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Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, Literacy Instruction, and Teacher Decision Making: A Formative Experiment Investigating Shifts in Teachers' Beliefs and Practices

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This dissertation, CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY, LITERACY INSTRUCTION, AND TEACHER DECISION MAKING: A FORMATIVE EXPERIMENT INVESTIGATING SHIFTS IN TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES, by NATASHA A. THORNTON, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

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CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY, LITERACY INSTRUCTION, AND TEACHER
DECISION MAKING: A FORMATIVE EXPERIMENT INVESTIGATING SHIFTS IN
TEACHERS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

by

NATASHA A. THORNTON

Under the Direction of Dr. Amy Seely Flint

ABSTRACT

Educational policies and systemic inequalities have created “very different educational realities” for African American students and their white counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 2005) resulting in low literacy rates, low test scores, and high dropout rates. Culturally relevant pedagogy has been shown to increase the academic achievement of culturally diverse students (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, many in-service teachers struggle to effectively implement a culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Esposito & Swain, 2009; May, 2011; Rozansky, 2010), and limited research has been conducted on professional development aimed at supporting teachers’ knowledge and practices around CRP (Knight & Wiseman, 2005; Milner, 2009). Guided by sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934/1986; Wertsch 1991), critical theory

(Freire, 1970), critical race theory (Delgado & Stefaniec, 2012; Taylor, 2009) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2003), this study examined teachers' changing beliefs and practices as they engaged in professional development on issues related to culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy development. Questions guiding this study were: (1) What shifts do teachers make in their conceptual and pedagogical understandings around CRP when engaged in professional development activities? (2) What factors enhance or inhibit teachers' ability to implement CRP during literacy instruction? (3) How do teachers navigate contextual constraints to implement their beliefs in relation to CRP?

The methodology for this study is formative experiment, as its goal is to bridge the gap between theory and practice, (Bradley & Reinking, 2011). A continuous, teacher-centered professional development focused on CRP served as the intervention for this formative experiment. Data sources include audio-recorded interviews and teacher debrief session, video-recorded professional development sessions, and field notes from classroom observations. Findings of this study indicate that theoretical learning, critical self-reflection, collaboration, and longevity are integral to support shifts in teachers beliefs and practices around culturally relevant pedagogy. Findings also show that the shifting process is dynamic and complex and occurs differently for individuals. Implications of this study suggest that professional learning should be differentiated for teachers as it considers teachers beliefs, experiences, and work context during the learning process. Teachers can form communities of practice to support each other's learning goals and implementation of CRP.

INDEX WORDS: Culturally relevant pedagogy, literacy instruction, teacher development, professional development, theory and practice

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in

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DEDICATION

For my sons, EJ and Cam.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“...students need a school culture that makes it inevitable that all students receive a socially just and excellent education. So do teachers” Oakes and Lipton (1999, p.326).

The quote above speaks to the heart of this study: supporting teachers in their knowledge and practice so that they can better enhance the learning of their students. An excellent education does not happen by chance, but by knowledgeable, reflective, and socially just educators offering a meaningful and relevant curriculum.

With the onset of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, PL 107-110, 2001) policy and the curricular mandates associated with increasing student achievement in reading and math, an “excellent education” began to be defined by policy makers and publishing firms, rather than teachers’ own perspectives and beliefs. As an elementary teacher, I witnessed colleagues abandoning what they believed about teaching and learning due to the curricular mandates of NCLB, state level assessments and the pressures to achieve Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The beliefs and ideas of many of the teachers I worked with were shaped through expectations of the school district and administrators, which in turn dictated teaching practices (Flint, et al., 2011). Embracing the intent of the law—to increase student achievement and accountability—left little room for teachers to question the outcome or the consequences of such a law. Therefore, what has been shown to drive a teacher’s decision making in the classroom is not always rooted in their own belief systems about teaching and learning, but heavily influenced by political rhetoric and ideologies about systematic instruction and test scores as the indicator of knowledge.

In this study, I seek to support teachers as they consider how implementing culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) during literacy instruction may provide their students a more socially just education. By engaging in a professional learning space, teachers will be able to discuss, question, and interact with ideas around culturally relevant pedagogy that will allow them to strengthen their beliefs about teaching and learning and implement practices aligned with their beliefs.

Definition of Terms

African-American/Black: People of African descent born in America.

Beliefs: A "set of conceptual representations which signify to its holder a reality or given state of affairs of sufficient validity, truth and/or trustworthiness to warrant reliance upon it as a guide to personal thought and action" (Harvey, 1986, p. 660).

Conceptual Understandings: Knowledge about a topic.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: A theoretical and pedagogical framework that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Culturally relevant pedagogy involves fostering academic achievement, cultural competence, and a sociopolitical consciousness in students.

Culturally Relevant Teaching: The praxis of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Deficit Beliefs: Negative beliefs about students and their families that attribute lack of academic success to race and/ or socioeconomic level.

Marginalized Students: Students who are silenced or perceived as powerless during the educational process based on factors such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

On-going, Teacher-Centered Professional Development: Professional development that is developed and designed to meet participating teachers' needs. Teachers have input in the topics discussed and actively engage in the learning process. The facilitator provides additional support for teachers as they reflect on their teaching practices.

Pedagogical Understandings: Knowledge of instructional methods.

Students of Color: Non-white student population that has been marginalized by mainstream education. In this study the terms African American, Black, and students of color are used interchangeably.

Teacher Decision Making: Teachers are empowered to make choices based on their pedagogical knowledge, beliefs, and what's best for their students' against competing courses of action.

Urban School Setting: Schools that have one or more of the following characteristics: (a) in a highly populated area, (b) have large numbers of culturally, linguistically and racially diverse students. (c) is located in a low socioeconomic neighborhood, and (d) performs poorly on state mandated tests and other measures of academic achievement.

Statement of the Problem

In 1970, social activist, Boggs stated, "...it is the black community that the present educational system has most decisively failed" (Boggs, 2011, p.38). More than 40 years later, Boggs' assessment of the public education system and its impact on the African American community and schooling still holds true. King (2005) asserts that there is a "crisis of Black education in the United States" (p.11), referring to educational problems that continue to plague African Americans. For example, African American students continue to be tracked into lower curriculum programs, over-represented in special education, under-represented in gifted and talented

classes, and have higher rates of suspensions, expulsions, truancy, and dropout rates (King, 2005). Attributing these problems to inherent deficiencies in African Americans are cultural deficit theories, constructed during the 1960s, that attest that family background negatively impacts the education of African Americans (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In addition, culturally deficit theories have neglected the societal and educational policies and systemic inequalities that have created “very different educational realities” (Darling-Hammond, 2005, p. 201) for the rich and the poor, the White and the non-White. The historic and social contexts that are rooted in the above quote by Grace Lee Boggs’ continue to be relevant within educational contexts of today (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Anderson (2004) and others (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Murrell, 2007) argue that the disparity in educational achievements between Blacks and Whites is not a depiction of African Americans’ lack of intellectual capabilities but is due to under-resourced classrooms, insufficient number of qualified teachers, large classroom sizes, and scripted, mandated curriculum. Many scholars argue that African American students receive a watered-down curriculum and are expected to perform poorly; ultimately being underserved by the educational system (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2009; Murrell, 2007).

Students of various cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds are not usually represented in the curriculum, materials, and assessments found in most public education classrooms. Rather, the values, perspectives, and beliefs of the White, middle class, heavily influenced by a Eurocentric perspective (Lewis, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006) are prevalent throughout the system. Such a perspective marginalizes and discounts the resources and understandings of diverse students. To further contextualize the focus of this study, I examine the impact of federal educational policy on literacy development and the linguistic and cultural challenges faced by students of diverse backgrounds in relation to mainstream education practices.

Impact of Federal Policy on Teaching and Learning

Since the 1960s, the federal government has implemented programs and provided additional funding to states in order to improve the academic achievement of children living in poverty. For example, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was enacted at the “height of the Civil Rights movement as a part of America’s ‘War on Poverty’” (Hewitt, 2011, p.169) to expand educational opportunity for low-income students and students of color. The goal of ESEA was to legislate the promise of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (Hewitt, 2011), which was to provide equitable education for all students and to specifically support the literacy development of students of color and those from low-income families. As a result, Title I programs were developed, to serve many low-income and rural schools. Then and now, Title I funds are distributed to schools based on the percentage of low-income students that are enrolled. Since its initial enactment, ESEA has been reauthorized with each presidential administration and many other federal programs have been implemented. The most recent educational reforms to be implemented under ESEA are *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) (PL 107-110, 2001) and *Race to the Top* (H.R. 1532, 2011). Earlier federal legislation required assessment to show the value added by instruction, but with NCLB, more frequent assessments were required and a series of mandated “corrective actions” were to be applied to schools that failed to achieve consistently improve academic performance (Allington, 2006, p.3). *Race to the Top* has in many ways extended the requirements of NCLB, continuing to focus on test scores as measures of student achievement and teacher accountability. It also introduced a national curriculum, the *Common Core State Standards* (CCSC, 2012). States are not required to adopt these standards; however, 45 states have now implemented the standards because of the grant money that is awarded by

adopting them into the state curriculum (Burns, 2012). Common Core standards also include criteria for what students must know at each grade level to be “college- and career-ready” (Tenam-Zemach & Flynn, 2010-2011). Many teachers view the Common Core State Standards as one more mechanism for narrowing the curriculum, which results in decreasing teacher autonomy and discounting the education of the whole child (Wessling, 2013). While many may argue that the intent of ESEA and corresponding reform efforts are quite honorable, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, along with other organizations critique the implementation of ESEA because of the mismanagement of funds and the difficulties in evaluating the effectiveness of the different programs (Hewitt, 2011).

Positioning of diverse students. When President Johnson signed ESEA into law, his hope was that ESEA would “bridge the gap between helplessness and hope for more than 5 million educationally deprived children” (Hewitt, 2011, p. 172). As late as the 2000s this hope has not materialized. Educational reforms continue to categorize students of color and low-income students as deficient. NCLB (2001) stated that the government would provide incentives, including “financial incentives, to principals who have a record of improving the academic achievement of all students, but particularly students from economically disadvantaged families, students from racial and ethnic minority groups, and students with disabilities” (p. 208). For the Race To the Top program, the U.S. Department of Education (2009) defines high-need students as “students at risk of educational failure or otherwise in need of special assistance and support, such as students who are living in poverty, who attend high-minority schools who have disabilities, or who are English language learners” (p. 12). These statements group students of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds with students who are learning to speak English and students who are identified as having special needs. Students of color are then positioned as needing

additional supports to learn because their racial and class backgrounds limit their ability to succeed academically. This line of thinking is reminiscent of the very cultural deficit models that dominated the early and mid-1900's. And as a result, policies and practices, rooted in deficit perspectives, guide the decision making of districts, schools, and teachers in relation to teaching and learning and limits what is expected of diverse students.

Prescriptive curriculum and teacher autonomy. Murrell (2007) attests that attempts are made to fix the symptoms of structural inequity, such as the disparity in test scores and drop-out rates, but that nothing is being done to address the root causes. Policy makers have yet to acknowledge the historic, social, and racial barriers that have inhibited the educational advancement of people of color for centuries and continue to view diverse populations as inherently deficient. For example, schools that qualify for Title I funds due to the low socioeconomic level of their students, and by not achieving the minimum in test scores, are mandated to use prescriptive reading curricular and test preparation materials. This increased control of federal mandates has “generated a new form of discrimination” (Breault & Allen, 2008, p. 5) by narrowing the curriculum with prescriptive reading programs and increasing the emphasis on test scores while failing to address the racial, cultural, and gender biases in curriculum and assessments that perpetuate the test score gap (Willis & Harris, 2000). The policies that have been put in place by the federal government to increase the literacy of poor and minority students have actually worsened them by decreasing the autonomy of teachers. Such curricula discount the knowledge and expertise of teachers and the understandings and practices of children that are embedded in engagements in their homes and cultural communities (Purcell-Gates, 2011).

The overwhelming effects of NCLB and subsequent legislation of Race to the Top and Common Core State Standards, not only impact how teachers view students but also how teachers understand the reading process. A narrow or biased view of reading can be harmful as teacher expertise has been found to be the single most important measurable cause of increased student learning (Ferguson, 1991) and at the same time, mandated reading programs can significantly shape how teachers conceptualize reading instruction (Flint et al., 2011). Willis and Harris (2000) support this claim by advancing that “reading has been politicized to support the status quo and to deny access to nonmainstream groups” (p. 57). Although teachers may not believe that implementing systematic reading instruction is the best way to teach their students, they often have no choice if their school district or administrators dictate teaching practices. As federal policy introduces instructional mandates, teachers are required to attend training sessions and workshops on how to implement instruction for at-risk students under the law. Dudley-Marling & Paugh (2004) contend that when teachers are under pressure to prepare students to make proficient scores on standardized tests, direct test preparation is substituted for literacy instruction, resulting in these tests becoming the entire curriculum. This results in a lack of teacher instructional autonomy and critical decision-making.

A major issue with reading policy, instruction, and high-stakes testing is that it is a cyclical and systemic problem. Educational reform was passed to increase the achievement of low performing schools by prescribing scripted curriculum and taking away teacher autonomy and expertise. However, curriculum that does not allow for teachers to make adjustments based on students’ needs and abilities nor allows for diverse cultural understandings will continue to impede the learning and development of students. Therefore, regardless of the educational policy passed to improve education, if it does not require culturally relevant teaching, the cycle of low

achievement for students of color will continue. Murrell (2007) maintains that the same policies which are legislated to support students of color actually further marginalize them.

Impact of cultural and linguistic differences on literacy learning

With the implementation of more scripted and mandated curriculum that position the teaching of reading as a one-size fits all approach, teachers' capacity to build on students' literacy experiences and knowledge as a foundation for teaching has been negated. Even more, the cultural and linguistic differences between teachers and students also create a barrier to building on students' literacy experiences. The U.S. student population is becoming more diverse, with an increasing number of students of color and those from low-socioeconomic families (Villejas & Irvine, 2010). This results in more diverse linguistic and communicative styles that the predominately White, female, and middle-class teaching population will have to encounter (Morrell, 2010). Students whose literacy practices are supported and built upon at school, are certainly validated as competent students, thus, cultivating a positive attitude about school and learning. However, mainstream classroom environments that perpetuate white, middle-class, male norms and values (Ntiri, 2009) are not structured to support the literacy of diverse learners and can have a negative effect.

Au (1998) argues that the linguistic and cultural differences that differ from mainstream beliefs of schooling can lead to subpar learning environments and education. For example, Gay (2002) explains that mainstream education has more of a passive-receptive style of communicating. This style of communicating is very uniform and instructive where the teacher is actively speaking, and the students are expected to listen quietly. She continues by stating that diverse students use more of an active-participatory style where everyone is actively engaged. The dif-

ferent styles can cause communication problems for both the teachers and students. Diverse students may be positioned as behavior problems and a silence can develop between teachers and students. Heath (1989) states that literacy engagements such as, “sharing knowledge and skills from multiple sources, building collaborative activities from and with written materials, and switching roles and trading expertise and skills in reading, writing, and speaking” (p. 371) are at the heart of being literate. However, she acknowledged that schools rarely offer time for practice or reward students in these open-ended literacy activities, especially students that do not exhibit high literacy skills based on standardized test scores. When students do not get an opportunity to use existing language skills as a bridge to academic reading and writing, learning interactions are fewer because of the disconnect between home and school interactions.

Students who do not speak Standard English, but some variation such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE), also called Ebonics, are generally viewed as being deficit language users and at-risk readers (Delpit, 2006). Negative views of students based on their language use can cause them to develop a poor self-concept and exhibit negative attitudes toward school and learning (Delpit, 2006). Misconceptions of students’ language development and lack of understanding of how to support or utilize the diverse vernaculars and languages of students are common challenges that teachers face. These linguistic differences are reflected in reading or literacy behaviors that students bring into the classroom.

The linguistic and cultural differences that students bring to the classroom often result in negative interactions and assumptions about students’ academic abilities. Some teachers believe that students whose literacy practices are not congruent with the literacy practices of the school will have difficulty learning (Purcell-Gates, 2011). Secondly, teachers are unsure of how to effectively capitalize on all of the diverse literacies that students bring in the classroom (Purcell,

Gates, 2011). Finally, once they become aware of the different literacies and understand how to build upon them, it is difficult to implement these practices within a high-stakes testing school environment.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this formative experiment is to support teachers' conceptual and pedagogical understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This study also seeks to understand how gaining conceptual and pedagogical understandings of CRP impact shifts in teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. There are many factors that impact a teacher's ability to implement CRP. For example, some teachers may have freedom to implement the instruction that they choose but have limited resources. A teacher in another classroom setting may be confined to instructional mandates but have a plethora of materials. A formative design will be used to document teachers' changing conceptual and pedagogical understandings as they engage in professional development on issues related to CRP and literacy development. The research questions that guide this study are:

- 1) What shifts do teachers make in their conceptual and pedagogical understandings around CRP when engaged in professional development activities?
- 2) What factors enhance or inhibit teachers' ability to implement CRP during literacy instruction?
- 3) How do teachers navigate contextual constraints to implement their beliefs in relation to CRP?

The methodology used in this study, formative experiment, is utilized to work toward bridging the gap between theory and practice as well as understanding what factors enhance or

inhibit an intervention. Formative experiment is an educational research approach that is designed to help researchers and teachers better understand how teachers can more successfully navigate those contextual factors. Therefore, the focus of this study will not be specifically on culturally relevant pedagogy, but on the shifts of teachers' theoretical and practical understandings of CRP and how the nature of formative experiment, as a methodical approach, allows for an understanding of how to best support teachers in understanding and implementing CRP.

Significance of this Study

This study is significant because culturally relevant, meaningful learning is not a reality for most students of color. Although volumes of educational research have been written about how to develop successful students, Lazar et al., (2012) declare there is an intellectual genocide of many students who are racially and culturally diverse. They ask the important question, "How is it possible that America's public schools are failing so many students?" (p. 2). These scholars deem that teachers must identify and offset injustices such as the misalignment of curriculum and instruction with what students actually need to learn. Milner (2009) argues that it is critical for teachers of African American students to be well educated. Therefore, this study works toward addressing a very critical educational problem in that it supports teachers in learning about culturally relevant pedagogy as a theoretical and pedagogical tool.

Theoretical Framework

The lines of inquiry that guide my study are sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1934/1986; Wertsch 1991) and critical theory (Freire, 1970). Within critical theory, critical race theory (Delgado & Stefanie, 2012; Taylor, 2009) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2003) further substantiate this study. These theoretical frames shape my understanding of culture and learning

within a historical, social, and racial context. In this formative experiment, as the teachers of African American students learn more about culturally relevant pedagogy and how to implement it within a Eurocentric-mainstream curriculum, the overarching goal is to shift their beliefs and teaching practices to better support the literacy development of their students. Sociocultural theory grounds my understanding of how people develop understandings based on their experiences in the world. People's understandings and knowledge can change as they have experiences within different social contexts. Both sociocultural theory and critical theory acknowledge how culture and history impact peoples' understanding. Critical race theory and critical pedagogy are a means through which teachers make meaning as they interact with each other and students in the context of race and in the ways they make decisions about their instruction and its impact on the world. These theoretical frameworks emphasize the concept that knowledge can be socially constructed as well as create change, which is the goal of my study.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory, based heavily on the work of Vygotsky (1934/1986), ascertains that learning and language development are embedded in experiences, dialogue, and social interactions with others and cannot be separated from a social context. For example, in order to make sense of new concepts, a person grounds his or her thoughts in concrete experiences of the social world. The way a person understands and thinks about a concept changes as he or she gains more experiences. These experiences determine the way people understand. Vygotsky's (1934/1986) theory of language development emphasizes that the primary function of speech is social contact and that the social and cultural nature of development is dependent on a child's interaction with adults. The nature of social interactions allows children to observe and participate in the lan-

guage and culture of those that are around them. Vygotsky deems that communication is a precursor before a child can mentally organize thought and that higher mental functions cannot be developed without actually engaging in speech acts. Vygotsky's (1934/1986) conception of the "zone of proximal development" explains this idea. The zone of proximal development is the actual level of development a child is at with the scaffolding and guidance of an adult or peer. Essentially, whatever a child can do with assistance today, he or she can do by herself tomorrow. Zone of proximal development asserts that learning is not development, but learning sets developmental processes in motion, which would be impossible apart from learning. Therefore communication in social interactions sets in motion language development, making language development a social process. The child is using speech to construct his knowledge, demonstrating that language is central in mediating development. Wertsch (1991) attests that "action is mediated and cannot be separated from the milieu in which it is carried out" (p. 18). For my study, this means that context, discourse, and relationships are essential to learning. It provides guidance for the learning processes that the teachers will participate in as they engage in professional learning, but also the types of learning engagements that the teachers will provide for their students within a culturally relevant context. It also guides how I will approach data analysis as Wertsch (1991) acknowledges that the main goal for a sociocultural approach is that the analysis be linked in some way with specific cultural, historical, or institutional factors.

Bloome and Bailey (1992) hold that through discourse, actions, and experiences members of a community or group construct, over time sets of practices or patterned ways of seeing, perceiving, and believing. In regards to this study, the sociocultural theory exemplifies that there are multiple ways of knowing, understanding, and doing. In relation to CRP, a teacher must be cognizant of the cultural markers such as beliefs, values, and norms, in order to encourage children's

development of language and so they can be competent members of their language and their community (Purcell-Gates, 2011). This concept is thoroughly represented within one of culturally relevant pedagogy's principle that teachers foster the cultural competence of students. Cultural competence acknowledges that culture and the social context of learning as something that is not separated from the learning process (Vygotsky, 1934/1986). Therefore, a culturally competent teacher seeks out the social and cultural knowledge and experiences that students already have and make connections to classroom instruction.

Halliday (2008) states that learning is a social and cultural phenomenon and all construction of meaning is a social process. New (2003) defined culture as "a composite of norms, social relationships, material conditions, and a language with which to negotiate these features." As a child uses language to negotiate these features, literacy development is taking place. An understanding of the sociocultural construction of literacy is important because people identify themselves and their language within their culture (Delpit, 2006). Although the common conception of literacy development is the acquisition of a series of discrete skills, a sociocultural view of literacy argues that literacy learning cannot be abstracted from the cultural practices in which it is nested (Razfar and Gutierrez, 2003).

Literacy as a social practice. "Sociocultural perspectives on literacy and learning highlight the important relationships between language, culture, and development" (Razfar & Gutierrez, 2003). Meaningful literacy instruction within a culturally relevant framework is at the helm of what is needed to place students of color in a position to achieve at high levels. Social languages, the way culture and identity are reflected in speech (Gee, 2001), must be valued in school and used as springboard to further develop reading and writing. However, the traditional

view of literacy in school and society is what Street (1985) calls an “autonomous” model of literacy and differs from the social languages that most students identify with in social interactions. The autonomous model views literacy as technical and a set of decontextualized skills to be learned and practice, void of any social or economic influences. Literacy is viewed as something that you have or don’t have and to be illiterate is to be deficient (Perry, 2012). Street’s “ideological” view of literacy maintains that literacy is set of practices grounded in social and cultural contexts. Therefore, there is no one way to describe literacy since notions of literacy are always ideological as they are rooted in particular understandings and experiences. This view of literacy as a social practice is the main premise of the theoretical perspective, New Literacy Studies. Within this field of thought, Barton and Hamilton (2000) outlined six propositions about the nature of literacy recognizing that literacy as fluid and changing within different social settings. It recognizes that as language is used so it is learned and developed. The beliefs and actions of those around socialize us into our understanding about ourselves and the world. The propositions are as follow:

- a) Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts
- b) There are different literacies associated with different domains of life
- c) Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others
- d) Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices
- e) Literacy is historically situated

- f) Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making (Barton & Hamilton, 2000, p. 8)

This concept of literacy is one that includes efforts to understand children's cultures, including what counts as knowledge in their homes and neighborhoods (New, 2003). It values the literacy experiences and knowledge that students bring to school and validates students as successful literate participants in the classroom. Literacy instruction within a culturally relevant framework mirrors this sociocultural view of literacy and substantiates Gee's (2008) claim that almost all children, including poor children have impressive language abilities, large vocabularies, complex grammar, and deep understandings of experiences and stories. In relation to this study, the goal is to for teachers to negotiate and share meanings about texts and the classroom community with the students, based on the language abilities that Gee suggests children automatically bring into the learning environment. Therefore it is essential to support teachers in understanding how language and sociocultural factors can support cognitive styles and the development of students who are viewed through an autonomous lens as deficient based on their literacy skills.

Critical Theory

Critical theory examines the impact of power relations in society; disapproving the way society privileges certain groups over others. These power relations can be based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, sexual orientation (Giroux, 2003) and can also be maintained and reproduced through the educational system (Apple, 1992, McLaren, 2003). Therefore, for this study, critical theory provides a lens for examining power structures and working toward transformation of inequities in for students of color in education.

Karl Marx, the father of critical theory, suggested that hegemonic ideology is linked to the economic base of society and the wealthy, those who own the means of production, and have the power to effect the line of consciousness of the people in that society (Crotty, 1998) resulting in “interactions of privilege and oppression” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). Critical theorists argue that those who have been privileged in society and education are the rich, the White, and the male, resulting in the oppression and marginalization of the poor, the non-White, and the female (Gage, 1989). Since critical theory is emancipatory and transformative, critical theorists believe that the oppressed can transform themselves and the inequalities that impact them through knowledge and action.

Knowledge and action as a means of social change are prevalent in Freire’s (1970) concepts of praxis and conscientization. Praxis is when people commit to education that leads to action and reflection and conscientization is the act of understanding your reality and then acting upon it to make a change. In Brazil, Freire used dialogue and the teaching of reading to help his students overcome oppression. He states that “The ‘dialogical man’ is critical and knows that...it is in the power of humans to create and transform” (Freire, 1970, p.91). Developing a critical consciousness of life and society prompts one to take actions toward transformation and is significant to this study as teachers learn about key tenets of CRP, engage in critical reflection, and support their students in doing the same.

Freire’s (1970) notions of “banking” apply to today’s educational system, which views students as empty vessels that need to have knowledge deposited into them. This kind of knowledge often reproduces the status quo and values one set of knowledge (usually from Eurocentric, middle class point of view). While there are a variety of races and cultures in our

schools, mainstream knowledge is what is most validated in the educational system. Critical theory disrupts the notion that one type of knowledge is more valuable than the other. When diverse students are not represented in the texts and materials are offered in school they may wonder “Where are the books and languages that reflect me?” (Nieto, 2009) causing them to further disengage from school. Murrell (2007) offers that liberal policies are not created to work toward eradicating the mismatch between home and school literacy practices of diverse learners, and educational reform continues to create policies that marginalize diverse students.

In our society there is a status quo, an existing structure that exists, that critical theorists seek to challenge. Privileged groups have great interest in supporting the status quo to protect the advantage that they have in society (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). However, disrupting mainstream ways of thinking, is vital to disrupting inequities that reproduce oppression such as the “pull yourself up by the boot straps mentality” and the notion that Standard English is superior to other variations of English such as African American Vernacular English. For this study, critical theory lays a foundation for issues of inequity, social reproduction, and multiple perspectives to be addressed in further detailed within the frameworks of critical race theory and critical pedagogy. The issues addressed in this section will be situated in the context of race and schooling in the following sections.

Critical race theory. Shelly-Brown & Cooper (2011) posits that “race must be considered in how culturally relevant pedagogy is enacted,” (p.70) therefore, critical race theory is essential in providing a theoretical frame for this study. Critical race theory (CRT) comes from a long tradition of resistance to the unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources perpetuated by the legal system (Taylor, 2009) and CRT seeks to transform the power relationships among race and racism (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). CRT is rooted in the following ideals

which support the inquiry of this study; (a) racism is a normal part of our society, (b) interest convergence advances the idea that racism advances the interest of the White elite and the working class Anglo people, therefore society sees little need to work toward eradicating racism and the status quo, (c) the notion that race and races are not objective or inherent but historically and socially constructed, (d) liberalism actually prevents true equality between races (e) storytelling is a technique that can counter dominant ideologies (Delgado and Setfancic, 2012, Ladson-Billings, Shelley Cooper, 2011). CRT emerged from Critical Legal Studies, a movement that sought to combat subtle racism that occurs in courts and challenged the notion that law is neutral and that every legal case has a single correct answer (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, Ladson-Billings, 2009).

CRT in education materialized as Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued for a critical lens to better understand issues of race in regards to school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, affirmative action, high stakes testing, controversies over curriculum and history, and alternative and charter schools. These notions of CRT in relation to culturally relevant pedagogy, teacher beliefs, instructional practices emphasize that mainstream education and curriculum is in fact a reproduction of race and racism in our society (Gay, 2002; Morrell, 2007; Yasso, Villalpando, Delgado-Bernal, & Solórzano, 2001), and often reproduced in schools. For example, Morrell (2007) refers to pedagogies of access and dissent where diverse students are taught skills that differ from their everyday culture, but the skills are necessary for them to succeed in society. However, they are also supported in developing a powerful language to critique those same systems that they are asked to navigate. Morrell's stance on pedagogies of access and dissent is powerful when it comes to helping students to think more critically about negative ideologies that they

may believe themselves, and empower them to refute those theories and gain a more critical consciousness about society and challenge the status quo.

In their work on critical race theory in Chicana/o education, Yasso et al. (2001) glean from the LatCrit Primer (2000) in their working definition of critical race theory in education which they believe is to:

....develop a theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and pedagogical strategy that accounts for the role of race and racism in U.S. education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating other forms of subordination such as gender, class, and sexual orientation (p.90).

Although LatCrit focuses specifically on Chicano students, this framework also includes all students of color, however, what is significant, is its goal is to bridge theoretical concepts with practice and teaching, and the community (LatCrit Primer, 2000). Critical race theory enables teachers and students to have a more critical approach towards learning that empowers them to question and challenge structures that marginalize people of color, as well as acknowledge and value students' racial and cultural ways of knowing and being.

For this study, CRT will allow me to understand more deeply how the inequalities rooted in race and class influence teachers' beliefs and their instructional practices. This will reveal the necessity for literacy instruction to be framed in CRP and for the development of teacher development practices that will help teachers negotiate mandated curriculum that has marginalized diverse students.

Critical pedagogy. Culturally relevant pedagogy aims to not only bridge home and school cultures, but also enables teachers and students to “see the contradictions and the inequities” (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p.328) of the educational system and the larger society. Ladson

Billings (2009) states that curriculum is a white supremacist master script, a perpetuation of race and racism within the classroom. Gay (2002) argues that formal curriculum, which holds the values and norms for mainstream education, avoids issues that are usually deemed as controversial such as racism, historical atrocities, and hegemony. Therefore, critical pedagogy is an essential theory to frame this study. Developing students' critical consciousness is one of the main tenets in Ladson-Billings' conceptualization of culturally relevant pedagogy. She suggests that it is imperative to support students in developing a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique "cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produces and maintain social inequities. If school is about preparing students for active citizenship, what better citizenship tool than the ability to critically analyze society?" (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, p.162).

Critical pedagogy is an approach that questions and seeks to transform oppressive structures of schooling and instruction. It rests on the assumption that education is used to promote a capitalistic society and challenges forms of oppression such as racism and sexism that pervade the educational system and society (McLaren, 2010). For some students, their experience in school is a true reflection of democracy providing opportunities and upward mobility. For others, curricula and teaching is a form of social control and imparts cultural dangers (Apple, 1992). Culturally relevant pedagogy acknowledges the disparities in the different schooling experiences and provides a guide to create opportunities for all students.

Culturally relevant pedagogy differs vastly from Freire's (1970) notion of the banking concept that is typical of many schools today. Instead of teachers disseminating knowledge that has one truth, culturally relevant teachers value multiple perspectives and co-construct knowledge with students. This form of teaching values multiple ways of thinking and validates

the cultural resources and knowledge that they bring to the classroom. This is contrary to the traditional models of teaching that operates in deficit view when students present non-mainstream ways of thinking.

According to Giroux (2003) critical pedagogy is a radical pedagogy which points to the connections between conception and practice, and it honors students' experiences by connecting what goes on in classrooms to their everyday lives. Giroux (2003) states that educators should reject forms of schooling that marginalize students and should adopt a radical pedagogy that not only emphasizes issues of curriculum and classroom practices but also resist social and institutional restraints and challenge dominant teaching practices and other forms of oppression. He suggests that issues related to gender, class, race, and sexual orientation should be resources for learning instead of being a punishment, failure, or barrier to learning (Giroux, 2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy is a critical pedagogy that enables teachers and students to be critical beings who make decisions about teaching based on their understandings of the historical, social, and economic factors that have marginalized people of color for centuries. It enables transformation through meaningful, critical thinking and discussions, as it critiques inequities in school and society.

Conclusion

Teachers' beliefs about the students that they teach impact the types of learning engagements and relationships that are constructed in classrooms. The negative perceptions of African Americans and other students of color that are constructed in society have been detrimental to the educational advancement of marginalized groups. Although there are successful teachers and schools of African Americans, the percentage of African Americans graduating from high school, college, and benefiting from the educational system remains low; and at the same time,

the number of African American students who are tracked in lower ability programs, represented in special education programs, and dropping out of school remains high. Research has shown that teachers are an extremely important factor in a child's educational achievements (Darling-Hammond, 2005). Therefore, in facilitating professional learning that focuses on CRP, this study offers teachers the opportunity to examine their beliefs and make deeper connections between their conceptual and pedagogical understandings as a way to support the academic achievement of their students.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The role that teachers play in the academic achievement of all students is critical, especially for African Americans. According to Irvine (2009), African American students are more teacher-dependent than kids of other races, and therefore the teacher can strongly influence a child's self-concept and attitude towards school (Irvine, 2009). Research highlights the importance of recruiting more teachers of color to support the educational needs of the growing diversity in schools. Villegas & Irvine (2010) and Milner (2012) agree that it is beneficial for students of color to have teachers who share a common history. Teachers of color, specifically African American teachers, serve as role models for all students; improve the academic outcomes and school experiences of students of color, have high expectations for students, they empathize with their students, they do not pity them (Milner, 2012; Villegas & Irvine, 2010). For example, Milner (2012) states, "Indeed, Black teachers often have a commitment to and a deep understanding of Black students and their situations and needs because both historically and presently these teachers experience and understand the world in ways similar to their students" (p.32). Roseboro and Ross (2009) agree that Black women educators have an ethic of care rooted in "historical, social, spiritual, and political situatedness" (p.21) and are the foundation for liberatory education.

However, there is a substantial cultural gap growing between Black students and Black educators (Paris, 2012). In addition to race, researchers have also explored the influence of class due to the growing population of middle class teachers serving students from low-income homes. Wilson (1978) suggested that the importance of race for Blacks was declining and contended that

class was growing in significance. Nieto (2000), states that the behavior and experiences of middle-class parents of any race or ethnic group, may differ from those of low-income parents. Therefore, middle-class, Black teachers who teach low-income Black students may not be culturally relevant if they have deficit views of their students based on class. One's understandings and perspectives of social class can impact beliefs about students' abilities, and ultimately impact practice. Another factor that negatively impacts the culturally relevant teaching of African American teachers, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is the role of policy on curriculum. Wynter-Hoyte (2014) corroborates this point from her examination of church and school literacy practices among Black, middle-class children. She uncovered that teachers in her study (Black women) placed more value on aligning their instruction with mandates of mainstream education, standardized curriculum maps and high-stakes testing while neglecting to support the cultural and linguistic needs of their Black students. These scholars and studies suggest that as socioeconomic distance grows between Black teachers and Black students, learning about cultural relevant pedagogy is needed for all teachers. Therefore, understanding teacher beliefs and studying practices that support shifts in teachers' beliefs in relation to teaching African American students is of great importance.

Kagan (1992) suggests that beliefs "may be the clearest measure of a teacher's professional growth" (p. 85), making this proposed study critical to the development of teachers and the academic achievement of diverse students. The literature included in this review, draws from both sociocultural and critical lenses and is grounded in the assumptions that (a) teachers beliefs' and understandings are socially constructed, (b) multicultural education is essential for building

on and expanding student's intellectual and language resources, and (c) critical reflection on professional development and learning opportunities is integral for developing the critical consciousness of teachers and students and promoting educational access to all students.

This literature review begins with a general overview of teacher beliefs to provide an understanding of how beliefs are constructed and how they impact instructional practice. Next, I extend the section on beliefs into a summary of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogy. This section discusses an overview of seminal studies that depict how students' cultural resources are vital for literacy development. Culturally relevant pedagogy is thoroughly reviewed and established as a belief system not simply a set of instructional strategies. The final section focuses on literature in reference to professional development practices that aid teachers in gaining knowledge and examining their beliefs to produce shifts in their understandings and practices. The literature selected provides an understanding of the work that has been conducted in teacher beliefs, culturally relevant pedagogy, and professional development as well as the research that needs to be done to support teachers in applying theoretical constructs into practice.

Teacher Beliefs

Research on teacher beliefs is important to the understandings of teacher actions and decision-making inside and outside the classroom. Teachers make decisions about classroom instruction in relation to the beliefs that they have about teaching and learning (Harste, 1977). A teacher's instructional plan, classroom management style, and professional development activities are examples of practices that are influenced by teachers' beliefs about teaching and the educational process as a whole. The research on beliefs is vast, and can be complicated due to the varying definitions and understandings of beliefs and belief structures that are presented in the literature (Pajares, 1992).

The discussion on teacher beliefs often includes understandings of teacher attitudes and knowledge, further obscuring the construct. Some researchers have described attitude as having an affective component and describe beliefs as cognitive actions (Richardson, 1996), labeling attitude and beliefs as separate constructs. However, others, such as Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, and Cuthbert, (1988) included a component of attitude into their definition of beliefs stating that a “belief is a way to describe a relationship between a task, an action, event, or another person and an attitude of a person toward it” (p.103). Similarly, with studying teacher knowledge, some researchers differentiate between beliefs and knowledge by viewing knowledge as having a “truth condition” (Richardson, 1996), requiring a group consensus to validate the theory (Green, 1971; Nespor, 1987), but beliefs do not require a truth factor. Nespor (1987) describes belief systems as being more inflexible and less dynamic than knowledge systems, while others have rationalized that knowledge, like beliefs are subjective and use the terms interchangeably (Richards, 1996).

Shulman (1986) established three dimensions of general knowledge involved in the process of teaching: subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, and general pedagogical knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin (1988) added personal practical knowledge to these dimensions which they explain is found in “teacher’s past experience, in the teacher’s present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions” (p.25) and in the teacher’s practice. Personal practical knowledge is a way of examining the past and the intentions of the future, to make decisions about the present situation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), thus integrating both knowledge and beliefs. They found in an earlier study of knowledge and beliefs that “it was difficult to pinpoint where knowledge ended and belief began” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987) and the two were basically different terms meaning same thing. Likewise, in his review of research

on teacher beliefs, Pajares (1992) found that “knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined,” (p. 325) but the nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new knowledge is learned. Therefore, people construct new knowledge based on beliefs they already possess. Similarly, in her work on teacher beliefs, Kavanagh (2010) reasons that beliefs, attitudes, identity, and context intersect, influence, and shape classroom practice. Therefore, for the purpose of this study the term beliefs will encompass teachers’ knowledge, attitudes, and values from which teachers make decisions in the classroom.

Sources of teacher beliefs

From a sociocultural perspective, a person’s beliefs are constructed within experiences and interactions with others and most theorists agree that beliefs are created through a process of enculturation and social construction (Pajares, 1992). Through observation and participation with others in their families and communities, people construct beliefs about the world. In regards to language and discourse, Gee (2001) calls these beliefs cultural models, which are “taken-for-granted schemata, storylines, theories, images, representations” (p.720) that people within the same Discourse groups share. Gee uses a capital D to describe Discourse which is a social language that involves more than just language, but includes ways of “talking, listening, writing, reading, acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and feeling” (Gee, 2008, p. 124), as opposed to discourse, that begins with a lowercase d, which he defines as language use. Therefore, within Discourse groups, cultural models are developed and beliefs are constructed. Gee (2008) gives the example of how the middle-class and working-class have different beliefs about child development. These cultural models about child rearing provide for each group value-laden constructs of what is normal and natural as well as what counts as inappropriate.

Teachers have different experiences in school as students learning to read and as pre-service teachers learning to teach reading. These different experiences and participation in different peer groups, impact their beliefs about reading paradigms, causing them to have varying beliefs about the most appropriate way of teaching reading. In a review of the literature on learning to teach, Richardson (1996) found three categories that influence the development of beliefs and knowledge about teaching based on people's experience: personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge.

Personal understandings derive partly from the first category, personal experience, and are rooted in socioeconomic status, gender, geographic location, and religious upbringing which effect an individual's beliefs, thus affecting their learning to teach and teaching (Richardson, 1996). Clark (1988) acknowledges that teachers' theories about teaching are "generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices" (p. 6). For example, Bullough and Knowles (1991) believed that one of the teachers in their study who initially viewed teaching as nurturing, constructed that belief from many years of being a parent prior to becoming a teacher. The second category, experiences that people have with schooling and instruction is what Lortie (1975) calls the apprenticeship of observation. The theory of the apprenticeship of observation explains how a person's experience with schooling, shapes their beliefs about the nature of teaching, teachers, and students and is responsible for how most people construct understandings and beliefs about teaching. Experience with formal knowledge, the third category, is when students gain knowledge about "school subjects, outside readings, television, religion classes, and so forth" (Richardson, 1996, p.104). Teacher educational programs provide formal knowledge about subject matter, conceptions of subject matter and how students learn it, and pedagogical knowledge. Although teachers gain formal knowledge about what it is to be a

teacher and how to teach, they still have assumptions about learning and make decisions about instruction in light of theoretical knowledge (Kuborska, 2011).

According to Green (1971) people can have beliefs or belief systems that are contradictory to each other. or that people hold on to beliefs even when they are no longer an accurate reflection of reality and do not change even when it makes sense for them to do so. Green suggests that beliefs must be reflected upon and examined to bring about consistency and an accurate portrayal of reality. Teachers are more responsive to new understandings and strategies that relate to their existing beliefs and practices (Kuzborska, 2011). The research on sources of teachers' beliefs supports the idea that the development of beliefs and knowledge is an amalgamation of various factors and experiences, with experiences being a major influence. Therefore, in supporting teachers in implementing their beliefs in practice, special attention must be paid to the experiences that teachers are provided in learning new knowledge and ways the new knowledge is connected to previous experiences.

Impact of Teacher Beliefs on Literacy Development and Practices

Examining existing beliefs and classroom practices of teachers is important for researchers to understand what impacts this important relationship. So far, the research on how teachers enact their beliefs in the classroom has come up inconclusive. A variety of explanations about how teachers' beliefs impact their practices have been illustrated in the literature (Deford, 1981; Harste, 1977; Powers, Zippay, & Butler, 2006). Researchers found that teachers who have strong theoretical conceptions are more likely to teach in relation to their beliefs. Harste (1977) described the findings of his research on the theoretical nature of teaching, supporting the conclusion that "despite atheoretical statements, teachers are theoretical in their instructional approach to reading" (p. 32). He found that teachers' instructional decisions when teaching reading were

aligned with a theoretical orientation, such as phonics or whole language, even if the teachers did not realize it. Likewise, Deford (1985) found a strong relationship between teachers' theoretical orientations and implementation. On the other hand, after a 3-year study of teachers' instructional decisions, Duffy (1981) concluded that teachers' theoretically based conceptions are not related to their teaching of reading practices. Teacher instruction can be stifled and not reflective of their beliefs if they lack resources and support from colleagues and administrators (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Also, if teacher's lack theoretical backing concerning what they believe is best for students, it is difficult for them to fully implement their beliefs in practice.

In Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd's, (1991) study about how teachers' beliefs about reading comprehension are reflected in their teaching practices they found that although majority of the teachers in the study implemented instructional practices that were aligned with most of their beliefs, they also found some areas where there were mismatches. The mismatches that they found in their study were instances when teachers were trying to use a practice, such as activating background knowledge, but their attempts were weak and ineffective. These instructional practices were related to beliefs that teachers had in which they did not express a solid understanding of during interviews. Also, when teachers' ideas began to shift in regards to different ways of teaching comprehension, they often did not know the practices that would allow them to act upon those beliefs. Richardson et al. (1991) concluded a lack of relationship between beliefs and practices may reflect that the teacher is going through a change process.

In their study of four reading teachers, Powers, et al. (2006) found that what teachers believed about instruction and assessment were not always consistent with the practices in their classrooms. In surveys where teachers responded to questions about what they believed about reading instruction, their instructional practices did not fully align with their responses on the

survey. They also found that instructional frameworks that teachers were most comfortable with influenced their instruction regardless of new instructional strategies they learned. The participants in this study were in a Master's program and were required to work in the university's literacy clinic where they learned new literacy strategies, but they continued to implement the literacy framework that they had been accustomed to using in their classrooms. Some of the teachers also felt that they had little control of their instructional practices due to district mandates. One of the teacher's practices aligned with her beliefs on the survey, but she failed to implement new literacy strategies she learned at the literacy clinic because they were outside of the scope of the literacy framework that she was accustomed to using with her students.

The implications from Kusborska's (2011) study of foreign language teachers revealed that teachers' beliefs did not "translate directly into classroom instruction or curriculum design". The teachers' instructional practices were guided by instructional frameworks which may have originated from the methodological approaches that were in use when they were learning or began teaching the foreign language. It seemed to the researchers that the foreign language teachers did little reevaluating or modification of instructional practices through the course of their teaching experience resulting in the gap between their theories and practices. Although the teachers may have believed recent and progressive practices were more effective, they had little support and practice in reflecting on their practices to bridge what they believed with their daily instructional practices.

However, teachers in Borg's (2011) study were supported in thinking more deeply about their beliefs and how they related to their practices. Borg (2011) examined the impact of an eight-week in-service teacher education program in the UK on the beliefs of six English language teachers. The results of this study showed that the teacher education program did impact

the teachers' beliefs. Data was collected about the teachers' beliefs by means of semi-structured interviews, coursework and tutor feedback. Findings showed that the in-service program supported three out of six teachers' awareness of their beliefs and consequently, they were able to articulate significant points that outlined their instructional practices. The other three teachers showed shifts in beliefs about strategies and activities that they believed to be useful during instruction.

These studies on teacher beliefs and practices provide insight into the development of beliefs and reasons as to why beliefs may or may not be implemented into instructional practice. Teachers' understandings of themselves, their students, and content are key to their implementation of instruction. These were qualitative studies which compared teachers' stated beliefs with what the researchers observed as actual classroom practices. My study is important because it is a formative experiment, where professional development will be implemented as an intervention to support shifts in teacher beliefs.

The implication of the research on pedagogy and praxis is that in-service teachers need to be better supported in gaining theoretical understandings and pedagogical practices. This study seeks to document shifts in teachers' beliefs by implementing an intervention using formative experiment as a methodological approach. The intervention is the focal point of any formative experiment with the goal of the intervention to positively transform instruction and facilitate the pedagogical goal. One of the affordances of formative experiment is that the intervention can be adapted to meet the pedagogical goal, which is different from other studies that implement some type of teacher professional learning and adaptations cannot be made to learning process as a way to facilitate shifts. Such as in Borg's (2011) study where the teachers did become more aware in their beliefs and made some shifts, the data also showed that the in-service could have engaged

teachers in “a more productive and sustained examination of their beliefs” (p. 370), but due to the criteria of a case study, the researcher is unable to respond to the case in order to bring about a more fruitful outcome.

Critical self-reflection will be implemented during the professional development for this study and teachers will critique their own thoughts and practices and examine how race, culture, and socioeconomic class impacts their students thinking and learning (Howard, 2003). Reflective practice is a critical component in pre-service teacher education but is missing in in-service teacher professional development and subsequent studies (Kurboska, 2011; Powers et al., 2006).

Multicultural Education and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

“Freedom for literacy and literacy for freedom” is what Henry Louis Gates deemed as the indigenous philosophy of education for African Americans (Perry, 2003). This philosophy was the sustaining force that compelled African Americans, free and enslaved, to risk their lives to secretly teach themselves and other African Americans to read. It was also the foundation of the Black community coming together during slavery and the Reconstruction Era to use their resources and time to create schools for slaves and free blacks when their children were prevented from receiving free public school education. This philosophy embodied the “feelings, the meanings, and the significance that African Americans have attached to schooling and learning” (Perry, 2003, p.12). The Civil Rights Movement became an extension of this philosophy (Banks, 2004; Harmon, 2012) as Blacks participated in protests to demand changes in the United States’ society so that equal rights would be offered to all people, including education. As Civil Rights’ protests began to extend from the streets to college campuses, multicultural education began to emerge as educational institutions were compelled to offer ethnic studies and multiethnic education (Banks, 2004). Although multicultural education was unquestionably a result of the African

American's efforts to attain educational equality, it encompasses all groups and cultures and is transformative education for both whites and students of color to "know more deeply their own histories as inflected by other groups' struggles" (Leonardo & Hunter, 2007, p.781). There are numerous approaches and definitions of multicultural education, but a key objective of all approaches "is to reform the schools and other institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality" (Banks, 2004, p.3). Factors such as race, class, and gender and their influence on education are critical to most multicultural educational approaches (Banks, 2004, p.3).

Culturally relevant pedagogy as discussed in chapter one is a theoretical and pedagogical approach that addresses a major goal of multicultural education; to give students an equal chance to experience educational success and mobility (Banks, 2004). Due to the mismatch of culturally and linguistically diverse students' home culture and the structure of mainstream education teachers must make learning culturally relevant in order to promote academic achievement for students of color. Although this study focuses on African American students, multicultural education and CRP are frameworks that support the learning of all students (Au & Jordan, 1981; Mohatt & Erickson,; Moll, Armanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2002). For example, many researchers have specifically addressed the discontinuity of home and school literacy practices with a variety of diverse groups and have used a range of terms to describe their culturally relevant approaches.

Au and Jordan (1981) used the term "culturally appropriate" when teachers use communication styles that resemble speech events in Hawaiian children's culture to teach lessons. In their study at a Hawaiian school they discovered that the use of "talk story", a Hawaiian speech event, contributed to the positive academic performance of the children. Au and Jordan (1981) believe that culturally appropriate lessons rely on three tenets: 1) it would have to be comfortable

for the children, 2) it would have to be comfortable for the teacher, and 3) it would have to promote better acquisition of basic academic skills. The rules governing speaking and turn-taking in the talk story lesson are consistent with the rules in the Hawaiian's children own speech community, bridging the gap between home and school.

“Culturally congruent” was used by Mohatt and Erickson (1982) during their research with Odawan Native American children. They found that when the students were singled out to respond individually and their responses were subject to open evaluation, they did not do well. However, when teachers involved the students in a more interactional communicative style, the students were more effective speakers. Building on students' cultural resources, such as the teachers in Mohatt and Erickson's study was significant in Moll, Armanti, Neff, & Gonzalez's (1992) ethnographic study where researchers and teachers used observations, interviews, and life histories of the participants who lived in Mexican communities in Tucson, AZ. They learned about aspects of the students' knowledge that were based on cultural and cognitive resources learned within the contexts of their homes and communities, which the researchers termed “funds of knowledge”. Using students' funds of knowledge as a bridge to curricular objectives in the classroom is integral to academic achievement and in supporting the cultural competence of students.

Cazden (1982) used the term “culturally responsiveness” in her work with African American teachers and students and Gay (2002) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) uses the term in their research on students from many diverse groups. Cazden found that there was a disconnect between teachers' and students' expectations during sharing time and that a lack of comprehension and/or appreciation when African American students told stories during sharing time were due to cultural differences. The implications from this body of work maintain that language is integral

in learning and students' language should be valued and built upon in the classroom. Gay (2002) corroborates that sentiment by stating "culturally responsive teaching is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, p.106). Cultural caring is also critical to Gay's (2002) conceptualization of culturally responsive teaching. She reasons that caring for students is a "social responsibility and pedagogical necessity" (p. 109) and that teachers must care so much for their students that they always act in the best interests of their students and only expect high-levels of achievement. When teachers build on students' individual and cultural resources who think, speak, and behave that are different from the norms of the dominant culture, they have confidence in their abilities and provide rigorous curriculum with a high level of accountability for students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Theoretical Tenets of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In Ladson-Billings' (1994) book *The Dreamkeepers*, she introduces the term "culturally relevant pedagogy," and presents an ethnographic study of eight teachers, five African-American and three European-American, who were considered to be excellent teachers in a school with predominately African American students. She realized that CRP was theoretical and praxis in nature as it was implemented in a variety of ways in teachers' classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Thein, 2012). Some teachers were more rigid with their teaching style while others were more progressive and utilized more open-ended instructional approaches, however theoretically the teachers had very similar perspectives of teaching that allowed them to meet the criteria of culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). She found that most teachers operated under the same theoretical perspectives and reflected the teachers' conceptions of themselves and

others, their conceptions of social relationships, and their conceptions of knowledge. The theoretical tenets include:

- 1.) teaching is an art and the teacher is the artist,
- 2) teaching is giving back to the community and the teacher is a part of the community,
- 3.) teachers believe all students can succeed,
- 4.) teachers help student make connections between their community, national, and global identities,
- 5.) teachers demonstrates a connectedness with students,
- 6.) teachers encourage a community of learners and encourages students to learn collaboratively,
- 8.) knowledge is continuously recreated, recycled and shared by teachers and students,
- 9.) knowledge is viewed critically,
- 10.) teachers are passionate about content, and
- 11.) teachers help students develop necessary skills.

During this study, Ladson-Billings witnessed students engaging in learning activities with high levels of confidence and demonstrated high levels of intellectual leadership. Ladson-Billings (1995a) later collapsed the above tenets and defined culturally relevant teachers as being able to (1) focus on students' academic achievement, (2) develop students' cultural competence, and (3) foster students' sense of sociopolitical consciousness. As a theoretical framework for research and praxis, CRP acknowledges that teachers are knowledgeable of the children they are teaching and recognize that the one-size fits all reading programs that are being supported by educational policy have excluded the social contexts of students' understandings and learning experiences.

While speaking with a group of pre-service teachers, Ladson Billings (2006) recalls how the students were concerned with not knowing how to “do” multicultural education. They said to her, “Everybody keeps telling us about multicultural education, but nobody is telling us how to do it!” Ladson-Billings (2006) responded by saying, “Even if we could tell you how to do it, I wouldn’t want us to tell you how to do it.” She felt it was critical to emphasize that if she told them what to do, they would do just that, and not deeply analyze for themselves the cultural and linguistic abilities and needs of their students. She pointed out to her students that nobody taught them how to “do” democracy, but they do it based on their beliefs and experiences as a participant in the American society. With multicultural education and CRP, there are no pre-made lessons or a set of instructions to follow. CRP provides a basis for teachers to develop beliefs about culture and its impact on teaching and learning. All teachers’ have beliefs or philosophies of education that provide rationale for decisions they make in the classroom, and it is important for CRP to be a guiding force for teachers actions with students of color. CRP provides teachers with ways of thinking about diverse students within an educational and societal context and offers tenets to operate within their beliefs to provide a relevant and equitable education to students. Villegas and Lucas (2007) urge that teaching students from diverse backgrounds and historically marginalized groups is more involved than applying specialized techniques; it demands a new approach to teaching that is rooted in an understanding of the role of culture and language in learning.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is not a color blind approach. Some people take the color blind approach when teaching students of color. Murrell (2007) suggests that not acknowledging race and culture in the context of learning is a new racism and presents itself in the practices and

policies that outwardly intend to promote equity but end up maintaining or increasing the inequity that oppresses the marginalized group. Ladson-Billings (1995a) gives an example of this new racism when she discusses how some teachers profess to not to see the color of their students in an attempt to treat all students the same. Agreeing with Murrell (2007), Ladson-Billings (1995a) asserts that when teachers take that stance, they justify the inequities that have been sustained because of race and ignore a critical component of their students' identities. Therefore, Ladson-Billings believes that it is very important for teachers to be cognizant of how they see themselves, their students, and their students' parents. Gay (2002) contends that the problem that some teachers have in dealing with the cultural identities of students is the fear of stereotyping and generalizing. Thus, they tend to ignore or deny the culture of their students and even their own. However, Gay (2002) agrees that denial is not the answer, but direct confrontation and thorough, critical knowledge of the interactive relationships between culture, ethnicity, communication, and learning and between individuals and group" (Gay, 2002, p.111) is necessary. Howard (2003) suggests that teachers equip themselves with the necessary skills to critically reflect on their own racial and cultural identities to recognize how these identities coexist with cultural compositions of their students. This type of critical reflection is embedded in the genuine belief that all students do have intellectual ability to succeed, without ignoring or demeaning their cultural identities and is essential for shaping academic success through cultural validation (Gay, 2002).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is critical in nature. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a pedagogy of power and opposition. Rozansky (2010) states that CRP is critical theory in action and can be a tool to enable teachers and students to "see the contradictions and the inequities" (Lad-

son-Billings, 1992, p.328) of the educational system and the larger society. Cultivating a socio-political consciousness in students, which is a fundamental tenet of CRP, requires teachers to incorporate issues of social justice within the required curriculum. Morrell (2007) refers to pedagogies of access and dissent where teachers not only validate students' diverse cultural knowledge and linguistic skills but also teach the skills and advanced literacies that they need to "succeed" in society; while helping the students to develop a powerful language to critique systems of social reproduction. Likewise, Villegas and Lucas (2007) believe that teachers should acknowledge the norms of the White middle class society and support students in understanding these norms, so they can function successfully within in society but still value the cultural and linguistic norms of students.

Implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The literature on successful implementation of culturally relevant instruction is mixed as teachers have to make decisions about instruction that align with their beliefs and the curricular goals of their schools and districts. There are many examples of teachers critically reflecting on their teaching to meet the diverse needs of their students and others who have difficulty implementing what they believe into practice. The following two studies highlight teachers deconstructing mainstream curriculum to implement more meaningful instruction for their students.

Hefflin (2002) describes her work with Pam, a third grade teacher of predominately African American students, who asked the question: "How do you use a full range of literary works, teach the mandated core curriculum, and still connect to children's lives in deeply personal ways?" With the help of Hefflin, Pam decided to use multicultural children's literature to meet the needs of her students. She felt the stories from the basal readers did not relate to their lived experiences. Hefflin (2002) developed a rating scale for Pam to use when selecting high quality

literature. The scale's criteria were based on the research of multicultural theorists, the needs of Pam's students, and the goals of the school district. Pam chose to start with the multicultural children's book *Cornrows* to shift into more culturally relevant literacy instruction. When teaching from that book, the students were more responsive during read alouds, wrote more elaborate responses when journaling, and engaged in deeper discussions with that related to them, their families and their African American heritage. Hefflin (2002) realized that by viewing the material and methods of their work through the practices of the students, they were able to adapt instructional practices that aligned with "social, cultural, and personal lives of students so that curricular goals can be realized" (p.247).

Kesler's (2011) approach to culturally relevant is framed in critical theory as he aimed to implement practices that were inclusive of all students by acknowledging the inherent biases in assignments that "center and validate some students, but if left unchallenged, marginalize and invalidate others" (p. 419). When Kesler assigned a family tree project with the goal of exploring the immigrant history of his diverse students, one family of an adopted student voiced concern. Kesler realized that the assignment had to be changed in order for the student to be fully represented within the curriculum. The student was able to modify the assignment and create a flower which included not necessarily family members, but those who surround her with love. This experience forced Kesler to question other assignments he had given that valued certain dominant cultural norms and evaluate how students have been marginalized during the learning process. For example, as a part of their immigration studies, Kesler's class took a field trip to Ellis Island. This trip reinforced the immigration stories of Americans from European descent, but marginalized other students, like African Americans, whose ancestors experienced forced migration into

slavery. For their research project on immigration, Jackie, an African American student, researched the Great Migration as it related to her Grandfather's experience of moving from Macon, GA to Chicago, IL in 1923. By reconstructing the assignments that were presented to them, their stories were able to be integrated into the class community. It enriched their learning and the overall classroom curriculum. Once Kesler was able to identify the inherent ideologies and bias in assignments, he was able to implement culturally relevant teaching by building on students' experiences and understandings.

These studies (Hefflin, 2002; Kesler, 2011) exemplify teachers who made "local, contextualized changes informed by political and historical contexts that require ongoing negotiation and revision" (Compton-Lilly, Rogers, & Lewis, 2012, p.38) to better support their students through CRP. However, Darling-Hammond (2006) states that most of the schools that are in need of culturally relevant approaches do not encourage these kinds of practices. The following studies describe teachers who are knowledgeable and passionate about culturally relevant approaches but due to a variety of contextual factors, had difficulty implementing their beliefs into practices. For example, Esposito and Swain (2009) studied how urban teachers used culturally relevant pedagogy as a means for teaching for social justice. They examined the challenge of striving for academic and social goals during the era of accountability. Each teacher possessed strong beliefs about culturally relevance and social justice but there were external factors that inhibited them from implementing their beliefs, as they wanted to. The teachers in this study had to negotiate the scripted curriculum, lack of time, and resources to implement culturally responsive teaching practices. The teachers discussed the positive impact that this type of teaching had on

their students such as developing agency and positively impacting their social and cultural identities of their students, they maintained several constraints prevented the full extent of such valuable instruction.

Rozansky (2010) also found that even for teachers with a disposition for CRP had difficulty implementing it in their classrooms. One teacher she studied had a developing knowledge of critical pedagogy and CRP. The teacher demonstrated increased understandings and applications of CRP but many of her applications of CRP were impaired by classroom management issues and lack of clarity when giving students instructions. The teacher was adamant about honoring students' prior experiences, although she rarely connected those conversations to curriculum or used them to generate new lessons.

May (2011) studied a teacher implementing comprehension strategies within culturally relevant instruction. She observed that the teacher found it easier to implement comprehension strategies from professional development literature that focused on students' personal and out of school experiences as opposed to comprehension standards from the state's curriculum. May (2011) asserts that the difficulty in aligning the curriculum standards with CRP was that the test made the comprehension strategy the end goal as opposed to the students comprehending texts by making connections with their experiences. Overall, the researchers in these studies provide support and insight to teachers as they implement facets of CRP during instruction and highlight the difficulties that teachers have in as their desire to implement a more critical pedagogy is countered by the demands of the current accountability measures in education and mainstream curriculum.

The above mentioned studies on CRP often describe teacher's implementation or the difficulty of implementation in practices. These studies implicate the need for more work to be

done in supporting teachers in understanding CRP and how to negotiate constraints of implementing CRP specifically during literacy instruction. This proposed study, will also seek to understand what inhibits the implementation of CRP, but formative experiment allows for the researcher and teacher to work together to navigate constraints that impede the pedagogical goal.

The next section details studies focused on language and literacy development in classroom contexts. Highlighted are ways in which teachers shifted their own beliefs and practices when working with culturally and linguistically diverse students. The final section of the literature review focuses on professional development and how to build on teachers' expertise and understandings in the construction knowledge and shifting beliefs. Included in this review are studies of effective professional development models and their impact on supporting teachers' understanding of literacy development and learning and transferring these understandings in the classroom.

Language and Literacy Development in Cultural Contexts

In the hegemonic society that we live in, privilege and value is placed on Standard English, thus privileging certain ways of knowing, doing, and believing, resulting in language being a system of power and oppression. Therefore it is clear that culturally relevant pedagogy is situated in the discipline of literacy as "language is the symbolic representation of culture" (Harmon, 2012, p. 15). A person's identity is intimately tied to their first language (Delpit, 2002; Smitherman, 2006) and the goal of teachers should be to value the language use of their students, but also teach what is expected of them in society. This will enable students to develop a critical consciousness and use language as a tool of empowerment.

African American students are more likely to speak a variation of Standard English (SE) such as African American Vernacular English (AAVE) also called Ebonics, which often situates

them as deficit or inferior to students who do not speak a variation of SE. Language disparities between students and teachers have been a large factor to the underachievement and labeling of students. One example is when black students in Ann Arbor, MI were placed in remediation and special education classes because the teachers felt that they had a language deficiency because they spoke AAVE (Perry, 1997). Sixty-six percent of the plaintiff children were classified as special needs in the predominately White school district in an affluent town. The negative perceptions that the teachers had of AAVE (Perry, 1997) resulted in students being excluded and silenced during the educational process. Many African American scholars of language and education suggest that the cause of educational problems of African American children is not the language but the educational system's response to the language (Delpit, 2002). Au (1998) emphasizes that a students' poor academic achievement generally is not due to limited English proficiency. Rather, it is due to the exclusion or limited use of instruction in the home language in many school programs or to the low status that is given the home language. Therefore students of linguistic differences have limited opportunity to use existing language skills as the foundation for learning to read and write as opposed to white-middle class students who speak Standard English.

Green (2002) asserts that AAVE is often reduced to speaking slang or misusing English as opposed to constructing sentences according to the rules that govern the dialect and this difference is often viewed as a deficit. Green (2002) suggests that it is important for educators to be knowledgeable about the rules of AAVE and understand that it is a systematic variety of Standard English. This would prevent a negative view of AAVE users and decrease the number of students are labeled as learning disabled or at-risk because of the vernacular that they use.

Gupta (2010) conducted a study where she examined teachers' perceptions about the impact of dialect on educational achievement of students who speak AAVE in the United States. He found that the majority of the teachers in the study saw AAVE as a deficit to learning. Sixty-three percent of the teachers in the study self-reported that they disagreed with the statement that AAVE was an adequate language system, 54% agreed that students who speak AAVE will have communication problems in the classroom, and 58% believed that students who speak AAVE will have problems in reading while 73% believed that they would have problems in writing. Gupta concludes that educators need good understanding and knowledge of language variability in order to make educational decisions that ensure effective instruction.

The research of Compton-Lilly (2003, 2007, 2012), Heath (1983), Miller (2010) and Purcell-Gates (1993) brings to light how varying communities view literacy differently and how these practices must be the center of students' language learning in school in order for them to be achieve academically. As an elementary school literacy teacher, Miller (2010) recalled how she operated with an "if only" mentality. This was a deficit perspective that Miller (2010) operated in because she believed that if only the parents and families of the students she taught would engage in mainstream literacy practices and read bedtime stories, engage in side-by-side readings, and participate in literacy activities at home then her students would perform better at school. Miller failed in her attempts to provide workshops and materials to parents in the poor, predominately African American school where she taught. Miller (2010) recalls how she "unknowingly acted out a common script used by privileged educators of children of Color and of children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds" (p.244); a script that validated dominance and marginalized students. The literacy development of students is contingent on how teachers view the literacy practices that a child engages in at home and in their communities.

Heath (1983) conducted an ethnographic study of the literacy and language practices of three different communities in North Carolina. Her results described how the values, expectations, and practices around literacy were different for each of the three communities. In the White middle-class community, children engaged in literacy activities such as being read to and literacy engagements were pleasurable as parents and children created and shared stories. In the White working-class community children were immersed in print from the time they were born such as being involved in games and storybook reading and literacy had very practical purposes for most children. In the Black working-class community, children were not always read to and were exposed to print within certain contexts, such as environmental print or writing prayers or reading the bible for church. Different from the other communities, literacy engagements in this community consisted of more verbal interactions such as playing language games and creating analogies. Heath argued that although these children did not have the same literacy experiences as the children in the White communities, these children did not lack literacy exposure. However, the literacy practices they were socialized in were different from those that they needed to meet schools' expectations of literacy development.

Purcell-Gates (2011) maintains that language and literacy practices are sociocultural in nature and that children have dynamic literacy understandings and practices embedded in their engagements in their homes and cultural communities. In an ethnographic study of an Appalachian woman, Jenny, Purcell-Gates (1993) found that the very language that denied Jenny access to reading print in school was the very language that was her scaffold to her learning to read and write as an adult. Jenny's words acted as a barrier between her and functional literacy because her words were never acknowledged or affirmed by her teachers. Purcell-Gates (1993) makes the argument that since people think, conceptualize, and learn with their own language, Jenny's was

shut out of the literate world, since she was not allowed to use her language as foundation for learning because it did not fit the language of schools. Cultural markers such as beliefs, values, and norms encourage children's development of language and support the child in being competent members of language and their community. Purcell-Gates contends that as children enter formal school, educators must build children's literacy foundation and their understandings of more conventional forms of literacy.

In a longitudinal study, Compton-Lilly (2003; 2007; 2012) follows eight of her students and their families, beginning in first grade through high school. To date, she has written three books documenting their reading identities and literate lives. Compton-Lilly challenges the mainstream discourses perpetuated by some of her participants', participants' teachers, and society. She found that discourses which negatively position urban students and families were negated when she spent time with the families and observed their home and community reading practices. The idea that urban parents are lazy and on welfare, are not involved in their children's education, and that urban families do not engage in literacy practices at home were confronted with alternate discourses by the participants in her study. Compton-Lilly (2007) notes how the parents in her study "describe their own commitment to their children's schooling, their interest in continuing their own education, and their struggles to stay off welfare and obtain viable employment" (p. 23). Her longitudinal study gives urban families a voice to present alternate interpretations of the world that are usually silenced. These alternative discourses are opportunities to bring change to the dominant ways of thinking. These dominant discourses are also connected to Compton-Lilly's discussion on reading capital.

Compton Lilly's (2007) concept of reading capital is drawn from Bourdieu's construct of cultural capital that emphasizes how children of different social classes have access to different

resources, which explains the differences in academic achievement. Thus, Compton-Lily (2007) describes reading capital as the material possessions such as books and electronic games, the social relationships that supports students as readers, and the behaviors, mannerisms, language, and grades that are valued in school which identifies students as good readers. Just as Heath (1983) and Purcell-Gates (1993; 2011) advocate for stronger connection between school and home in order to build on strengths of students, Compton-Lily (2012) suggests that teachers should allow students and parents be able to share their stories to identify obstacles that students encounter as they move through school. She also believes that collaborating with students' former teachers and informing their future teachers, and developing portfolio systems that focus on students' interests and abilities is imperative for children's success who are often marginalized within the dominant discourse of learning and literacy.

These studies highlight how cultural resources must be built upon to support the language and literacy development of African American students. The researchers provide significant findings of how to teachers to can value students literacy resources within a mainstream curriculum while increasing their academic achievement. Not evident in the research literature, however, is the process of teacher growth and development in understanding the cultural and linguistic strengths of the students.

Teacher Professional Development

Teacher accountability has been the topic of many discussions related to the current welfare of education and school reform. Federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top have placed issues of teacher quality at the forefront. Teachers are often blamed for the failures of students in public school systems which have prompted the mass production of teacher-proof, scripted curriculum. Teachers are provided professional development and training

on how to use new reading programs, but very seldom presented with professional learning that provide them with opportunities to reflect on build on their beliefs and pedagogical understandings. Often, the type of professional development that is provided to enhance teacher knowledge and skill is a “one-shot-model,” which has been the traditional form of professional development for teachers. Although there has been little evidence in its effectiveness (Clark & Florio-Ruane, 2001) it has been a mainstay in professional learning for years. Fiszler (2004) concurs that this model is taught using methods not aligned for active learning. The use of hands-on on learning for students is a common topic of professional development, but the in-service facilitator rarely demonstrates that practice (Fiszler, 2004). In their book *Talk Shop: Authentic Conversation and Teacher Learning*, Clark and Florio-Ruane (2001) provide a premise for why professional development needs to change for teachers in order for teachers to be a part of the learning process by first outlining the frustrations that many educators have with current professional development: lack of teacher ownership, a deficit model, contextual sensitivity, and short-term thinking.

One of the most prevalent frustrations is that professional development is often mandated with the top down not designed the teachers in mind. Clark and Florio-Ruane (2001) assert that teachers do not have any ownership in professional development because most teacher professional development programs are designed from outside of the professional community and teachers are not involved in framing the goals for their education. When teachers have no ownership or “buy-in,” research has shown that training programs fail. Likewise, the deficit model grounded in professional development programs for teachers is also a cause of frustration. This kind of professional development is prescriptive in nature and is more of a troubleshooting model. Viewing teachers as defective and in need of fixing does not acknowledge or value

teachers' skills, knowledge, or interests, nor builds on them for further learning. Within the deficit model, decontextualized learning does not deal with teachers' needs and teachers are like empty vessels, passive recipients that need to be helped by experts (Kooy, 2009). It suggests that teachers have no knowledge and teachers are not provided the opportunities to construct and deconstruct notions of learning for themselves (Kooy, 2009). Contextual insensitivity is another problem with traditional models of teacher professional development. Many in-service training programs are standardized so that they can be delivered in many different schools and different settings. This often results in professional development that is not compatible with a school's needs, and does not draw upon the school's strengths. Finally, short-term thinking creates issues because most professional development programs are brief in duration and present quick fix solutions to problems that require several years of problem solving before substantial results are seen.

Characteristics of Impactful Professional Development

There is consensus among research that schools need to offer teachers more effective professional development than what is typically available. Professional development has shown to be a powerful tool for teachers' growth and development and to impact student learning when teachers are involved in the planning process. Due to the drawbacks with traditional models of professional development, recently there has been an increase in the research on professional learning that is more collaborative, teacher centered, and committed to powerful and effective change (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Snow, 2012). Desimone (2009) identified five characteristics of teachers' learning that are critical in improving teacher's practices, increasing their knowledge and skills, and promoting student achievement: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration and collective participation. Content knowledge focuses on activities that support teachers in

understanding the subject matter content as well as how students best learn the content. Active learning involves teachers being actively engaged in the learning process such as observing an expert teacher and reflecting on the process or leading a group discussion.

Coherence refers to the degree that the professional development is related to the teachers' previous experiences and knowledge and to the goals of the school and district. Duration of professional development should last a significant amount of time for intellectual and pedagogical growth. Desimone (2009) states that research shows for support for at least 20 hours of contact time for participants over three to four months. Collective participation is when teachers learn from each other during interactions and discourse.

Models of Effective Professional Development

Many of the characteristics that Desimone (2009) identified as being critical in impactful professional development are sociocultural in nature. Some of the more recent models of professional development that build on the knowledge of teachers, encourages active learning, and collaboration such as teacher study groups and critical friends groups have applied a more sociocultural approach to teacher learning which differs from the traditional models of professional development. Teacher study groups provide a structure for teachers to reflect and dialogue about teaching and learning in a long-term supportive setting (Birchak et al., 1998; Florio-Ruane, & Raphael, 2001). There are various types of teacher study groups such as school-based groups, professional book discussion groups, topic centered groups and many other others. The goal of all of these groups is to build on teachers' interests, knowledge, and insights as a way further construct knowledge. Teacher study groups support teachers in building relationships, making connections between theory and practice, and developing a sense of professionalism. Critical

friends groups operate in similar fashion as teacher study groups. Teachers work together in collaborative teams so that they can accomplish work-related tasks “CFGs depart from this sort of “drive-by” staff development by asking school insiders to construct their own learning through a cycle of inquiry, reflection, and action” (Curry, 2008). The basis of CFGs is that teachers should lead the educational change and learning should be the center of school reform efforts. The belief is that in order for schools to be intellectually engaging for students, their teachers should be engaged in similar actions such as thinking, reading, discussing.

Schools and school districts are increasingly implementing professional development that involves more teacher ownership and engaged learning as the “one-shot” method of professional development has continuously shown to be ineffective (Darling-Hammond, 2009). One method is professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs are similar to teacher study groups and critical friends groups, as they all are rooted in the idea that teachers working collaboratively to build knowledge and promote change. However, PLC’s, are not as tightly defined as teacher study groups and critical friends groups, but have been shown to increase teacher development and student achievement (Dufour & Eaker, 2008). For example reading teacher’s in a large urban school district in Texas were organized into professional learning communities (PLC) in an effort to encourage collaboration, joint lesson planning, and problem-solving among teachers (Williams, 2013). The district decided to implement PLCs to improve teacher and student growth when achievement gaps between sub-groups of students continued to exist. The teachers reported that the PLCs provided avenues for them to learn and positively impacted their classroom practices. In analyzing focus-group interviews of the teachers the students, Williams (2013) found four themes that addressed the following research question: What were teachers' perceptions of PLC activities and their impact? She learned that the teachers benefited from collaborative aspect of

PLCS as opposed to learning in isolation. The teachers reported (a) collaborative teacher learning; (b) data-driven decisions; (c) curriculum, instruction, and student learning; and (d) school culture impacted their professional growth and their students' achievement. The teachers reported that their knowledge increased due to the collaborative nature of learning, by discussing various strategies with other teachers, they were more knowledgeable in supporting students in mastering reading standards. The teachers were also more apt to use data from multiple sources, such as formative and standardized assessments, due to their time in PLCs that focused on student assessment data. They also found that because the PLC's were focused on curriculum instruction and student learning, teachers discussed effective instructional strategies and found the use of common academic language helpful. Finally, the teachers found that their collaborative culture provided a forum for asking questions and problem solving collaboratively. This change in professional development for the teachers improved their instructional decision-making and they became more apt to work toward understandings together to better support students.

Similarly, an elementary school district in Southern California decided to create its own professional development model as opposed to purchasing one to improve student achievement, when previous teacher trainings had proven to be ineffective (Fisher, Frey, Nelson, 2012). The central office solicited the feedback of teachers and coaches when planning professional development and created an instructional framework to support teachers in instructional decision making, which modeled a gradual release of responsibility approach to support students when they have difficulty understanding concepts. Instead of focusing on a strategy they focused on a framework, which produced strategies and the professional development was sustained over four years, based on teachers' needs.

Although the studies above provide examples of teacher-centered, collaborative, and engaging professional development, they highlight a gap in the literature. Each study reviewed took place in a school district with high minority populations, none of the professional development addressed specific knowledge and attitudes that are relevant to teaching diverse students. Teachers need to understand the language development of diverse students, the demands that mainstream education places on culturally diverse students (Clair, 1993), as well as their own beliefs and biases about their students impact their instructional practice. Although this proposed study will include the characteristics of impactful professional development that is exemplified in the studies above, the activities and discussions will center around how race, culture, and language are significant in the teaching of African American students. The participants will engage in activities where they co-construct understandings of how to support African-American students within in a mainstream curriculum. The goal is for the teachers to decide upon strategies and instructional practices rooted in their knowledge and attitudes about teaching students of color.

Professional Development and Shifting Beliefs

The research on shifts in teachers beliefs call for professional development to be rooted in teachers experiences and beliefs as well as for teachers to reflect on their existing beliefs and behaviors so that they can become more receptive to alternative perspectives (Kurboska, 2011; Richardson et al,1991). Flint, Kurumada, Fisher, and Zisook (2011) described their approach to professional development with two grade third teachers who were interested in improving their writing instruction. The researchers approached the professional development with three assumptions: literacy learning is socially and culturally constructed, teachers are knowledgeable

professionals who want to do the best work they can to help meet students' needs, and that relationship building is imperative in a professional development program. The sociocultural perspective that they grounded their work in with the teachers, allowed them to create meaningful relationships with the teachers, which valued the knowledge and experiences of the teachers during the learning process so that positive change could occur. These assumptions created a productive space for dynamic learning interactions that resulted in shifts in teachers' beliefs about writing instruction and shifts in their practices for engaging in the writing process with their students.

Relationship building was also key to teacher change in Smith's (2012) study on middle school literacy coaches. The goal of the study was to investigate literacy coaches' perspectives on their efforts to facilitate teacher change and impact classroom practice. The literacy coaches supported teacher change through an ongoing process that included 3 levels: a) initial steps, b) necessary supports, and c) ongoing efforts. For initial steps, the coaches worked to build relationships with teacher. The coaches found this to be time consuming, but integral in gaining a level of trust that was essential to engage teachers in the change process. The necessary supports to encourage teacher change included supporting individual teachers in implementing new skills as well as facilitating group discussions to support learning within a community contexts. Ongoing efforts include encouraging independence among individual teachers and teacher learning communities toward instructional change. The teachers found these supports to be vital for teacher change and agreed that the initial steps of relationship building helped teachers develop both content and pedagogical content knowledge.

Kennedy (2010) explains the factors that led to student change in her study which aimed to increase the literacy development of students in a high-poverty school by empowering the

teachers through professional development. The teachers were involved in designing the professional development and the literacy program they would use with their students. The customized professional development took place over an extended period of time and used a variety of research-based approaches. Kennedy (2010) also noted that significant changes in teachers' beliefs and attitudes transpired after the teachers saw positive changes in student learning and engagement.

These studies document methods that have been found effective to promote shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices. Relationship building and teacher ownership in professional development practices key to producing change. Few studies (Knight & Wiseman, 2005; Milner, 2009; Patton, 2011) have examined culturally relevant professional development, none have focused explicitly on the impact of professional development on teachers' practices around culturally relevant pedagogy. In his study on the Culturally Relevant and Responsive Education Professional Development Program developed for students with disabilities in the Los Angeles Unified School District, Patton (2011) sought to understand how the components of the professional development program related to the content and components of the Culturally Responsive Professional Development for regular education students. His study of the culturally relevant professional development did not investigate its impact on teachers. Likewise, in their review of 56 articles that covered the topic of professional development for teachers of diverse students Knight and Wiseman (2005) found that that little evidence exists for determining the impact of professional development on teacher and student outcomes. My study focuses specifically on shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices while engaged in professional development centered on culturally relevant literacy instruction.

Conclusion

This review of the literature on teacher's beliefs and practices, multicultural education, and professional development addresses a critical concern in education; the lack of student achievement among students of color and low-income students. There is a multitude of research on multicultural education and effective models of professional development that provide insight in promoting achievement among these students, however, research on supporting in-service teachers' beliefs and practices in culturally relevant ways is limited. Due to the expectations of mainstream curriculum, it is likely that culturally relevant teachers may experience difficulty when employing teaching methods. Therefore, more investigations about how to support teachers in implementing CRP within the context of real classrooms are essential.

3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers' pedagogical and conceptual understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). A formative design is used to document teachers' changing practices and beliefs as they engage in professional development sessions on issues related to CRP and literacy development. The research questions guiding this study are:

- 1) What shifts do teachers make in their conceptual understandings and pedagogical practices around CRP?
- 2) What factors enhance or inhibit teachers' understandings of CRP when engaged in professional development activities?
- 3) What factors enhance or inhibit teachers' ability to implement CRP during literacy instruction?

The pedagogical goal of this study was to promote conceptual and pedagogical understandings of CRP among teachers of African American students. The intervention was designed around the implementation of teacher-centered and on-going professional development based on the knowledge and interests of teachers and the students' needs related to culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy instruction.

The goal of this research is not to determine the effectiveness of CRP, as there have been many research studies which has established its effectiveness in promoting positive identities and academic achievement among students of color (Banks, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2002; 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lazar, Edwards, & McMillon, 2012; Milner, 2011; Murrell, 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Rather, the goal is to determine those factors that enhance or inhibit teachers' ability to adopt CRP beliefs and instructional practices, as well as understand the contexts in

which these factors may or may not be present (Walker, 2006). This research is significant because CRP often conflicts with mainstream beliefs of teaching and learning, mandated curriculum, test preparation, and behavior management routines, causing teachers to have difficulty or even showing resistance to implementation (Wells & Wells, 2001).

Research Design

Formative experiment is the appropriate methodology for this study, as it tends to fill a neglected gap between literacy research and literacy instruction. Many studies on culturally relevant teaching address the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy or the practices, but very few thoroughly examine the integration of theory and practice. Formative experiment more directly addresses the pedagogical questions and issues practitioners' face that may not be addressed as much by other research methodologies. For example, unlike both naturalistic and experimental studies, formative experiment accommodates both the variation inherent in classrooms and the need to adapt intervention in response to relevant variation (Bradley & Reinking, 2011b). Central to the rationale for formative experiment are the following guiding questions: (1) How can, and how should literacy research inform instructional practice? and (2) How can the long-lamented gap between research and practice be closed? (Bradley & Reinking, 2011b). Structuring educational research around these two questions is imperative to advance the theoretical and practical understandings around culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy instruction.

Formative experiment is categorized as design-based research (Cobb, Confrey, diSessa, Lehrer, & Schauble, 2003) because the goal is to transform instruction and inform practice. As a useful research methodology, formative experiment likely acknowledges the complexities of classroom teaching, informs teachers of research-based pedagogies, and provides insight as to how they might effectively implement instructional interventions (Bradley & Reinking, 2011b).

In order to better understand the lineage of formative experiment and its methodological origins, Reinking (2012) provides a good starting point with his definition for design-based research:

Design-based research refers to a set of closely related approaches to research (e.g., formative experiments, design experiments, lesson studies) originating in the field of education. These approaches are aimed at attaining valued educational outcomes and desirable transformations of teaching and learning by designing and implementing specific, workable interventions derived from theory and/or previous empirical work. Grounded in the metaphors of engineering and ecology, design-based research acknowledges that a vast array of complex interacting factors affect classroom teaching and learning. Thus, design-based research claims to be an approach that is more directly informative to practitioners by providing guidelines and recommendations instead of prescriptions. Design-based research embraces multidisciplinary perspectives and diverse approaches to collecting and analyzing all relevant data towards testing, refining, and developing pedagogical theory and practice (p.1).

As stated in this definition, design-based research provides an inclusive term for approaches to research that share its defining characteristics. Therefore, when outlining defining characteristics of this methodology I use the terms “design research” and “formative experiment” interchangeably. It has been noted that most literacy researchers use the term “formative experiment” (Jimenez, 1997; Fisher, Lapp, & Frey, 2009; Neuman, 1999; Reinking & Watkins, 2000). Reinking and Bradley (2008) developed a framework for designing, conducting, and reporting formative experiments. The following six questions that make up the framework were utilized to ensure methodological rigor and quality in implementing this formative experiment. Questions one

and two are addressed in this chapter and the remaining questions are answered in Chapters 5 and 6:

- 1) What is the pedagogical goal to be investigated, why is that goal valued and important, and what theory and previous empirical work speak to accomplishing that goal instructionally?
- 2) What intervention, consistent with a guiding theory, has the potential to achieve the pedagogical goal and why?
- 3) What factors enhance or inhibit the effectiveness, efficiency, and appeal of the intervention in regard to achieving the set pedagogical goal?
- 4) How can the intervention be modified to achieve the pedagogical goal more effectively and efficiently and in a way that is appealing and engaging to the stakeholders?
- 5) What unanticipated positive and negative effects does the intervention produce?
- 6) Has the instructional environment changed as a result of the intervention?

(Reinking & Bradley, 2008, p. 74-77)

My rationale in using formative experiment to understand the conceptual and pedagogical shifts that teachers make as they engage in professional development has been substantiated by previous formative experiments that have documented shifts in teachers' beliefs and understandings while engaged in professional development activities. For example, Neuman (1999) conducted a formative experiment to determine to what extent a reading program reached its pedagogical goal of improving early literacy abilities with low-socioeconomic preschool children. This study included teacher training which consisted of workshops and modeling based on theoretical and developmental principles in order to enhance teachers' knowledge of early literacy and its development through storybook reading. Neuman (1999) asserts that the demonstration

lessons and collaboration between trainers and teachers that occurred during the trainings provided supports for teachers in the process of change.

In Bradley & Reinking's (2011a) study on enhancing teacher-child language interactions, the researchers did not include a specific professional development component within the design of the experiment; yet, they did provide the teachers with an overview of the intervention and related research, and ways they could implement the intervention during their instruction. The benefits of formative experiment in this study allowed the researcher to see the "intervention from the teacher's point of view," thereby being more informed on how to support the teacher in shifting her beliefs about small group book sharing, so that teacher was then able to implement literacy strategies into practice that she would not have previously considered.

Thein et al. (2012) implemented a design-based research study with the goal of investigating effective instructional practices for teaching multicultural literature. As opposed to implementing a specific intervention or curricular unit, Thein and the teachers in her study worked with a shared set of understandings and principles on multicultural literature and what it might accomplish. Thein et al. (2012) maintain that the design-based research study allowed teachers to enhance their instructional practices while still meeting the demands of their schools and curricula, and to actively inquire into their own teaching and the teaching of others. The formative experiment design was useful for each of these studies because the researchers did not primarily seek interpretation of what was happening in classrooms but understood the complexity of the contexts and sought to collaboratively impact change and transformation to improve teaching and learning.

Defining Characteristics of Formative Experiment

Formative experiment has defining characteristics that provide guidance for researchers who operate within this approach. The following characteristics, developed first by Cobb (2003) and further defined by Reinking and Bradley (2008), guide my study:

Theoretical

Design research is theoretical in that long-standing, overarching theories are used to guide the study's intervention. For this study, in order to support teachers' understanding of how to improve their instructional with students of color, theories on culturally relevant pedagogy and teacher development were used to "create, implement, and refine" (Reinking & Bradley, 2008, p.18) the intervention. This focus on theory is what sets formative experiment apart from related research activities such as formative assessment and action research. The difference between design research and other approaches to classroom research or data collection methodologies is that theory has a predominate part in this methodology. With action research, teachers assume the role of the researcher and the goal of the research is professional development and empowerment (Reinking, 2000). Whereas with design research, the teacher is more of a valued informant and not a part of the research team. In regards to formative evaluation, its focus is to design and test an instructional intervention, whereas the goal of the design research is to not only evaluate the workability of the intervention but seeks to theoretical understand factors that enhance or inhibits its effectiveness. Therefore, theory is vital in design research to provide a justification for the importance of the inquiry, to provide a rationale for the intervention, and to interpret findings, just as any other research methodology (Bradley & Reinking, 2011b). The research that I have provided on culturally relevant pedagogy, teacher beliefs, and teacher develop-

ment provide ample justification for the need of CRP to support the literacy development of African American students and the need for teacher-centered, on-going teacher development to support shifts in teacher beliefs and pedagogical practices. The theoretical frameworks that I have chosen to guide my decision making in conceptualizing and implementing my study provide insight into data analysis and interpretation.

Goal Oriented

In order for design researchers to explicitly work toward improving education and learning in authentic instructional environments, they articulate a goal that they work toward that provides a rationale for the study. The goal also becomes a “day-to-day reference point for collecting and analyzing data, for making modifications to the intervention, and at the end of the investigation for determining the extent to which progress has been made” (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). The pedagogical goal of my study is to promote conceptual and pedagogical understandings of CRP among teachers of African American students. Teacher interviews, classroom observations, teacher debriefs, and classroom artifacts will be utilized to understand if the professional development is supporting the pedagogical goal as well as to understand what needs to be adapted or added to provide continued support for the teachers in adopting CRP beliefs and practices during literacy instruction.

Intervention Centered in Authentic Instructional Context

Design research is research and the instructional intervention is the focal point of formative or design experiment. The goal of the intervention should be to positively transform instruction and facilitate the pedagogical goal. Regardless if the intervention is innovative or well-researched, it must be studied in an authentic instructional environment where interventions are allowed to occur naturally and not constrained by the researcher. Therefore, just as Thein et al.

(2012) worked with the teachers with principles of teaching multicultural literature as opposed to a specific intervention, the teachers in my study created instructional plans based on their understandings they gained from learning about the principles of CRP during the professional development sessions.

Adaptive and Iterative

“In design research, a researcher begins with an assumption that an instructional intervention at the beginning of a study may be quite different from the one that emerges at the end of the investigation” (Bradley & Reinking, 2011b). This varies greatly from traditional intervention experiments that must demonstrate fidelity within a study. That is, the intervention must be carried out in a specific manner in each lesson, classroom, and school the exact same way to ensure internal validity. Reinking and Bradley (2008) argue that this adherence to fidelity in intervention research contributes to the gap between research and practice because it doesn’t allow for data to be collected about the workability of the intervention. Researchers who conduct design experiments understand that teachers are responsive to the needs of children and must adapt lessons and strategies to meet the instructional goals and objectives. Since the goal of design research is to adapt the intervention to make it work better in response to the inherent unpredictability within classrooms, data are collected and analyzed to determine what is working and not working. This modification process is repeated in cycles, aiming to meet the pedagogical goal; making design research iterative.

At the end of the second day of the professional development, the teachers were asked to evaluate the professional development up until that point by responding to the following; questions (a) What factors of the professional development have supported your learning? and (b)

What could be done to better support your learning? The teachers' responses provided information about how the professional development sessions could be adapted to better support the teachers' understandings of CRP. The teacher debrief sessions during the second part of the intervention provided insight on how teachers could be further supported in their learning as well as modifying their instruction to better support their students.

Transformational

The assumption with design research is that the intervention may transform teaching and learning or the environment in some way. Often with design research, the intervention is chosen because of its potential to reach a pedagogical that has been difficult to attain. Therefore, a design researcher is aware of unintended consequences that may transform instructional practices, teachers' beliefs, or further research (Reinking and Bradley, 2008). Although the goal of the my study is to transform beliefs and practices of the participants, possible unintended consequences that can be transformational during my study may include the teachers may influence other teachers not in the study to learn more about CRP and professional development practices at the school may change.

Methodological Inclusive and Flexible

Design research is not driven by any particular method of collecting or analyzing data. A researcher may choose any approach to data collection and analysis as long as s/he can justify how the methods further understandings about the effects of the intervention as well as how the intervention can be implemented more effectively (Reinking and Bradley, 2008). The use of qualitative methods for data collection and analysis are outlined in Methods section of this chapter.

Pragmatic

According to Reinking and Bradley (2008) formative experiment is still new and evolving and has not settled on an epistemological framework, but does align closely with pragmatism. Dewey's (1938) belief about pragmatism is that the value of theory comes when it works toward real change. The goal of design-based researchers is to seek theory that can be directly useful for practitioners (Reinking and Bradley, 2008). The teachers in this study will serve as informants and decisions will be made based on their needs, experience, and interests. How teachers use CRP in their literacy instruction will be directly useful for all teachers involved.

Methods

The research methods selected for this formative experiment align with the theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory, critical race theory, and critical theory. Data collection involves interviews, observations, audio and video recordings, and artifacts which allowed me to gather a wide range data on the sociocultural nature of learning, the impact that the construction of race has on teachers' beliefs and practices when teaching African American students, and how a critical examination of educational policy and curricular materials can support shifts in teachers' beliefs about purposes and intent of education. According to Scott and Palinscar (2009) the work of sociocultural theory is to explain how "individual mental functioning is related to cultural, institutional, and historical context; hence, the focus of the sociocultural perspective is on the roles that participation in social interactions and culturally organized activities play in influencing psychological development" (p. 1). Sociocultural theory is critical to my understanding of how aspects of the social and collaborative nature of learning during the professional development and teacher debriefs support teachers in adopting beliefs and practices rooted in culturally relevant pedagogy.

Critical race theory centers race and racism in its analysis which will allow me to understand how the construct of race may inhibit teachers in implementing CRP since it is a pedagogy that supports the academic achievement of students of color. A tenet of critical race theory, whiteness as property, contends that Whites enjoy the right of possession, the right to use, and the right to disposition in regards to properties that others do not have the right to. Therefore, through educational policies and practices that that restrict high-quality curricula to students of color and well maintained schools, school districts perpetuate the idea of Whiteness as property “whereby the rights to possession, use and enjoyment, and disposition, have been enjoyed almost exclusively by Whites” (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). This framework connects with critical pedagogy because as teachers learn about the historical contexts of education that is rooted in racism, teachers beliefs may shift in a more critical direction, analyzing policies, mandates, and curriculum that provide or do not provide certain opportunities for their African American students. This will guide my analysis of teachers’ instructional planning, choices of materials, and ways they work to foster a critical consciousness in their students.

Setting

This study was conducted at Red Cove Elementary School (pseudonym), a public school serving 730 students in grades pre-k through fifth grade, in a large metropolitan school district in the Southeast region of the United States. Student demographics for Red Cove reflect the surrounding neighborhood: 96% were African American and 4% were Hispanic. 82 % of students qualified for free or reduced lunch. Of the 42 teachers at Red Cove, 38 were African American and four were White. Red Cove opened its doors in 1990 as a neighborhood school with a Resident and Magnet program. Red Cove was once a sought out school in the southern end of Phillips County due to high test scores and a focus on the arts and nutrition. The Magnet Program

was rehoused to another building in Phillips County beginning in the 2008-2009 school year. Shortly after, there were administrative changes and the percentage of low-socioeconomic students increased. A more thorough description of the school is detailed in Chapter 4's discussion of the context of this study

Participants and Sampling

Based on the nature of this formative experiment, purposeful sampling was employed to select participants. The teachers at Red Cove Elementary School reflect the average person and situation of students and teachers who could benefit from greater understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy, therefore were able to “facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (Patton, 1990, p. 73). A total of five teachers participated in the various aspects of study (see Table 1). Cori taught at another school in the district but formerly taught at Red Cove. She was invited to join the study by Monica and began the four-day professional development on the second day. Carolyn served as the Literacy EIP teacher at Red Cove for 16 years. During the Professional Development session she was moved to another school and another grade.

Criteria for the teachers to participate in the study required that they have at least three years of teaching experience. By the fourth year of teaching, teachers begin to develop a professional identity and have solidified some beliefs around professional practice (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This criteria was suitable for this study to provide insight into the kinds of professional development practices that are most effective with supporting shifts in teachers' beliefs who have many years of experience. At the conclusion of the four-day professional development two participants were selected as focal teachers to be observed and supported as they implemented culturally relevant literacy instruction in their classrooms. Based on interest and response, Bridgette and Monica both agreed. This allowed me to effectively manage the amount of data I

collected and analyzed, and to more closely observe the processes by which teachers' shift in pedagogical practices and conceptual understandings.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	Grade Level 2013-2014 School Year	Taught at Red Cove	Focal Teacher
Bridgette	Kindergarten	X	X
Carolyn	6 th Grade		
Cori	3 rd Grade		
Monica	4 th Grade Inclusion	X	X
Samantha	1 st Grade High Achievers	X	

Phases of the Formative Design Experiment

This research study was conducted in four phases from June 2013 until January 2014. The phases for this study have been adapted from Reinking and Watkins' (2008) study that included phases for the intervention, data collection, and data analysis. This section provides detail of each phase, types of data that was collected, and the process of analysis. Due to the iterative nature of formative experiment, data was analyzed continuously throughout the study. This process of analysis allowed me to determine what modifications needed to be made to the intervention to better support teachers in their understandings around CRP and how to support the teachers in implementing CRP in the classroom. The purpose for the iterative nature of FE is to

determine if the intervention is meeting the pedagogical goal. The phases of the study, from recruitment to final analysis are discussed below.

Phase one: Recruitment. The purpose of this phase was to recruit teachers who were interested in learning more about culturally relevant literacy instruction and conduct initial interviews. Recruitment flyers about the study were placed in teachers' mailboxes located in the front office of the school during the first week in May 2013. The flyer provided information about the study and indicated for teachers to email me if they were interested. Five teachers agreed to be in the study and I met with them the last week of May during their end of the year post-planning teacher work day. During this meeting I gave the teachers a short article on culturally relevant pedagogy, from the website learnnc.org titled Culturally Relevant Teaching (Coffey, 2008), they signed the consent forms, we chose dates for the professional development, and scheduled initial interviews. One of the five teachers had to drop out of the study because she had to care for an ill family member. However, another teacher joined the study on the 2nd day of the four-day professional development.

Phase two: Baseline. The baseline phase took place the first week of July as I conducted initial interviews for four of the teachers who agreed to be a part of the study. I conducted individual interviews with each participant to gain deeper insight into their understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy, their beliefs about their students, beliefs about literacy instruction, current literacy instructional practices, and thoughts on professional development. During these initial interviews the teachers were also asked about their needs and interests related to culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy instruction that they would like addressed during the professional development. (See Appendix A for interview protocol).

Phase three: Four-day professional development. The intervention for this study was implemented in two parts. The first part of the intervention was 20 hours of professional development (4 days @ 5 hours per day) focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1994; 1995a; 2001) and the second part included classroom observations and teacher-debrief meetings during the fall (discussed in Phase 4). The professional development sessions were designed to provide teachers with research-based theories to understand culture, language, and literacy instruction. Culturally relevant pedagogy is not a set of strategies to be implemented with students. It is a set of principles that guide teachers' beliefs and instruction as they seek to meet the needs of their culturally diverse students. Therefore, the teachers were not only taught strategies but were engaged in intellectual dialogue on research related to culture and language development and were encouraged to develop their own understandings of CRP to guide their literacy instruction. . A power point presentation was used to guide the participants through each session.

The professional development sessions were designed to include the features of effective and impactful professional development as defined in the literature (Birchak et al., 1998; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Desimone, 2009; Florio-Ruane, & Raphael, 2001; Snow, 2012). Table 2 identifies features of effective professional development and how they were addressed in the intervention.

During the 4-day session, there was a break mid-week to provide teachers time to “catch up” and reflect on what had already occurred. Three of the sessions were held in one of the participant's classrooms at Red Cove Elementary; the final session was at the researcher's home because Red Cove Elementary School was closed on that day

Table 2

Features of Effective Professional Development Addressed in the Intervention

Active Learning	Participants were actively involved in the learning process as they engaged in intellectual dialogue, reflected on themselves and the learning process, and participated in various activities during the four-day professional development.
Development of content knowledge	Theoretical and practical knowledge on culture and literacy development were presented during the four-day professional development.
Collaboration	Participants learned through interaction and discourse as they worked collectively on various tasks during the 4-day professional development and collaborated on classroom practice during the teacher debrief sessions. The researcher and focal teachers collaboratively planned culturally relevant literacy interaction.
Teacher Ownership	Teachers' interests and needs were considered in the development of the professional development and the teachers shared resources that were focal points during the four-day professional development.
Trust and Relationship Building	The researcher taught at Red Cove for eight years and had built a relationship with the teachers prior to the start of the professional development.

Day 1: Culture. The first day of the professional development began with an overview of the study and goals for the professional development, which were to support the development of teachers' beliefs and practices around CRP and support them in planning culturally relevant literacy instruction. The first activity was an ice breaker where the teachers wrote their own versions of the poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyons. Using a template, the teachers wrote about important things from their childhoods and lives that revealed cultural aspects of themselves. The purpose of this activity was for teachers to see themselves and each other as cultural beings so they can gain a greater appreciation and understanding of students' cultural identities.

The teachers were presented with a picture of a teenage girl that was being discussed in the media because she was a key witness to a controversial case that centered around race that was being tried at the time. Some media outlets portrayed negative and stereotypical depictions of her based on her speech, style of dress, and her disposition while on the stand offering her testimony. We discussed an alternate perception of the girl that was written by a blogger that discussed the fact that she was fluent in three languages and context of the case and disposition of the attorneys impacted her. Teachers shared their own examples of how they had negative perceptions of students changed and how students feed into those negative perceptions. After that they discussed the quote of by y Fredrick Douglas 'Once I learned to read I would be forever free". The goal of the discussion around the image and quote was to help teachers understand that their beliefs about their students and literacy would be very important to their implementation of culturally relevant literacy instruction.

Next the teachers watched a video titled "Introduction to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy" produced by Teaching Tolerance. The video included commentary from leading scholars Jordan Jacqueline Irvine, Geneva Gay, and Kris Gutierrez whose work focuses on culturally responsive

teachers, culture and identity, and urban education. While watching the video the participants wrote what they agreed with, disagreed with, and what they understood about culture in the classroom based on the video and discussed their thoughts afterwards. Presented with different definitions of culture as defined by various scholars, the teachers discussed their understandings of culture. After watching a video about a culturally centered school called Culture and Language of Success Charter School (CLAS), we discussed how culture was valued and built upon to support academic achievement and how that differed from how culture was used at Red Cove.

We ended the session with exploring explanations of the disparities in education among culturally and linguistically diverse students such as systemic racism, meritocracy, and deficit theories. Emphasis was placed on supporting teachers in identifying as what they believed was the reason for educational disparities. This examination allowed them to begin to think about culturally relevant decisions they needed to make based on their students' needs

Day 2: Policy, curriculum, and multiple perspectives. The purpose for the second day of professional development was to address the impact of educational policy on culturally diverse students. Reading curriculum shaped by reading policies are scripted, one-size fits all programs that lack cultural relevance and multiple perspectives (Darling-Hammond, 2005).

Teachers were presented with a historical timeline of educational reform, the purpose of the reform and the impact of the reform on reading instruction. Discussions around mandated instruction, lack of teacher autonomy, and standardized testing ensued as teachers shared their own experiences of how they and their students have been affected by such policies.

The teachers participated in two activities that revealed how there is often one, Anglo-centered perspective presented in text books and literature used during literacy instruction. The

teachers read a summary of news article about a popular trial in which the teachers had already formed opinions about. The summary that was presented depicted one side of the case and was very compelling had the teachers not already had another perspective.

In a related activity on multiple perspectives, we engaged in an activity called *Missed Cues*, a discussion protocol, to show how culture can play a part in creating different understandings between a teacher and student. This activity was accompanied with a summary of Shirley Brice Heath's research on how oral language development differs from in various communities. The teachers saw how language is developed culturally (through experiences, beliefs, values, norms) and how language is tied to identity. The connection then to policy and literacy instruction was then made to highlight the issue of curriculum and standards rejecting language that is not Standard English and perspectives that are not reflective of White, middle-class norms.

Finally, the teachers read about CRP and the tenets as developed by Ladson-Billings (1994) and the Banks (2004) model of multicultural education. Teachers read a short article and discussed what tenets of CRP they identified as already a part of their teaching and what other aspects they believe are important to incorporate in their instruction. At the end of the session, the teachers were asked to evaluate the professional development up until that point by responding to the following; questions (a) What factors of the professional development have supported your learning? and (b) What could be done to better support your learning?

Day 3: Critical self-examination and language. This session began with a discussion on the topic of critical examination being integral to being a culturally relevant teacher. Each teacher shared a personal story of how they negatively perceived a student or parent but came to realize their perceptions were inaccurate. Teachers completed a Self-Analysis of Diversity Issues and Implications from mentormod-ules.com and interviewed each other on questions of culture

and diversity (see Appendix C.2). Each pair shared their interviews and discussed how negative perceptions of students can negatively impact student learning.

Teachers read an article titled, “The Real Ebonics” (Delpit, 1997). They discussed their own biases toward language specifically AAVE since this is mostly spoken by their students and in their communities. We discussed various theories about code switching and what supporting students in code switching would possibly look like in the classroom. The participants then read different quotes from various scholars about the importance of valuing and seeking out the positive aspects of their students’ language and literacy to build on in the classroom.

The final segment of the session addressed linking CRP to instructional standards and examples were discussed with the teachers. Teachers were provided culturally relevant trade books that they could use with their students. The set of books included: *Coming On Home Soon* (Woodson, 2004), *Do Like Kyla* (Johnson, 1990), *Come on Rain* (Hesse, 1999), *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994), and *Grandpa’s Face* (Greenfield, 1988). Each teacher chose a book and shared how the text would be relevant to her students and how she would connect to instructional standards.

Day 4: CRP into practice. Teachers began by sharing what they gained most from the four-day professional development and shared their goals for culturally relevant literacy instruction. Scenarios from the book *Bridging Literacy and Equity* (Edwards & Lazar, 2012) that foregrounded culturally relevant pedagogy were copied and handed out to each teacher. The teachers read their scenario and shared the importance of the activity with the group and the connections to their own students and teaching. Various books and resources from Teaching Tolerance and ReThinking Schools on the topics of *social justice education, critical literacy, and standardized reading assessments* were available for the teachers to read through and get ideas and materials

for culturally relevant literacy instruction. Finally, the day concluded with a discussion protocol on the tenets of CRP and that would guide their literacy instruction.

A caveat. During the course of the four-day professional development, the administration team made changes to teachers' grade level assignments. All of the teachers except Cori, received a change in grade level assignment. Monica was changed from 1st grade to kindergarten. Samantha was changed from fourth grade to first grade high achievers. Monica was changed from third grade to fourth grade. Carolyn's was reassigned to a middle school as a sixth grade Language Arts teacher. These changes made the teachers a little reluctant to begin instructional planning and wanted to get more familiar with their curriculum prior to collaboratively planning as a group. We also ran out of time to have a full day of instructional planning that I initially prepared for. The adaptive nature of formative experiment allowed for modifications to the intervention to occur to ensure the advancement of the pedagogical goal. Therefore, the participants met for an additional day during their pre-planning week to share resources and plan together. A description of this session is addressed in Chapter 5.

Phase four: Classroom observation and continuous support. From September 2013–January 2014, I observed and provided continuous professional learning support for the two focal teachers, Bridgette and Monica, and facilitated debrief sessions for all five participants. I observed Bridgette seven times and Monica six times for one to one and half hours during their literacy blocks. During the observations I made notes of factors that enhance and inhibit the teachers' implementation of CRP and documented modifications that were made as a result of the continuous support. All of the teachers participated in three audio-recorded teacher debrief sessions to further support their implementation of CRP. At the end of the study I conducted final interviews with the 2 focal teachers.

Phase five: Retrospective analysis. This phase was a retrospective analysis of all the data collected during all the phases: teacher interviews, audio-recorded debrief sessions, field notes and video recordings from professional development sessions and classroom observations, and classroom artifacts. This process is described in greater detail in the data analysis section.

Table 3 provides a timeline of the study that corresponds with the phases of the study.

Table 3

Research Study Timeline

Date	Action Taken	Data/Materials Collected
May/June 2013 Baseline Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with teachers to review details of the study • Received input for professional development from teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interviews
July 2013 Intervention (Part 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field Notes • Audio and Video recordings • Teacher interviews • Researcher Memos • Teacher Evaluations
September 2013 – January 2014 Intervention (Part 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom observations and continuous professional learning support (11) • Teacher debriefs with teachers (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debriefs audio recorded • Classroom Observations/Field Notes • Classroom Artifacts
January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final debrief with 2 focal teachers • Share interviews with participants and conduct member checks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Interviews

Data Collection

“The central issue of data collection in formative experiments is not whether quantitative or qualitative data are gathered but what data can best generate the systemic understandings that inform theory development in the real world of practice” (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). Systemic approaches to research treat variables as interdependent and transactional as opposed to analytic approaches, which treat variables as isolable (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). Aligning with formative experiment, systemic approaches produce thick descriptive theories as it seeks to determine that which happens in actuality in normal conditions (Salomon, 1991). Therefore, it would be implausible to conduct a formative experiment without qualitative data, but quantitative can also be useful for collecting baseline data and measuring progress toward the pedagogical goal. For the purpose of my study, only qualitative data was collected to provide greater understandings about shifts in teachers’ conceptual and pedagogical understandings of CRP and the factors that enhance or inhibit a teacher’s implementation of CRP.

The data collected during the study includes semi-structured teacher interviews; video-recorded professional development sessions, individual evaluations of the professional development sessions highlighting what each teacher gained from each session and what could have better supported their understandings; field notes from classroom observations; audio-recorded teacher debrief sessions; and classroom artifacts. The use of these particular methods to collect data were chosen in order to document any shifts in teachers understandings and practices, and gain insights into what enhances or inhibits the implementation of CRP in classrooms in order to further inform what types of learning engagements teachers need to better support them in understanding and implementing CRP.

Semi-structured interviews. Interviews are necessary in data collection in order to understand participants' unobservable behaviors, beliefs, and feelings (Merriam, 2009). In the field of education, the research has indicated that teachers do not, for a variety of reasons, always implement instruction that is aligned to their beliefs. For this study, to gain a better understanding of what teachers believe about culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy instruction and document a shift in their beliefs, three semi-structured interviews were conducted. Initial interviews and post-professional development interviews were conducted with all teachers. Final interviews at the end of the study were only conducted with the two focal teachers. Semi-structured interviews were prepared with an interview guide with open-ended questions that allowed for follow up questions and probes to gain more detail about what the participant answered (Roulston, 2010).

Video recordings. During the four-day professional development, the first three days were video recorded. The video recordings allowed me to gain greater conceptual understandings because in addition to the audio, I could also observe non-verbal cues which provided insight on comfort level, understanding, and engagement of the participants. Being the facilitator of the professional development I had to rely on the video footage to capture the data as my focus was on facilitating each session.

Observations and field notes. Observations were a prime source for data in research studies because they took place in the setting where the phenomenon authentically occurred (Merriam, 2009). Field notes were recorded during the professional development sessions and in classroom observations to capture the ongoing nature of the intervention and the teachers' responses.

Teacher debriefs. Audio recordings of weekly teacher debrief sessions were another source of data for this formative experiment. After the professional development intervention, the teachers continued to be supported in weekly debrief sessions during the fall semester. The debriefs included a discussion on how the intervention could be modified to better support their conceptual and pedagogical understandings and to also better understand the contextual factors of the classroom and school culture that enhanced or inhibited the implementation of CRP.

Documents and classroom artifacts. Classroom artifacts were collected to gain additional insight into the knowledge and understandings of the teachers. According to Merriam (2009) documents and artifacts are a ready-made source of data that may contain information relevant to the researcher's question. Teacher evaluations of the professional development sessions were collected, as well as follow up email responses to lingering questions.

To manage the data and analysis, I focused on shifts in conceptual and pedagogical understandings that are observed in lesson planning, instructional engagements, and teachers' interactions with students and materials. Interview transcripts, field notes from professional development sessions and classroom observations, and classroom artifacts were analyzed in reference to the three major tenets of CRP: teacher fostering academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Transcripts from interviews and teacher debrief sessions, and field notes from observations were analyzed to understand factors that enhance or inhibit a teacher's implementation of CRP and how they navigated their teaching contexts.

Table 4 provides a cross-match of the research questions and the goals of a study that are outlined in the formative design framework, which was presented earlier in this chapter, with data sources.

Table 4

Research Questions and Data Sources

Research Question	Data Sources
What shifts do teachers make in their conceptual understandings and pedagogical practices around CRP?	Teacher Interviews (#1, #2, #3) Teacher evaluations of professional development sessions Classroom Observations/ Field Notes Teacher Debrief Sessions Email responses
What factors enhance or inhibit teachers' understandings of CRP when engaged in professional development activities?	Teacher Interviews (#2 #3) Teacher evaluations of professional development sessions Classroom Observations/ Field notes Teacher debriefs sessions
What factors enhance or inhibit teachers' ability to implement CRP during literacy instruction?	Teacher Interview (#3) Classroom Observations/ Field notes Teacher debriefs sessions

Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) states that the process of data collection and data analysis is recursive and dynamic. Data analysis that is ongoing throughout the study is aligned with the iterative and adaptive nature of formative experiments. This type of analysis is useful to understand what factors are enhancing and inhibiting the intervention so that modifications can be made to progress

the intervention toward the pedagogical goal. For this study, data was analyzed in during three phases to maintain methodological rigor: baseline, intervention (parts 1 and 2), and retrospective analysis.

All data collection was analyzed with a constant comparative method (Glaser & Straus, 1967). Constant comparative is a data analysis method that enables the researcher to compare themes and categories that emerge from data with one another to determine similarities and differences (Merriam, 2009). According to Glaser (1965) the constant comparative method of analyzing data is completed in four stages. Although the stages are not linear, they do provide a guide for following through with analysis. The first stage is comparing incidents that are applicable to each category. Therefore, during the initial analysis of data each incident should be placed in each category that it applies to. When placing an incident in a category it is important to compare to all other incidents that have already been placed in that category. The second stage of constant comparative is integrating categories and their properties. During this process, “the constant comparative units change from comparison of incident to incident with properties of the category which resulted from the initial comparison of incidents” (Glaser, p.440). For example, teachers whose understandings shift in critical consciousness, will more than likely begin to foster critical consciousness in their students. Therefore, categories of teachers’ beliefs and practices become related in different ways and are integrated. Thus, theory about intersection of beliefs and practices begin to develop as these different categories and their properties become integrated through constant comparisons (Glaser, 1965). The third stage is delimiting when there are no longer any significant finds from the data. Glaser calls this theoretical saturation when no new aspects of a category emerge from incidents. At this point, non-related incidents or details can

be disregarded so that major categories or themes are outlined that emerged from the study. Finally, the fourth stage of constant comparative is writing the report.

Baseline Analysis. To gain an understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices prior to the intervention, I began my analysis of the baseline data using structural coding. According to Saldana (p.84) structural coding is most suitable for interview transcripts than other data sets. It also allows for the researcher to apply a conceptual phrase to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question or topic. Therefore, in order to take the first step in answering my first research question, "What shifts do teachers make in their conceptual understandings and pedagogical practices around CRP when engaged in professional development activities?" I specifically looked for data segments that related to "beliefs and practices." After I coded all of the data, I began to group the codes into the following categories: "beliefs about students," beliefs about parents," "beliefs about reading instruction," and "beliefs about professional development." As I coded for "instructional practices," I placed codes in subcategories such as "culturally relevant practices" and "literacy instructional practices." Once I read over the data and codes, I collapsed some of the categories into broader categories which resulted in 4 dominate themes for the baseline findings: "beliefs about students and their families," "beliefs about culturally relevant pedagogy, "beliefs about reading instruction vs. actual instructional practices," and "beliefs about professional development." (See Tables 5 & 6).

Table 5

Baseline Categories and Excerpts (Bridgette's Initial Interview)

Categories from Structural Coding	Excerpts from Initial Interview
Beliefs about Students and Families	<p>“There was a different caliber of students when we had the magnet population. We had parent participation, we had the students that were on grade level.”</p> <p>“I think kids learn at their own pace, and the educational system hasn't caught up with that yet.”</p>
Beliefs about Instruction	<p>“I think that being a reading teacher you do need to listen to your kids read.”</p> <p>“I get in trouble a lot because, I don't stay on pace I have to meet the kids where they are because, if my pacing chart says I should be on subtraction, but they haven't gotten addition.”</p>
Beliefs about CRP	<p>“I've stayed at Browns Mill, because I feel like I know the kids and I can relate to their culture.”</p> <p>“The stories I read to them at story time have changed. Like the school has changed, the kids have changed.”</p> <p>“I just think when children come to school and they feel like school is an extension of what's going on in their lives it does make an impact the learning and makes them more excited.”</p>
Professional Development	<p>“Differentiated instruction, anything that makes learning more real.”</p> <p>“Like I said we don't have the resources to teach, if you can show us resources ...we want to know more about flip charts and websites, things of that nature.”</p>

Table 6

Baseline Categories and Excerpts (Monica's Initial Interview)

Category from Structural Coding	Excerpts from Monica's Initial Interview
Beliefs about Students	<p>“I don't get the sense that a lot of my students don't get a wide range of experiences.”</p> <p>“A kid who reading on a kindergarten level can make progress, but I know that he will not be able to be on a 3rd grade level by the end of the year, He may not be on 4th grade but I can get him to first grade.”</p> <p>“I mean it's sad when you have kids that want to learn but don't have the support at home to even halfway help them.”</p> <p>“Speaking standard English at school, it's not correct, you don't sound smart.”</p>
Beliefs About Instruction	<p>“Reading to someone and reading to themselves. From what I gained from the whole Daily 5, just drowning them in reading that is how they are going to get better, by reading.”</p> <p>“Writing is an important component [of literacy instruction].”</p>
Beliefs About CRP	<p>“I have not done it enough to say that it makes a difference in my class, but based on what I read if I did it on a consistent basis it probably would.”</p> <p>“I think my students respond well to it [rap music].”</p>
Professional Development	<p>“I hope what this PD does, especially looking at it through CRP...provides a lens to look at speech in different ways...provide insight on how to support students' language development.”</p>

Intervention analysis. During the intervention phases (e.g., professional development sessions, classroom observations, and teacher debriefs), data was analyzed to understand what factors were enhancing and inhibiting the effectiveness of the intervention. The emerging themes that are related to factors that enhanced and inhibited shifts in teachers' beliefs were thoroughly analyzed after the four days alongside my researcher memos. I juxtaposed teacher statements that

were shared at the end of this phase and during the post-professional development interviews to highlight shifts in their beliefs. By analyzing teachers' thought processes during the four-day professional development. Although a statement does not confirm a shift in beliefs, it does provide insight on a change process that could possibly be occurring. Therefore, statements that teachers made which indicated possible shifts were triangulated with multiple data sources that reflected a change in practice. After coding and constantly comparing the data units, the following themes emerged that described factors that enhanced the four-day professional development: a.) the professional development was self-selected, b.) the group of teachers were homogenous, and c.) theory was presented around beliefs as opposed to strategies. The inhibiting factors were: a.) Lack of time and b.) timing of the professional development. Classroom observation data and teacher debriefs were analyzed after every two observations. I would review field notes and the audio taped conversations. I developed codes to organize and label data. I compared the codes to group them and determine larger categories.

Retrospective Analysis. The data analysis was concluded with a retrospective analysis of all of the data collected to form conclusions and make recommendations from the overall analysis (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). To address the overall research question for the study, *What shifts do teachers make in their conceptual understandings and pedagogical practices around CRP?*, I coded the data specifically analyzing the beliefs and practices of the focal teachers Bridgette and Monica during each phase of the study. This analysis led to an understanding of ideological factors that impact implementation of CRP and how shifts in beliefs and practices are contingent upon many factors and occur differently for everyone. The findings of the retrospective analysis are detailed in Chapter 6.

Methodological Rigor

Establishing rigor in data collection and analysis in a study is critical to conducting a study that is methodologically sound. I conducted this study based on the following standards of methodological rigor for formative experiments:

Conceptual Rigor

For conceptual rigor a researcher must be able to articulate how the intervention might make a difference in accomplishing the pedagogical goal (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). The professional development intervention in this study is different from most professional development that has occurred at Red Cove Elementary. The aspects of it being on-going and teacher-centered are attributes that should better support teachers beliefs and understandings and the ongoing debrief sessions should allow for continuous professional to promote teachers' pedagogical and conceptual standards of CRP to work toward bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Multiple Sources of Data

In formative experiments the researcher considers multiple factors that may influence the implementation of an intervention; therefore there must be multiple sources of data for analysis to reveal those factors (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). For this study, teachers were interviewed, classroom artifacts were collected, field notes were taken during classroom observations and the professional development intervention, and the weekly debrief sessions with the participants were audio record. These multiple sources of data reveal multiple factors about the intervention, its implementation, and its effectiveness.

Triangulation

Employing triangulation, allows the researcher to cross-check insights gained through one type of data with other methods (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2011). Also called construct validity,

researchers must use at least three forms of data in order to make valid claims from research (Yin, 2008). I used data from interviews, professional development sessions, field notes, and teacher debriefs to confirm themes that emerging from the data and to make sense of contradictory data that may emerge across themes and categories during the analysis process.

Researchers' Role and Reflexivity Statement

My teaching experiences and relationship to the school, teachers, and students where my study will be conducted reveals much of my subjectivities in relation to this study. Having taught at Red Cove Elementary for 8 years prior to enrolling as full-time PhD student at large, metropolitan university, shaped the very purposes of me working toward my doctoral degree. I have witnessed countless students that lack motivation and have poor attitudes toward school; teachers succumbing to deficit views of these students and their families; and years and years of low teacher morale due to curriculum constraints, student behavior issues, and feelings of lack of support. During my studies as a doctoral student, I have learned many different theories and perspectives that have allowed me to view my previous teaching experiences and education as a whole through multiple lenses. I do not perceive the racial gap in tests scores, dropout rates, and suspension statistics of African American youth as an inherent deficiency of a population of people. I situate my understandings of these troubling statistics within a historical and social context that highlights centuries of marginalization and systemic racism which still continues today and pervades educational and school policies and curriculum that negatively impacts students' identities, abilities, and achievement. Therefore, operating under the theoretical frameworks of sociocultural theory, critical race theory and culturally pedagogy, I view culturally relevant pedagogy as a set of beliefs that can support teacher's understandings of external factors that position Afri-

can American students negatively and not carry deficit views of them, but understand why a culturally relevant pedagogy is critical for teaching and empowerment of African American students. As I facilitate the professional development intervention and teacher debrief sessions, my hope is for teachers to adopt beliefs that promote more of culturally relevant practice. However, I also understand that my role as researcher is to objectively observe for any shifts in beliefs and practices and how I can better support teachers in a way that is comfortable for them and their goals.

As far as my positionality, I consider myself both emic and etic in my research. Due to the eight years I spent teaching in the public school system and my work as a graduate teaching assistant, I am an insider to the classroom. Creating lesson plans, organizing my classroom, and supporting students and teachers in various ways has helped to construct my identity and shape myself as a professional for all of my adult life. I have an etic position as well, because I am removed from the elementary classroom and no longer a part of the faculty at Red Cove Elementary. The teachers and students that I work with may not know me which makes me an outsider; however I am African American like the majority of the students at the school and a woman, which resembles the demographics of the teachers at Red Cove. Regardless of the similarities or differences between my former school and the school where my research will be conducted, I will always question social constructions and equity, due to my positionality of being a double minority. Johnson-Bailey (2003) writes about Banks' four-part typology that references the complexity of a researcher's position, she says, "The second component references the political and cultural position of the researchers: Do they hold the values, beliefs, and views of the people that they are studying?" (p.130). Therefore, my views on political and social issues in regards to education and literacy curriculum, may or may not make me etic.

Conclusion

The aim of this study is to document teachers' changing practices and beliefs as they engage in professional development on issues related to culturally relevant pedagogy and literacy development. The possible findings that will emerge from this study will provide further insight on how to support teachers in providing a more just education for students of color. For this study, the iterative nature of formative experiment will allow for the researcher to continually modify the intervention to better support shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as enable the teachers to continually examine their beliefs and practices. This process will be examined through a sociocultural and critical lens to better understand professional development practices that impact teachers' conceptual and pedagogical understandings around cultural issues in literacy education.

4 CONTEXT AND BASELINE PHASE

This chapter provides an overview of the context for the research study, a description of the participants, and a description of the data that was collected and analyzed during the baseline phase. A thorough understanding of the context and baseline data is integral for formative experiments so the researcher can get an understanding of the intervention in response to the complexity of the authentic educational setting as well as establish where the participants are in relation to the pedagogical goal (Reinking & Bradley, 2008).

This research study was conducted at Red Cove Elementary School, in five phases from June 2013 until January 2014. The baseline phase was the second phase of the study, lasting for one week in July when I conducted the initial interview for each participant. Due to the iterative nature of formative experiment, data was analyzed continuously throughout the study. Therefore, the baseline findings are discussed in this chapter and iterative cycle of data analysis and findings for Phases 3 and 4 are addressed in Chapter 5.

Red Cove Elementary School

When conducting a formative experiment, the goal is to implement an intervention at a site where the chances for successful implementation is neither too high nor too low (Reinking & Bradley, 2008). It is normal to face some challenges when implementing an intervention, but not challenges that will cause the intervention to completely fail or where there are no challenges. Red Cove proved to be an ideal site for my study. First, research has shown that in order for professional development to be impactful, there must be trust between the participants and facilitator (Smith, 2012). As a former teacher at Red Cove, I have relationships with many of the teachers as a friend and co-worker. As far as the teachers who agreed to participate in my study, I taught with two of them on the fourth grade team and I served on school committees with the other

three. This was also a factor when considering the timeline for my study. Due to the relationships that I already had with the teachers, we did not have to spend time on developing trust and relationship building and more time could be devoted to the learning process. Red Cove's end-of-the-year standardized test scores reflect the average scores of their school district with 15% of the students scoring "below the standards," 54% "meeting the standards," and 30% "exceeding the standards." However, teachers have seen that students who "meet the standards" with minimum scores are not reading on grade level. Furthermore, learning about culturally relevant pedagogy was something that these teachers were interested in to further enhance their teaching and increase levels of achievement. Thus, I chose Red Cove because due to the relationship that I have previously built with the teachers and the need for PD on culturally relevant topics, achieving the pedagogical goal was likely.

Red Cove Elementary is located in a small suburban city, on the southeast outskirts of a large metropolitan city in the Southeast U.S. The city is home to about 10,000 people. According to 2011 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census, 84% of the people living in this city identified as Black/African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Red Cove Elementary School opened in 1990 as neighborhood school and for students throughout Philips County who qualified for the Magnet program in the arts in grades 4-6. The Disciplined Based Arts Education (DBAE) program was a major focus for the school until 2004. The Getty Foundation research project that funded the program ended and funds were no longer available for teachers to attend trainings and new teachers that were hired had little knowledge of DBAE. Around this time period, the school began to take on a Healthy Living/Nutritious focus. The principal of the school had a personal investment in this focus as he had overcome a health

scare by maintaining a healthy diet and exercise. The school received recognition locally and national as a Sugar Free school. The cafeteria eliminated sugar in all of the meals and students were given more healthy options for lunch. All of the teachers were given pedometers to encourage them to walk, exercise classes were offered, and grants were awarded to receive funds for the initiative. Many teachers liked the focus on healthy living but felt that it took emphasis away from academic concerns. In 2005 and 2008 Red Cove won the Georgia School of Excellence and the 2005 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School award for academic excellence. The measurements for these awards were end-of-year state mandated test scores.

In the 2008-09 school year, the Magnet program moved to another school and with this change students also moved, changing the school's demographics, which resulted in Red Cove becoming a Title 1 school. Test scores for the school dropped, making it a challenge for the school to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). At this time, the school experienced administrative changes. Red Cove's principal was placed on leave for selling her nutrition books and the assistant principal took the principal position. The focus on healthy living began to wane as the new principal focused on tutoring programs to improve achievement.

Participants

In order to know if progress is being made toward the pedagogical goal in a formative experiment, baseline data must be collected. Since I did not receive approval to begin my study until after the school year had ended, I conducted individual interviews with the participants to establish initial understandings and practices. The dominate themes for the baseline findings that resulted from data analysis are: "beliefs about students and their families," "beliefs about culturally relevant pedagogy," "beliefs for effective instruction," and "beliefs about professional development." These findings were the starting point to measure the effectiveness of the intervention

in meeting the pedagogical goal. Bridgette, Monica, and Samantha will be described below based on their initial beliefs of each baseline theme that was determined. Cori and Carolyn will only be described briefly in this section as they both participated in the study for only a limited time.

Bridgette. Bridgette is a kindergarten teacher in her 16th year of teaching, all at Red Cove Elementary School. Prior to 2013-14 school year, she taught first grade for 15 years. Bridgette decided to become a teacher when her sons were in school because she did not like the education they were receiving and decided she wanted to make a difference in the lives of other African American males (Written Reflection, January 1, 2014). She reflected,

When my oldest son was in kindergarten his teacher thought he had reading trouble that's what she thought. Now I wasn't an educator at the time, but my mom was, my sisters my brothers, I come *from that kind of background*. So, her concern was that he wasn't reading on the level he should be, and I disagreed with her. [She] was a White teacher. The first problem was he couldn't see; we found out he needed glasses. The second problem is and I struggle with this now because *my child is not the type of child that school system catered to*. Meaning he's very creative, so her problem with him was that she's teaching and he's drawing, I knew that's what he liked to do, that's what he does, in fact that is what he majored in and got his degree in. So we went back and forth, back and forth and I was like this woman does not understand my child that's the problem. We are going back and forth by the end of the year, she was like ok, maybe we need to test him for gifted. Oh ok, so that's the other end of it, so he's not retarded. I'm sorry, we call it special ed. He was gifted so, that's why I needed to get my degree and go into education. That's what started it. (Initial Interview, July, 1, 2013)

Bridgett believes that it is important to teach the whole child. In a reflection she wrote, “I feel they need to know more than what is in textbooks but they need life skills as well. They need to be exposed to things other than what they see on a daily basis at home and on TV.”

Bridgett’s students are very comfortable with her, and she has a bit of a mother feel. She is firm with her students, consistent with her expectations for behavior and learning, and her students seem to respond well. Bridgett provides opportunities for her students to share in an orderly fashion. During story time, she encourages her students to participate ensuring that all students who raise their hands have an opportunity to contribute. The discussions are fun and engaging, but Bridgett makes sure that the students are respectful of each other by listening when others are talking. She makes efforts to get to know her students and discuss their lives outside of school with them. For example, one morning she read a story about a boy and his pet bat for her phonics lesson and asked students to make various words with the “at” rime. Bridgett selected a student to be her “assistant teacher” and write the words on the board as students called them out. If students said words that did not rhyme with “-at”, she asked them to listen to the ending of the word and helped them to understand why it was incorrect. As Bridgett read the story, she did not focus solely on the “-at” words but she asked clarifying questions about the story as well such as “How do you think the bat got into Pat’s house?” “What do you think Pat is thinking?” and “What would you do if a bat got into your house?” Students began to share their experiences with different animals such as snakes, squirrels, and dogs that get into their houses.

Beliefs about students and their families. Bridgett states that she believes all students can learn and views the challenges that her students face in regards to learning as a result of policy driven instructional mandates:

I believe that all students can learn, I just get frustrated as a teacher because there's a pacing chart, but everybody's not going to learn how to add by September 1st, but [Phillips County] wants them to learn by September 1st. On October 1st, I have to test them, on whether not they know it, I just do, I think kids learn at their own pace, and the educational system hasn't caught up with that yet (Initial Interview, July 1, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, Red Cove was once a magnet school drawing students from the neighborhood and around the district. Bridgette notes the changes in population since the school is no longer a magnet school:

Well when I started, Red Cove had a different caliber of students. We had the magnet population; we had parent participation; and we had the students that were on grade level. Now over the years the magnet program is gone and we have a lot of transient students who live with their grandparents or who are in foster homes now. It's rare that I have kids from two parent homes now. I think the majority of them are either foster, or live with their grandparents or single family [parent] homes (Initial Interview, July 1, 2013).

Beliefs for effective instruction. Bridgette believes that collaboration is important for her to teach her students well. At the beginning of each school year she talks to each child's previous teacher and sends an inventory home for parents to fill out about the strengths and weaknesses, academic ability, personal interests, and what skills they think their child needs to work on. She feels that it is important to get to know students in order to provide appropriate instruction.

Bridgette collaborates with Carolyn to find books in which students see themselves. She says that the reading curriculum they use is leveled and she likes that it provides examples of

how to teach the objective in different ways and on the students' levels, but the books do not reflect a diversity of people or experiences. When speaking about the reading program she states,

What's good about it is that it's leveled and whatever I do with one group, I can do it with another group, just a different way with the same objective being met, that's what I like about it. Now as far as our kids, that's the problem. Most of the books have little white kids in them, most of the stories that come with the program those booklets, so Carolyn and I pull stuff so our kids can see themselves (Initial Interview, July 1, 2013).

Bridgette states that supporting the literacy development of 1st graders can be a daunting process because the students begin the school year with a range of abilities. She says that her literacy goals for her students vary depending upon the child. That is why she thinks it is important to collaborate with other teachers who have taught the child and to also get to know her students.

We [first grade teachers] used to get together at each other's house and talk about what are we going to do, that's the most important, drawing from your peers. Like I talked to Carolyn all the time, that was when she got her PhD, so that's the biggest part for me, collaboration. That keeps me from pulling my hair, saying 'Hey, is it me'? And then, too, I call on the parents for help. 'What's going on? Can you give me some background?' And I start my year off with that, I give each parent an inventory that asks about the child's strengths and weaknesses, academic, personally then what can we do, what skills do you think your child needs to work on? (Initial Interview, July 1, 2013).

Beliefs about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. When Bridgette read the article on CRP that was given to the participants before the baseline phase, she said it occurred to her that CRP was something that she had been doing all along. Bridgette and Carolyn taught on the 1st grade team together for 10 years and when Carolyn became the reading specialist at Red Cove six

years ago, they continued to collaborate because some of Bridgette's students received additional reading instruction from Carolyn. The two teachers often focused on the students' personal lives as a way to make connections and relate learning to their experiences. Bridgette shared an example of how one of her students that was also taught by Carolyn in the EIP program, would come to school late and have personal body odor. They spoke to the social worker about her and found out that her mom was not consistently in her life because she battled with drugs and was in and out of jail. Carolyn and Monica found stories that had characters who did not live with their mothers or had relatives that were in jail. After reading these books, this particular student was more eager about coming to school and even mentioned it to her social worker that she wanted to get to school on time. Bridgette goes on to reflect how her many of her students were very interested in these books and that they were eager to reread the books and write about them after story time was over. Bridgette says that she believes it makes a difference when using texts that relate to students' lives. She comments:

It does make a difference. It effects how motivated they are, it effects what they are willing to give you, and I think it helps them to leave and forget what's going at home for a minute, and kind of focus on school and be engaged (Initial Interview 1, July 1, 2013).

Bridgette's understanding of the culture and teaching reflects how she understands that CRP is not a set of strategies that you can use with the same students year after year. She noted in her first interview "Stories that I read during story time change as my students change."

Views on professional development. Bridgette prefers professional learning experiences that provide practical application and examples of the topic that is being presented. She notes that she is interested in learning about more resources that could help her teach the standards in more culturally relevant ways.

Monica. Monica began teaching five years ago at Red Cove Elementary. She has taught 3rd and 4th grade at Red Cove and during the study she was the fourth grade team leader. Monica has always wanted to be a teacher because she wanted to positively impact the future generation of children. She believes that it is very important for her to connect with parents as a way to get to know her students. Monica's teaching style is a combination of teacher-centered and student-centered learning. She believes that activities that require students to be engaged with the text, and that support critical thinking and collaboration are important for her students. However, if these activities are not implemented as effectively as she likes, she gravitates to teacher guides and worksheets which document that the students have been taught the instructional standards.

Collaboration and instructional planning with her peers is important to Monica so that she (and the other fourth grade teachers) are on track with the school system's instructional pacing guide. The 4th grade team meets once per week after school for instructional planning, which is outside their mandated meeting time during the school day. Monica also designated one day a week to plan with her co-teacher, who works primarily with the special needs students. Monica has 6 special needs students. She and the co-teacher do more side-by-side teaching as opposed to teaching together. The co-teacher normally works with the majority of special needs students, while Monica teaches the other students in the class.

Beliefs about students and their families. Monica believes that all of her students have the ability to learn but acknowledges there are difficulties in promoting the achievement of her low to middle income students of color. Monica states that she believes that her students can learn, and although they learn at different paces believes she can make a difference in her students' lives. However, she feels that if the parents are not supporting the child at home, there is

only so much she can do. An example of this when she called her 3rd grade students “phonetically challenged”:

Natasha: Phonetically challenged? What do you mean?

Monica: Their phonics skills were not up to grade level. I had kids spelling words with no vowels. In third grade, it’s so far beyond me, it’s sad it’s ridiculous, I had a kid spell, a word s-p-i-s. What’s that word?

Natasha: Spice? Special?

Monica: “Surprise”, and I just went off on my entire class because I was so baffled by foolishness.

Natasha: Foolishness on whose part?

Monica: You know what, I never blamed a previous teacher, so for me at that point in time, for me it was foolishness on child’s part. If I go back I could blame, parents, teachers....

Natasha: What’s your view of the parents?

Monica: They are sorry

Natasha: Explain that

Monica: Sorry because a lot of our kids are below what they should be. As a parent your first responsibility is to teach your child. I’m a teacher not a parent. I think that a kid, nobody, as parents you should know where your child is, parents should give me a diagnosis. You should know where your child is academically.

Natasha: Why do you think they don’t know....they don’t care, don’t know, or don’t try?

Monica: If I were to assume, I would say they don’t try. There are a percentage of parents

that don't know, and I don't have a problem them. I don't have a problem teaching parents if they don't know. I have helped a parent learn multiplication. I have parents that do know and don't try, and that drives me crazy. This is not my child in the sense that God did not give him/her to me. I don't like caring about somebody's kid more than they do. I mean it's sad when you have kids that want to learn but don't have the support at home to even halfway help them. It's hard for me to be mommy to everybody when you have large classes (Initial Interview 1, July 3, 2013).

Although Monica says all students can learn, she admits that depending on where they are starting from they can only learn so much and that if the parents are not supporting them then her efforts are futile.

Beliefs about effective instruction. Monica's literacy goals for her students are that they gain a deeper understanding of "...correct grammar, being able to write. Reading and understanding, and comprehending, being able to go through those motions, the standards, the way the standards have been set" (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013). The Daily 5 reading program (Boushey & Moser, 2006) is something that she wanted to implement the previous school year but was not able to get it started. She saw the Daily 5 as a means to support her students' reading development and comprehension because "it is drowning them in reading. That is how they are going to get better, by reading. By hearing somebody reading, by reading to somebody, by reading to themselves, by reading all the time." (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013) Writing is another component of her students' literacy development that she sees as very important, but admits to not implementing it much or well:

It's important to me, it's not something that I do every year, it's something that I would like to implement more this year. So it's not something that I've done before. Writing is

important because that's how people are introduced all of times for the first time. College and job applications. You have to be able to write to email people, and write text messages, but everything incorporates writing. When you include the two of them together [reading and writing] you'll learn how to read, and all of that as well, but I think written expression is very important. I mean very important (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013).

Much of Monica's time and energy was focused on teaching grade level standards in English Language Arts. The previous two years she taught 3rd grade, which in her state is a promotion grade, meaning students must pass the state standardized test in order to be promoted. In the past, her reading instruction consisted of isolated reading tasks. Students started with grammar and spelling exercises, and then were introduced to a reading strategy by Monica. They would complete a corresponding reading activity where the focus was on the reading strategy just introduced. In her adherence to the standards, she has had difficulty integrating what she truly believes is important for her students' literacy development, which is multiple opportunities to read and write.

Beliefs about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Monica had heard of the term CRP prior to the study and assumed that it meant "taking their culture into play when you're teaching." She stated that once she read the article I gave them during our first meeting, she realized that that she wasn't too far off in her understanding of it, and she also thought that she was not doing it enough in her classroom. Aspects of Monica's instruction that she identified as culturally relevant was her use of a multiplication rap CD: "Rap music, multiplication facts to rap music, or music they like. That's the first thing that pops into my head....I can't even, that's the only thing I can think of now." She also shared one time she read a book to her students and the book was about a lady who drove a convertible, and a popular rap song at time was about driving around

with your “ceiling missing.” She used her students’ knowledge of that song to connect with the book. Monica stated that she believed CRP would increase achievement if done consistently. Her takeaway from the article was on the language aspect of CRP:

I was reading something in the article, where it talks about their speech, and how they talk and not correcting them all the time. I’m thinking, oh my gosh, I correct my students all the time. Yeah, when I realized that, I was thinking if there was a way for me to get them to still learn the *language in a proper way*, because the time that I have with kids is not enough time *for me to correct their language* that they have learned all this time, then go home for however long at night, then all of the weekend, I’m kind of beating a dead horse.

Views on professional development. Monica shared many things that she wanted to learn about CRP and literacy instruction. Mainly she wanted to know how to teach in culturally relevant ways, so that “I can teach them what they need to know without compromising who they are,” as well as developing a community of learners for her students. She also wanted to learn about a system for guided reading that works for all kids but that is flexible enough that works for a new class year after year.

Samantha. Samantha has 12 years of teaching experience and 10 of those years she has been at Red Cove. She has taught 1st through 4th grade. Samantha has a Bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Development and a Master’s degree in Teacher Leadership. She wanted to be a teacher because she has always loved education and learning. She felt that it was important to share the successful experiences she had as a student with her students and make a difference in their lives. Ensuring that her students grow through compassionate and effective teaching is important to her.

Samantha has two sons. The oldest, now in middle school, attended Red Cove after Samantha became dissatisfied with their neighborhood school. Samantha was not happy with her son's second grade teacher who consistently complained about her son instead of working with Samantha to increase his academic success. Samantha perceived that the teacher had a problem with the Black male students in the class as they were often sitting by themselves or in trouble for talking to too much. The teacher informed Samantha that her son had reading and grammar difficulties when he pronounced the letter m sound as "mu" instead of "mmm" during an assessment. Similarly in math, the teacher told Samantha her son was failing, even though Samantha had explained that math would be an area he would need enrichment in. Going through this experience with her son led Samantha to better understand the need of getting to know students and building on their strengths. In her own teaching, Samantha uses morning meetings and various activities to better understand her students personally and academically. At the beginning of each school year, she does a scavenger hunt where students have to find classmates that fit in certain categories such as "have siblings," "been on an airplane," "lived in another state," etc. She has the students elaborate on their experiences and makes connections to the students' personal experiences and learning activities throughout the school year.

Beliefs about students and their families. Samantha believes that all students can learn and that the teacher has a large responsibility in making this happen. She admits that that if students are "programmed" at home to value learning then teaching them is a lot easier. This belief is reflected in her thoughts about the change in student population that occurred when Magnet program was moved to another location. Before working at Red Cove, Samantha worked at an elementary school in another state with a predominantly low-income student population. She stated that it was easier to teach the students at Red Cove than at her former school because most

of the students at Red Cove came from middle – to upper middle class families. She stated that their parents were educated and they came from more stable homes. She continued by saying that since Red Cove’s population has changed, it is now similar to the first school with the lower SES students, making teaching more difficult again. She says,

The students now, you know at the same school, have changed. Their socio-economic status has changed in that area. Now it’s become more of a lower income area so the kids now are kind of the same as I had when I first started to teach. Their parents are – they come from, not two parent homes, there are a lot more foster kids and so forth, so it is going back to kind of being a little bit more difficult (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013).

Samantha believes that the difficulty lies in the lack of parental support. In her first interview she stated, “I would say maybe about 75-80 percent of my kids just don’t get at home what I’ve tried to give them at school” (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013). She continues by noting how she constantly tries to talk about real life issues with her students to help them see the importance of education. She uses current events and issues that happen in their community to try to get her students to make life choices that can help them get a good education. Samantha also discusses how this is difficult for her because she did not have this kind of experience in school. The teachers taught, and she did what she needed to do to learn.

I also think that for us, we had to adapt. There were no small groups when I grew up. There was teaching and there was lecturing, you learn and that’s how we – we learned at that time and we adapted and so we don’t even think that these kids cannot adapt. We think if I did it they can do it to. And it may not be the case or the fact that I might even be white. It didn’t bother me, it didn’t stop me from wanting to do what I needed to do, but that might not be the case for these kids (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013)

Beliefs about effective instruction. Samantha believes that reading for enjoyment and reading comprehension are important and her instructional practices support that. Samantha really wants her students to desire to read for enjoyment. Although she remarks that fluency is important, she thinks students should just want to read. She recalled the previous year in 4th grade, when she read the novel *Walk Two Moons* (Creech, 2009) with her students. It was not out of the ordinary for her to read to her fourth graders, but with *Walk Two Moons* she did not tie an assignment to reading. “So I just want them to be able to read books just for pure entertainment not to have stress or pressure of answering questions all the time. I just want them to be able to read” (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013). Samantha’s belief that her students should enjoy books was evident in her classroom as she read to her students a novel that they enjoyed. It was not clear if she allowed them to read for enjoyment during independent reading time.

Comprehension is also really important to Samantha. She supports her students’ understanding of what they read through dialogue, questioning, and modeling. When doing comprehension worksheets, she states that she stops to ask questions and has students reread to so they can better understand what they are reading. “One thing that I don’t know if they enjoyed it the most, but they did pretty good.” She implements story diagramming with students to break down a story to identify the characters, plot, setting, the problem, and the solution so they can understand the purpose of the story. She says that this helped students when they had to write their own stories.

Another aspect of Samantha’s teaching is that she prefers whole group over small group or individual work:

I do a lot of whole group. People fought against a lot of whole group, but I do a lot of whole group. Because I feel like I need to model a lot so that’s one way I kind of try to

make them see that it's not that bad just do it. Get it done, here's the answer, you can do it right the first time and you're done (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013).

She believes in whole group structure and even though others in her school do not like whole groups, she sees the benefit in them and implements them. Samantha has found a way to teach the standards in a way that she believes works. When asked about how she releases the responsibility to the student so they are able to do the learning task on their own, she stated, "I'll spend the first couple of days [of the week] modeling it, we'll do it together, we'll go write answers, we'll go through answers then I'll put them off in groups."

Beliefs about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Samantha understands that culturally relevant pedagogy as using students' cultural experiences as a basis for teaching. She discussed how she used technology a lot in her class last year because she knew her students were knowledgeable about it and it interested them. She centered her research projects on technology; the students used the Internet to look for sources and created Power Point presentations. She recalled that there was not a lot for her to do as far as teaching how to use technology to research and present. Samantha's use of technology as a culturally relevant tool aligned with her view of culture. She stated she that sees culture not only as skin color or race but as students' experiences and interests. She sees age as part of culture because she has had different experiences than her students due to their age difference, so she has to take that into consideration when teaching them. Samantha believes that CRP makes a difference for African American students because they need something that can build upon their knowledge and interests but she is also waivers on that thought:

And I kind of hate saying it because I feel like it shouldn't matter you know, race or how you teach, but it does...So I mean, I don't think it should matter, but people are kind of

fast doing it. I mean and you do, I think when you say like you had to find a cultural something culturally, I don't always think race. I think of environment, I think the time that you're in.... like I say with technology (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013).

Samantha's view of CRP is that cultural relevance is connecting with the students through their experiences and interests, not necessarily tied to race. Samantha stated that as a child she went from a predominately Black school to a predominately White school and she adapted fine. Even if students are not receiving culturally relevant instruction, it perplexes her that her students are unable adjust and do well in school as she did.

Views on professional development. As evident in her responses about culture, Samantha wanted to learn more about culture and what it entails in regards to working with children. She also wanted support in using small groups to teach. She believes that she learns best when professional development is interactive and teachers have opportunities to share their own ideas and experiences in the classroom.

Carolyn. Carolyn has been teaching for 16 years and has served as the Early Intervention Program Reading teacher for the past 7 years. Carolyn started teaching when her son was in second grade at a religious-based school and his teacher had to go on maternity leave. The school asked Carolyn to fill in and when she started she thought "Oh my God this is where I'm supposed to be!" (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013). Carolyn went on to get a Master's degree in Education and recently completed her Ph.D. at a large state university. Her research was focused on African American males' educational experiences. Therefore, Carolyn was already knowledgeable about many of the concepts that I planned to introduce during the professional development.

Carolyn's views on education and literacy learning are framed in a historical, critical, and culturally relevant context. She believes that teachers must work to positively help students develop a sense of self and identity.

During the school year, one of Carolyn's loved ones became sick and she had to take a leave from school and was unable to participate in debriefs. Therefore, Carolyn baseline beliefs will be discussed as well as her engagement of the four-day professional development but she will not be included in the other phases of the study. Her input during the professional development was very meaningful to the discussion and provided thoughtful insight that supported the understandings and growth of her colleagues.

Beliefs about students. Carolyn believes there are many factors that marginalize African Americans due to the dominant ideology of the Whites in society. When asked about deficit ideologies that explain the lack of achievement in Blacks, she stated:

We've come a long way, struggled alone, and we have been a resilient people to progress like we have. When you have snatched us from our mother, our father and you done brought us over here. You wonder why black men got rage? You done go rape his mama, rape they children, rape they wife and they got to sit there and say nothing so that rage gets passed down and passed down and you want to look at them like something's wrong. Yeah something's wrong with us! You got that right, okay something's wrong! But they don't want to take any responsibility and so even when we look at ourselves; we almost erased them out of the equation and lock it up (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013).

Carolyn believes that her students have all of the ability to learn and succeed academically but due to historical marginalization and degradation of Blacks, her students do not see themselves as learners.

Beliefs about effective instruction. When asked about her reading instruction Carolyn stated that her first goal for instruction was to develop a sense of self in students. She conducts interviews with her students at the beginning of the year so she can get to know them and develop trust.

I believe that education means absolutely nothing if you don't know self. If you're not first educated as to what your purpose is in life and what life is...you have to know you're in the world for a reason. So I try to teach children to know themselves. Try to know yourself, what's your purpose, why you're here and then from there, they can learn anything (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013).

At the beginning of each school year, Carolyn shows movies to her students about people who have persevered to achieve great things. The previous school year she showed a movie about Gold Medal Olympian Gabrielle Douglas. She used the movie as a jumping-off point for discussion, asking,

Just, how do you think she got to that point? How do you think she got to that point to believe that she could go and present? We start talking about that. So they'll look at maybe five minutes of the movie and the rest of the time they write. And I don't care if they cannot write. They write. Tell me what you're thinking; tell me what came to mind and from that, just from that, I'm telling you, it blossoms out. When they say, 'I can't write', put down that kind of thinking, write something that you can, then when they tell me, talk to me and tell me what their thinking then we go from there and do some writing (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013).

Carolyn also uses multicultural and culturally relevant books to teach the curricular standards. Instead of using the suggested texts that accompany the reading textbook,

she uses books that are relevant to her students' lives to support their literacy development. Carolyn has even conducted a short staff development at Red Cove where she shared with the teachers examples of texts that she uses during her literacy instruction to teach the standards.

Natasha: So what culturally relevant materials or resources do you use?

Carolyn: Everything and anything that I can find.

Natasha: Okay.

Carolyn: *Julian's Glorious Summer* (Cameron, 2001), the Julian books, with people that look like them. Angela Shelf Madeiras books, Jacqueline Woodson. Everything I can and, uh...*Donavan's Word Jar* (DeGross, 1994), anything I can that reflects them.

Natasha: Yeah,,I remember when you did that in-service on culturally relevant texts.

Carolyn: Yes, teachers need to know 'You not tied down, you not locked down'.

Natasha: But you get the teachers' manual from day one...

Carolyn: Exactly....why? Enculturation (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013).

Carolyn believes that effective instruction is connected to supporting students in developing positive identities. She uses movies, interviews, discussions, and culturally relevant texts to motivate students to believe in themselves. Self-knowledge, Carolyn believes, is essential for any kind of academic success.

Beliefs about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Carolyn believes that culturally relevant pedagogy is necessary because of the marginalization of people of color in society and in school. The misrepresentation of information in textbooks is also a reason for CRP. Carolyn says that in school, Blacks are introduced to their culture starting with slavery with no mention of the dynasties of Africans before they were forced to travel to America. Other immigrants willfully came to

America for a better life, but Africans were forced here. She uses the term “Americanized Africans” instead of African Americans to describe Blacks, because she says that Blacks became Americans by force and struggle.

Americanized Africans, when I’m talking about us as a people who are not indigenous to this country; those people who were brought here in chains. Those people who did not choose to come here. Those people and their people their heritage, I say I call and I identify as Americanized African. Their learning, their knowledge, our learning, our knowledge is structured by those who captured us to keep us in captivity (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013).

Education in U.S. schools continues as a form of captivity for Blacks. Culturally relevant pedagogy is necessary for Black students, as she believes that mainstream curriculum presents an Anglo-centered perspective that is hegemonic in nature.

They [mainstream curriculum] don’t infuse the sense of being a W.E.B. Du Bois. They don’t want to infuse the sense of being Carter G. Woodson, they don’t infuse the sense of our people. Like they’ve got George, everybody knows George Washington cut down a cherry tree I’m sure. What the hell is that? Who cares about him cutting down a cherry tree? He didn’t tell no lie, white folks don’t lie. That’s what they want you to believe (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013).

Carolyn’s beliefs of CRP directly relate to her beliefs about effective instruction. She describes how she had “up close and personal” experiences with racism as she grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, in the 1950s and 1960s. Her grandparents and parents were business owners in their community and she once had a cross burned in her yard. She also endured loss; she was friends with Denise McNair and went to high school with Ana Mae Collins, two of the girls that were

killed in the 16th Street Baptist Bombing in 1963. Also, Carolyn's initial teaching experience was in an Islamic school that was dedicated to Black empowerment. Therefore, Carolyn's beliefs and experiences were never aligned with values of mainstream education. Her beliefs about teaching and learning were always deeply engrained in culturally relevant beliefs and practices.

Cori. Cori has a total of eight years teaching experience. She taught at Red Cove for 6 years, but for the last two years she has been teaching at another school in the county. The school where she currently teaches is different from Red Cove because it has a predominantly Latino/(a) population. She found out about the study from Monica and joined the professional development on the second day of the four day professional development intervention. Hence, her initial beliefs will not be discussed in the baseline findings.

After receiving a bachelor's degree in African American History, Cori decided to get a Master's in Education because she felt there was a need to enhance the educational lives of Black children in the U.S. education system. "Too many Black children were being left behind in a system that was revamped to leave no child behind"(Written Reflection, November 14, 2013). She sees teaching as a way to facilitate knowledge so students can make academic connections.

Conclusion

Overall, the teachers demonstrated a range of culturally relevant beliefs and instructional practices. Although some of the teachers already implemented more culturally relevant curricula than others, each of them desired to learn more about culturally relevant pedagogy. Deficit beliefs that some of the teachers held in regards to their students' abilities and perceptions of their families indicate that the professional development intervention could support teachers in shifting beliefs toward a more culturally relevant stance.

5 FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to support shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices when engaged in professional development around culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). Two phases of professional development were conducted and served as the intervention for this study. This chapter will address the findings of this study that relate to questions 3 and 4 from Reinking and Watkins's (2000; 2008) formative experiment framework which was presented in Chapter 3 and are as follows: (a) What factors enhance or inhibit the effectiveness of the intervention in regard to achieving the set pedagogical goal? and (b) How can the intervention be modified to achieve the pedagogical goal more effectively and efficiently? In this chapter, I will present the factors that enhanced and inhibited teachers' learning during the intervention as well as modifications made to improve the intervention and better support the teachers' implementation of CRP in the classroom.

Enhancing Factors, Inhibiting Factors, and Modifications

Phase 3: Four-day Professional Development

Data analysis in a formative experiment is cyclical and iterative, in the sense that as data is being collected it is simultaneously being analyzed. This type of analysis is useful to understand what factors are enhancing and inhibiting the intervention so that modifications can be made to progress the intervention toward the pedagogical goal. Modifications were made to days 3 and 4 of the professional development based on the teachers' evaluations on the second day of the intervention, researcher memos, and observations. The teachers' evaluations were compared with my observations and researcher memos of what I saw as factors inhibiting and enhancing shifts in beliefs. The emerging themes that are related to factors that enhanced and inhibited shifts in teachers' beliefs were thoroughly analyzed after the four days alongside my researcher

memos. I juxtaposed teacher statements that were shared at the end of this phase and during the post-professional development interviews to highlight shifts in their beliefs. By analyzing the statements, I was able ascertain what factors contributed to the teachers' thought processes during the four-day professional development. Therefore, during the retrospective analysis, statements that teachers made which indicated possible shifts were triangulated with other data sources that reflected a change in practice. After coding and constantly comparing the data units, the following themes emerged that described factors that enhanced the four-day professional development: the professional development was self-selected and relevant; the group of teachers were homogenous; and theory was presented around beliefs as opposed to strategies. Inhibiting factors include: limited time and when the professional development sessions were offered.

Enhancing factors. The enhancing factors were aspects of the four-day professional development that were conducive to the teachers' knowledge construction and positive dispositions toward the learning process.

Self-selected and relevant. The voluntary nature of the professional development intervention and the focus of the sessions on CRP were enhancing factors as teachers engaged with new ideas and shifted their beliefs and understandings. Much of the professional development offered in schools is mandated. Teachers are required to attend regardless of their interests and needs for professional learning. Often, professional development is centered around mandated reading curriculum or district initiatives focused on standardized testing (Darling-Hammond, 2009). This lack of teacher ownership and autonomy in professional development results in low levels of interests and limited transference into the classroom. This was not the case in this intervention. Teachers in this study voluntarily agreed to participate and thus were highly motivated to engage. They believed that engaging in professional development around the topic of CRP

was something they needed to continue to develop as a professional and better meet the needs of their students. Some participants were more interested in learning about CRP while others wanted to share their knowledge and build on their experiences with CRP.

Monica was one of the participants who wanted to learn about CRP. In her initial interview she stated, “I am curious to learn about another way to reach my students” (Initial Interview, July 3, 2013). Throughout her interviews and comments made during the 4-day session, it was evident that Monica believed that the students and parents needed more motivation to make school a priority, which aligned with her reason for joining the study. Her willingness to seek out knowledge to better support her students enhanced her ability to be open to new information and to be honest with adjustments she needed to make within her beliefs to increase the achievement of her students. Likewise, Samantha, who shared similar beliefs about students at the beginning of the study, wanted to learn more about CRP and engage in discussions about it to help her better understand and implement it.

For Bridgette and Carolyn, however, components of their literacy instruction were already framed in culturally relevant teaching. During Bridgette’s first interview, she noted that she wanted to learn more about what the research says about CRP so she could be kept abreast of the latest developments in that area. Bridgette named several reasons for participating in the professional development, including sharing her experiences teaching through a culturally relevant lens and gaining a deeper understanding of how to better support her students. Carolyn, who is also very knowledgeable about culturally relevant pedagogy from her doctoral studies, stated that she joined the study because “it offered an opportunity to develop deeper into another diagnosis and prognosis of the cultural and academic achievement of our [Black] children in particular and in the present day” (Initial Interview, July 8, 2013). Each teacher had a personal purpose and

goal for participating in the professional development. Therefore, the factor of each teacher being willing to learn and share about CRP enhanced the intervention in its effectiveness to meet the pedagogical goal.

Homogenous group. Another factor that enhanced the success of the intervention was that all of the teachers were African American women. Race is not a qualifier for having similar beliefs, experiences, or values; however there was solidarity among the group that was rooted in race and in their purposes for being educators. The teachers shared a collective identity, which was a focal reason as to why they joined a study about culturally relevant pedagogy. Each of the participants made it clear at some point during the study that they decided to teach because they wanted to make a difference in the lives of African American students. Often during the study, teachers would say “our children” or “our people” in reference to African Americans. This was acceptable due to the demographics of the participants. Discussions about racial identity, students’ perceived abilities and language use, and the marginalization of African Americans in society and the educational system were challenging, but the group did not indicate discomfort or displeasure with the conversations. The participants were not timid in sharing their thoughts and beliefs, even when they were deficit in nature because there was the understanding that each person was there to gain greater understanding to improve the education and ultimately the lives of “our children.” This allowed for honest discussions around race and education. For example, when the teachers were discussing the lack of parental support, Samantha stated, “Honestly, I am disgusted sometimes. We need to do better as a people.” This statement was deficit in nature, but its intention was in wanting better for her race, which was understood by the group.

After completing the week-long professional development sessions, Cori discussed the comfort level of the group and felt this was due to the homogeneity of the group’s composition:

female and African American. When I asked her if she felt workshops like this were important for teachers of African American students, she stated,

What we are doing now, is important, because it's not just, we go in and we have professional development, and then we don't [do] anything, I was like, it's important as long as there is support because it's a professional development study where people are allowed to be open and honest, like, this works with us, because we are all black, we are all black women. But would it be the same, would somebody else be as comfortable to share? We could talk about code switching and we could talk about BEV (Black English Vernacular) and just say okay, but would somebody else be comfortable or would we even be comfortable with someone else saying, "Well I don't understand when they speak this way or what?" So if it's something that it is ongoing, where people are comfortable, are made to feel comfortable and people's ideas, and just anything is accepted and that we can have a conversation about it and then kind of that would be, that would be good (Post PD Interview, July 30, 2013).

As Cori pointed out, even though some of the participants made negative comments about their students' use of BEV, no one seemed offended.

On the third day of the professional development, a discussion of systemic racism in education ensued and the group began to discuss meritocracy and how that ideology may not be a reality for all people. I posed the idea that due to the experiences that some parents had in school, they may not know how to support their child based on school's expectations of support, preventing them from successfully navigating the educational system that their child is in. Monica had difficulty with the idea of a parent not knowing and not trying to find out information that could benefit their child. Carolyn used an analogy about slavery to try explain it to her.

Monica: As far as you saying they may not know, I just, I can't accept that, because I don't know how to fix a toilet but if I want to learn, I'll Google it. I'm thinking if you want your kid to be successful, even if you don't know yourself, why can't you say to the teacher....

Carolyn: That's a big *if* baby!

Samantha: But, but at the same time.....

Carolyn: Your parents passed that belief on to you. But you know I always go back. Our history in our country is skewed through the eyes of what they said was good...bad...success...failure. It's like, the people, those that worked in the big house serving the master and guests, they had a mindset of being better than the masses who was in the fields. I'm just saying that the majority of us was out there in the fields, they didn't have no belief and no hope that something was going to get better. They just had to pick cotton and do what whatever, that was in their mind. Those in the big house got to read, got to present, they got to see a better life (Day 3 of PD, 7/18/13).

All of the teachers nodded their heads agreeing with Carolyn and Samantha replied with, "That's true." Carolyn's point was to show that lack of knowledge about education was systemic and reproduced in society starting with slavery. Field slaves did not see things outside of the field, so for some of them, they would not know how to navigate certain systems that the house slaves could because they had different experiences. This analogy was understood by all of the participants and did not upset anyone. Slavery was a real part of each of their histories and they identified with the impact it had on their race and in their lives. The comfort level in the group allowed for such analogies.

Carolyn would also use the term “they” in reference to White-dominated society. It was understood who she was talking about and no one was offended by the use of the term. No one felt that her race was the object of scrutiny and could accept each other’s beliefs. Although the participants had opposing viewpoints on some of the topics discussed, these conversations were not offensive. Therefore, the teachers could have difficult conversations about race and be honest with their beliefs and perceptions, thereby enhancing the teachers’ understandings and learning.

Theory Driven. The focus of this professional development was to support shifts in teachers’ beliefs as opposed to sharing an array of instructional strategies to improve teaching. Many scholars suggest that CRP should not be presented as a “how-to-guide” for teaching children of color, but rather a belief system that guides instructional choices (Howard, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1996). In order for a teacher to be culturally relevant, they must believe that all students have cultural resources that are valuable and are tools for learning. I shared various research studies such as Ladson-Billing’s (1995) work with culturally relevant teachers, Delpit’s (2006) work on culture and language, and Labov’s (1972) student on AAVE. The teachers engaged in discussions around research that provided insight on around topics that they dealt with as educators of African American students.

During one of our discussions on language use, the teachers read sections of the article, “THE REAL Ebonics Debate” by Lisa Delpit and a synopsis of Shirley Brice Heath’s study “Ways With Words” about oral language development among various communities of people. I wanted the teachers to gain a broader understanding of language use, and to think more critically about it, how they can acknowledge it, and build on it in their classrooms. The following day, we continued our discussion about language, and I shared a quote with the participants by James

Gee, “All children have impressive language abilities...”. Aside from Carolyn, the other participants had not known about these studies and the research in these areas. The quote challenged their thinking and pushed them to engage in topics that they had not discussed before:

Natasha: Do you all agree?

Carolyn and Samantha nod their heads

Monica: Well....

Natasha: What?

Monica: Nothing. Go ahead.

Carolyn: I mean, what schools mean by large vocabularies and complex grammar may be different from what we understand and different from what the children bring. Like Heath was saying, the children from Trackton knew how to talk and they knew what each other was saying, but some Caucasian teachers may be like “what are they talking about”?

Bridgette: Some Black teachers too

Natasha: Yeah some black too

Heads nod

Cori: Me!

(Laughter)

Carolyn: Yea some Black too, so what we have to understand, what they say is complex or large vocabulary, it may be a cultural vocabulary.

Bridgette: I agree with it if that’s what he’s saying

Carolyn: If we were to take them to the hood, then....

Natasha: Just knowing our students have experiences, they may not have certain experiences but the experiences they have are valuable because they are theirs.

Bridgette: That's interesting.

Samantha: What's interesting?

Bridgette: Just the large vocabulary, just thinking about it like that.

Samantha: Yeah it is, or even the impressive language abilities, I was about to be like 'uh unh'.

Laughter

Samantha: and when you look at...that's what I'm...I don't know if I want to say I'm struggling, but

Natasha: That's fine, we all struggle with...

Samantha: that's going to be a struggle for me to look at it from a different angle, and I think it's because I don't...the most, most of the time the way I speak is Standard English. So to think that BEV could be standard is like huh? That's something that I am working on

Carolyn: Because we are standardized by teacher education programs, we are standardized, when you go through teacher education programs it's an enculturation too usually, not an enculturation with a proclivity to people like us

Monica: So yeah that's kind of where I am

Natasha: Yeah and that's the point of all of this...I'm still pushing myself

Samantha: And I think that handout you gave us Tuesday with the Trackton and the...

Natasha: Yeah...

Samantha: I think that's why when I first read that (pointing to quote) I was like yeah I agree and that was the first thing that I thought about different cultures and yes how they

have impressive language abilities you know based off their understandings and culture so that's what I immediately thought about, so yea I agree.

Monica: So you all already changed

Laughter

Samantha: That's where my mind first went to now that I have been exposed to it. (Day 3 of PD, July 18, 2013).

This exchange demonstrates how the teachers began to work through and problematize some longstanding beliefs about language use and culturally deficit models when presented with theory-driven professional development. Carolyn, already knowledgeable about cultural studies, was able to help Monica understand which lens she viewed language from, by discussing the enculturation of teacher education programs. For Samantha, the research that she read helped her to understand the value in the languages that her students used and Monica struggled with this new information but could begin to see how it made sense. In a post-professional development interview, Monica discussed my role as a facilitator and addressed the theoretical aspects of the professional development.

You were more like a facilitator in the sense that you brought, you brought different ideas to us. You brought different questions as far as challenging our thinking. And this year, some of your experience of being a teacher before, but also as someone that is doing research on it now, so you gave us the other side of things too. So I will say if anything it kind of pushed our thinking a little bit. (Post PD Interview, July 30, 2013).

Bridgette also felt that it was important to learn about what is happening in educational research. In her interview following the professional development, she stated, "I felt you educated us about things that are going on in the academic realm, while we're in the classroom with the kids, we

don't know what the think tank is saying what we should be doing" (Bridgette, Post PD Interview, July 30, 2013).

Throughout the professional development and in interviews, the teachers acknowledged the impact of research studies and theoretical concepts to support them in their understandings. In Monica's final interview, she discussed how the professional development addressed her beliefs and how in turn that will cause her to be more self-reflective and think about how her beliefs are shaped with regards to her teaching.

I think with all the statistics around and we see how bad our kids are doing, I think having the workshop like this or even introduced, you know culturally relevant pedagogy would allow teachers to kind of look at things in a different light. Because I don't know that a lot of teachers are self-reflective of, you know their own beliefs and how to fix their teaching. I think of course at the end of a lesson or end of the day of the week, we are like I think I should have done this, or taught this. But never are we like, you know what, I believe this.... (Post PD Interview, July 30, 2013).

The readings presented to the teachers and the follow-up discussions were not about the typical one-size-fits-all strategies that are often shared during teacher professional development. Rather, theories on learning, culturally relevant pedagogy, and language development were presented to support teachers in viewing their students and literacy experiences through a wider lens that values diverse understandings and abilities. These theoretical perspectives gave them the space to develop their own understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy. These professional development interventions that introduced teachers to theories and support emerging and shifting understandings were therefore enhancing factors.

Factors of Four-Day Professional Development

Time. Although the four-day professional development session lasted for a total of 20 hours, a lack of time was certainly an inhibiting factor to the effectiveness of the intervention. The theoretical and pedagogical nature of culturally relevant pedagogy necessitates time to critically work through ideas around cultural, language, and instruction; especially if the purpose is to encourage shifts. When confronted with new ideas, people use their current beliefs to evaluate the new information, initially responding with acceptance or rejection (Kennedy, 1997). The teachers in this study, however, were committed to developing beliefs that were more culturally relevant, meaning that we needed more time to unpack existing beliefs as they began to work toward accepting new ideas. For example, the teachers were very engaged in our discussions around language and the use of AAVE as they had very strong opinions about this topic. At the beginning of the study, all of the teachers except for Carolyn had deficit type views about the use of AAVE because they believed that Standard English was correct and had not yet critically examined language in the context of history, society, and culture. After discussing James Gee's quote, which is referenced in the previous section, Cori described some of the tension she had with code switching:

It's just the whole idea of code-switching and our children being able to do that. And we come in and speak Standard English and we see our children and they are not speaking it then we, well I get upset because that's not how you are supposed to speak and they don't know the difference. And I don't how to...I don't know what to do...and I know that it's a black cultural thing where we don't know. Well in any language there is a way you speak at home or how you speak when you are comfortable and it should not be how you speak in a professional setting (Day 2 of PD, July 16, 2013).

As Cori stated, the use of AAVE and understandings of it is something that she was still trying to figure out as it was something that other teachers were still in flux about. They were open to receive the notion that language is connected to identity, but at the same time, they held deeply ingrained beliefs about the use of Standard English due to their upbringing and experiences in school. We needed more than a couple of hours over a four-day period to address that topic and other topics related to CRP in a more in-depth manner.

Another outcome of the limited time was that the teachers did not collaboratively develop instructional plans as originally planned for the last day of the professional development. I decided to do more summarizing work on Friday to help teachers think more about their understandings and ideas for implementing CRP when school began. The teachers had time to peruse resources and share ideas, but there was no time to outline specific lessons related to the standards. When interviewing Monica and Cori after the professional development, I asked about what could have been done in the professional development to better support them. They both agreed more time to plan would help them understand practical classroom examples:

Natasha: What suggestions would you give to make this professional development more beneficial or effective?

Monica: I think that if we have more time to actually plan, or even look at, to look at it or to see how it looks in the -- the implementation of that.

Natasha: More of a real live example.

Monica: That would be beneficial.

Cori: Yeah, I think so too.

Monica: But yeah, I would like to see what it looks like in the classroom and how to plan, The goal to get it in the classroom.(Post PD Interview, July 30, 2013).

The lack of time in learning about language and other topics related to CRP as well as thinking about how to enact it in practice did inhibit the intervention from being as effective as it could have been.

Timing. The timing of the professional development was also an inhibiting factor for various reasons. It occurred two weeks prior to the teachers pre-planning week, which happened to be the same week that the assistant principal was notifying teachers of changes to their grade assignments. As mentioned in Chapter 4, every teacher that participated in the study and taught at Red Cove during the previous school year was moved to a different grade level. Subsequently, each teacher, except for Bridgette and Cori, was called out during the professional development sessions to speak with the assistant principal about their new grade assignment, missing out on parts of the professional development. Monica shared her concerns of learning of her new grade assignment and responsibilities that came along with it:

Remember, even though I have taught 4th grade before, I have never taught all of the subjects. So this year I had to learn new standards (CCGPS) for all subjects. So I could see if these were the same standards I use to teach but everything is new. This is my first time teaching reading in fourth grade, which is a big part of their scores (Final Interview, January 23, 2014).

The timing of the professional development was an inhibiting factor as teachers not only had to learn about CRP but also about new standards and resources for the new grade level they were teaching. Monica recalled how most of her energy was put into learning about 4th grade curriculum, making it difficult for her to focus as much on CRP.

Modifications to Phase Three: Four-Day Professional Development. At the end of the second day of the professional development, the teachers were asked to evaluate the professional

development up to that point by responding to the following questions; (a) What factors of the professional development have supported their learning? and (b) What could be done to better support your learning? Modifications were made to the professional development based on their statements. All of the teachers agreed that the discussions supported their learning but Carolyn suggested that we do another discussion protocol. Therefore, the modifications that were implemented were to build in more time for instructional planning and to engage teachers in different discussion protocols. An additional day for instructional planning was the modification that added to teacher's ability to implement CRP and is discussed below.

Additional Day for Instructional Planning. Time was already scheduled on the last day of the professional development for teachers to find resources that would assist them with their instructional planning. On the last day, each teacher read a different scenario of CRP in the classroom and had to share the significance of the activity and how they could implement something that related to their students. The teachers were also given time to peruse resource books with examples of CRP to share and use in their classroom. However, collaborative time for teachers to engage in instructional planning did not take place. Therefore, I decided to meet with them for an additional 2 hours during their preplanning period to collaboratively plan. The teachers wanted to take some time to think about their new grade assignments and bring ideas to the planning session. The week-long break between the professional development and the additional planning session gave the teachers time to think about how to infuse culturally relevant pedagogy with their new grade level standards. In the planning session, Monica brought resources for Daily 5 to share with the other teachers. They discussed ideas for getting to know the students at the beginning of the year. Drawing on some of the activities from the professional development sessions, Monica planned to introduce the "Where I'm From Poem" to her students, and Cori shared her

idea of having students decorate clipboards that reflected their lives and they would use them all year and would also be conversation starters to learn more about the students.

New Discussion Protocol. One teacher suggested that we do the Wagon Wheel protocol to respond to further discuss CRP and to share ideas. We did the Wagon Wheel protocol on Friday as the wrap up to our last day. Two of the teachers sat in chairs with their backs against each other. The other two teachers sat in chairs facing them. During the first rotation, both pairs responded to the following question: What tenets of CRP will guide your instruction? For the second rotation, the teachers had to share with each other how they planned to use CRP with their students.

Phase 4: Continuous Professional Development and Classroom Implementation of CRP

During this phase of the study, results of the iterative analysis informed modifications that were made to improve the intervention. I analyzed the data from the field notes of the classroom observations of the two focal teachers (Bridgette and Monica), informal conversations, and teacher debriefs to understand what factors enhance or inhibit teachers' implementation of CRP in the classroom and what modifications need to be made to better support them. Due to the nature of the professional development being teacher centered, decisions made during the continuous support were collaborative. The teachers were given suggestions but the final decision of what to implement was ultimately their own (Reinking & Bradley, 2000). Figure 5.1 below describes what will be presented in the following section: the focal teachers' goals for implementing CRP, inhibiting factors, modifications, and enhancing factors that comprised their experiences as they sought to implement culturally relevant literacy instruction. The enhancing factors will be discussed last for both teachers to reduce redundancy as shared experiences in the teacher debrief sessions serve as data sources for both focal teachers.

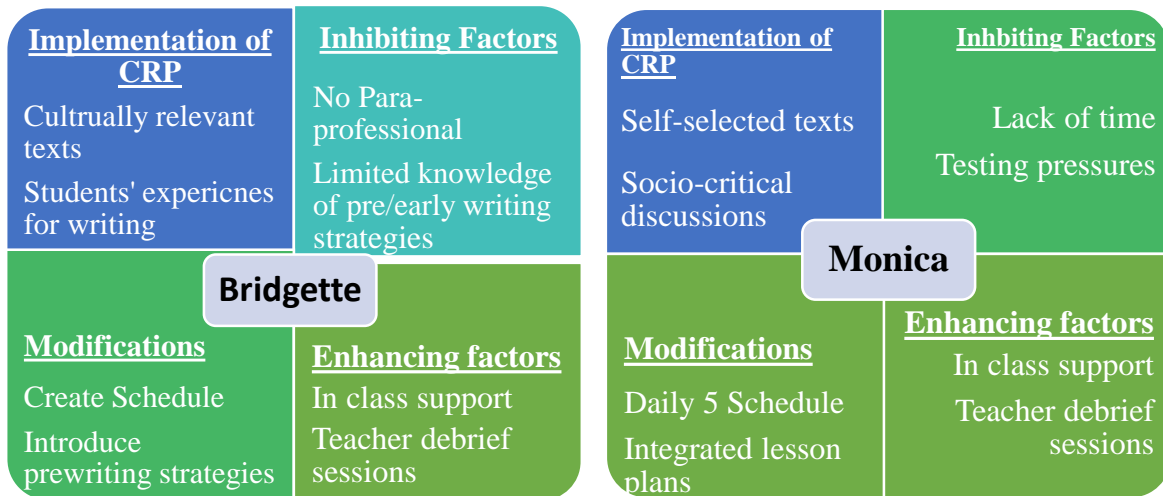


Figure 1: Focal Teachers' Implementation of CRP

Bridgette's implementation of CRP. After the four-day professional development session, Bridgette wanted to use more culturally relevant texts with her kindergarten students. When teaching first grade in previous years, she had used texts that related to her students' lives, but she wanted to be more intentional about making connections between the texts and curriculum standards. She was somewhat concerned because she would have to learn a new curriculum and was not sure if her younger students would be able to have meaningful discussions around texts to support their learning. Now as a part of her instruction, she purposely selected books that she believed related to her students' experiences. An example of some of the texts she used were *Shouting* (Thomas, 2007), *Shoes Like Miss Alice's* (Johnson, 1995), *Pigeon Finds a Hotdog* (Willem, 2004), and *Wolf* (Bloom, 1999).

To illustrate, Bridgette often began her literacy time by asking students to reflect on the experiences they just had in their exploratory class (e.g., music, art, PE). A few students would be selected to share. She then began to read aloud a pre-selected story. Bridgette started story time by showing students the front cover and telling them the title of the story. She would tell

then name of the author and the illustrator and ask what each person did to make the book. She usually asked the students where they would look in the library to find the book. The students would shout out the first letter of the author's last name indicating the section in the section of the library they would go to.

Bridgette read stories to her students that they could connect with. During one observation (Classroom Observation, August, 27, 2013), she read the story *The Pigeon Finds the Hotdog* (Willems, 2004). This story is about a pigeon that finds a hotdog and does not want to share with a duckling that keeps asking questions about the hotdog. While she read Bridgette asked students to predict the next part of the story. They began to share stories about favorite foods and stories of family members and friends trying to eat their food and they did not want to share. One student stated that his baby brother wanted some of his Fruit Loops so he gave him some. Another student stated her mom asked for a bite of her pizza and when Bridgette asked if she gave her some, the student shook her head vigorously and said, "No!" Everyone started laughing. This story engaged the students and they were able to make personal connections with the text to share with the class.

In a later observation (Classroom Observation, September 13, 2013) Bridgette read the story *Shouting* (Thomas, 2007). This book depicted a young African American girl's experience in church with her mother. Bridgette encourages students to talk, especially about their experiences. She asks the students questions while she reads and allows for call out, but makes sure that students that raise their hands are acknowledged. Bridgette has a firm demeanor and is consistent with behavioral expectations and maintains an orderly class even during discussion time. The following is an excerpt of her reading the story *Shouting* (Thomas, 2006):

Bridgette: The author is Joyce Carol Thomas. So if you want to check this out what letter will you look for when you go to the library?

Several students: T!

Bridgette: The illustrator is Annie Lee. Ooh, she is one of my favorite artists!

Student 1: When I saw a church their windows were like that too

Student 2: I liked how she did that. She drew the pictures.

Bridgette: (She slowly flips through the pages of the book) Look at the people in her pictures. She left what off?

Students: Their eyes, nose, mouth....

Student 3: Why she did that?

Bridgette: Why did she do that?

Several students guessed: She forgot. She was doing something else. She didn't want to. She was writing the book at night and went to sleep K They can't see.

Student: She likes her people that way.

Bridgette: I think so too, I think she likes her people that way. It's up to you to decide what the people look like.

As Bridgette read the story, she allowed a lot of time for discussion as the story and discussion lasted about 45 minutes. Students made connections to their experiences at church and what they did with their families on Sunday. Bridgette made connections and asked questions as she read the story. "This reminds me of my church where I grew up." "Who is that standing there?" "What is the pastor doing?" "Who wears hats?" "Not many wear those [gloves]. What are they?" She asked a lot of questions about pictures while reading to help students understand the story. This type of question and answering did not take away from the story but enhanced it,

making it engaging and interesting for the students. Students were interested in the seats and handheld fans, because many of them did not what they were. One question that she asked was about the dad that was not in the story. “Where is he?” she asked her class. She called on students to answer:

Student 1: Work.

Student 2: Mama and Daddy may have broke up.

Bridgette: Where does he live?

Student 3: On the street.

Student 4: With his sister.

Student 5: At the hotel.

Student 6: In the woods.

Student 7: Walmart.

Bridgette: Yes. It’s possible that he can be at any of those places (Classroom Observation, September 10, 2013).

As Bridgette continues to read, the students still raise their hands to talk about where daddy lives. “Ya’ll can’t get past that question”, she remarks. Later, she shared that students should feel comfortable enough to share but still talking about such personal things such as daddy not being around makes her uncomfortable.

At one point in while she was reading the story, a student continued to shout out. Bridgette told him in a calm, firm voice, “You’re being rude to me, I don’t like that. I sat and listened to you but you are not doing the same.” After the story, Bridgette passed out journal paper, and asked the students to draw a picture of their favorite part of the story.

As part of her classroom instruction, Bridgette selected stories that were relevant to students and their experiences. Although *Pigeon Finds a Hotdog* would not be considered a multicultural text, the students enjoyed the story and connected to the “sharing food” experience. *Shouting* (Thomas, 2006) was a book that her students could connect with because many of them experienced church on Sunday with family members. During the first teacher debrief, Bridgette admits that she thought she might get in trouble for reading that book due to its religious content although it did connecting shouting in church to African cultural traditions. However, I did not observe Bridgette building upon these class discussions to further increase academic achievement. After story time, the students would go to their tables to work on a phonics sheet or draw about the story, without conferencing or implementing strategies to support writing development. I spoke to Bridgette about how she could use relevant texts to increase her students’ writing development.

Inhibiting factors. Bridgette wanted her students to write in their journals at least two to three times per week, but was hesitant about her writing instruction because she did not have the support of a paraprofessional and was not confident in her ability to support the early writing development of her kindergarteners. After teaching first grade for fifteen years, Bridgette’s experience with teaching writing was working with students who could for the most part write anywhere from short to complex sentences. She had very little experience supporting students’ writing at the pre and early writing stage, which was the case for many of her kindergarten students. Therefore, Bridgette’s lack of experience with writing development at this level was an inhibiting factor to implementing culturally relevant practices around writing.

The lack of assistance in teaching her kindergarten students was also an inhibiting factor. At Red Cove, the kindergarten teachers no longer had a paraprofessional in the classroom with

them all day. Four years ago, the school lost kindergarten paraprofessionals due to funding, leaving only one paraprofessional to rotate to all of the kindergarten classrooms. During our conversations at the beginning of the school year, Bridgette stated how she was excited that the paraprofessional assigned to kindergarten would begin her rotations soon. She shared her excitement with me after her first observation in an informal discussion:

Natasha: So when is Mrs. Lane starting?

Bridgette: I'm not sure, but I believe next week. That will be exciting to have her. At least for one day she can help with writing.

Natasha: Yes, she is so good. I remember when we used to write with our kindergarten students, and Mrs. Lane would complain how long it would take, nearly the entire morning, but she was so happy when she saw the results! It was a lot of work and it took a long time, but finally, you know?

Bridgette: Yes, she will help me a lot (Informal conversation, August 27, 2013).

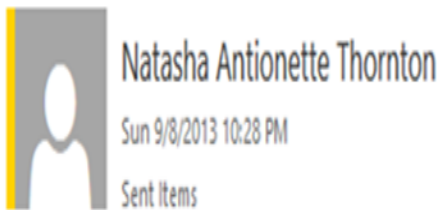
However, during the first month of the school year, the paraprofessional was assigned to work in the front office to help with registration and front office duties. Within that month, one of the kindergarten teachers quit and a long-term substitute was put into that classroom. The paraprofessional was then assigned to assist the substitute every day. A month later, a new kindergarten teacher was hired and the paraprofessional was told to stay with the teacher. Therefore, neither Bridgette nor any of the other kindergarten teachers received any assistance throughout the year.

During my second observation, Bridgette showed me a stack of journal papers that her students had written the day before when they responded to the book *Shoes Like Ms. Alice* (Johnson, 1995). Bridgette stated, "I'm nervous about this writing Thornton! I really don't know how

to get them past this. Some of my students can write a few words, but I got some that can barely write their names” (Informal Conversation, September 10, 2013). Bridgette did not refrain from reading culturally relevant texts but building on the student’s dialogue around these texts and connecting to writing instruction was challenging for her. A combination of lack of expertise on writing instruction for young learners and lack of staff support inhibited her from supporting her students’ writing development in culturally relevant ways.

Modification to include meaningful writing instruction. Bridgette wanted to offer her students a literacy curriculum that was relevant to their experiences and lives. Modifying her approach to teaching writing became the focal point of the continuous professional development. We developed a schedule for writing instruction that made Bridgette feel more comfortable despite her lack of assistance. I also shared strategies on how to support early writing development and modeled a writing lesson for her. This support gave her the confidence to engage her students in journal writing without the assistance of a paraprofessional.

First, we decided that the students would write at least four days a week. Instead of attempting to conference with each student every day, we decided that she would develop a schedule where she would conference 1-2 times per week, per student. This change enabled Bridgette to not rush through each student, but to take careful notes of where each student was in the writing process. Next, through email, (see Figure 2), I suggested a plan that she could implement to build onto the connections that students were already making during story time. We discussed that text selection was key to supporting students’ interest and motivation in writing when they could write about personal experiences that were presented in the stories that were read and discussed in class. I also suggested strategies that she could use with her beginning writers that included the drawing and labeling of ideas.



mark as unread

Here are some ideas about writing!!!

With CRP we build on what students know and can do (their experience and knowledge). They “know” their experiences with their families.....and in terms of writing they can talk and draw about their experiences which can be built upon to support writing development.

I’m thinking we can begin with students telling their stories, then drawing their stories, labeling their stories and leading into more complex writing.

Here are some things that we can do within the next 6 weeks:

1. 1. When reading your books about families, tell students that authors write words to tell stories but they also use pictures. Go back through the book after you’ve read it and have students discuss the drawings that are used to tell the stories as well. Allow students to share stories about their families.

Have the students go back to their tables and draw pictures about their families. Have a few students come back to the carpet and have some the students tell their stories based on their drawings.

2. 2. As you read stories to students about families, allow students to talk about their families and things that they do with their families. You can have students bring in item(s) that represent their families or things they do with their families.

Do a shared writing with the students: On chart paper (you can do one chart paper based on the tables where the students sit) write the student’s name, draw picture of what they brought, and write a few words/sentence that they say about each picture (see chart I sent you via text message). Allow students to read/say what you wrote.

Have the students draw a picture about their item, they can use some of the words on the chart paper to label their drawings.

3. 3. As you all discuss families create a chart of family words: mother, father, etc. and draw pictures next to the words.

4. 4. While students tell stories about their families take note of places that they discuss: churches, mall, etc and we can take pictures of those places and bring them in when you all talk about communities and community helpers. The students can draw and label stories that they write about their families and communities.

Let me know what you think. I will be at [redacted] Tues-Thurs this week.

Figure 2 Email to Bridgette with Ideas for Writing

During the next observation, Bridgette read the story *Wolf* (Bloom, 1999) and asked if I would model a lesson to start the students on their journal writing. I asked the students to share their favorite part of the story. I drew picture words and labels to help them with writing words. I asked students to help me to sound out the words and told them this is what they will do when they write words that may not be written anywhere else in the room. They began on their journals and Bridgette was pleased to see them label pictures as they drew about their favorite part of the story. This was one strategy that Bridgette liked and began to increase the number of pictures and words that she and her students determined would be good for their writing. For example, during a discussion following the book *Shouting* (Thomas, 2006), one student shared that his uncle played the tambourine in church. Bridgette drew a stick person and tambourine and labeled both of these items. This strategy is designed to support early writing so that students can begin to link images with words.

Throughout the remainder of the study, Bridgette and her students created a word and picture list that filled up an entire dry erase board and she began word lists on a Word Document that she would display on her Promethean Board. The lists were grouped by different books they read and included color words, student names, number words, etc. Bridgette reviewed this list daily with students and during my last visit in December, they had over 100 words on their list. During writing time, the students would identify pictures and words to use for their journal writing. Her intentional connection to cultural relevancy supported their writing development and vocabulary knowledge.

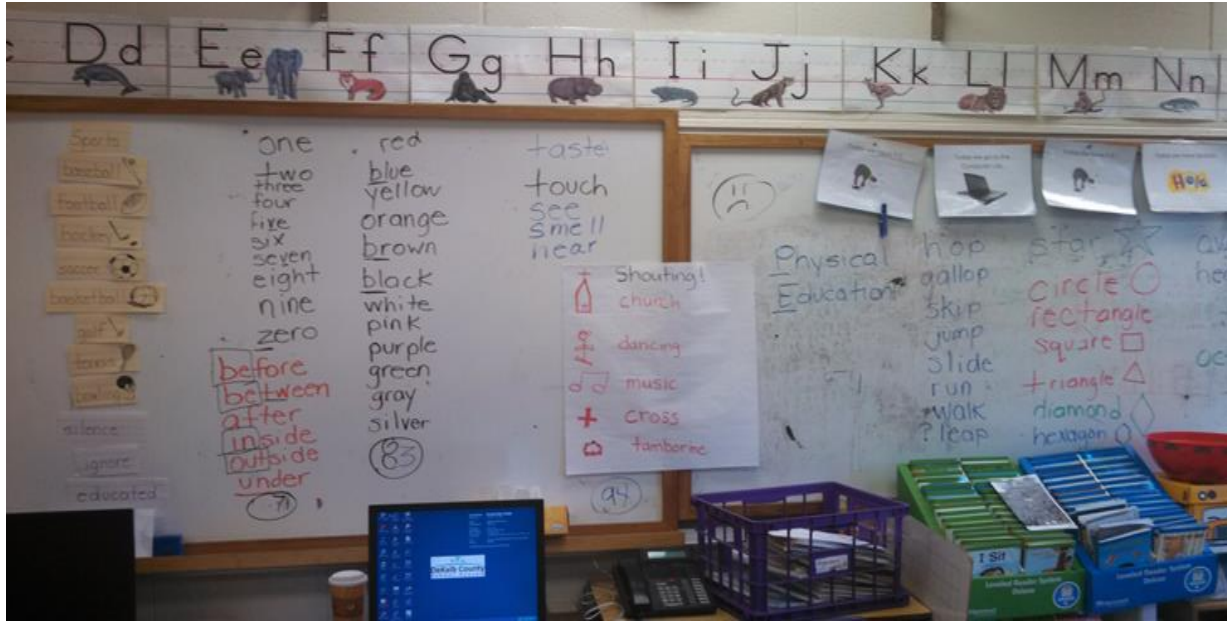


Figure 3: Bridgette's Word List

Monica's implementation of CRP. Monica's goal for CRP was to get to know her students better, beyond a surface level, so that she could implement reading instruction that was more relevant to their lives. She also wanted to increase her students' engagements with reading self-selected texts during their reading block. She began the school year with the students writing "Where I'm From" poems to foster a deeper understanding of her students and build a collective community of learners. She also gave the students a reading interest inventory to complete so that she could know what kinds of books they were interested in reading.

When I observed in Monica's class, students were completing worksheets. On my first visit (Classroom Observation, August, 29, 2013), I was unable to observe her reading block so I stayed for Science. The class was divided into two groups. Monica was working with a group of 20 students, while the co-teacher worked with seven. The worksheet covered the water cycle.

Monica discussed the diagram with the students and they labeled each part of the water cycle together. While they were going through each part of the cycle, she felt like her students need more help and she pulled up a website with the different parts of the water cycle to serve as a guide for students and displayed it on the smart board so that all students could see it. Once the students completed the activity, they were dismissed to their exploratory class. In our follow-up conversation, I asked how her reading activities were going. She stated that she started reading conferences so she could better choose literature that the students are interested in and more likely to read but did not get a chance to finish all students.

During the next observation of her reading block, Monica was working with the students on a comprehension worksheet from a test preparation workbook. On the smart board, she typed instructions for the students to read and to guide them through answering the questions. Once all the students had completed the worksheet she reviewed the answers with the students. At first she primarily guided the lesson by explaining the answers then she began to let the students explain their answers whether they were right and wrong. As she gave the students a bit more control in answering the questions, she let them know that it was okay if they did not do well and that the purpose was to learn how to think through the questions and responses to be able to choose the correct answer. Based on my observation notes and informal discussions, Monica's teaching was closely connected to teaching the standards in a traditional way. Her choice of worksheets provided alignment to the standards and an objective way to assess students' knowledge and progress.

Inhibiting factors. Monica desired a reading block where students had extended time to read and choices in the texts they read. She felt that by enabling students to read self-selected lit-

erature on their independent reading levels, rather than the assigned stories from the basal anthology, students would be more motivated and engaged in the reading process. She also reflected on the ideas from the professional development sessions about connecting texts with students' lives and felt they would be able to comprehend the material using the skills she taught them. The flexibility and openness of this structure, however, created a tension for Monica. She was unsure of how to manage implementing more culturally relevant literacy instruction and meeting the requirements of the English/Language Arts standards. Monica wanted to keep her students on track with the reading standards. During a teacher debrief session she shares her difficulty in balancing standards, time, and culturally relevant literacy instruction.

Natasha: Do you feel pressure with time?

Monica: I do, I feel like, I feel like

Bridgette: Like you don't have time for the good stuff.

Monica: Yeah, I feel like my job is not just to teach academics but to teach life skills, and those kinds of things and often times my life skills lesson are on the fly and that I can't actually take time because... For instance, I was out yesterday, I come back today so I'm behind in my centers so I'm rushing trying to get stuff done so how dare I take time to talk to you about your Ebonics? I just feel like with that my schedule is so boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, especially in reading. Now in Math I feel like have bit more wiggle room there, but we only have 30 minutes for Science and Social Studies so if I miss something for today that throws everything off for the rest of the week.

Natasha: So Monica, when you talk about your schedule you talk about time for this and that. So you try to stick to your schedule?

Monica: I do try to stick as closely to the schedule as I possibly can.

Natasha: Why? You just mentioned reading, and I know you said that reading and writing are, I know you say that reading is important. So if you feel like you need to do other things....okay do you stick to the schedule because....what causes that adherence to the schedule because I know some teachers do what they want to do?

Monica: Standards. Standards. To make sure I'm teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching when I'm supposed to be teaching it. Especially like right now because my team is behind, and I'm talking about weeks behind. For me its like... (Teacher Debrief Session, October 10, 2013).

This pressure around testing and standards proved to be an inhibiting factor for Monica. Although she believed that sustained reading time was important, she would sometimes shorten this portion of her reading block leaving only a few minutes for students to read independently or to someone else. Often grammar exercises related to the standards would dominate the time or students would move into their Social Studies work to stay on a pre-determined schedule. For Monica, it was important for her to keep her lessons for each subject within the time allowed by her classroom schedule that was developed by the schools' administration. For example, once she started the Daily 5 schedule, she would cut students' reading time short just to stay on track with time and not go over into her social studies block. She also felt that if she taught the standards in the allotted time given, she would be able to cover all of the standards, better preparing her students for the end-of-year standardized test. Due to the pressures from the test, Monica sometimes viewed CRP as veering away from the standards and felt more comfortable with teaching what she knows. In her final interview, she elaborates on these inhibiting factors:

I definitely see time and trying to get to all of the standards as reasons why I would cut the reading time short during the Daily 5, and I know time is a constraint when it comes

to culturally relevant pedagogy. It's time in planning too, because I do not put the item into it as I should to intentionally think of culturally relevant plans. It's easier to pull the textbook and say read this and then you know that standard is cover. Now I don't mind doing things that directly connect to what I am teaching. Like we are on government right now in Social Studies and I am definitely going to talk about the Jordan Davis case with them. It may not be a whole lesson, but I definitely think its important to discuss this as it relate to the justice part of government (Final Interview, January 23, 2014).

Lack of time and testing pressures were issues for Monica when it came to her implementation of CRP unless she saw a direct link to the standards. Modifications to support her in implementing CRP are addressed below.

Modifications for Monica's implementation of CRP. There were two modifications implemented to support Monica with CRP. When asked what she felt she needed the most support in to facilitate more culturally relevant literacy instruction, Monica replied that she wanted help in building her reading block around the Daily 5 structure so that her students would have multiple opportunities to read and respond to text and so she could work with them in small groups on comprehension, word work, and fluency. I also suggested that we consider ways to more effectively integrate her reading and social studies content. Together, we created a schedule based on the Daily 5 structure and developed a socio-critical lesson plan with which she integrated a Reading and Social Studies lesson. These modifications would allow her to provide her students multiple engagements with self-selected texts and provide a platform to teach from a critical stance while integrating reading and social studies standards.

Daily 5 provides a structure for independent reading, partner reading, and small group instruction. We created a schedule where the students would rotate 3 times a day for two days

through the following centers: read to themselves, read to someone else, work on writing, small comprehension group with Monica, or a small fluency group with the co-teacher. During our planning, I suggested she use grade level texts also to model reading and support students in vocabulary development. At the time of observations, she wanted all students to be involved in reading comfortably and did not feel that students would make the most of the time if they were struggling with their text. She designated time outside of Daily 5 for that.

Rotation	Center		
Rotation #1	Read to Self Library Books	Group 5	Group 3
Rotation #2	Read to Someone Letters from a	Group 4	Group 1
Rotation #3	Work on Writing Opinion Writing		Group 2

Group #1	Group #2	Group #3	Group #4	Group #5
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Figure 4: Monica's Daily 5 Rotation Schedule

We also designed a lesson on Christopher Columbus. The social studies standards addressed explorers, and Columbus was one of the explorers. We decided to use various texts about Columbus and have the students read and respond during a 2-hour block that combined the allotted time for Reading and Social Studies. During the first lesson, students completed a KWL chart on explorers. They were prompted to provide details of what they knew, wanted to know, and what they wanted to learn about explorers. During this discussion, some students stated that they knew that Columbus discovered America, and other students stated that he did not discover

America. Monica asked the students how they knew about Columbus. One student spoke up and said, “Some people think he discovered American but he didn’t.” When other students disagreed he said, “No he didn’t. Indians were there”.

As the students prepared to leave for their exploratory class, Monica wrapped up the lesson:

Some people say he discovered America, some say he didn’t, and some of us do not know. We are going to look at different perspectives of what actually happened and we can decide who discovered America. If we say he didn’t, then we’ll find out who is printing these stories that are not true. Then you are going to use your own brain about what you think really happened (Classroom Observation, September 19, 2013).

Following this introductory activity, the students were supposed to read various texts during the block. Monica read a book that offered the perspective of the Taino Indians that were living in San Salvador when Columbus claimed it for Spain. Students read and discussed a textbook passage from a critical perspective by asking more critical questions. These small moves, however, did not provide the full integration that Monica had planned and envisioned. However, it was not implemented as planned because the lessons were taking longer than plan and she was pushed for time to proceed to the next topic in Social Studies.

While reading and social studies were not integrated as planned, Monica began to have more critical discussions with her students on various topics that were currently in the news and impacting the students’ lives. She talked about the government shutdown and two high-profile cases that centered on race. Monica noticed that her students talked a little bit more and she felt she had the opportunity to get to know her students better. She believed that since these discussions did not necessarily warrant right or wrong answers, but were based on their beliefs and experiences, she saw increased engagements in class discussions.

Enhancing factors for Bridgette and Monica. Bridgette and Monica identified the ongoing support of the professional development as a critical enhancing factor as they began to infuse more culturally relevant practices in their teaching.

In-class support. Modeling of new ideas and strategies was an important factor for the two focal teachers. Modeling provided teachers with images of how the strategy/lesson works “in the moment” and “with my students.” The modeling of how to initiate journal writing with emergent writers was helpful to Bridgette. She wanted students to see and read on a daily basis the words they used in their journals. Bridgette began a word/picture list around the room as students learned new words in the books that she read to them. One of the first lists she and class wrote together was a students’ name list since students often included classmates in their oral and written stories. Bridgette and her students created a list of words from the book *Shouting* (Thomas, 2006) and animal names after reading *Head to Toe* (Carle, 1997). As students read from the animal wordlist, Bridgette said, “we need to draw pictures by the animal words to help us remember them” (Classroom Observation, September 18, 2013).

During the observations that followed, the word/picture list that Bridgette started on the board had grown. With each book she read, she and the students added words and pictures to the board, and they read them every day. The various word/picture lists provided students with a resource to use as they wrote. Once she saw her students being able to meet her expectations, she continued to push them toward higher levels of academic achievement. She was able to better understand aspects of early instruction to support her students’ writing development.

As Bridgette talked about the intervention, she notes the importance of the in-class support:

Bridgette: All of those things, different strategies that helped me to implement CRP—the collaboration—“Have you thought about this?” “What if we add this?” Like that story

Shouting. I never would have thought to put the words with the pictures. I think the fact that we started this summer, 'cause some of that stuff didn't make sense. But it helped that you came in and brought some of that research to life. [Pause] I'm trying to remember the girl from the Trayvon Martin trial. I never thought we would have a similar conversation with 5 year olds. You sit in these in-services, you read and do research and you have to be apply it, but when you have the little people in front of you, that's what makes a difference. But the fact you were able to come and reinforce really helped.

Natasha: If I had not had come in, what would have that component of your literacy instruction would have looked like.

Bridgette: I really think I would have gone back to what was comfortable. I really don't think I would have pushed myself or tried as many new things if I would not have had the support of you coming in. You know how you sit in in-service and you got back to class but you have questions and no one to ask....I think that helped a lot (Final Interview, January 21, 2014).

Monica also noted the importance of the in class support:

You coming in was what, what helped me the most. I mean, the planning together and ideas about reading and writing and encouragement to help me students to be more critical with how they think about stuff was extremely helpful. Its easy just to go to the teacher's edition and do what it says, but with you pushing me to find more resources and you coming in with different, really helped a lot. You know just doing things I wouldn't normally do because with you coming in reminded me to look for other books, other perspectives to share with my students (Final Interview, January 23, 2014).

Teacher debrief sessions. The teacher debrief sessions, where participating teachers had opportunities to come together to reflect on CRP implementation, became an important venue for noting changes and shifts in practice. Teachers found that the debriefing sessions provided a space for collaboration and sharing of ideas that they could use in their classrooms. For example, Carolyn was not able to make it to the first debrief, but she asked that I share a picture book with the group that she was interested in. I shared it during our first debrief session, and Bridgette loved it and eventually ordered for herself. Also, Cori would often share how she would dedicate time to talk to her students in the mornings about what is happening in their lives. Monica then decided to allow her students write about their weekends every Monday for morning work as a way to get to know her students better. This space for support was key to their thinking about culturally relevant pedagogy in practice. Monica stated, “The collaboration in the debriefs helped me to get ideas from other teachers. So the debriefing helped give me ideas and new ways of looking and implementing CRP” (Final Interview, January 23, 2014).

During the second debrief session, Bridgette shares with the other teachers a conversation she had with her kindergarten students around the topic of AAVE. Conversations like that one that follows allowed teachers to share and reflect on their experiences and encouraged them to continue taking those necessary steps to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of their students:

Bridgette: And something that we talk about this summer, the girl that got up there, ya’ll remember the girl we talked about this summer, the girl from the Trayvon Martin trial? We had a long discussion about her.

Natasha: Oh yeah, umm I can’t remember her name.

Cori: You’re talking about one of your students?

Bridgette: No...well she reminded me of my students by the way she talks.

Monica: No...the girl from Trayvon trial, the girl on the stand

Cori: Oh..yeah yeah

Natasha: Oh yeah, Rachel, Rachel Jeantel.

Monica: Yeah that's it. So one of my students, one of my girls said something. We were talking about something and she said, "What's this all up in here?"

Monica: One of your kids said that?

Bridgette: Yes, and so later, we were doing something else and another student, one of my boys said, "Ain't nobody got time for that!" So I said okay we have to have a conversation about this and when to talk like that and when not to talk like that. So I found this book and I shared this story (holds up book), "*She Come Bringing me that little baby boy*" and the kids loved it, because of the same reason...

Cori: Because of the language?

Bridgette: Yes...and I explained to them there is a time to talk like this and there is nothing wrong with it and I even talk that. You'll hear me talk like that and I said "Aint nobody got time for that!" I said it for the rest of the day!

[*Laughter*]

Cori: So when you had the discussion about the time and place, what was the end result? Did they understand it? I know its kindergarten, so did they understand? Okay I have two parts: Did they understand what you said and based on that conversation have you created a time where they can speak those ways?

Bridgette: One of our vocabulary words is educated. So that's what I talked to them about, when to sound educated, when to talk educated and when to talkand I think one of my kids yelled out, "Ghetto!". [Interruption from announcement on the intercom].

So to answer your question yes there is a time. When we are in class working you should sound educated, but when you are at centers playing you can talk like that with your friends if you want too but there is a time and a place.

Cori: Oh I like that. That's really good.

Monica: It must be really nice to have time to do things like that.

Bridgette: It is nice, that's good thing about kindergarten, you do have time for.....

Cori: I think for certain things though I make time.

Monica: Of course, of course.

Natasha: Like what?

Cori: Stuff like that. So my students always talk over each other like they have to all talk at the same time, it never fails, that everyone is speaking when others are speaking. So at least 5 – 10 minutes, once a day, we talk about how our words are important. And I tell them, if you speak while someone else is speaking then you don't value what it is that you are saying words. That's just 5 minutes of the day but we take time for that.

Monica: I like how you said they don't value what they're saying instead of they don't value what others are saying!

Bridgette: Oh see, I thought you made a mistake.

Cori: No see because when I'm speaking...

Monica: Because if you valued what you were saying you wouldn't talk while someone else was talking.

Bridgette: Ohh...

Cori: So when I speak I say things like "I have something important to say, so I'll wait until you are finished, because my words are important".

[Interruption from announcement over the intercom]

Natasha: Okay we are going to wrap up so you all can eat before your meeting. But I want to go back to what you said. You said that you are glad that you have the time for that.

Monica: Yeah. I feel like, not to say there are not teachable moments in my class and that I don't take advantage of them, but just not all time.

Natasha: Do you feel pressure with time?

Monica: I do, I feel like, I feel like

Bridgette: Like you don't have time for the good stuff.

Monica: Yeah, I feel like my job is not just to teach academics but to teach life skills, and those kinds of things and often times my life skills lesson are on the fly and that I can't actually take time because... For instance, I was out yesterday, I come back today so I'm behind in my centers so I'm rushing trying to get stuff done so how dare I take time to talk to you about your Ebonics? I just feel like with that my schedule is so boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, especially in reading. Now in Math I feel like have bit more wiggle room there, but we only have 30 minutes for Science and Social Studies so if I miss something for today that throws everything off for the rest of the week.

Natasha: So Monica, when you talk about your schedule you talk about time for this and that so you try to stick to your schedule?

Monica: I do try to stick as closely to the schedule as I possibly can.

Natasha: Why? You just mentioned reading, and I know you said that reading and writing are, I know you say that reading is important. So if you feel like you need to do other

things...okay do you stick to the schedule because...what causes that adherence to the schedule because I know some teachers do what they want to do?

Monica: Standards. Standards. To make sure I'm teaching what I'm supposed to be teaching when I'm supposed to be teaching it. Especially like right now because my team is behind, and I'm talking about weeks behind. For me it's like...

Natasha: So without that constraint of time, and other constraints like standards...what would your teaching look like?

Monica: I would probably definitely incorporate more life skills, and do things, I want to have these kinds conversations I would want to talk to them about the way they speak and teach them a time and place for this.....

Natasha: Ok can you not connect those kinds of things to reading, science, social studies?

Monica: Yes, I could but I don't know that I think that far ahead to be able to make connections because now I'm looking at standards. I'm not thinking about when I can talk to them about their language because the standards don't say that. Because, well with grammar I can do it. Last week I was telling my students how I was teaching them these grammar skills not just so they can complete an assignment but because that is the way they need to speak, but I didn't start a conversation with them about their language.

Natasha: I'm just pushing you to think about this because I know you are interested in having more critical-like conversations with your students. I'm pushing you to connect whatever the next unit that you teach themes related to life skills, and I think you will be more satisfied as a teacher. That's just what I'm thinking...(Teacher Debrief Session, October 10, 2013).

Cori also gave Monica suggestions for books that she used with her students during reading that related to Social Studies content called *Begging for Change* (2003) and *Money Hungry* (2001) both written by Sharon Flake. The debriefs provided a space where the teachers could share what they were thinking and wondering about. It also allowed them to share their understandings of CRP through the talk of everyday classroom experiences.

This perspective was in contrast to what the teachers experienced with their grade level colleagues not engaged in the intervention. Bridgette and Monica both found that their peers on their grade levels were not as receptive to learning about CRP for various reasons. Monica believed that with everything else the teachers had to do, CRP was just another thing to add on to everything else (Final Interview, January 23, 2014).

Summary

In this chapter, I have reported the results of the qualitative data that was analyzed and informed the modifications to the intervention. The intervention was modified during the four professional development sessions to better promote teacher's understandings of CRP and modified during the in class support phase to better support teachers' implementation of CRP. The results suggest that the primary enhancing factors of the intervention were intellectual engagement, honest dialogue, and continuous support from the researcher. These aspects of the professional development and the modifications made to the intervention were identified as advancing the pedagogical goal. Factors that inhibited the professional development were the lack of time available for teachers in that particular learning space as well as contextual constraints in the classroom as a result of standards-driven and high-stakes testing obligations. In Chapter Six, a

holistic understanding of the results will be discussed in relation to additional factors that impacted shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices and how the change process varied for the focal teachers. Implications for instructional practices and further research will also be addressed.

6 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

The purpose of this formative experiment was to support teachers in understanding and implementing culturally relevant pedagogy. Understanding characteristics of professional development that are integral in developing teachers' understanding and implementation of CRP was the impetus for this investigation. Professional development that was teacher-centered, collaborative, and ongoing served as the study's intervention. Ongoing analysis of the implementation of the intervention revealed factors that enhanced or inhibited teachers' understandings of CRP as well as factors that impacted teachers' implementation of CRP during literacy instruction.

In addition to the results that were reported in Chapter 4, a retrospective analysis was completed to reveal supportable assertions, or claims justified by data, that may reaffirm existing theory, refine that theory, or generate new theory (Gravemeijer & Cobb, 2006). For this study retrospective analysis revealed the kinds of shifts teachers made in their conceptual understandings and pedagogical practices around CRP when engaged in professional development activities. These shifts were analyzed through a sociocultural and critical lens. The analysis will highlight the social nature of the learning process within the context of the teachers' personal and professional experiences and examine teachers' beliefs and practices through the lenses of critical pedagogy and critical race theory..

The remainder of this section discusses three assertions that emerged from the retrospective analysis: (a) there are critical elements of professional development that support shifts in beliefs (b) shifts vary by individual, and (c) the shifting process is multifaceted, nonlinear. The first assertion that emerged was that theoretical knowledge development, critical self-reflection, collaboration, and longevity are critical for professional development to support shifts in beliefs and practices. The second assertion is that the shift process is different for each individual. The

final assertion is shifting that occurs among teacher's beliefs and practices is a multifaceted and complex process. In this chapter, I discuss assertions from the retrospective analysis and the unintended consequences of the intervention. Next, I present the implications of study for teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers. I will then discuss the limitations of this study and conclude with recommendations for further research that explores teacher learning around CRP and its implementation in the classroom.

Assertions from Retrospective Analysis

Critical Elements of PD on CRP

Much of the existing literature on teacher professional development suggests that there are specific activities, processes, or programs that teachers experience in isolation to promote learning. However, there is limited literature on the “complex teaching and learning environments in which teachers live” (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 377). In other words, much like student learning, factors that impact teacher learning are contextual. In the following section, I describe elements of professional development which I found to be critical in promoting shifts in the teachers' beliefs in practices as these elements were rooted in the context of teachers' experience, knowledge, and work lives.

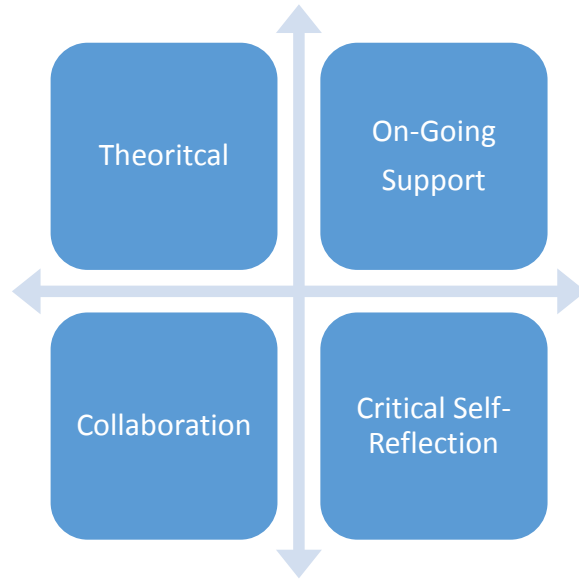


Figure 5: Critical Elements of Professional Development on CRP

Theoretical. In regards to teacher development, Gordon and O’Brien (2007) state “the significance of theory is in its ability to define the problems that teachers face, clarify their confusions, and suggest possible solutions to these problems” (p. xii). They continue by maintaining that theory should not be seen as a fixed set of knowledge to be applied directly to the classroom without adjustments but “viewed as guides to thought and instruments of interpretation” (p.xii). For this study, theory served as the basis for teaching about culturally relevant pedagogy. Since CRP is a theoretical framework, it must be taught as such and not as a set of strategies. As teachers read and discussed the tenets of CRP, they developed an understanding of CRP for themselves. They examined other theories that afforded them a different lens from which to view reasons for the lack of academic achievement for marginalized populations. The participants in this study believed that the theory that was presented to them was integral in developing their understandings of not only CRP, but also the need for it in schools. Monica stated that her professional development experience through participating in this study was different from other professional development experiences because she was able to think about and reflect on what she

believed about teaching and learning. Overall, she believed the experience was beneficial because she gained strategies that worked with her students and knowledge she could not easily forget.

Theoretical understandings are the core of beliefs when it comes to teaching and learning. Much of teacher professional development provides educators with “research-based” strategies to be implemented “as is” and with little knowledge of how to make adaptations as needed for their teaching styles and their students. Gordon and O’Brien (2007), maintain that a gap between theory and practice ensues when teachers are taught to “plug-in” theory as-is in their classrooms instead of it being a frame of reference for teaching. Therefore, teaching theory in professional development with an understanding of the contextual factors that impact teaching and learning helps to reverse the gap. The teachers in this study had the autonomy to develop an understanding of the theoretical constructs for themselves based on their previously constructed knowledge and experiences in their school and with the students they teach. Providing teachers only with specific strategies during professional development limits teachers in implementation, but teaching theory that lends itself to multiple strategies widens the possibilities for teachers and students in the context in which they teach and learn. Another integral component to professional development is critical self-reflection, an element essential to the implementation to CRP and essential to educators taking part within this study.

Critical self-reflection. Howard (2009) states that it is imperative for teachers to engage in critical self-reflection in order to be culturally relevant. The basis of CRP is theory and teachers’ belief systems must be aligned with the theoretical notions of CRP. The essence of CRP is that it uses “students’ culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.17). Therefore, in order for someone to be culturally

relevant, they have to believe that all cultures are worth maintaining, not just their own or mainstream culture. In order to examine the educational system and society critically, as CRP calls for, one must be able to critically examine their own beliefs. It is human nature to have biases and preconceived notions of others, but teachers must be aware of these because beliefs about students impact teaching and learning.

Critical self-examination allows teachers to examine their beliefs about their students, as well as examine the context of the school in which the work and the surrounding community in which their students live. During the study, the participants examined their beliefs about different races and cultures but also about their beliefs about the population of students they currently teach. They shared stories about students and parents about whom they had negative perceptions, but their perceptions changed once they interacted more closely with the student and their parents. Bridgette also recollected about how her mother-in-law valued education but did not attend parent-teacher conferences because she had 12 children to raise. Sharing these stories was critical for teachers to examine their beliefs since experiences are critical for impacting beliefs. They shared varying perspectives, pushing each other to be more open and accepting.

Collaboration. Collaboration has been widely researched in teacher learning and development (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Desimone, 2009; Richardson & Anders, 1994). The research on collaboration has given way to the developments of communities of practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991) such as teacher study groups and professional learning communities. For this study, collaboration served as a way for teachers to get insight into what others were thinking about in terms of a CRP. In the professional development sessions and the teacher debriefs, teachers shared their classroom experiences and developed ideas to implement culturally relevant classroom practices. Through collaboration, teachers constructed new knowledge beyond what

they may have constructed on their own. This is reminiscent of Vygotsky's (1934/1986) concept of zone of proximal development. Carolyn, as the more knowledgeable other, was able to support her colleagues in gaining new insights into how histories of racial inequality can impact students' sense of self and academic achievement. Collaboration brought the context of the setting into professional learning. Also, when teachers are engaged collaboratively during professional development, their beliefs and knowledge about the world are influenced by the beliefs and values of that community (Jonassen & Land, 2000). The teachers in this study were able to explore practice examples of CRP in the classroom at deeper levels by asking each other questions such as "What did they do then?" and "Why did you ask that?". Since culturally relevant pedagogy does not align with the mainstream beliefs of education, collaboration is key for teachers to continue to grow and support one another with culturally relevant practices. Therefore, professional development designed around CRP allowed teachers to collaborate and provide practical examples of CRP for students in the same school context. Another critical element in supporting teachers' conceptual knowledge and implementation of CRP is on-going support. The next section will outline the importance of such support for teacher development.

On-going support. Longevity has been shown to be essential to developing teachers' understandings and providing support for classroom implementation. This extended duration supports the sustained implementation of instructional innovations. The focal teachers were given feedback and support in implementing CRP in small steps during their literacy instruction. Monica and Bridgette indicated that on-going support was the most beneficial because instructional decisions were being made based on contextual factors that impacted the implementation of CRP.

Variances in Shifts

Retrospective analysis of the data revealed that the shifts in beliefs and practices among teachers varied. The data also revealed that the shifting processes of beliefs and practices are interwoven. It is likely to assume that a shift in belief would lead to a shift in practice, and so forth and so on, with each belief manifesting in practice. Conversely, the study revealed that shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices were messy and shifts in practices were impacted by numerous factors as beliefs were in a shifting process. Below I provide an overview of the focal teachers' shifts and changes throughout the study. I also highlight transformations in teachers' shifts in instructional practices and in beliefs and factors that impacted these changes.

Bridgette's shifts in beliefs and practices as related to CRP. Bridgette saw that connecting stories to students' personal lives helped to increase their interest and engagement in school. During her first interview, Bridgette spoke about her frustration with the disconnect she saw between the texts that were recommended to supplement the curriculum and the real lives of her students. She was also frustrated with the mandated pacing charts that had her continue to the next subject regardless of whether or not her students had learned concepts. Bridgette recalled that at the beginning of the school year, her students had to be assessed to determine their reading level as they started 1st grade. Her students had to read a story about bison, something they had little or no previous knowledge of, and this determined their reading placement for the 1st grade year. She stated "It's a conspiracy, and then you feel like, you want kids to enjoy school but how, exactly? They feel like a failure already." Bridgette would often tell herself "They can't write me up for teaching" as she tried to navigate the pacing charts and texts that had little relevance to her students' lives.

Bridgette knew that valuing students and relying on their experiences was essential to learning, but there also seemed to be a struggle with that belief. In her first interview, Bridgette stated that there was “a different caliber of students” at Red Cove when the Magnet Program was there. She specified that most of her current students lived in single-parent homes, lived with their grandparents, or were in foster care. She stated that most students in the past came to school on grade level but that had changed, since most students were not on grade level at the beginning of the school year. Therefore, Bridgette’s response implies that she does not view her current students as highly as she viewed students she taught in the past. Despite her indication of wanting to value students’ cultures and home life, she appears to experience a conflict in her thinking around the resourcefulness of the knowledge these students bring to school. This may be attributed to the idea that her status and experiences as a middle-class, African American educator and mother differed from the students she was currently teaching. Bridgette was cognizant about her beliefs of her students because, during the 4-day professional development, she placed a lot of effort into thinking about how to bridge her students’ out-of-school experiences with classroom learning. During her second interview, she acknowledged that she still had some work to do around perceptions of students.

Yes, I have shifted some. Hopefully I’m more open to how students’ backgrounds affect their performance in the classroom. I used to be more biased, I remember I used to judge single parents and kids by their hairstyles. I am aware of those biases now so I can separate how I feel about those kids, from what they really are before I get to know them
(Post PD Interview, July 30, 2013).

Her experiences in professional development made her more aware of her biases; therefore, Bridgette desired to plan culturally relevant lessons that reflected students’ lives and connected

to writing. She designed more culturally relevant lessons in her class, as outlined in chapter 5. She became intentional about connecting with the standards, allowing her students time to share their personal experiences in class, and in turn reframed this knowledge in her writing curriculum. After the intervention, she appears to not view her teaching in a contentious way, but is confident in what she is doing in her role as a professional to understand the system and how to navigate it in a more purposeful manner.

“When I see a standard, I think, what story can I choose, what I can read to make the students a part of this (as opposed just what related to their lives to make school more interested, but a direct connection of CRP to standards). I look at the standards to see what kind of text I can use to teach this and relate to the students. I intentionally look at standards where before I just read books that were relevant or interesting” (Final Interview, January 21, 2014).

Bridgette’s intentional focus on using students’ experiences and knowledge to support their literacy development and align it to the standards of mainstream curriculum is what Ladson-Billings (2009) calls “counter pedagogical” (p. 30). Critical race theory maintains that instructional strategies supported by mainstream curriculum suggest that African American students are deficient (Ladson-Billings, 1994, p.29). While bound by the state curriculum standards, Bridgette’s approach for selecting texts and writing instruction was based on her students’ experiences and knowledge.

Bridgette experienced shifts in beliefs and practices that enabled her to implement instruction that challenged the standardized culture of the public education system. However, in her final interview, she made a statement about having to separate children from their parents in order to teach them appropriately:

I have to remind myself and the hardest thing is to separate the child from their parent. It's not its Sonya's fault she's late every day. That is the battle I have daily. Some parents grate me the wrong way and I have to separate that from their child. Because if I don't get past my feelings for the parents or if I transfer that to the child, I'm not reaching that child. It's hard when you wouldn't make those decisions as a parent. I wouldn't have my child late 50 days, I wouldn't take my child out a week to go to Disney World, and all of these things have happened. And I'm trying and I think, "Really?" Changes how you teach that child, how you uh, how you, what you're willing to put up with (Final Interview, January 21, 2014).

Bridgette's shifting process does not reflect a starting point and an ending point, but rather complex, back-and-forth movement along a continuum of beliefs. At the beginning of the study, she believed that students' lives should be connected to the learning process but noted there was a certain caliber of students were more prepared for learning than others. As the study progressed, her instructional approaches were more inclusive of all students and their families as she built on students' personal experiences to support their writing develop. This shift in practice reflected a positive shift in beliefs that supposed all students—not just students of a certain caliber—have something valuable to contribute to the learning process. However, her beliefs were still conflicted in this area as she continued to have experiences with parents that did not align with what she valued. As Figure 6 shows, Bridgette's beliefs did not progress in a linear fashion from one point to another, but fluctuated as she had negative experiences with parents and positive instructional experiences with students that impacted her beliefs.

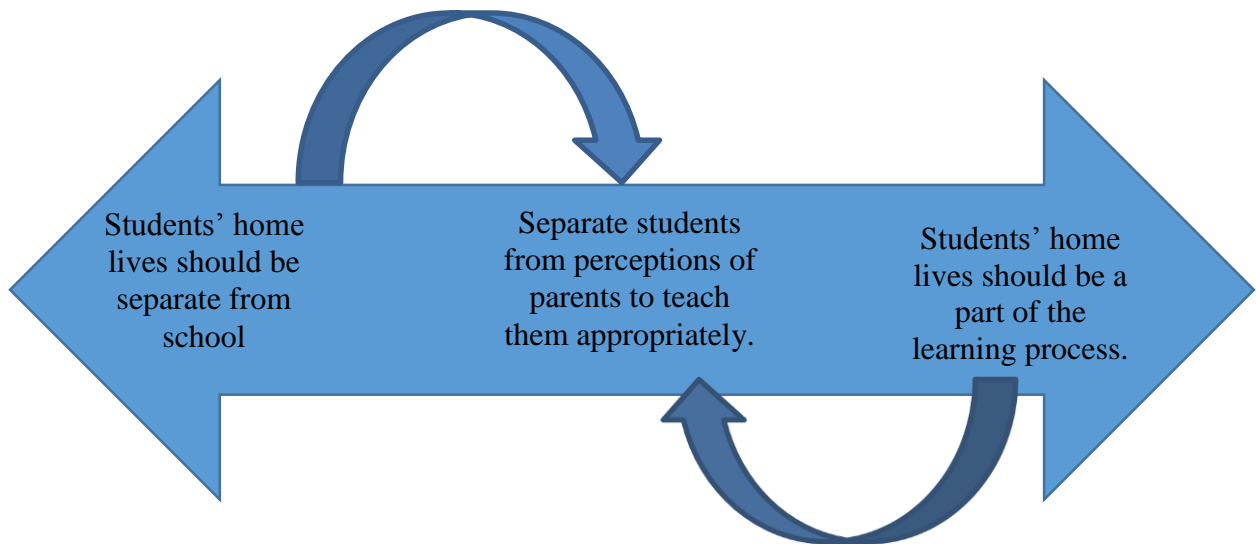


Figure 6: Bridgette's Shifts in Beliefs as Related to CRP.

Monica's shifts. At the beginning of the study, Monica believed that her students were not motivated to learn and did not do well in school because their parents had not instilled in them the importance of education. She felt that she had to work twice as hard to educate students because parents did not do their job. During the four-day professional development session, Monica expressed that she believed the “pull yourself up by the bootstrap” theory and meritocracy was valid, but would not work for her students. She indicated that all of them do not come to school on an equal footing ready to learn.

Monica attributed her students' lack of academic success to having parents who did not care about their child's education. She believed that if she dedicated time and energy to teaching the standards and preparing her students for the standardized tests, then she did her part. If the

students did not succeed academically, there was nothing else she could do. Research on attribution theories reveals that teachers' perceptions of students impact practice (Raths, 2001). For example, a teacher may attribute lack of parental support, students peer group, or community to a student who is failing as opposed to attributing it to the teaching. Therefore, adequate teaching and learning cannot take place because the lack of achievement is attributed to something that may not be the primary cause (Raths, 2001). Monica attributed her students' educational difficulties to their parents.

After the professional development, Monica's goal for CRP was to implement the Daily 5 reading structure to offer her students choice in reading materials so that reading instruction would become relevant and individualized. However, lack of time and adherence to the curriculum pacing chart caused Monica to struggle with implementing the Daily 5. She had difficulties with her ideal implementation of CRP because she saw it more as interrupting the teaching of the standards as opposed to enhancing the students learning the standards:

I know time is a constraint when it comes to culturally relevant pedagogy. Its time in planning too, because I do not put the time into it as I should to intentionally think of culturally relevant plans. It's easier to pull the textbook and say read this and then you know that standard is covered. Now I don't mind doing things that directly connect to what I am teaching, but it takes more time to plan for that too (Teacher Debrief Session, October 10, 2013).

In an effort to bridge CRP with standards, Monica began having more critical conversations with students on Social Studies concepts that were interesting and that they could connect to. When she began to look for multiple texts to increase students' reading in Social Studies, she began to notice bias in the curriculum and wanted to open these kinds of conversations up with

her 4th grade students. Examining curriculum and assignments for bias allows the teachers to intentionally bring in multiple perspectives and reconstruct discussions around topics that are more critical and inclusive (Kesler, 2011). During Monica's last interview, she referenced the discussions during our four-day professional development and debriefs about using topics that the students are learning about in class, saying, "I empathize with my students now that I have a more understanding of like how history effects their backgrounds and experience. So it is important to have these critical conversations with them" (Final Interview, January 23, 2014)

This shift from Monica shows that she began to see the need of the CRP as she searched for meaningful Social Studies texts, but found omissions and one-sided perspectives as predominate resources. According to Ladson-Billings (2009), critical race theory views this as a White Supremacist master script rooted in mainstream curriculum. This indicates that stories of African Americans are muted in curriculum, especially when they challenge white dominate culture. Monica began to involve her students in more critical conversations as she became aware of how historical contexts situated them and their families within the educational system and society. These shifts in practices were rooted in shifts in understandings.

In her final interview, Monica discussed one student's improvement in math relating to increased academic support from her grandparents. She revealed,

I had a student last year in 3rd grade and in math I would say she struggled, she was probably a C student but end up with a B average because she did her work, but was a C student as far as ability. She never learned her multiplication facts. We would have multiplication facts competitions and she could never get finished in the allotted amount of time. So, I had her again this year and her grandfather came in to get help with a particular math assignment. I told him she would continue to struggle if she didn't learn her

facts, this was like at the beginning of the school year. After about a month, her grade was boosting and I realized she had learned her facts. I made her my story, my testimony and I let her tell the students her story and how easy math has been since she learned her facts. Her confidence has gone up and this really makes me happy. I can't take credit, this is all on her and her family. I appreciate that because someone said something to her to make her learn. (Final Interview, January 23, 2014).

Monica was excited about this experience she had with her student and the child's grandparents. This experience confirms her initial beliefs that this kind of parental support is necessary for student achievement. She views students and families who exemplify this sort of hard work in a positive manner, but may be inclined to view families who do not more negatively. However, her beliefs have shifted, as she also believes that having critical conversations with her students increases their engagement in school and brings attention to inequities in society so that "their fight will be all the bit more" (Final Interview, January 23, 2014). Like Bridgette, Monica has shifted in areas where she sees a direct impact on students' engagement and motivation. Also like Bridgette, her shifts in beliefs and practices do not reflect a starting and ending point, but represent a progression toward a more culturally relevant beliefs and practices (see Figure 7).

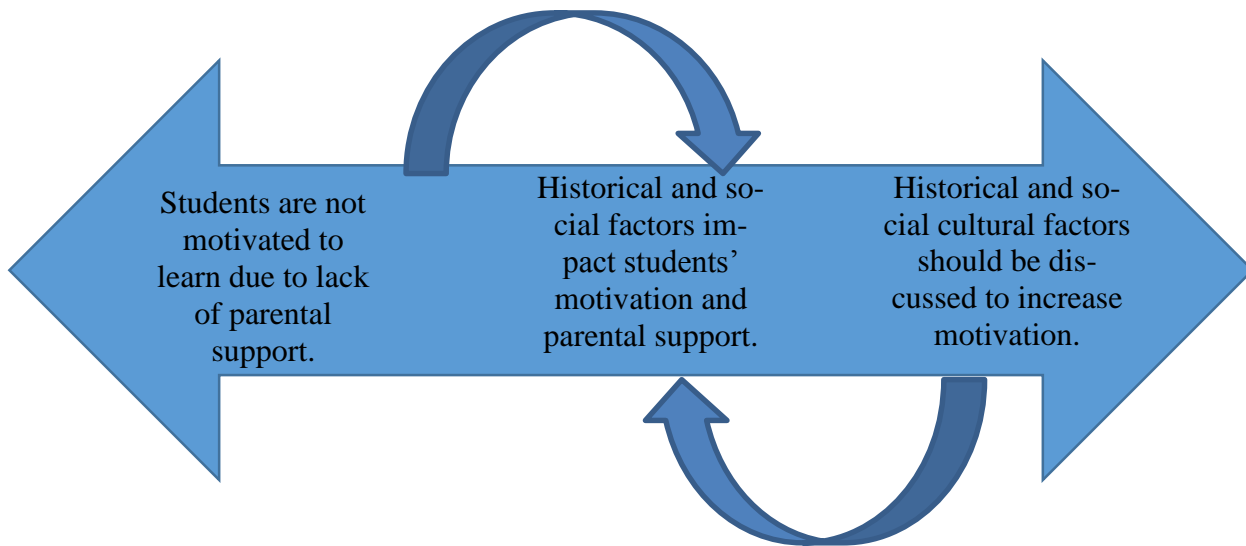


Figure 7: Monica's Shifts in Beliefs as Related to CRP

Complex Process

This study asks, “What shifts do teachers make in their conceptual understandings and pedagogical practices around CRP?” The goal for the study was to promote shifts in teachers’ conceptual and pedagogical understandings. Rokeach (1968) explains that changing beliefs is a sizable challenge, because many ingrained beliefs are resistant to change. This was evident throughout the study, as shifts in teachers’ beliefs and practices were complex and messy. Characteristics of effective professional development were implemented in the study but the change process looked different for the two focal teachers. This evidence contradicts research on teacher development which advocates for a linear learning and change process (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Some research insists that change in belief leads to change in practice, which leads to change in students (Desimone, 2009). In others, change in practice leads to change in students, which leads to change in beliefs (Guskey, 1986, 2002). However, there is a necessity for research on teacher

development to examine teacher learning and change as a more multifaceted system rather than a linear process (Opfer and Pedder 2011). For both Bridgette and Monica, their experiences also seemed to shape their beliefs. They witnessed positive results in the classroom with culturally relevant practices, but lingering and ongoing interactions with parents encouraged beliefs that conflicted with cultural relevancy.

Change in a linear process does not take into account other factors that are occurring that disrupt or confirm shifting. The teachers' professional growth and instructional decision making was not only limited to the needs of their students, but extended to who they were as people, their personal experiences, and beliefs. The teachers were diverse in their years of teaching experience, testing pressures, and levels of accountability. These factors all attributed to what they took away from the professional development.

One important shift in teachers' beliefs was an understanding that students bring to the classroom a range of experiences and knowledge that can be used as a catalyst for curriculum and learning. All of the teachers saw their students' experiences and language in more positive ways. Bridgette valued individual students' experiences, whereas Monica empathized with children's family lives and backgrounds, which led her to discuss sociopolitical factors with students.

Although the teachers did experience positive shifts in beliefs and practices, the focal teachers did not experience full shifts in some of their deficit beliefs about families and student achievement. This may not be viewed as progress, but as stated earlier, ingrained beliefs can be difficult to change and for changes in practice to reflect beliefs that are in flux reveals the dynamics of the teachers' learning and practice processes. Beliefs and practices inform each other as they are developed and practiced. Teachers may not exhibit grand shifts in beliefs, but micro

shifts as their experiences continue to shape their beliefs. These small shifts in beliefs may vacillate back and forth, or move at a steady progression, but awareness of beliefs and their need to shift to better teach students is necessary. Furthermore, these small shifts that the teachers experienced in their beliefs and practice during this study, are likely to continue to shape their beliefs and practices for years to come.

Implications

Much of the literature on culturally relevant pedagogy notes the difficulties that teachers have when implementing CRP even though they are knowledgeable and passionate about it (Esposito & Swain, 2009; May, 2011; Rozansky, 2010). The findings of this study reveals some of those difficulties, but a close examination of shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices in study also uncovers integral elements of the learning and implementation process of CRP. This research is important because provides insight for how to further support teachers in this process. The implications for this study provide insight for practitioners, teacher educators, and policy makers.

Implications for Practitioners

This study provides insight on factors that may inhibit or enhance teachers' implementation of CRP. The revelation of the participants' shifting process is important for teachers to better understand that learning about and implementing culturally relevant pedagogy is a complex process and cannot be implemented without being thoughtful and intentional. The hope, however, is that it does not seem like a daunting process, but one that can be inhibited and enhanced by various factors and that teachers can learn from those. During the study, teachers faced issues with time, testing, standards, lack of support, and lack of content knowledge. These are things that many teachers deal with in some way. However, a detailed description of how each teacher be-

came more intentional in their implementation of CRP can be inspiring to other teachers. Teachers who are interested in culturally relevant pedagogy must consider actions and activities that support implementing CRP in meaningful ways. Based on the findings and discussion from this study, teachers should (1) develop communities of practice and work with colleagues that have similar goals for learning; (2) spend time reading, discussing and reflecting on the theoretical tenets of CRP; and (3) and continuously support each other during their processes.

Implications for Teacher Educators

Professional learning for teachers should be differentiated, especially for theoretical and practical concepts such as culturally relevant pedagogy. It should be differentiated in the sense that as information is taught, teachers should have the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon it so that it makes sense for them. Theory or strategies should not be presented as a fixed set of knowledge that cannot be adapted or modified to fit teachers' frame of reference and the context of the school and their students. Due to teachers' experiences and previous knowledge, teachers' understanding and implementation of CRP and literacy instruction will differ. These differences contribute to the complex nature of the change process. Just as a one-size-fits-all approach does not meet the learning needs for all students, neither does it meet the needs for all teachers. It does not provide follow-up or continuous support or account for a school's contextual issues, or the differences in teachers' experiences and knowledge (Robb, 2000).

For all of the teachers in the study, culturally relevant pedagogy was implemented differently. In the cases of the two focal teachers, Bridgette used culturally relevant texts to support the writing development of her kindergarten students, while Monica use sociopolitical topics to engage her students more in Social Studies texts. As long as teachers' beliefs align with the

tenets of CRP, the implementation may differ but the goals are the same. Therefore, critical elements that support a change in practices and beliefs such as theoretical knowledge, critical self-reflection, collaboration, and longevity should all be included in professional development in a way that meets the needs and monitors the progress of teachers' understandings and implementation of professional development.

Teacher educators should also consider the difficulties in learning about and implementing CRP, since it does not align with the norms of traditional schooling (Darling-Hammond, 2005). First as teachers begin to learn about and implement CRP, there may be inconsistencies in their beliefs and practices. This does not reflect a teacher's lack of desire or willingness, but one who is working through the messy constructs of a critical pedagogy. Continuous professional support can provide teachers with insight, ideas, and strategies to carry on with culturally relevant practices. The continuous support can be in the form of follow-up and feedback from a teacher educator, instructional coach, or a mentor or from collaborative format with peers.

Bridgette and Monica could have benefited from additional in-class support and more teacher debriefing sessions as some of their beliefs were still shifting. Commitment to a school that includes longevity is necessary to support the culturally relevant beliefs and practices of teachers.

Implications for Policy

The implications of this study for federal policy include the need to develop curriculum standards that are culturally relevant. Educational legislation over the past decade has intended to improve academic achievement, primarily for low-income and students of color in public education. However, to little or no avail as Ntiri (2009) notes that the political discourse around literacy standards has yet to develop into reforms that improve the literacy development of students of color. Research studies reveal that teachers who are culturally relevant are particularly successful

in increasing the sense of self and academic achievement of students. Although the Common Core National Standards include standards that encourage the understanding of multiple perspectives, more still needs to be done in teacher development and standard implementation that support teachers in aligning standards with multicultural and culturally relevant resources.

Limitations and Delimitations

A significant limitation of this study is attributed to standardized testing that was conducted in Phillips County Schools from October 7 – October 25, 2013. The school administered the Cognitive Abilities Test and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills during this time. Although the focal teachers that I was observing were not testing grades, heightened security measures around testing restricted visitors from being in the school during testing hours. For three weeks, I was unable to gather any observational data. The teachers later reported in informal conversations or interviews what types of culturally relevant activities they were doing during that time, but I had not data to determine what kinds of modifications could be made to teacher support or for the teachers' implementation of CRP.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study is significant because it provides deeper understandings of the ways teachers learn about and implement CRP. This study captures the enhancing and inhibiting factors of implementing CRP and the shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices during a limited time over the course of one school semester. The length of the study was adequate for describing the initial shifts and how the teachers were supported in working toward meeting their goals for implementing CRP, but a study that examines shifts over an entire school year would reveal more information about teachers' shifting process. The researchers would have more time to document teachers' beliefs and develop more modifications to support teachers with conflicting beliefs.

Another factor in this study was that all of the participants were African American women. This was found as an enhancing factor for the teachers in learning about CRP. During the four-day professional development the teachers partook in some difficult discussion about race and racism in education. The fact that they shared similar racial and gender understandings allowed for the conversations to feel more comfortable and less offensive. With majority of the teaching force in public education being White, middle-class women, a study on supporting the beliefs and practices of CRP with a more diverse group of teachers would have a more positive effect on the African American students that they teach. It would also serve as an opportunity for the facilitator to model CRP during the learning process. Working with a more diverse group of teachers would possibly reveal more ideological factors that impact a teacher's learning and implementation of CRP.

Conclusion

Culturally relevant pedagogy and multicultural education has been widely researched but has not been widely implemented. The current educational conversation addresses the lack of achievement for students of color, but there has been little impact as solutions focus on a scripted curriculum and standardized testing. These solutions neither bring equity to education nor value or build upon the cultural and linguistic resources of this population of students. Teachers who implement culturally relevant practices are needed to critically examine these inequities in education and provide a more just education for all students. This formative experiment examined shifts in teachers' beliefs and practices as they engaged in professional learning around culturally relevant pedagogy. It revealed factors that enhanced teachers' learning and implementation of CRP as well as elements of professional development that are critical in promoting shifts in

teachers beliefs around CRP. These insights are essential when thinking about how to bridge the gap between theory and practice in regards to culturally relevant literacy instruction

The shifts that teachers made in beliefs and practices were inspiring as these teachers were open to changing deficit beliefs about students in order to promote culturally relevant learning. This study acknowledges that shifts in beliefs and practices are as dynamic and complex as the context in which teachers work and students learn. The understandings of CRP and shifting processes occurred different for all teachers, which reveals that teacher learning is closely connected with teacher's experiences and existing knowledge. Theoretical knowledge, critical self-reflection, collaboration, and continuous support were shown to promote shifts, but how these elements are implemented depend largely on the contextual setting. It is my hope that the development of professional development not only proceeds as an assessment of the needs of the students, but also as an assessment of the learning needs of the teachers.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Semi-Structured Interviews with Teachers

Initial Interview

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. Can you tell me about your teaching experiences? How many years have you been teaching? What grades have you taught?
3. Can you tell me about your students?
4. What do you know about your students' home and community experiences?
5. What are your students' attitudes like in school? What are their attitudes towards reading? Writing? Other subjects?
6. How do you motivate your students towards reading? Writing? Other subjects? Can you give me an example of this?
7. What do you believe about the students' you teach and their abilities to learn? How does your belief impact your teaching?
8. What do you know about culturally relevant pedagogy?
9. In what ways are your instructional practices related to Common Core ELA standards culturally relevant?
10. Do you believe that culturally relevant teaching practices can make a difference in the achievement of African American students?
11. What is your definition of literacy?
12. What literacy goals do you have for your students?
13. What types of literacy activities do you like to implement in the classroom?
14. Which literacy activities do your students seem to enjoy the most?
15. What would you like to learn about literacy instruction?
16. How have you been supported in learning how to implement Common Core ELA standards? District wide? Building level?

17. What do you think of the professional development experiences that you have experienced so far at this school?
18. What types of professional development opportunities would you most like to have in your school? What topics interest you?
19. How do you presently seek out ways to improve your teaching?
20. What kinds of topics would you like to discuss and learn about during professional development focused on culturally relevant pedagogy and improving the achievement of African-American students? Why?
21. How have the new Common Core ELA standards impacted your instruction of African-American students?

Post PD Interview

1. What social class would best describe your family? Do you feel that you teach students who resemble you from a socioeconomic standpoint? How do relate to these students who may be similar to/dissimilar from you?
2. Talk about your early academic experiences with reading. Do you think that this has impacted your teaching?
3. What have you learned as a result of your participation in the professional development focused on culturally relevant pedagogy?
4. Have you had other professional development classes have you had on culturally relevant topics?
5. How has this professional development informed your teaching practice?
6. Have your views about your students shifted in any way?
7. Has your understanding of yourself as a teacher shifted in any way?
8. Do you think workshops like these are important for teachers of African American students? Explain
9. What are your recommendations for improving staff development conducted at the school and district levels?
10. Describe my role during the professional development.


11. Describe your role during the professional development
12. Do you feel that the professional development focused on the interests, needs, and expertise of the teacher and students? What difference did that make in the learning process?
13. How did your participation in the professional development inform your views about yourself as a learner?
14. Do you have any concluding thoughts or comments?

Final Interview

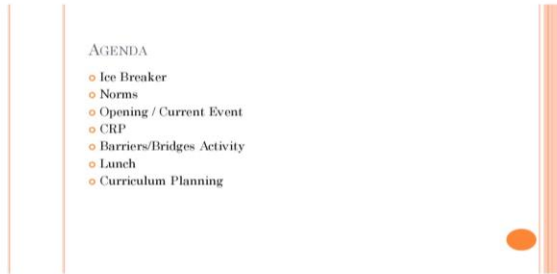
1. What aspects of the overall research project do you consider most beneficial? Why?
2. How do you feel about integrating culturally relevant pedagogy into your classroom instruction?
3. How would you share techniques and strategies that you have learned with your colleagues?
4. What would you like for other educators to know about teaching African-American students?
5. What would you like for other educators to know about on-going, teacher-centered professional development?
6. What would you like for other educators to know about professional development focused on culturally relevant pedagogy?
7. What do you feel is most important in teaching Common Core ELA students in culturally relevant curriculum manner?
8. What support would you put in place for teachers in order to implement your ideas effectively?
9. What should teachers of African-American students know about their learning, home life, language, etc. that would result in positive student outcomes?
10. Do you believe that a discrepancy exists between what you want to teach and how you are able to teach? What do you do to close the gap?
11. When I observed your classroom, I saw...(activities observed during the research period). Tell me about how you feel about yourself as a teacher when your students respond this way.
12. Do you have any concluding thoughts or comments?

APPENDIX B

Power Point for 4-Day Professional Development



CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND LITERACY INSTRUCTION



AGENDA

- o Ice Breaker
- o Norms
- o Opening / Current Event
- o CRP
- o Barriers/Bridges Activity
- o Lunch
- o Curriculum Planning

PURPOSE OF STUDY

- o Support the development of beliefs and practices around CRP
- o Support teachers in planning culturally relevant literacy instruction
- o Provide continuous support as teachers implement culturally relevant lessons

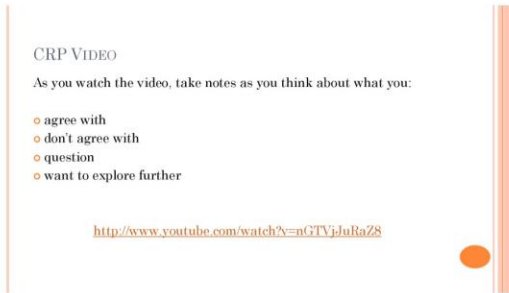
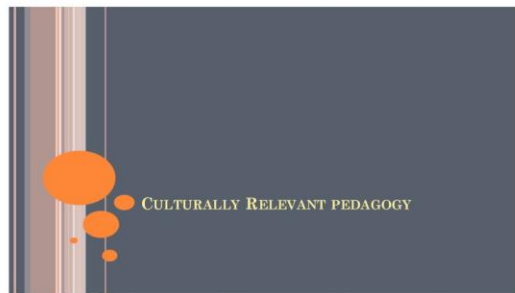
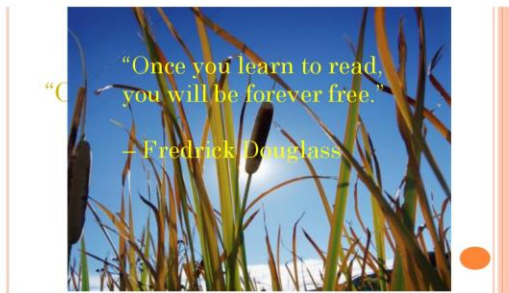
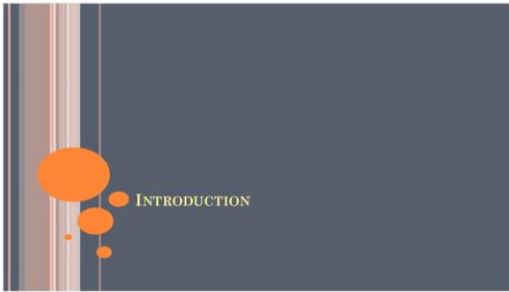
DURING THIS SESSION

- o Understand the tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy
- o Explore the impact of educational policy and curricular mandates on African American students
- o Explore various types of culturally relevant literature



ICE BREAKER: WHERE I'M FROM POEM

- o Read the poem written by George Ella Lyons
- o Follow the instructions to create your own
- o Share with the group



DEFINITIONS OF CULTURE

- o Culture is the way in which we respond, think, believe, feel, act, and learn (Amy Flint).
- o Tangible culture is what you can see; music, art, technology. Intangible culture include values, beliefs, feelings, opinions, perspective, and assumptions (Geneva Gay)
- o Cultural models (James Gee) define what counts as normal and natural, what counts as inappropriate and deviant. They inform social practices.

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE ACADEMY OF SUCCESS

- o What do you notice about this school?
- o How is culture used?
- o What are the teachers/ students doing?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3AbtFEzIokg>

CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

- o "culturally responsive teaching is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly" (Gay, p. 106).
- o enables teachers and students to "see the contradictions and the inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1992, p.328) of the educational system and the larger society

PRIMARY TENETS



WHY IS CRP NEEDED?

In 1970, social activist, Grace Lee Boggs wrote, "...it is the black community that the present educational system has most decisively failed."

Achievement Score Gap

Dropout, expulsions, and suspensions

Over represented in special education

Underrepresented in gifted and talented programs

EXPLANATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL DISPARITIES

Meritocracy
Pull self up by bootstraps/ everyone has equal opportunities to succeed

Deficit Theories
African Americans are inherently intellectually deficit, amoral

Systemic Racism
Schools reproduce the racism and inequities in society

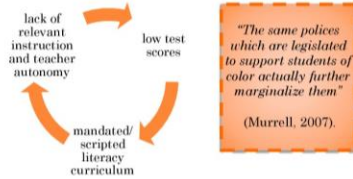
Cultural Mismatch
Schools do not reflect norms/culture/understandings of African Americans

IMPACT OF POLICY AND CURRICULUM ISSUES

POLICY TIMELINE

- Elementary Secondary Education Act 1965
 - Provided resources to help disadvantaged students have access to a quality public education
 - Title I initiated to provide resources/programs for students living in poverty
- Many federal programs were implemented to support the reading development of low-income and students of color
- NCLB/RT3 extended these programs
 - Higher stakes attached to assessments
 - Mandated curriculum

IMPACT OF POLICY



MAINSTREAM CURRICULUM

- Curriculum is not a neutral text
 - People with personal opinions/perspectives create it
- White, middle-class norms are valued
 - Who’s perspectives are missing?
- Lack of cultural references
 - What percentage of textbooks represent multicultural stories or history?
- Reading programs are prescriptive
 - Honors one answer as being correct

EXCERPT FROM A CURRENT EVENT TEXT BOOK

- On February 25, 2013, George Zimmerman was riding around his neighborhood to protect his community as the head of the neighborhood watch group. When he saw a black male walking around his subdivision wearing a hoodie, he became more alert because of rash of break-ins that had occurred in his neighborhood by young black males. He approached the young boy who had his hand in his pocket and looked as if he was concealing a gun. When the young male refused to leave the subdivision Zimmerman got out his car and the young man hit him with a concrete slab and Zimmerman proceeded to shoot him to save his own life. Using the stand your ground law which is a way for people feeling threatened outside their home to defend themselves and not face prosecution.

SCAVENGER HUNT

- How many books have a person of color as a main character?
 - What is the percentage? (___ out of ___)

MISSED CUES

- o Please read the excerpt and jot down your first impressions of the teacher and student. (2 minute quick write)

Discuss with Partner

- o Have you ever been so rushed that you missed an opportunity to unpack a student's "wrong" answer? Briefly describe the circumstances. (2 minutes)
- o How might framing your instructional lens in CRP help you read your students' cues accurately in order to support their learning and development?

Debrief as a group



CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY AND LITERACY INSTRUCTION

AGENDA

- o Review Norms
- o Opening/Current Event
- o Review CRP
- o Critical Self-Assessment
- o Language and Culture
- o Lunch
- o Multicultural Literature
- o Barriers/Bridges Activity



CRP IN PRACTICE

TENETS OF CRP

- o Read handout about the tenets of CRP
- o Find an idea or tenet that you think is significant (find a "back up" as well)
- o The first person begins by reading what "struck him or her the most." Then, in less than 3 minutes, describe why that line struck you.
 - Why do you agree/disagree
 - What questions do you have
 - What issues does it raise for you or what do you wonder
- o Continuing around the circle each person responds to that quote and what the presenter said, briefly, in less than a minute.
 - to provide a different look at the quote
 - to clarify the presenter's thinking about the quote
 - to question the presenter's assumptions about the quote
- o In the Final Word respond to what has been said.
 - What are you thinking now?



ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- o The teacher has clear goals for student learning and achievement
- o The majority of class time is devoted to teaching and learning
- o The teacher (not only standardized test) assesses student learning
- o The teacher can articulate individual student progress
- o The teacher is knowledgeable and skillful



CULTURAL COMPETENCE



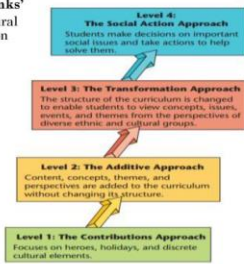
- The teacher understands culture and its role in education
- The teacher takes responsibility for learning about students' culture and community
- The teacher uses student culture as a basis for learning
- The teacher promotes a flexible use of students' local and global culture

CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS



- The teacher knows the larger sociopolitical context of the school-community-nation-world.
- The teacher has an investment in the public good
- The teacher plans and implements academic experiences that connects students to the larger social context
- The teacher believes that students' success has consequences for his or her own quality of life

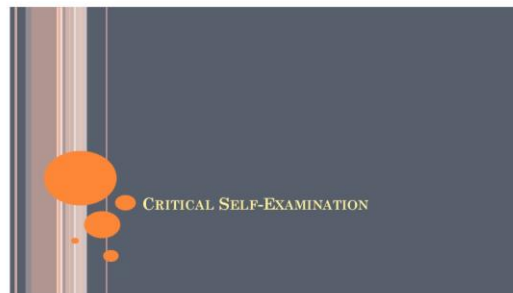
James Banks' Multicultural Education Model





EXAMPLES OF CRP IN PRACTICE

WHAT CRP IS	WHAT CRP IS NOT
<p>Incorporating students' cultures into the curriculum</p> <p>For example: A math teacher discusses the evolution of mathematics from Egypt and Babylon, instead of focusing only on Greek math systems.</p>	<p>Teaching curricular content that does not relate to or respect students' funds of knowledge</p> <p>For example: A math teacher uses a classic example of a standardized test question about the speed of a boat in a regatta. For urban students who may have no cultural knowledge of sailing, this example is not relevant or responsive.</p>
<p>Providing opportunities for students to engage, cooperate, and collaborate with each other</p>	<p>Focusing on teacher-centered instruction that replicates the banking model of education (Freire).</p>
<p>For example: A science teacher allows groups of students to develop their own experiment and demonstrate the process and results to the class.</p>	<p>For example: During a science class, the teacher puts a cell diagram on the board and lectures about each part's function, then requires students to memorize the information for a multiple-choice exam.</p>

<p>Demonstrating that all cultures have value</p> <p>For example: An elementary teacher discusses the conflict between Israel and Palestine during a current events unit, presenting both sides of the story and challenging students to form their own opinions.</p>	<p>Valuing some cultural beliefs or practices above others</p> <p>For example: During a lesson on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an elementary teacher presents only the portion of the story with which she agrees.</p>
<p>Sustaining a commitment to multicultural education throughout the year and throughout curricula</p> <p>For example: A Spanish teacher discusses the political movements behind and social implications of Cinco de Mayo, instead of having only a food-centered celebration.</p>	<p>Celebrating only "heroes and holidays" or discussing only "food and festivals," thus encouraging a cursory approach to multicultural education</p> <p>For example: A Spanish teacher asks students to bring in tacos and pinatas to celebrate Cinco de Mayo, without discussing any historical or cultural facts.</p>







In order to understand how culture impacts your students' learning, you must know yourself as a cultural being.....

CRITICAL REFLECTION IS KEY TO CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING

Teachers must acknowledge how **deficit based notions of diverse students** continue to permeate traditional school thinking, practices, and placement, and **critique their own thoughts and practices** to ensure they do not reinforce prejudice behavior

SELF-ANALYSIS OF DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 
- o Self-Analysis Checklist
 - o Additional Questions
 - What is your first language?
 - Have you ever learned to speak, read, or listen to other languages?
 - What is your opinion about what language should be spoken in the classroom?
 - Are there variations of this language that you believe should or should not be welcome in the classroom?
 - How might you express these opinions through your words and/or actions?
 - How do you think culture and language influence your classroom instruction?



CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

"Be what you is, not what you ain't, 'cause if you ain't what you is, you is what you ain't." – Luther Price

"They're standing on corner and they can't even speak English. I can't even talk the ways these people talk. Why you aint? Where you is? ... And I blamed the kid until I heard the mother talk. And then I heard the father talk..." - Bill Cosby

KEY POINTS ON LANGUAGE

- o A person's identity is intimately tied to their first language (Delpit, 2003; Smitherman, 2006).
- o AAVE is more sophisticated than Standard English in some aspects (Labov, 1972).

7/20/2014

ANN ARBOR EBONICS LAWSUIT

- o <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KKlmaFQniB0>

THE REAL EBONICS DEBATE

- o Read the 1st section of the article. Stop at Group Identity
- o 4 A's Protocol

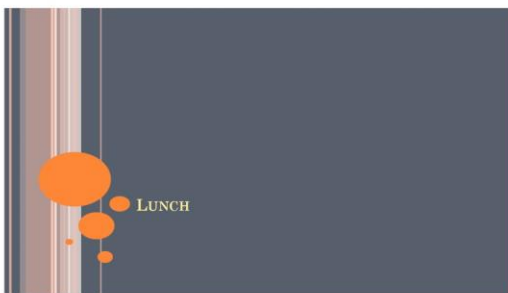
INCLUDING HOME LANGUAGE

- o Pedagogy of access and dissent
 - Access to higher education, gainful and rewarding employment, and access to civic life.
 - Students must critique the very system that they are asked to navigate. Blind access can come at great costs, including the loss of self, or alienation from one's culture, one's language, and one's values.
 - Students can acquire the skills they need to "succeed" while also developing a language of critique of systems of social reproduction.

INCLUDING HOME LANGUAGE

- o Role Play
- o Bi-dialectical dictionary

Scientist	Newscaster	Poet	Someone's Grandma	Usher
chemical				
change				
evaporation				
condensation				



LINK TO THE STANDARDS

Teachers should not have to sacrifice what they believe to be important content. Rather, they can implement activities and curriculum in ways that can be directly linked to required standards. - Mara Sapon-Shevin

When using multicultural literature, students:

- o read a wide range of print and non-print texts/genres
- o apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts
- o use a wide range of strategies as they write and use various writing process elements
- o apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, figurative language and genre to critique and discuss print and non-print texts
- o conduct research on issues and interest by generating ideas and questions
- o gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

Search various pinboards on Pinterest and post to our pinboard.

ACTIVITY

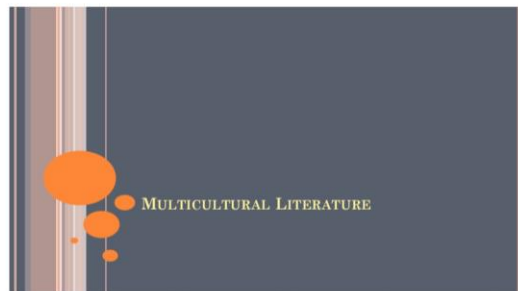
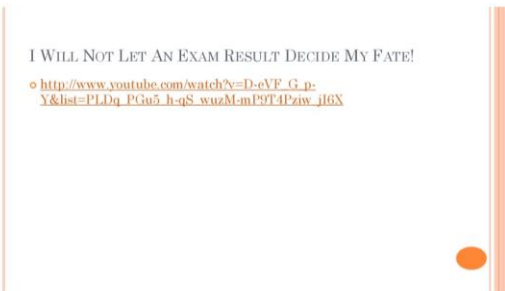
CHOOSE A STANDARD FROM YOUR 1ST NINE WEEKS PACING GUIDE AND DECIDE HOW TO TEACH THE STANDARD(S) USING A MULTICULTURAL TEXT. SHARE WITH GROUP?

Quality of Texts

- **Author/Illustrator** (have established reputations for publishing culturally sensitive material)
- **Character Portrayal** (portrayed in positive and affirming ways)
- **Language Use** (natural, authentic, appropriate)
- **Illustration Authenticity** (ethnic sensitivity and authenticity)
- **Accuracy** (factual information)

Link to CCSS

- What books have your students enjoyed in the past?
- Does the book align with standards? Big idea? Essential question?
- What meaningful activities can the students do with the text to understand and apply the standards?



LINKING MULTICULTURAL LIT TO THE STANDARDS

Teachers should not have to sacrifice what they believe to be important content. Rather, they can implement activities and curriculum in ways that can be directly linked to required standards. - Mara Sapon-Shevin

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 - apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, figurative language and genre to critique and discuss print and non-print texts
 - conduct research on issues and interest by generating ideas and questions
 - gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

<http://www.education.wise.edu/cebe/books/detailListBooks.asp?idBookLists=42>

http://www.cynthialeitchsmith.com/lit_resources/diversity/multicultural/multi_biblio.html

ACTIVITY

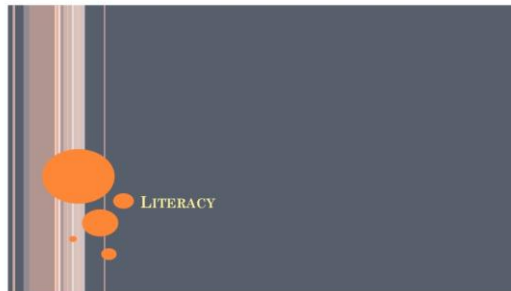
CHOOSE A STANDARD FROM YOUR 1ST NINE WEEKS PACING GUIDE AND DETERMINE HOW TO TEACH THE STANDARDS USING A MULTICULTURAL TEXT. SHARE WITH GROUP!

Quality of Texts

- **Author/Illustrator** (have established reputations for publishing culturally sensitive material)
- **Character Portrayal** (portrayed in positive and affirming ways)
- **Language Use** (natural, authentic, appropriate)
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Link to CCSS

- What books have your students enjoyed in the past?
- Does the book align with standards? Big idea? Essential question?
- What meaningful activities can the students do with the text to understand and apply the standards?




CRP AND LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Occasions for extended reading, writing, or talking on a sustained topic are relatively few and far between. Yet such occasions lie at the very heart of being literate: sharing knowledge and skills from multiple sources, building collaborative activities from and with written materials, and switching roles and trading expertise and skills in reading, writing, and speaking (Heath).

Almost all children, including poor children have impressive language abilities, large vocabularies, complex grammar, and deep understandings of experiences and stories (James Gee).

6 TS (JUST REALLY GOOD TEACHING!)

- **Time**
 - Students must spend a lot of **time** reading
- **Texts**
 - A variety of texts on student's reading level (variety of genres, magazines, graphic novels)
- **Teaching**
 - Reading strategies should be explicitly taught (mini-lessons, anchor charts, guided reading)
- **Tasks**
 - Meaningful activities around reading strategies (practice strategies during reading, d)
- **Talk**
 - Students must engage in meaningful discussions around texts (making connections, questioning, etc)
- **Testing**
 - A variety of assessments must be used to drive instruction (writing samples, observational notes, conferencing, etc.)



CRP AND LITERACY
Wrapping it up

FACEBOOK GROUP

- You've been added! @
- Respond to the post about goals for the upcoming school year

CULTURALLY RELEVANT LITERACY INSTRUCTION

- Read example of culturally relevant literacy instruction from *Bridging literacy and Equity. The essential guide to social equity teaching.*
- *Share With Group:*
 - Summary the scenario
 - Importance of the activity with the group
 - Impact that activity has on literacy

FINAL THOUGHTS

- CRP is a **critical** examination of society and schooling
- Belief system that provides a framework for implementing instruction that supports marginalized students
- Values students whose **culture** (language, beliefs, values, norms, experiences, etc) are not valued in mainstream society
- Builds on culture to bridge students' understanding to academic knowledge and to promote academic success

LET'S FIND RESOURCES

- Peruse the different books
- Jot down ideas and sources for culturally relevant literacy instruction
- Share with the group

REFLECTION (WAGON WHEEL)

- What does culturally relevant pedagogy mean to you?
- What is a culturally relevant teacher?
- What does this mean for you and your classroom for this upcoming school year?

Appendix C

Appendix C.1

Additional Resources for 4-Day Professional Development

Where I'm From – Literature Response

Directions: Before reading the assigned articles, read the poem below by George Ella Lyons. Then, write your own poem that captures where YOU'RE from. Please type your poem and bring a copy with you to class to submit. Also be prepared to discuss your poem and the readings.

Where I'm From

By: George Ella Lyons

I am from clothespins,
 from Clorox and carbon-tetrachloride.
 I am from the dirt under the back porch.
 (Black, glistening,
 it tasted like beets.)
 I am from the forsythia bush
 the Dutch elm
 whose long-gone limbs I remember
 as if they were my own.

I'm from fudge and eyeglasses,
 from Imogene and Alafair.
 I'm from the know-it-alls
 and pass-it-ons,
 from Perk up! and Pipe down!
 I'm from He restoreth my soul
 with a cottonball lamb
 and ten verses I can say myself.

I'm from Artemus and Billie's Branch,
 fried corn and strong coffee.
 From the finger my grandfather lost
 to the auger,
 the eye my father shut to keep his sight.

Under my bed was a dress box
 spilling old pictures
 a sift of lost faces
 to drift beneath my dreams.

I am from those moments-
 snapped before I budded-
 leaf-fall from the family tree.

Where I'm From - Assignment Ideas:

1. Use the following categories to list specific details related to you. The key is making this as specific and personal as possible. Use nicknames or words that only you or your family use. Don't worry about the readers not knowing what you are talking about.
 - a.) Parent name/s and significant relatives
 - b.) Special foods or meals
 - c.) Family specific games or activities
 - d.) Nostalgic songs
 - e.) Stories, novels or poetry that you'll never forget
 - f.) Phrases that were repeated often
 - g.) The best things that you have been told
 - h.) The worst things that you have been told
 - i.) Ordinary household items
 - j.) Family traditions
 - k.) Family traits
 - l.) Family tendencies
 - m.) Religious symbols or experiences
 - n.) Specific story(ies) about a specific family member that influenced you
 - o.) Accidents or traumatic experiences
 - p.) Losses
 - q.) Joys
 - r.) Location of memories, pictures, or mementos
2. Select from your lists the items you want to include in your poem. You do not have to include everything that you listed, and you can always add more categories or items to include in your poem.
3. Read the original poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyons. You'll discover that there are items, people, and situations mentioned in this poem with which you are unfamiliar. That's perfectly okay, because this poem is personal and particular to the poet, not the audience.

Composing:

Step 1-Begin with: I am from _____ . (Fill in with one of the many items you listed while prewriting.)

Step 2-Continue on the next line with: From _____ and _____. (Fill in each blank with items from your list.)

Step 3-Continue with: I am from _____ and _____. (Fill in the blanks as you did before.)
Continue this format until you have completed your poem.

Step 4-End the poem with an explanation of where you keep any symbols, items, boxes or pictures that may represent some or most of the topics you included in your poem.

Step 5-Reread your poem and make any changes or edits. This poem can be rewritten over and over again, and you'll probably find yourself thinking about more things that you can add to your poem, even when you are finished.

Appendix C.2

Critical Self-Reflection Questionnaire (mentormodules.com)

Self-Analysis of Diversity Issues and Implications

Take an honest look at what you believe about the following statements. Look at the belief statement and decide if you agree or disagree. Next, jot down a personal reason or rationale for your response. During the conversation with your partner, place a mark in the “match” column to indicate areas where the two of you agree or disagree.

Belief	Yes	No	Personal Reason/Rationale	Match
Asian-American students are more motivated than other minority students				
African-American students have the most discipline problems				
White students are prejudiced toward minority students				
Students with severe disabilities should not be mainstreamed during the school day				
Language minority students should receive all of their instruction in English				
At-risk students are slow learners and unmotivated to improve their learning				
Intellectually gifted students are self-motivated and self-disciplined				
Modifications should be made for students who hold religious beliefs outside of the “norm”				
All students, regardless of their cultural and socioeconomic background, should only speak standard English in school				
Children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are future dropouts				
Female students are easier to teach than male students				
Hispanic students do not adapt to the school environment with ease				
Slow learners do not achieve in subjects when placed in a classroom with regular education students.				

Adapted from Podsen, I. & Denmark, Vickie (2000). Coaching & Mentoring First Year Student Teachers

Appendix C.3

Brief Summary of Heath's Research (Lazar et al., 2012)

Table 4.1. Maintown, Roadville, and Trackton: Key Differences

Community and Ethnicity/Race	Caregivers' Practices and Expectations
<p>Maintown White/African American</p>	<p>Adults purchase books for children. Adults read aloud to children. Children are asked known-answer questions such as "Where's your nose?" Adults engaged children in elaborated talk about books, prompting children to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respond to "how do you know" and "what do you think will happen next" questions; • respond to hypothetical questions about what might happen if story characters and events were different or taken out of the story context; • recognize contradictions between books and reality. <p>Adults modeled routines and expectations relating to books—that is, how to sit, listen quietly, and avoid interrupting the reader (repeated in Sunday school activities and playgroups).</p>
<p>Roadville White</p>	<p>Adults purchased books for children. Adults read aloud to children before bed and naps for a few minutes only. While story-reading, adults asked children literal-level questions; adults answer if the child does not respond; adults ask children to read aloud or point to something on the page, or ask children to name characters. Adults asked children to follow directions and tell logical stories based on facts. Adults asked children to label items or name characters (e.g., "What is it?" "Who is it?" "Where is it?").</p>
<p>Trackton African American</p>	<p>Adults exposed infants to a constant stream of adult talk and storytelling; discourse included the use of figurative language. Adults asked children analogy-type questions such as "What's that like?" Adults asked "story starter" questions (Did you see Maggie's dog yesterday?) and "accusations" (What's that all over your face?). Children watched older siblings and adults read and write for different purposes. Reading tended to be a communal activity involving adults who read aloud and invited group interpretation of texts. Adults sent children to the store to buy groceries, requiring them to read labels and recognize print.</p>

Source: Heath, 1983

Appendix C.4

Handout on History of Racial Privilege and Subordination in America (Lazar et al., 2012)

Table 7.1. A Brief History of Racial Privilege and Subordination

My Family's History	Corresponding History of Black America
1904. Grandfather (father's side) Born in Sicily Came to America: 1908 Family worked in a woolens factory.	Most African American families worked as sharecroppers in the rural South; a perpetual system of White ownership of land prevented many Blacks from becoming debt-free.
1910. Elementary public school: until grade 8.	Education was highly separate and unequal, with poor educational access for Blacks.
1918. Worked in woolens mill, was good, reliable worker in his teens and twenties, was noticed and rewarded with promotion to supervise mill.	White factory owners would not have considered Blacks for supervisory positions.
1925. Sold products door to door to make extra money.	Black men would most likely not have been hired to do this kind of work; would not have been trusted to knock on doors. This was a time of extreme racism (KKK, lynching).
1938. Accumulated enough money to make a small down payment on business (\$4,000). Had to borrow \$5,000 to get the remaining funds.	Banks would most likely not have lent money to African Americans at this time without high collateral.
1950s-1970s. Business allowed him to get loans to purchase property.	Equal rights for Blacks were still not secure during this time; banks would not be lending large funds to African Americans.

(continued)

Table 7.1 (continued)

My Family's History	Corresponding History of Black America
1950. Capital allowed my father to attend private Catholic school; my father goes to college.	Schools are still not integrated for African Americans; opportunities to go to college were limited.
1958. Capital from grandfather allows him to give my father a house and property.	Generational passing down of property was limited for Blacks.
1959. I'm born.	President Johnson signs Civil Rights Act. Integration is limited. White resistance to integration is rampant. School equality does not evolve for most African Americans.
1964. I attend school. Full privileges of public school, full integration, I am accepted as equal with other children, perceived as having equal abilities, given a curriculum that celebrates my heritage, and is molded to my lifestyle, school and community norms and expectations.	Deficit theories about African American children in poor communities were espoused by social scientists. Chances are my African American counterparts would not have had teachers with high expectations. Social/economic inequalities limited funding for college.
1965-1977. Successful in school (own effort, but some success is attributed to the fact that I was expected to do well, and was in a school that fit my cultural world). Apply to money available.	

Appendix C.5

Missed Cues Discussion Protocol (National School Reform Faculty, 2014)



Missed Cues A Reflective Activity

Developed by Debbie Bambino.

This activity might be used as an intro to giving/receiving feedback, unpacking assumptions or LASW.

The following selection is from *Pictures of Hollis Woods* by Patricia Reilly Giff.

This picture has a dollop of peanut butter on one edge, a smear of grape jelly on the other, and an X across the whole thing. I cut it out of a magazine for homework when I was six years old. "Look for words that begin with W," my teacher, Mrs. Evans, had said.

She was the one who marked in the X, spoiling my picture. She pointed. "This is a picture of a family, Hollis. A mother, M, a father, F, a brother, B, a sister, S. They're standing in front of their house, H. I don't see one W word here."

I opened my mouth to say: How about W for wish, or W for want, or W for "Wouldn't it be lovely," like the song the music teacher had taught us?

But Mrs. Evans was at the next table by that time, shushing me over her shoulder.

- Please read the excerpt and jot down your first impressions of the teacher and student. (2 minute quick write)
- Have you ever been so rushed that you missed an opportunity to unpack a student's "wrong" answer? Briefly describe the circumstances. (2 minutes)
- How might our collaboration help us read our student's cues accurately in order to support their learning and development? (5 minutes)
- Pair-Share (10 minutes)
- Debrief as a group (12-15 minutes)

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group[®] and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at www.nsrharmony.org.

Appendix C.6

Wagon Wheel Discussion Protocol (National School Reform Faculty)



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Wagon Wheels Brainstorm Facilitation Notes

Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.

Purposes

- To stimulate lots of generative thinking in a very short time.
- To stimulate powerful thinking between people who might not know each other.
- To create a “vivid image bank” of a new idea in action to inform the planning process.
- To develop a sense of team with a common purpose.

Set up

- Four chairs back to back at the hub of the wheel and four chairs on the outer circle facing the chairs at the hub.
- Facilitator selects 4 ideas to explore.

Directions

Have participants bring paper and pen and fill in the seats in the wheel(s).

Ask them to take notes of both their own ideas as well as their partner's.

The people on the outside of the wheel will be moving one seat to the right at each rotation; people at the hub remain in their seats.

Explain that they will be working on one topic with each partner for approximately 5 minutes — i.e. they will work with 4 different partners during the activity.

For each topic have the participants reach a common understanding of what the topic means and then brainstorm what it would look like in action.

At the end of each rotation, ask each participant sitting on the outside of the wheel to rotate one seat to the right. After they settle down, give them the next topic and ask them to reach a common understanding before brainstorming.

Going Deeper

Have participants pick their favorite ideas for each topic and write them down on post-its. Make sure they label the top of each post-it.

Put large flip chart sheets with the topic title on the top around the room and have participants post their favorite ideas on the appropriate sheet.

Create focus groups to further explore a specific topic and to plan how to put the powerful ideas into action.

Protocols are most powerful and effective when used within an ongoing professional learning community such as a Critical Friends Group[®] and facilitated by a skilled coach. To learn more about professional learning communities and seminars for new or experienced coaches, please visit the National School Reform Faculty website at www.nsrharmony.org.

Appendix C.7

The Real Ebonics Debate Article (Delpit, 1997)

The Real Ebonics Debate: What Should Teachers Do?**By Lisa Delpit**

(NOTE: The footnotes in this article are hot-linked. Click on the highlighted number to go directly to that footnote. Click on the number in front of the footnote to return to the place in the article you just left.)

The "Ebonics Debate" has created much more heat than light for most of the country. For teachers trying to determine what implications there might be for classroom practice, enlightenment has been a completely non-existent commodity. I have been asked often enough recently, "What do you think about Ebonics? Are you for it or against it?" My answer must be neither. I can be neither for Ebonics or against Ebonics any more than I can be for or against air. It exists. It is the language spoken by many of our African-American children. It is the language they heard as their mothers nursed them and changed their diapers and played peek-a-boo with them. It is the language through which they first encountered love, nurturance and joy.

On the other hand, most teachers of those African-American children who have been least well-served by educational systems believe that their students' life chances will be further hampered if they do not learn Standard English. In the stratified society in which we live, they are absolutely correct. While having access to the politically mandated language form will not, by any means, guarantee economic success (witness the growing numbers of unemployed African Americans holding doctorates), not having access will almost certainly guarantee failure.

So what must teachers do? Should they spend their time relentlessly "correcting" their Ebonics-speaking children's language so that it might conform to what we have learned to refer to as

Standard English? Despite good intentions, constant correction seldom has the desired effect.

Such correction increases cognitive monitoring of speech, thereby making talking difficult. To illustrate, I have frequently taught a relatively simple new "dialect" to classes of pre-service teachers. In this dialect, the phonetic element "iz" is added after the first consonant or consonant cluster in each syllable of a word. (Maybe becomes miz-ay-biz-ee and apple, iz-ap-piz-le.) After a bit of drill and practice, the students are asked to tell a partner in "iz" language why they decided to become teachers. Most only haltingly attempt a few words before lapsing into either silence or into Standard English. During a follow-up discussion, all students invariably speak of the impossibility of attempting to apply rules while trying to formulate and express a thought. Forcing speakers to monitor their language typically produces silence.

Correction may also affect students' attitudes toward their teachers. In a recent research project, middle-school, inner-city students were interviewed about their attitudes toward their teachers and school. One young woman complained bitterly, "Mrs. ___ always be interrupting to make you 'talk correct' and stuff. She be butting into your conversations when you not even talking to her! She need to mind her own business." Clearly this student will be unlikely to either follow the teacher's directives or to want to imitate her speech style.

Group Identity

Issues of group identity may also affect students' oral production of a different dialect. Researcher Sharon Nelson-Barber, in a study of phonologic aspects of Pima Indian language, found that, in grades 1-3, the children's English most approximated the standard dialect of their teachers. But surprisingly, by fourth grade, when one might assume growing competence in standard forms, their language moved significantly toward the local dialect. These fourth graders had the competence to express themselves in a more standard form, but chose, consciously or unconsciously, to

use the language of those in their local environments. The researcher believes that, by ages 8-9, these children became aware of their group membership and its importance to their well-being, and this realization was reflected in their language.¹ They may also have become increasingly aware of the schools' negative attitude toward their community and found it necessary — through choice of linguistic form — to decide with which camp to identify.

What should teachers do about helping students acquire an additional oral form? First, they should recognize that the linguistic form a student brings to school is intimately connected with loved ones, community, and personal identity. To suggest that this form is "wrong" or, even worse, ignorant, is to suggest that something is wrong with the student and his or her family. To denigrate your language is, then, in African-American terms, to "talk about your mama." Anyone who knows anything about African-American culture knows the consequences of that speech act! On the other hand, it is equally important to understand that students who do not have access to the politically popular dialect form in this country, are less likely to succeed economically than their peers who do. How can both realities be embraced in classroom instruction?

It is possible and desirable to make the actual study of language diversity a part of the curriculum for all students. For younger children, discussions about the differences in the ways television characters from different cultural groups speak can provide a starting point. A collection of the many children's books written in the dialects of various cultural groups can also provide a wonderful basis for learning about linguistic diversity,² as can audio taped stories narrated by individuals from different cultures, including taping books read by members of the children's home communities. Mrs. Pat, a teacher chronicled by Stanford University researcher Shirley Brice Heath, had her students become language "detectives," interviewing a variety of individuals and listening to the radio and television to discover the differences and similarities in the ways people talked.³

Children can learn that there are many ways of saying the same thing, and that certain contexts suggest particular kinds of linguistic performances.

Some teachers have groups of students create bilingual dictionaries of their own language form and Standard English. Both the students and the teacher become engaged in identifying terms and deciding upon the best translations. This can be done as generational dictionaries, too, given the proliferation of "youth culture" terms growing out of the Ebonics-influenced tendency for the continual regeneration of vocabulary. Contrastive grammatical structures can be studied similarly, but, of course, as the Oakland policy suggests, teachers must be aware of the grammatical structure of Ebonics before they can launch into this complex study.

Other teachers have had students become involved with standard forms through various kinds of role-play. For example, memorizing parts for drama productions will allow students to practice and "get the feel" of speaking standard English while not under the threat of correction. A master teacher of African-American children in Oakland, Carrie Secret, uses this technique and extends it so that students video their practice performances and self-critique them as to the appropriate use of standard English (see the article "Embracing Ebonics and Teaching Standard English"). (But I must add that Carrie's use of drama and oration goes much beyond acquiring Standard English. She inspires pride and community connections which are truly wondrous to behold.) The use of self-critique of recorded forms may prove even more useful than I initially realized. California State University-Hayward professor Etta Hollins has reported that just by leaving a tape recorder on during an informal class period and playing it back with no comment, students began to code-switch — moving between Standard English and Ebonics — more effectively. It appears that they may have not realized which language form they were using until they heard themselves speak on tape.

Young students can create puppet shows or role-play cartoon characters — many "super-heroes" speak almost hyper-correct standard English! Playing a role eliminates the possibility of implying that the child's language is inadequate and suggests, instead, that different language forms are appropriate in different contexts. Some other teachers in New York City have had their students produce a news show every day for the rest of the school. The students take on the personae of famous newscasters, keeping in character as they develop and read their news reports. Discussions ensue about whether Tom Brokaw would have said it that way, again taking the focus off the child's speech.

Although most educators think of Black Language as primarily differing in grammar and syntax, there are other differences in oral language of which teachers should be aware in a multicultural context, particularly in discourse style and language use. Harvard University researcher Sarah Michaels and other researchers identified differences in children's narratives at "sharing time."⁴ They found that there was a tendency among young white children to tell "topic-centered" narratives—stories focused on one event—and a tendency among Black youngsters, especially girls, to tell "episodic" narratives—stories that include shifting scenes and are typically longer. While these differences are interesting in themselves, what is of greater significance is adults' responses to the differences. C.B. Cazden reports on a subsequent project in which a white adult was taped reading the oral narratives of black and white first graders, with all syntax dialectal markers removed.⁵ Adults were asked to listen to the stories and comment about the children's likelihood of success in school. The researchers were surprised by the differential responses given by Black and white adults.

Varying reactions

In responding to the retelling of a Black child's story, the white adults were uniformly negative, making such comments as "terrible story, incoherent" and "[n]ot a story at all in the sense of describing something that happened." Asked to judge this child's academic competence, all of the white adults rated her below the children who told "topic-centered" stories. Most of these adults also predicted difficulties for this child's future school career, such as, "This child might have trouble reading," that she exhibited "language problems that affect school achievement," and that "family problems" or "emotional problems" might hamper her academic progress.

The black adults had very different reactions. They found this child's story "well formed, easy to understand, and interesting, with lots of detail and description." Even though all five of these adults mentioned the "shifts" and "associations" or "nonlinear" quality of the story, they did not find these features distracting. Three of the black adults selected the story as the best of the five they had heard, and all but one judged the child as exceptionally bright, highly verbal, and successful in school.⁶

This is not a story about racism, but one about cultural familiarity. However, when differences in narrative style produce differences in interpretation of competence, the pedagogical implications are evident. If children who produce stories based in differing discourse styles are expected to have trouble reading, and viewed as having language, family, or emotional problems, as was the case with the informants quoted by Cazden, they are unlikely to be viewed as ready for the same challenging instruction awarded students whose language patterns more closely parallel the teacher's.

Most teachers are particularly concerned about how speaking Ebonics might affect learning to read. There is little evidence that speaking another mutually intelligible language form, per se,

negatively affects one's ability to learn to read.⁷ For commonsensical proof, one need only reflect on nonstandard English-speaking Africans who, though enslaved, not only taught themselves to read English, but did so under threat of severe punishment or death. But children who speak Ebonics do have a more difficult time becoming proficient readers. Why? In part, appropriate instructional methodologies are frequently not adopted. There is ample evidence that children who do not come to school with knowledge about letters, sounds, and symbols need to experience some explicit instruction in these areas in order to become independent readers (See Mary Rhodes Hoover's article in this issue of **Rethinking Schools**, page 17). Another explanation is that, where teachers' assessments of competence are influenced by the language children speak, teachers may develop low expectations for certain students and subsequently teach them less.⁸ A third explanation rests in teachers' confusing the teaching of reading with the teaching of a new language form. Reading researcher Patricia Cunningham found that teachers across the United States were more likely to correct reading miscues that were "dialect" related ("Here go a table" for "Here is a table") than those that were "nondialect" related ("Here is a dog" for "There is a dog").⁹ Seventy-eight percent of the former types of miscues were corrected, compared with only 27% of the latter. He concludes that the teachers were acting out of ignorance, not realizing that "here go" and "here is" represent the same meaning in some Black children's language.

In my observations of many classrooms, however, I have come to conclude that even when teachers recognize the similarity of meaning, they are likely to correct Ebonics-related miscues. Consider a typical example:

Text: Yesterday I washed my brother's clothes.

Student's Rendition: Yesterday I wash my bruvver close.

The subsequent exchange between student and teacher sounds something like this:

T: Wait, let's go back. What's that word again? {Points at "washed."}

S: Wash.

T: No. Look at it again. What letters do you see at the end? You see "e-d." Do you remember what we say when we see those letters on the end of the word?

S: "ed"

T: OK, but in this case we say washed. Can you say that?

S: Washed.

T: Good. Now read it again.

S: Yesterday I washed my bruvver...

T: Wait a minute, what's that word again? {Points to "brother."}

S: Bruvver.

T: No. Look at these letters in the middle. {Points to "brother."} Remember to read what you see. Do you remember how we say that sound? Put your tongue between your teeth and say "th"...

The lesson continues in such a fashion, the teacher proceeding to correct the student's Ebonics-influenced pronunciations and grammar while ignoring that fact that the student had to have comprehended the sentence in order to translate it into her own language. Such instruction occurs daily and blocks reading development in a number of ways. First, because children become better readers by having the opportunity to read, the overcorrection exhibited in this lesson means that this child will be less likely to become a fluent reader than other children that are not interrupted so consistently. Second, a complete focus on code and pronunciation blocks children's understanding that reading is essentially a meaning-making process. This child, who understands the text, is led to believe that she is doing something wrong. She is encouraged to think of reading not

as something you do to get a message, but something you pronounce. Third, constant corrections by the teacher are likely to cause this student and others like her to resist reading and to resent the teacher.

Language researcher Robert Berdan reports that, after observing the kind of teaching routine described above in a number of settings, he incorporated the teacher behaviors into a reading instruction exercise that he used with students in a college class.¹⁰ He put together sundry rules from a number of American social and regional dialects to create what he called the "language of Atlantis." Students were then called upon to read aloud in this dialect they did not know. When they made errors he interrupted them, using some of the same statements/comments he had heard elementary school teachers routinely make to their students. He concludes:

The results were rather shocking. By the time these Ph.D Candidates in English or linguistics had read 10-20 words, I could make them sound totally illiterate The first thing that goes is sentence intonation: they sound like they are reading a list from the telephone book. Comment on their pronunciation a bit more, and they begin to subvocalize, rehearsing pronunciations for themselves before they dare to say them out loud. They begin to guess at pronunciations They switch letters around for no reason. They stumble; they repeat. In short, when I attack them for their failure to conform to my demands for Atlantis English pronunciations, they sound very much like the worst of the second graders in any of the classrooms I have observed.

They also begin to fidget. They wad up their papers, bite their fingernails, whisper, and some finally refuse to continue. They do all the things that children do while they are busily failing to learn to read.

The moral of this story is not to confuse learning a new language form with reading comprehension. To do so will only confuse the child, leading her away from those intuitive understandings about language that will promote reading development, and toward a school career of resistance and a lifetime of avoiding reading.

Unlike unplanned oral language or public reading, writing lends itself to editing. While conversational talk is spontaneous and must be responsive to an immediate context, writing is a mediated process which may be written and rewritten any number of times before being introduced to public scrutiny. Consequently, writing is more amenable to rule application — one may first write freely to get one's thoughts down, and then edit to hone the message and apply specific spelling, syntactical, or punctuation rules. My college students who had such difficulty talking in the "iz" dialect, found writing it, with the rules displayed before them, a relatively easy task.

To conclude, the teacher's job is to provide access to the national "standard" as well as to understand the language the children speak sufficiently to celebrate its beauty. The verbal adroitness, the cogent and quick wit, the brilliant use of metaphor, the facility in rhythm and rhyme, evident in the language of Jesse Jackson, Whoopi Goldberg, Toni Morrison, Henry Louis Gates, Tupac Shakur, and Maya Angelou, as well as in that of many inner-city Black students, may all be drawn upon to facilitate school learning. The teacher must know how to effectively teach reading and writing to students whose culture and language differ from that of the school, and must understand how and why students decide to add another language form to their repertoire. All we can do is provide students with access to additional language forms. Inevitably, each speaker will make his or her own decision about what to say in any context.

But I must end with a caveat that we keep in mind a simple truth: Despite our necessary efforts to provide access to standard English, such access will not make any of our students more intelligent. It will not teach them math or science or geography — or, for that matter, compassion, courage, or responsibility. Let us not become so overly concerned with the language form that we ignore academic and moral content. Access to the standard language may be necessary, but it is definitely not sufficient to produce intelligent, competent caretakers of the future.