles and cultural beliefs we may not agree with.

As indicated by this study, there are specific strategies teachers can use to optimize student learning. The strategies discussed in this study extend the work of Ladson-Billings (1990b).

In closing, if teachers truly desire to make an impact on their students' comprehension regarding issues of diversity and equity, conversations to negotiate and co-construct meanings and understandings need to take place in a safe and secure social environment.

APPENDIX A

PARENT OR GUARDIAN PARTICIPATION LETTER

Dear Parents:

Your child is being invited to participate in this research study involving multicultural literature. My name is Jennifer Dyer and I am a doctoral student in the Integrated Teaching and Learning program at The Ohio State University. I am about to begin my dissertation research and Dr. Evelyn Freeman and Dr. Rebecca Kantor are my advisors who will supervise my dissertation, which makes them the principal researchers.

The purpose of this research study is to collect information to provide an understanding of a teachers use children's multicultural literature with their students. This will be a pleasant group experience lead by your child's teacher. Students will not receive a grade or a progress report based on the read-aloud or the activity that follows. The literature being used is available at public libraries and the titles will be provided to you.

Over this ten-week period, I will observe the teacher reading to the students, the conversations that go on about the books, and the activity that follows. I will also be writing field notes on the interactions taking place. Each of the readings by the teacher will be audio and/or video taped by the researcher. The purpose of audio and/or video taping is to accurately record what is going on in the classroom. If the teacher's interactions reveal your child's name, your child's name will not be included. These tapes will be used only for this research study and will only be accessible to those involved (researcher, classroom teacher, principal, participants, and parents). Any published documents will not reveal your child's name. In addition, audio and videotapes will be destroyed after one year of the completion of this study.

Your support for this research will be greatly appreciated. Participation in this study will no way affect your child's grades. The results of this research will be for instructional and academic purposes only. If you choose to consent to your child's participation in the study, please complete the attached "Parents Consent Form" and have your child return it to his/her teacher.

If you have any questions, you may contact me. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Evelyn Freeman, Professor
School of Teaching and Learning
The Ohio State University

Jennifer Dyer
Doctoral Candidate
The Ohio State University

APPENDIX B

PARENT OR GUARDIAN PARTICIPTION FORM

Parent or Guardian's Consent Form

I consent to my child's participation in the research entitled: Common Grounds: How Two Male Primary Teachers Use Multicultural Literature in Their Classrooms. I understand that the principal researchers are Dr. Evelyn Freeman and Dr. Rebecca Kantor, professors at The Ohio State University and that Dr. Freeman and Dr. Kantor will be supervising the research of Jennifer Dyer.

The procedures, purpose, and expected time and length of the study have been explained to me. I understand that any questions that I have before, during or after the research is completed will be answered by either or all of the researchers. Possible benefits of the study have been described, and I acknowledge that I have the opportunity to obtain additional information regarding the study. I understand that my child will not receive a grade or progress report based on the read-aloud or activity. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and to discontinue participation in the study and that my child can discontinue his/her participation in the study without any consequences to him/her.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

_____ _____
Parent or Guardian's Signature Date

_____ _____
Witness Date

_____ _____
Principal Investigator or representative Date

_____Yes, my child may participate. _____No, my child may not participate.

APPENDIX C

TEACHER INFORMATION LETTER

Dear Sam and Don:

The purpose of my study is to explore the dialogue between teacher's and students as well as among students surrounding the reading aloud of multicultural literature. Over a period of ten weeks, students participating in the study will listen to stories, participate in conversations and activities that relate to the book that was read. The teacher will spark dialogue among the students that will reflect the students understanding and awareness of issues surround multicultural education and literature. Data will be collected through researcher field notes, audio and video recordings of the sessions, observations of students, interviews with teacher's and students, and artifacts created as a result of the teacher planned activity.

The students in this study will not be put at risk by participating. The research sessions will take place at times chosen by the teachers to ensure that the study does not interfere with or take away from instructional time. The literature being used is available at public libraries and the titles will be provided in list form to the parents of the participants. Students participating in this study will benefit from exposure to multicultural literature as well as the activities. None of the activities will counteract the instruction of the regular classroom teacher or the language arts program in effect; rather, they will enhance the current instruction.

All of the data collected will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Parents are welcome to review the data that has been collected. Participation in this study is voluntary; parents or students may elect not to remain in the study at any time. Written consent of parents will be obtained with form HS-027 of The Ohio State University Office of Research Risks Protection, which will be attached to a letter explaining the study. This letter is included on the following page. Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Dyer
Doctoral Candidate
The Ohio State University

APPENDIX D

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

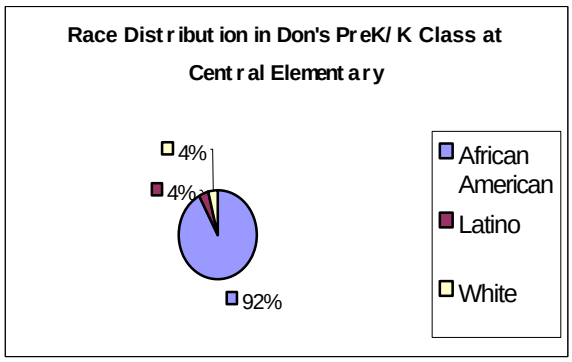
Teacher Interview Questions

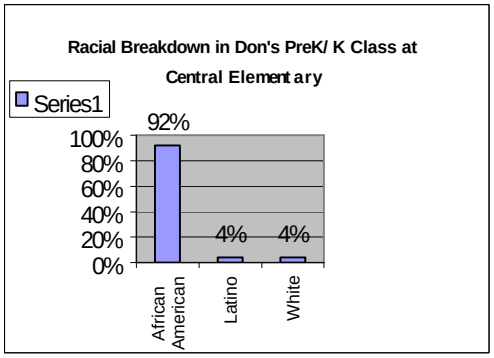
1. Why did you become a teacher?
2. What other grades have you taught?
3. How did you decide on this school?
4. How many students do you have in your class? (what is the breakdown—ses, gender etc.)
5. How do you define multicultural literature?
6. How should it be used?
7. Do you talk about equity and race? When do you discuss these issues?
8. How do you handle tough issues represented in the books you choose?
9. When students bring in books, do they bring in multicultural literature?
10. How do you choose the multicultural books you have in your classroom library?
11. Do you pre-plan lessons done with these books or do you allow your lesson to emerge from the children?
12. Do you tell personal or made up stories to humanize the book to make it more relevant or pertinent to the students?
13. What do you see as the purpose of education?
14. Are there experiences that have lead you to this belief?
15. What goals are you trying to achieve when you use multicultural literature?
16. When you use multicultural literature, what do you tend to focus on?
17. What is your philosophy of education?
18. How do you see pedagogy and your philosophy of education surrounding issues of culture and multiculturalism?

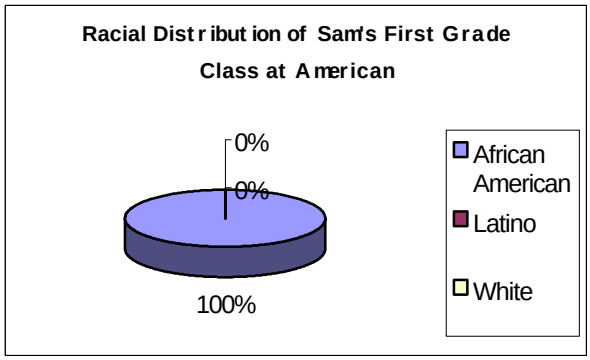
APPENDIX E

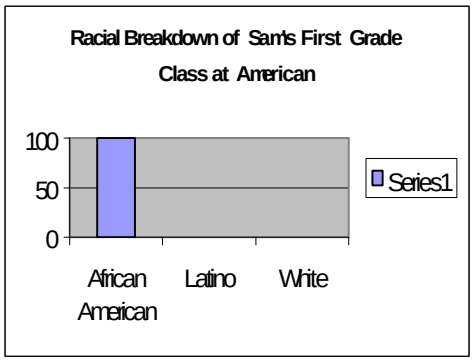
CLASSROOM RACIAL DISTRIBUTION

Classroom Race Distribution









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