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Critical Multicultural Engagement with Children's Texts: Perspectives, Power, and Positioning

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Critical Multicultural Engagement with Children's Texts:

Perspectives, Power, and Positioning

A Dissertation Presented

By

JASMINE ANGELA ROBINSON

Submitted to the Graduate School of the

University of Massachusetts Amherst

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

May 2021

College of Education

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Critical Multicultural Engagement with Children's Texts:
Perspectives, Power, and Positioning

A Dissertation Presented

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DEDICATION

To three erudite women who have blessed my life and who are with me in spirit:

My mother Violet Robinson,

for when faced with the most difficult decision of her life, she chose me.

My dear friend Dr. Susan Kennedy Marx,

who was a champion of social justice and social transformation.

My mentor Dr. Masha Rudman,

who inspired my work as a critical multicultural educator.

To my long-suffering daughters,

Lisa, and Hannah for whom I am eternally grateful.

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The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.

The Lord is sufficient unto me... in Him let the trusting trust.

This has indeed been an exceedingly long journey, but I have had tremendous support, inspiration, and joy from my travelling companions and those I have encountered along the way. First, I would like to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to Dr. Maria José Botelho my advisor, for believing in the social, multicultural, and educational significance of my work, and for her tireless patience, devoting many hours to rereading my drafts. I am grateful for the times she provided me with a physical space to write and some delicious meals that nurtured my mind, body, and soul. I thank my committee members and kindred spirits Dr. Laura Valdiviezo and Dr. Demetria Shabazz for their years of support and inspiration. I must also acknowledge Dr. Theresa Austin, my C.A.G.S advisor, for her guidance and continued interest in my work, without her initial encouragement I might have not undertaken this journey.

I wish to express my gratitude to my family, and the many friends, and hiking companions whose gifts of love, words of encouragement, and countless meals helped to bolster my endurance and keep me focused.

This project tells the story of an amazing group of young people whose critical journeys are just beginning and without whom this research would never have been possible. May they continue to shine in their brilliance.

ABSTRACT

CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT WITH CHILDREN'S TEXTS:

PERSPECTIVES, POWER, AND POSITIONING

May 2021

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While critical approaches are an accepted teaching philosophy (Aukerman, 2012; Behrman, 2006; Luke et al., 2010), there requires further inquiry of theoretical and pedagogical practices for critical multicultural teaching of culturally diverse literature in the elementary context. The problem is not just about *what* we read with students, but *how* we critically and multiculturally read and use children's literature for promoting an understanding of social constructs. The essential question that guides this dissertation is: What does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts?

This critical ethnography argues that pedagogy centered on critical multicultural engagement with children's texts invites and promotes critical multicultural consciousness and agency, offering students the possibility for critical constructions as

they negotiate meaning of sociocultural themes. My pedagogical arguments are informed by critical multicultural analysis (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) who suggest teaching critically with multicultural literature includes keeping “power relations of class, race, and gender at the center of...investigations of children's literature...connecting our reading to sociopolitical and economic justice" (p. 268).

This research adopts feminist poststructuralist theory and includes a critical reflexive process that "aids in understanding ...the workings of our social world" (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). Reflexivity provides the examination of perspectives, power, and positioning (Pillow, 2003) as the participants (the teacher-researcher and her third-grade students) engage with texts.

Incorporating ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2003), I present the students’ responses as mini scripts illustrating how students’ discourse informs and leads the learning and gives the reader a sense of *being there*. As the students respond to texts, they produce new texts and through critical creativity they represent their understandings of social constructs such as race and sociocultural identity. Critical discourse analysis (Rex & Schiller, 2009), is used to discuss power relations manifested in the critical multicultural events.

Keywords: Critical multicultural reading, reading comprehension pedagogy, critical creativity, ethnodrama, and teacher research.

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CHAPTER 1

A CLASS ACT



Figure 1: The March on Washington with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
Honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 2018

50 Years Later-The Dream lives On

Scene 1: The stage is set to take the audience participants back in time to the 1960's. There is a Greyhound bus, a Woolworth's lunch counter, and a restaurant. Projected on a screen is a photograph of a sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter. The production opens with the cast sitting or standing in their scenes. The lights are out as the audience members enter and take their seats. The lights come on and Ross stands to face the audience.

Ross: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929. [Sit at a round table.]

Monica & Diane: But, April 4th, 1968 is a day we will never forget. [Get on the bus]

Evan: Fifty years ago, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was shot and killed. [Sit at round table.]

Joan, Rose, Eve, Paul: Today we remember a man who gave us a dream of hope.

Rose: Fairness,

Paul: Justice,

Eve: and **possibilities.**

Sam: 50 Years Later- The Dream lives on... [Sit at back table]

Scene 2

Evan: [sitting] Life in America has not always been fair for African American people. Then, we could not sit anywhere we wanted to on a bus. [Stand up]

Joan: We had to sit in the back [Climb onto the bus]

Will: [As bus driver] Sit in the back or you will be arrested!

Monica & 3 girls [The characters are seated on the bus and dressed in clothes with other props of that period]

Mrs. Rosa Parks was not the only woman to give up her seat. Three other women who also refused to give up their seats were:

Julie: Irene Morgan, on a Greyhound bus in Virginia in 1944.

Mia: In 1955, Claudette Colvin a 15-year-old high school student in Montgomery, Alabama.

Diane: 18-year-old Mary Louise Smith, and Mrs. Rosa Parks.

Paul: [Facing the audience] Now we can sit wherever we want on a bus-

Steven: [Stand and face the audience] Thank you Dr. King.

Ross & Sue: [Sitting in restaurant then stand] Then, we could not all eat in the same restaurants.

[Actors seated at restaurant counter, waitress scowling with hands on her hips]

Tom: It was Feb. 1, 1960, when four black students sat down at Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, N.C., and ordered coffee. They were not served.

Sam: The four young freshmen, remained seated until closing time, and returned

with 300 more students a few days later, determined to integrate the whites-only restaurant. [Other actors sit down at tables some reading newspapers or the menus]

Rose: [As furious waitress] Oh, my gosh, this is too **much!**

Eve: [Moving to center of the room] Woolworth's finally desegregated in July of 1960, and so did other stores and restaurants.

Peter & Joe: Now we can eat together. Thank you, Dr. King, for helping us to live a wonderful dream...

Evan & Sam: [strong emotion] **But**, a woman's payment today is still not always equal to that of a man doing the same job.

Rose: [Still as waitress - frustrated] Hey, did you know that I get paid a third of what the men get here?

Eve: Well, that's not fair! Makes me wonder what I get paid!

[Monica and Julie enter off the bus]

Monica and Julie: Hey, what are you talkin' about?

Eve: She gets paid a third of what the men get paid! [looks at her imaginary cell phone] I get paid 80 cents for every dollar a man gets paid!

Everyone: Gasps!

Voice 6: Marcus, Peter & Eve: I have a dream - that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed:

Everyone: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all people are created equal" (repeat) are created equal.

Tom, Steve, & Joe: I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves, and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to

Everyone: Sit down together at the table of human brotherhood (all shake hands).

Mia and Rose: I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering in the heat of oppression...

Will and Julie: Will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

Paul and Eddie: I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin...

Everyone: But by the content of their character.

Peter, Monica, Ross, & Sue: I have a dream ... [Begin to sing the song]

Everyone: Continue the song-

We have a dream

That one day this nation will rise up

And live out the true meaning of its creed:

We hold these truths to be self-evident

That all people are created equal,

are created equal.

Everyone: This is our hope. This is our dream. [All hold hands and bow]

[Lights out]

The dramatic production above was a culminating activity primarily designed and developed by the students in this research. The research design includes a critical ethnographic perspective Goldstein (2012) for describing the activities, events, and power relations that surround critical multicultural engagement with literature and texts written

for young children. As the students engaged in our daily explorations, it became clear that they wanted to be designers of their own texts and of the ways to represent their understandings. Consequently, the dramatic production above not only illustrates the development of critical multicultural perspectives of a class of third grade students, but it is also an exploration into their multicultural consciousness, agency, and critical creativity. As Saldaña (2003) conceptualizes about “ethnodrama”, the students created an "informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative" (p. 220). Critical multicultural engagement with children's literature and other texts offered my students a collaborative opportunity to explore, extend, and represent their understanding of a critical moment in our nation's history. During collaborative language use there is, what Bloome and Beauchemin (2016) describe, as a shift in “attention from what individuals bring to what individuals collectively do as constituting classroom events" (p. 154). This understanding relates here to the students’ collective responses to sociopolitical issues and themes conveyed in texts through the construction of their dramatic production. The production identifies the students enacting critical creativity and positions them as collaborative researchers telling their unique research story. To understand how these students arrived here requires an explanation of the objectives of this dissertation research.

Purpose of Research

The intentions of this dissertation are to understand what happens when the teacher-researcher facilitates learning experiences that promote critical multicultural engagement and attends to how the teacher researcher and her students use language and the power relations that operate within the elementary classroom as they are critically and

multiculturally engage with children's texts. Nichols and Campano (2017) maintain that texts influence student responses: "Books themselves exert a type of agency in creating conditions for meaning making or supporting critical orientations toward the world ... drama with language arts learning ... can transform classroom environments and the ways students engage" (p. 248). The dramatic production presented illustrates children engaging with and responding to texts, applying new knowledge, and building on prior experiences with texts in ways that extend their understanding of critical multicultural themes and issues in history, current events, and in their personal lives.

Research Questions

While critical approaches are an accepted teaching philosophy (Aukerman, 2012; Behrman, 2006; Luke et al., 2010) there requires further inquiry of theoretical and pedagogical practices for critical teaching in the elementary classroom contexts. The problem is *how do we read* and use children's literature particularly multicultural children's literature, and not just *what do we read* with students, and how do these practices as argued by Botelho & Rudman (2009) "shape the reading subject positions available to them"(p. 269), and promote an understanding of social constructs, as children construct, deconstruct, and negotiate their identities. The essential question that guides this dissertation is:

What does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts?

This dissertation will seek to understand: How does a teacher-researcher promote critical multicultural engagement in the elementary classroom? What happens when elementary students critically and multiculturally engage with children's texts? In what ways do

critical multicultural engagement offer elementary students opportunities for making meaning of power relations? In what ways do critical multicultural engagement with children's texts support students' negotiation and affirmation of their own identities in relation to people of diverse communities?

A Critical Multicultural Educator's Rationale

In my position as a classroom teacher for more than three decades and across two continents, I have had the opportunity to facilitate learning in a variety of sociocultural contexts. I have worked in communities where students' race, ethnicity, and life experiences could be described as homogeneous and monocultural. In contrast, I have also worked in culturally and ethnically heterogeneous communities where children experience diversity in their daily social interactions in school and the macro community, and the student population reflects global pluralism and multiculturalism that is present in the United States and other countries around the world. In both the homogeneous and the heterogeneous classroom contexts I fervently sought ways to include multicultural literature and critical practices in the curriculum. On numerous occasions colleagues have stated "You get so much out of your students" meaning that the children are not only inspired and engaged, but they extend and represent their understandings in creative and productive ways. Additionally, I regard critical multicultural engagement with children's literature as a literary process for promoting children's understanding of social constructs such as racism and other power relations, and how children perceive themselves and others. In Robinson (2013) I support the cross-curricular critical engagement with multicultural literature for: expanding students' multimodal literary and literacy experiences (reading, writing, listening, thinking, speaking, viewing, and representing);

promoting critical, intellectual and emotional responses; extending reading comprehension; and promoting epistemological foundations on which students construct their understanding of themselves, each other, and the world. This dissertation extends these understandings to further discover the multimodal ways (e.g., speaking, dramatizing, drawing, etc.) that offer students possibilities for making meaning of our world and for critically constructing and representing their understandings.

As I advanced in my career, I came to realize that my role as an educator was not as simply defined as a facilitator obligated to implement the mandated curriculum. I came to appreciate that facilitation of learning involved recognizing the contributions and experiences children themselves brought to the classroom (González et al., 2005; Janks & Dixon, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009). In the process of appreciating the children's role and influence on the learning taking place, I began to conceptualize that my role as a critical multicultural educator was based on democratic perspectives consistent with the critical constructivist theories of Freire (2000) who considers learning as involving "a constant unveiling of reality" (p. 81). Therefore, by positioning students as contributors, co-teachers, and co-learners, they can question the status quo and engage in problem-posing education that inspires thought, and question education that reiterates and promulgates societal and political ideologies, while they intellectually and emotionally engage critically with literature.

Additionally, as a critical multicultural educator I have conceptualized critical engagement as experiences that offer children the possibility to expand their literacy and language use for understanding their cultural and social realities, and the cultural and social realities of others. Street (1984, 1995) supports the promotion of literacy when it

involves one's social and cultural experiences. Critical engagement examines how words and images can be used to shape what others notice and care about, and how social issues are mirrored in texts. As argued by Street (1984, 1995) hegemonic structures and ideology are promulgated through academic literacy and "we need to build institutions which enable people to acquire what they say they want and not what teachers... think they want" (p. 226). In the classroom, critical literacy is enacted through dialogue and critical questioning that asks about: power relations for informing and understanding power and positioning, the positions of characters and the reader, multiple viewpoints, the inclusivity and exclusivity of cultural representations, interactions, and illustrations. Through critical engagement with multicultural children's literature students can explore and understand that constructs such as racism and other power relations affect how they perceive themselves and others, which also contributes to their overall comprehension of the text, and multimodal discursive experiences offer students the opportunity to challenge or validate ideas about social and cultural phenomena (Morrell, & Morrell 2012). Additionally, Botelho and Rudman (2009) describe the connection of critical engagement to multicultural literature when they suggest "Children see that the text's meaning is constructed and reconstructed in interaction with the text, each other, and the world" (p. 12). These ideas are also supported by Street (1984, 1995) who conceptualizes literacy pedagogy as social practice and confirms my critical teaching philosophy that classroom literacy and literary pedagogy are more effectively supported by critical multicultural engagement that involves a "'mix'...of communication," (p. 130).

Significance of the Study

The significance of this dissertation is that it presents research that identifies and challenges a gap in the field of elementary literacy and reading instruction, and as some studies have found (Pandya Avila, 2014; Shannon, 2011; Vasquez, 2017;) some educators have yet to appreciate critical multicultural experiences while engaging children with literature. Engagement with multicultural literature is supported using critical processes. My arguments here are substantiated by culturally responsive pedagogy as described by World (2019) where she argues the need for teachers to provide more diverse books and to consider how they engage students "in meaningful reading opportunities...teachers have a responsibility to take the initiative to create atmospheres that are thick and rich with literature from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds" (p. 18). In this regard, this dissertation can be considered inductive; it draws on the constructed experiences of the research participants and offers an informed perspective about reading engagement that extends critical multicultural experiences with children's literature and other texts.

The Global Relevance

From a historical and traditional perspective, literature and canonical texts have been used in education to convey hegemonic ideals of the dominant cultures as argued by Luke, Iyer, and Doherty (2011), and consistent with Luke et al. (2010) pedagogical practices for engaging with these texts have insufficiently addressed and/or have underrepresented the critical issues of our increasingly diverse communities. Additionally, Luke et al. (2011), suggest that an awareness of literacy in global contexts supports "cogent analysis of the effects of the global on educational media, youth

identities and cultures, and literate practices” (p. 104). Accordingly, critical, and multicultural pedagogy validates ethnic identities and acknowledges issues in contemporary society.

The outline for this dissertation is as follows: Chapter 2 will present theories and historical influences that inform my conceptual understandings of critical multicultural processes for engaging children with texts. Chapter 3 presents a literature review that explores salient empirical research in critical multicultural engagement with children’s literature. Following this, Chapter 4 describes critical ethnographic epistemology and the practices associated with this way of knowing. This methodology section also details my rationale for using a critical ethnographic process. In Chapters 5 through 7 I present the research data, findings, and artifacts in six mini scripts where the children and I participate in critical multicultural engagements (CMEs). The mini-scripts complement the reporting of the ethnographic data (Saldaña, 2003) by giving the reader a sense of *being there* and presents a validation of the students’ discursive practices through immediate - in the moment- experience while maintaining the flow and fluidity of the discourse events, and these mini-scripts provide units of analysis. The student participants’ understandings, emotional tone, and mood convey their responses to social and political ideology that a third-person narrative may not convey as meaningfully. A brief overview of Chapters 5 to 7 is as follows:

- Chapter 5 presents CME #1 and CME #2:
 - CME #1 Cultivating critical work.
 - CME #2. Discovering criticality
- Chapter 6 presents CME #3 and CME #4

- CME #3 Engaging critically
- CME #4. Communicating criticality
- Chapter 7 presents CME #5 and CME #6
 - CME #5 Dramatizing as Deconstruction
 - CME #6 Re/Constructing Criticality

Chapter 8 is a discussion of the findings, and Chapter 9 presents the conclusion and recommendations for educators and other stakeholders. In Chapter 2 I present a historical and theoretical foundation of multicultural children's literature in the classroom, discuss contemporary ideas about critical literacy learning and teaching, and conceptualize critical literacy pedagogy in relation to the teaching of multicultural children's literature.

CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

There now follows a discussion about the theoretical framework. The theories provide the same perspectives that I will be employing to:

- (1) Research the essential question: What does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts?
- (2) Review the literature surrounding critical engagement with multicultural children's literature *writ large*.
- (3) Develop and implement my research design.
- (4) Analyze the data and findings.
- (5) Guide the final discussion and conclusion.

The theories that support the research of critical multicultural engagement with children's texts are nuanced by historical, social, political, and critical multicultural understandings. Feminist poststructuralist and critical constructivist theories support my perspectives of critical multicultural engagement and pedagogy by offering a democratic, socially conscious, and critical lens. These theories will be used to discuss the idea that power relations, position, and perspectives are conveyed through discourse as my students interact with each other, with me, and with the texts. In the next paragraph the theories are further discussed in relation to my identities and how I approach this research.

Feminist Poststructuralism and Critical Constructivism

Fundamentally, this research is centered on learning how this group of children and I enact critical multicultural consciousness and discourse while engaging with texts. This statement relates to the question, what does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts? Nuanced here is the question how is power enacted through the constructions, deconstructions, and reconstructions of knowledge or, more simply stated in the adage if "knowledge is power," what are the implications for the children and me in this context? Feminist poststructuralist and critical constructivist lenses align with my identities of a critical multicultural female educator and participant in this research. Critical constructivist theory not only points out the deficits in education (Kincheloe, 2008) but considers the students as assets and resources in their own knowledge production. Feminist poststructuralism (Lather, 2010) argues that patriarchal, societal, and historical influences shape students' knowledge production. The perspectives of feminist poststructuralism and critical constructivism challenge pedagogies where students are positioned as receivers and repositions them as producers or constructors of knowledge. Additionally, for reviewing the literature surrounding critical engagement with multicultural children's literature *writ large*, these theoretical tools will provide a lens for identifying democratic processes (or not) as they are enacted and described by the teachers and students in the studies, outlining how the students are offered opportunities to contribute to the learning. Similarly, these tools will help me to describe phenomenon that occurs in my classroom.

Conceptualizing Discourse and Power

A feminist poststructuralist' perspective claims power relations “operate within and through language” (Jones, 2013, p. 199) and supports the argument that language and discourse are social and cultural products. Nuanced in this theory is the notion that all texts that are uttered or written, including children’s literature, are not only intertextual, but draw upon many cultural, social, and political ideologies. As Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of the socially constructed intertextual contexts of language argues “There can be no such thing as an isolated utterance. It always presupposes utterances that precede and follow it” (p. 136). Consistent with Bakhtin’s (M. Bakhtin et al., 1982) conceptualization of social heteroglossia where “consciousness and discourses [are saturated] with fundamental speech diversity” (pp. 326-327), Aukerman (2012) argues that the critical and the dialogical possibilities of literacy practices because it describes “that a student’s own [language constructions are] structured and emerges in conversation and constant tension with multiple other voices” (p. 46). Aligning with Bakhtin (1982), Aukerman and Schuldt (2016) also argue that dialogue occur “in public spaces where...students can explore, develop, and reconsider ideas about textual meaning” (p. 289) and through dialogue students negotiate power relations.

Critical Constructivist Lens

A critical constructivists perspective also considers how power is enacted in our social and political world and how this impacts us collectively and individually. In regards to a critical multicultural oriented classroom and discursive practices an idea proposed by O’Brien (2001) suggests that the focus is “transferred from the critical talk and activities to the collection of [practices] and power relationships (on my part and my students) produced by offering a critical position

toward classroom texts” (p. 38), where individuals engage in critical, intellectual and emotional transactions with text and each other. Cai (2008) argues that critical engagement allows the reader to respond with resistance and “we should regard their resistance as a springboard for discussing and clarifying critical issues related to multicultural literature” (p. 217). Cai’s ideas about resistance are consistent with ideas about the roles of power, positioning, and perspective in relation to students critically and multiculturally constructing discourse as they engage with texts.

Feminist perspectives and critical constructivist lens offer this ethnographic study a way of looking at text and discourse critically and helps to question hegemonic structures in texts and in the power relations that exist among the participants. Additionally, a feminist poststructuralist perspective resonates the critical constructivist ideas espoused by Freire (Freire, 2000) pertaining to students having access to “problem-posing education” (p. 83), in my research design students are invited to explore the role hegemonic structures have played in their lives. As I observe students critically and multiculturally engaging with text I am observing how students acquire literacy through active processes and not passive acceptance or complacency, engaging in “problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world” (p. 83). As students engage with texts, from a feminist poststructural perspective St. Pierre (2000) argues, it is perceived through the lens of looking at the social characteristics of discourse as “historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs” (p. 485). Consistent with St. Pierre, I feel obligated to identify and address how power relations and patriarchal concepts are exercised in children’s literature, and in the classroom discursive events, to

promote the analysis of whose “ideas are revealed or omitted” (p. 485). Additionally, Morrell (Morell, 2007) argues that a poststructural perspective is significant because “it reveals that meanings aren’t fixed...they change and are constructed within existing relations of power” (p. 51).

Critical Democratic Strategies of Power

Foucault’s (1980) conceptualization of the connections between knowledge power, position, and perspective also address poststructural perspectives when he argues that “the formation of discourses and the genealogy of knowledge need to be analysed...in terms of strategies of power” (p. 77). Democratic strategies of power recognize critical practices for engaging children with literature and includes the understanding that power to construct knowledge cannot be the intellectual property of the adult facilitator, or any one participant (the term participant would then become quasi or even redundant). Through critical practices all the participants are co-constructors or re-constructors of the epistemological products. Consequently, dominance by any one individual within a critical context would be antithetical to these social commitments. Power is exercised through discourses (Foucault, 1980) and has a polyvocal texture, (Agger, 2006) and is influenced by the macro society, ideologies, multi-modal devices, and mass media. Within a critical perspective it is possible for everyone to exercise a unique power which as Foucault (1980) argues is shaped by “class position ...conditions of life and work ... the political and economic demands to which [people] submits or against which [people] rebels” (p. 132). Power is exercised through the point of view of the individual, but as a participant co-constructing learning with critical experiences this unique power is invaluable. Power

is an enabler of individual subjective realities. However, power is not static, individuals may exercise power with every utterance and every action.

Power Exercised Through Position

David Takacs (2003) argues that individuals exercise power through their position “who you are” shapes “what you know about the world” (p. 27). One’s position does bias one’s epistemology, and one’s position shapes critical engagement with the world emotionally and intellectually. O’Brien (2001) argues “The focus is thus transferred from the critical talk and activities to the collection of [practices] and power relationships (on my part and my students’ part) produced by offering a critical position toward classroom texts” (p. 38). Power and perspective are enacted when individuals critically engage in intellectual and emotional transactions with text, and during interactions as participants co-construct/reconstruct learning with critical experiences. Describing the relevance of power and perspective within the discourse of critical multicultural engagement becomes invaluable, because they enable individual and subjective realities and perspectives that can change over time “possibly in ways that grant more power to those who had been historically oppressed “ (Morell, 2007, p. 52), and as theorized by (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) “ Critical multicultural analysis is reading power and exposing how power is exercised...[and examines] the complexities of race, class, and gender...[the challenge for discourse and readers of text] is not to reproduce dominant readings but to interrupt them” (p. 117).

Position and Perspectives Conveyed in Discourse

_____ Positioning, is enacted when participants engage in discourse, and as Aukerman (2012) argues critical literacy practices invite students to “inhabit positions of textual authority” (p. 43), where they (students) also recognize that their own reading of text is

just one of many positions and understandings. Just as power and perspective are not static, individuals exercise position with every utterance and every action; “an individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through various discursive practices in which they participate” (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 5).

Theorizing Multicultural Children’s Literature

Multicultural children’s literature as a literary category has been a conduit for an adult imposed agenda influenced by political, economic, social, and cultural expectations. Consequently, how adults have conceptualized childhood and the educational needs of children has influenced the themes, contents, and accessibility of children’s literature for all children, Botelho and Rudman (2009). A definition of multicultural literature is connected to its intent and purpose which can be categorized as either literary or pedagogical, and as Cai (2011, p. xvi) argues, pedagogical development of multicultural literature has been more political than literary, being influenced by the Civil Rights Movement and feminism.

Definitions of multicultural literature focus on diverse human experiences. Morrell and Morrell (2012) argue, “when broadly defined... is about people from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds, who have been marginalized and considered outside of mainstream society...overshadowed by [racism and classism]” (p. 11). Definitions of what constitutes multicultural literature have been conceptualized from being only about people of color in this country or clustered under the umbrella of “minority books” Tunnell and Jacobs (2013, p. 84). Consistent with the ideas of Hill (2011) and Bishop (1990) multicultural literature concerns the experiences

of every human being. “Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences” (Bishop, 1990, p. 1), and critical work with multicultural literature includes engaging with a variety of genres, where children can apply social justice perspectives as they respond to diverse texts. I also, conceptualize that multicultural literature, is not as simply defined as a literary category or genre, because it presents the possibility for embodying a variety of literary genres: histories, her-stories, fables, realistic fiction, non-fiction, biographies and so on and explores these texts from critical, democratic, and social justice perspectives. Multicultural literature embodies diverse human experiences, and as Nieto argues multiculturalism has been a part of educational discourse and practice for forty years, therefore multicultural texts should not be regarded as supplemental but integral to the learning processes.

Theorizing Critical Literacies Pedagogy

Critical literacies involve practices that support students’ comprehension of ideas and meaning making and is concerned with understanding how hegemonic ideologies (Street, 1984, 1995) and power relations are conveyed and circulated within and through language. Janks (2010) argues “part of the work of critical literacy is to make these workings of power visible... and to reveal them as constructed representations of the social order, serving the interests of some at the expense of others” (p. 36). So, what does engagement with critical literacy look like in the classroom setting? Critical literacy pedagogy supports a democratic classroom where students ask critical questions, and as Janks has argued (2010) children are able to redesign what school should look like for them which consequently assists in promoting learning. Consistent with Janks, I suggest

critically engaged students can actively respond to text, intellectually, emotionally, and challenge, validate, construct, and reconstruct ideas about the social complexities of the world in which they live.

Critical pedagogy is essentially a democratic ideational “an interactive process” as hooks (2010, p. 9) argues. It is dialogical, and critical experiences with texts considers the “ideational” ways Street (1984, 1995) children have available to them for being thoughtfully engaged and consequently critically multiculturally literate. As argued by Vasquez (2017) young students engaged with critical literacy practices, “are likely going to be better able to contribute to a more equitably and socially just world...better able to make informed decisions regarding such issues as power and control” (p. 4). These critical intentions are consistent with the ideas of Aukerman (2012) who suggests that “critical literacy as dialogical engagement...may be particularly powerful because it potentially evokes conversations in which students have a profoundly personal stake” (p. 47). As students experience diverse multicultural reading material (what they read), and diverse experiences for engaging with texts (how they read), they are simultaneously participating in this critical multicultural process. I might add here that multimodal experiences also contribute to how children engage with text, their own text production, design, and redesign of text, (Janks, & Dixon, 2014). Within the critical and multicultural process students are more democratically positioned as change agents who can take action, and transform their learning using diverse literacy and literary resources available to them.

Critical multicultural literary and literacy practices are also viewed from a democratic perspective that fundamentally recognizes the needs of the students, and not

exclusively the teacher's needs or the needs of the curriculum. I am not suggesting that the core curriculum does not matter, but that it is better served / facilitated if it considers the needs of the students. Additionally, Vasquez (2017) has argued that students "learn best when what they are learning has importance to their lives... using the topics, issues, and questions that they raise should be an important part of creating the classroom curriculum" (pp. 3-4). Luke, Dooley, and Woods (2010) substantiate the need for critical engagement for literacy learning and reading comprehension when they argue that comprehension is vital in all content areas of the curriculum, and it is just as important in our current "text-saturated societies" (pp. 151-152). Street (1984, 1995) supports these pedagogical ideas for critical engagement, when he argues critical engagement promotes pragmatic experiences that allow us to "understand literacy in terms of concrete social practices and to theorize it in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded" (p. 95). Street's conceptualization of ideological models of literacy supports critical practices and recognizes that there is no one approach for critically engaging children with multicultural literature, pedagogical approaches are situated practices, occurring through the literacy events in the classroom and what the student participants bring to the learning.

In summary, the theories I am using to inform my research, feminist poststructuralist and critical constructivist perspectives address these concepts: knowledge is polyvocal and constructed through social interactions; reader responses are influenced by the intertextuality of language events, and the intellectual and emotional significance in those events. Critical multicultural perspectives from a pedagogical standpoint offers for the educator fundamental concepts on which to inspire and facilitate

experiences for students that promote intellectual and emotional understanding of the influences of power, race, class, and gender embedded in discourse and text (Botelho & Rudman, 2009); and critical multicultural understandings promote democratic possibilities enacted through perspectives, power, and positioning. Knowledge is power and within a critical perspective it is possible to exercise power through discourse (Foucault, 1980). The critical classroom (Freire, 2000) is one that offers democratic opportunities where children can have positions of leadership, and participate in the construction and reconstruction of the learning activities which lead to new epistemologies for all the participants including the teacher.

CHAPTER 3
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Educating young people in contemporary ethnically pluralistic society requires the educator to cultivate a multicultural context in the classroom that promotes critical appreciation for diversity. Including multicultural literature in the curriculum is a way to acknowledge diversity and to attend to sociopolitical issues and implications. Promoting critical multicultural engagement with children's texts requires an understanding of how it relates to the debate about the objectives of multicultural education *writ large* in the academic field. World (2019) argues for more diverse books and reading experiences "it is imperative for educators to think about the ways in which all students will be engaged in meaningful reading opportunities" (p. 13). Students' perceptions of other cultural groups are constructed by their socialization experiences. These influences include family and community values, media representations, and the types of printed resources that are available in their homes, community, and at school. Critical multicultural engagement with children's literature is essential for the classroom that challenges the hegemonic constructs that predominates children's literature (Rudman, 1995) and offers children the possibility to make meaning of social constructs, such as racism and other power relations. Describing the connection of critical engagement and multicultural literature Botelho and Rudman (2009) suggest "Children see that the text's meaning is constructed and reconstructed in interaction with the text, each other, and the world" (p. 12), and they argue teaching with multicultural literature includes critical multicultural analysis that "means keeping the power relations of class, race, and gender

at the center of our investigations of children's literature, thus connecting our reading to sociopolitical and economic justice" (p. 268).

Additionally, Nieto (2002) argues that because critical practices include "the experiences and viewpoints of students it is by its very nature multicultural" (pp. 45-47). Nieto (1992, with Bode, 2017) describes the significance of multicultural literature for promoting critical learning as a valuable process in all areas of the curriculum. Fifteen years after Rudman's third reissue of *Children's Literature: An Issues Approach* Luke, Dooley, and Woods (2010) also argue for the consideration of "culturally based reading comprehension and critical literacy" (pp. 7-8).

This literature review builds on and extends the critical multicultural perspectives of scholars in the field and discusses some of the pervasive practices that invite children to be critically and emotionally engaged with text. This review is guided by the question: In what way is critical multicultural engagement with children's texts theorized and practiced? Adopting a feminist poststructural lens this review considers multicultural texts as social transcripts (Botelho & Rudman, 2009) and examines several teacher-research studies and teacher and researcher collaborative studies centered on the literacy events and practices that occur while students and teachers engage critically and multiculturally with texts. Consistent with Botelho and Rudman (2009) I am suggesting that this investigation is not only about *what to read*, but the primary focus is on *how to read* and use a critical and multicultural lens while engaging with children's literature (p. 269). A review of the literature is organized as follows: (1) The methodology for reviewing the empirical research, including Critical Discourse Analysis for discussing the literature; (2) A description of practices that have influenced classroom literacy teaching

over the past two decades; (3) A discussion of empirical research centered on critical multicultural engagement with children's texts, the findings; and (4) Conclusions.

Methods for Reviewing the Research Literature

The process for reviewing literature that identifies empirical studies centered on critical multicultural engagement with children's texts includes researching qualitative and ethnographic studies that have impacted the literacy teaching landscape in the United States and international contexts, beginning in the early 1990s to the current era. The research period for this literature review spans nearly thirty years beginning with Nieto (1992), to more current literature that includes: Vasquez, (2017), Luke (2020), Fontanella-Nothom (2019), and World (2019). I chose to begin my research period in the early 1990s, when Sonia Nieto (1992) published her noteworthy work on multicultural education, and Violet Harris (1992) introduced her perspectives about the teaching of multicultural literature. About the same time, Australian scholar Barbara Comber (1993) disseminated her classroom research on critical literacy pedagogy. These scholars' works have contributed to the development of critical multicultural perspectives and practices in the United States. I would also add that in contemporary times pedagogical development of multicultural children's literature in classrooms continues to be impacted by the underrepresentation of our diverse, socially, and economically evolving communities.¹

Researching the Studies

I reviewed mainly ethnographic studies that represent classroom teacher research studies, or collaborations between researchers and classroom teachers whose pedagogy include critically engaging children with multicultural texts in various areas of the

¹ See infographic in the conclusion depicting diversity in children's books in 2018 compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

curriculum. I used multiple sources for locating empirical studies through the following databases: ERIC, MLA International Bibliography, MLA Directory of Periodicals, and the journal archives of the National Association for Multicultural Education and New England Reading Association and Connected Community electronic database of the National Council of Teachers of English. Keywords used for searches were empirical research with multicultural children's literature, teaching multicultural literature, critical literacy, and multicultural education. Fourteen of these publications I selected for the review of critical practices were directly relevant to the elementary context, and discussed the importance of inquiry in critical literacy instruction; three address the construction of self-perception and the promotion of identity, six articles discuss strategies for teaching and promoting reading comprehension, and all of these articles directly address multicultural children's literature.

Initially, for identifying themes and making connections for discussion points in the various articles and empirical studies, I categorized the research literature in a matrix based on the practices of Feak and Swales (2009) as shown in Appendix A. For the analytical process, I adopted a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory (Emerson et al., 1995) is used to locate common sociocultural themes, by coding, categorizing, and selecting recurring themes. Grounded theory as conceptualized by (Wolfswinkle, Furtmueller, & Wilderom, 2013) complements a feminist poststructuralist view. By disturbing the literature it offers a way of looking at multiple perspectives, and it recognizes that "the textual data can be analyzed in a variety of different ways" (p. 53) to "reach a thorough and theoretically relevant analysis of a topic" (Wolfswinkel et al.,

2013). This practice involves a constant comparison process for collecting and for revealing the themes and links throughout the empirical studies.

Analyzing the Studies

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is used to identify and examine the moments of critical engagement, how language is used, and how the students and teacher are positioned through their utterances and roles in the literacy events. Discourse analysis according to Rex and Schiller (2009) allows the teacher research to “capture interactions in the moment” (p. xi) and discursive choices. It also allows for discussion about the ideas and prior understandings that the children and the teacher have brought to the learning events including the intertextual influences, which in turn contributes to the responses and observable phenomenon. In terms of the roles of power, positioning, and perspective, Bloome and Willis (2013) nuance the historical functions of classrooms influenced by the evolving needs of society in respect of “the acculturation of students to fit in with and contribute to the extant society, so that they can find an appropriate place within its social life and order” (p. 14). Bloome and Willis’ (2013) discussion alludes to data that has a social action dimension, and as Rogers and Schaenen (2014) argue “literacy researchers are considering how their critical analyses of discourses can result in micro – and macrolevel changes” (p. 137).

Practices That Have Influenced Literacy Teaching

My research of the literature considers literacy practices that have historically influenced children’s reading experiences. Literacy practices are often recycled by policy or mandated curriculum and have informed and influenced (affirmed or contradicted) the development of newer practices. Altwerger, Jordan, and Shelton’s (2007) research about

reading fluency, decoding, and meaning-centered approaches for reading instruction, is an example of how reconceptualization of ideas has impacted literacy practices: “We have found that some current instructional practices touted as tried and true ways to increase fluency have their foundation in meaning-based, whole language instruction” (p.107). The following section identifies that literacy practices can be categorized in terms of autonomous and ideological models for example, the Four Resources model conceptualized in 1990 by Luke and Freebody (1997) and the Four Dimensions model (Lewison et al., 2002).

Autonomous and Ideological Literacy Models

A discussion of practices that have influenced literacy teaching can be discussed as autonomous or ideological models (Street, 1984, 1995). Autonomous models are cognitive-psychological and inclusive of metacognitive experiences with text where children learn to think about how they read. Ideological models afford children contexts where they are socially, intellectually, and emotionally engaged with the ideas conveyed in text. Ideological models include pragmatic experiences with text and recognizes that “communication can involve many things, themselves the outcome of previous social process...to study these we have to examine the structural, political and ideological features of the society” (p. 96). Critical engagement promotes pragmatic experiences that allow us to “understand literacy in terms of concrete social practices and to theorise it in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded” (Street, 1984, 1995).

In this next section, I will discuss reciprocal teaching, a common metacognitive and autonomous practice that is ubiquitous in many classrooms. Following this I will

discuss ideological, and pragmatic models, revisiting Behrman's (2006) literature review of critical literacy practices as part of this work.

Reciprocal Teaching with Children

An example of an autonomous model is described by Stricklin (2011, pp. 620–621) in her discussion on reciprocal teaching. Simply stated, reciprocal practices involve children learning how to understand texts with limited involvement from the teacher. The four strategies model of reciprocal teaching developed by Palincsar and Brown (1984) advocates that teachers should instruct students to use the strategies of: predicting – where children predict before reading then check their prediction during the reading; clarifying – the reader stops to clarify unknown words or ideas; questioning – where children respond to teacher generated questions to check for understanding during and after reading; and, summarizing – where the teacher or children summarize the text after reading. The teacher's role is to activate prior knowledge; monitor students' use of the four strategies; and, to encourage reflection, particularly, - the efficacy of a particular strategy.

Arguably the four reciprocal strategies present ways to inspire students to think about themselves as readers in metacognitive ways. The problem here is that reading, and comprehension are viewed as skills to be acquired and that is the sole purpose of children's engagement with text, consequently meaning is restricted within the text. From a critical multicultural standpoint children's experiences with text are much more than learning to use a set of autonomous skills. Reciprocal strategies are fundamental for metacognitive practices, but insufficient and problematic alone. Reading experiences, as Ohanian (1999, p. 79) suggests, should involve the cerebral (intellectual), critical, and

emotional. In terms of multicultural themes, the Four Resources and the Four Dimensions are ideological models that offer more pragmatic possibilities for critical, intellectual, and emotional engagement with texts.

The Four Resources

Luke, Dooley, and Woods (2011) substantiate the need for critical approaches to literacy learning in their discussion about the Four Resources model conceptualized by Muspratt, Freebody and Luke in (1997). They align their ideas of reading comprehension to those of John Dewey (2010) when they suggest that comprehension is an act for “making sense of social and cultural worlds” (p. 149) and vital in all content areas of the curriculum and for all children. As readers engage with text they may use the four resources: as a *text decoder*, the reader applies autonomous skilled based knowledge to actually decipher letters and sound; as a *text participant*, the reader becomes involved with the text/story and attempts to comprehend it by drawing on prior knowledge of themes and genre; the *text user* can identify and use different genres of texts for a variety of purposes; and, as a *text analyst*, the reader tries to understand the power relations in the text and think about whose interests are served by the text. Janks and colleagues (2014) acknowledge that critical engagement with text requires the reader using all four resources, but they suggest that the role of *text analyst* (p.11) has significant importance for critical work with texts. Critical engagement with multicultural literature is supported by pedagogical approaches that promotes personal and analytical responses to text, and not just literal interpretations.

The Four Dimensions Model

The Four Dimensions is the conception of Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002, p. 382) and represent ideological perspectives for critical literacy practices. The Four Dimensions are: (1) disrupting the commonplace, (2) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (3) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (4) taking action and promoting social justice. These dimensions were developed from a synthesis of practices described in research and professional literature; but they were inspired through these researchers' own work with classroom teachers, exploring "real-life and controversial issues" (p. 384) with the desire to "move away from passive reading and become more actively engaged" (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 384) with multicultural literature. Lewison, Flint, and Sluys conducted research in elementary classrooms that examined racial identity with children's literature and explored multiple viewpoints with social issues books. The Four Dimensions afford the possibilities for children to use their emotions, senses, experiences, and intertextual resources for critically responding to literature. This model extends both the reciprocal the Four Resources models by specifically providing pedagogical strategies that promotes critical intellectual, analytical, emotional, and personal engagement with multicultural children's literature. Table 1 shows a possible juxtaposition of autonomous and ideological models how their relate and expand each other.

Table 1: A possible juxtaposition of autonomous and ideological models.

Juxtaposing Autonomous and Ideological Models for Critical Engagement (1) Palinscar and Brown model of 1986 (<i>italics</i>); Freebody and Luke's (1990) "Four Resources"; and The Four Dimensions model Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002).

<p>The Four Resource Model (Role of the Reader)</p>	<p>Abbreviated descriptions of the reader's utilization of the four resources²</p>	<p>Responses produced when critically engaged (intellectual, pragmatic, emotional)</p>
<p>1 Text Decoder Reader can crack the text's code.</p>	<p>Knows the patterns and structures of semiotic codes- spoken, written, and visual</p>	<p>Intellectual (Autonomous skills)³</p>
<p>2 Text User Reader is engaged with a variety of texts. <i>(predicting, clarifying, questioning, summarizing)</i></p>	<p>Use texts for specific purposes in social contexts.</p>	<p>Intellectual, pragmatic, emotional</p>
<p>3 Text Participant Engaged active readers who understand key ideas and are involved with the story.</p>	<p>Interacts with the text to construct meanings and make connections</p>	<p>Intellectual, pragmatic, emotional</p>

² The *four roles* (1990) were revised by Luke and Freebody to become *a family of practices* (1999). I use the current term *the four resources* because contemporary multimodal literacies are nuanced in the descriptions.

³ Autonomous-refers to reading strategies children independently use to literally decode text exclusive of comprehension.

<p><i>(predicting, clarifying, questioning, summarizing)</i></p>	<p>to other social and textual worlds.</p>	
<p>4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Text Analyst</p> <p>Reader tries to understand whose interests are served by the text.</p> <p>How are power relations presented in the text?</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Clarifying and Questioning)</i></p> <p>5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The Four Dimensions</p> <p>(1). Disrupting the commonplace,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(2) Interrogating multiple viewpoints,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(3) Focusing on sociopolitical issues,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(4) Taking action and promoting social justice.</p>	<p>Identifies how text manipulates the reader, shapes, and defines identities, society, beliefs, and positions.</p> <p>Power, perspective, and positioning are critiqued.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Intellectual, pragmatic, emotional</p>

The chart illustrates that Palinscar’s four reciprocal strategies seems to have further significance when viewed with the pragmatic ways to respond and engage critically with literature. The customary order of text user and text participant have been inverted in the first two rows of the diagram to emphasize the metacognitive strategies connection for decoding and utilizing different types/genres of text. Rows three, four, and five show

ideological models (Street, 1984, 1995) for engaging with text. The Four Dimensions when positioned with the role of text analyst would appear to provide specific objectives for the text analyst to critically engage with literature and affirms the point that critical approaches with multicultural literature is not just about teachers using multicultural literature to simply share good stories, or for students to decode text, summarize or make predictions. How these models all relate to Behrman's (2006) review of critical literacy practices for engagement with literature will be discussed in the next section.

Six Practices for Critical Engagement

Behrman's (2006, pp. 492–493) review of professional literature highlights teachers' practices that support the promotion of critical engagement. At the time of his review there were not many materials theorizing these practices. While his study does not directly acknowledge or mention multicultural literature, his findings do substantiate the relationship between critical practices and using multicultural texts to promote critical literacy. Behrman's review shows that critical practices rely on multicultural text resources that are inclusive of the experiences of marginalized people⁴. Six key practices for critical engagement with literature were identified in his review: (1) reading supplementary texts, (2) reading multiple texts, (3) reading from a resistant perspective, (4) producing counter texts, (5) conducting student-choice research projects, and (6) taking social action (p. 492). These six practices support the ideological models described earlier. I am also suggesting that the models are recursive and interdependent. For example, as text analysts and text participants, critical multicultural readers are

⁴ Texts such as *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor (1976) & *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1960).

positioned to ask whose interests are served by the text? How are power relations represented in the text? As text decoders and text users, readers may draw on contextual and visual cues, and their funds of knowledge to use the text analyst resource for constructing meaning.

These literacy practices formulate the backdrop of the following review of empirical studies as I address the research question: What does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts? I will review and analyze empirical teacher research studies and collaborations reporting on critical multicultural practices with children's literature in a variety of contexts.

The theoretical tools (discussed earlier) for analyzing the research literature of empirical studies and for later discussion of my research findings in chapters four through six are summarized here: knowledge is constructed through social interactions; reader responses are influenced by the intertextuality of language events and the emotional significance in those events; discourse and text are influenced by hegemonic structures and social constructs such as race, class, and gender; and a critical multicultural lens acknowledges democratic possibilities enacted through perspectives, power, and positioning. The review includes: (1) a presentation of empirical studies of practices for critical multicultural engagement with children's texts; (2) an analysis of the findings regarding power, perspective, and positioning; and (3) a discussion and concluding remarks.

Empirical Studies of Critical Practices

My critical review of the research literature yielded the following critical engagement practices (to be discussed in this order): making connections and

disconnections, prioritizing students asking questions, analyzing multiple sources, and taking action. Each of the studies will be discussed by describing: the purpose of the study, research setting, research design, critical practice, research findings, and analysis of the study. Appendix B offers a condensed view of the empirical studies.

Making Connections and Disconnections

Making connections for promoting meaning has been a practice in literacy teaching contexts Botelho and Rudman (2009, pp. 11–12). Customarily, students are asked to locate the similarities between themselves and the characters or events in the text, other texts, and events in the macro contexts. The studies below illustrate that making disconnections with the text is as equally important.

Drawing on Personal Cultural Knowledge in Literature Discussions

Three studies in this review address the significance of making connections and disconnections, Robinson (2013), Jones (2013), and Enciso's (1994). Enciso's research is based on her understanding that society is historically racialized, and her belief that literature can inspire empathy for "different people, times, and dilemmas" (p. 524). The study's purpose was to examine how the participants (teacher and students) drew on their cultural experiences to define their own identities and those of others. She conducted a teacher research study with fourth and fifth grade students in an elementary arts-based school in a diverse suburban area. The student participants were mainly from low-income backgrounds who regularly acted in disrespectful ways related to ethnicity or criticized each other's physical appearance, "Monica's nickname is 'Bonkers'" (p. 525).

Enciso's (1994) theoretical framework included Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional model that claims that when readers engage with text and the lives of the characters, they

may acquire understandings about their own lives. Her research covers a four-week period and involves reading aloud a text that she selected and collecting data from: discussions (including spontaneous discussions); and children's artistic interpretations of the characters, events, and themes in the story. She discusses her own ethnic heritage with the students to show them the cultural groups that she identifies with. She held pre-reading, and post-literature discussions with the students, where they were organized into heterogeneous groups that were ethnically diverse, varying reading level attainments, and friendships. Enciso facilitated the discussions beginning with race and racism by having the students compare two main characters: the African American "tough guy" and the "white supremacist bully" (p. 527).

Enciso's critical practice of positioning the children as text analysts and critics, offers them power to critique social norms. Marisa, for example, disrupts the common place when she wonders why other ethnic groups are not included in the narrative "Where would like Mexicans or Chinese or someone like that be?" (p. 524). Enciso discovers that "the way we discuss literature and encourage our students' responses also influences how we see ourselves and others" (p.532). Here, she is referring to the teacher and the students. She claims that students need to be involved in conversations that challenge stereotypes and encourage critique, otherwise their ideas about race are constructed around what they experience in mainstream television, or sports and used as their frames of reference or "cultural maps" (p. 527). This not only applies to how students respond to literature but also to events in their own lives. She also finds that in one of her initial discussion groups the children avoid discussing race. Instead, the students steer the conversation into a discussion about personality. Enciso finds that to

discuss race she needs to present a theme from the book that directly addresses race. She chooses segregation. One of the African American students makes a connection with historical events (segregation on buses) and the Puerto Rican experience in the musical *West Side Story* to expand and construct an understanding of segregation for the other students.

Enciso (1994) describes her fascination with Jerry Spinelli's 1990 *Maniac Magee*, a story where the protagonist crosses social, and cultural boundaries, and encounters bigotry and stereotypes. She specifically chooses this book to consider this group dynamic as she felt that a book that deals with "racial conflict had significant implications" (p. 525) for the children's sense of identity in relation to others. Here, she positions her need to explore this book as more important than the students' interests. Her position is based on assumptions about the students' needs because they often disparage each other. Later, she discovers that releasing her power over to the students during the discussions allows them to draw on cultural referents to show intertextual connections to social and political ideologies, which further promotes critical analysis and engagement.

Enciso's study discusses identity and the importance of children having opportunities for these types of discussions, but raises an important issue concerning how the teacher's position influences the learning. She did not have discussions with the students about their heritages or ethnic and cultural affiliations before beginning this study, which had implications later in the study and findings. She introduced her students by making assumptions about their heritage "Marisa, who appeared to be of Latina heritage, often had conversations with Richard" (p. 525). Richard self-identified as African American and made several allusions to historical events concerning Black

history. On these assumptions Enciso formulates discussion groups that later affected the superficial and inconsequential attitude or amusement of some of the students. In one discussion, Enciso and the students discuss the scene in the story where the White Protagonist Maniac, accepts a bite of chocolate from the African American character. But the serious deep conversation about the encounter between the two strangers and how they relate to each other was lost when the teacher asks about the relevance of color when sharing a bite of chocolate “So it doesn’t matter about who is black or white or green or orange ...?” The students then erupt in laughter and one even declares “If he was orange or green, I would never take a bite” (p. 529).

Inadvertently, as facilitator her study does emphasize the importance of careful questioning strategies and the paradoxes created when teachers make assumptions, creating possible adverse situations that reinforce stereotyped attitudes, or undermine children’s sense of importance. One of the White students refers to the African American character as a thief because he loves Mars bars so much “He probably steals them” (p. 524). Here is an example of an opportunity where students could question the author’s representations by exercising their power to share their perspectives and to interrogate multiple viewpoints. It is also important not to single out specific children for commenting on sensitive questions that the teacher has devised but work from the students’ inquiries. It is important for children to deconstruct, construct, and reconstruct with each other in ways that are not necessarily available to the teacher but support children’s shared experiences.

Reading for Disconnections and Extending the Four Resources Model

Jones (2013) taught the Four Resources Model and critical literacy pedagogy in her university classes and expressed an interest in conducting further research in this area. The purpose of Jones' study was to extend the findings of a previous three-year ethnographic study started in 2007 where she found that working-class children needed to be affirmed in their own identity. Her objectives for the study include: evaluating the efficacy of the Four Resources Model for planning and analyzing reading instruction; considering how these practices support the "construction of students as text analysts"; studying how "critical literacies pedagogy change" with children from marginalized communities; and, noticing how her students felt "entitled to position themselves" as text analysts who "engage in constructive and reconstructive practices" (Jones, 2013, pp. 198–200). The eleven-week study takes place in an urban second-grade classroom, in a high poverty area in the Midwest. The neighborhood consists of predominantly European-American families as well as Guatemalan and Mexican families.

Jones' (2013) perspectives of literacy are based on feminist poststructural theories of language, power, and identity; and acknowledges that power conveyed through language influences inequalities and promotes the marginalization of certain groups of people. This critical ethnographic study includes classroom observations, video-taped readings of large group discussions, audio-taped small group discussions, interviews, writing samples, and descriptions of children's books. Initially, the Four Resource Model was used as an analytical tool. Later it was expanded to explore themes of agency, identity, and power.

For preparing to engage children in critical ways of learning, it was important for Jones to experience the children's lives outside of the classroom. Her intention was to acquire a deeper understanding of the students, their cultures, and the knowledge that they brought to the classroom context. The class participated in read-aloud and small group discussions of social issues and multicultural texts. Jones (2013) promotes critical practices by engaging the children as text analysts as theorized in the Four Resource Model. She explained to the children that critiquing a text or altering it, did not mean the same as not liking the text, and one could respond having both positions (p. 214). Her strategy was to have the students omit or replace characters and or change events from the original story with persons or situations from their own life. Hope, for example had several older male cousins and uncles that were important in her life, but no older brothers "Hope: And add the father as a big brother or somethin" (p. 213).

Jones alludes to the ubiquitous practice in many literacy programs for generating student responses, that of having students make text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections (2013, p. 218). Jones' work points out that this is inefficient for responding as text analysts. Jones observes that, as text analysts, when children make personal connections to text, they are more inclined to align themselves with ideologies rather than to critique them. She needs to help her students to be affirmed in their own identity. She identifies the "missing discourse of agency and power within literacy learning spaces" (p. 199). Her research shows that specific scaffolding and extending the four resources model were needed when considering issues of identity and agency. Jones claims that "marginalized readers need to feel a sense of entitlement in order to position themselves as text analysts before they can begin to challenge and question mainstream

texts” (p. 198). The preponderance of class-privileged lives in early reading texts often ignores the social experiences of marginalized children and diminishes the lives of children of low socio-economic households. Jones found that the children wanted “to align themselves with the text” (p. 204) and were “constructing fictions about their lives” centered on ideas and behaviors of the characters in the books they were reading, in this case *Henry and Mudge* by Cynthia Rylant. One of the children declared that she had had an elaborate birthday party as the protagonist “I had a goldfish at my party too” (p. 204), which Jones and the other classmates knew to be untrue.

As Enciso’s (1994), research and in Jones’ (2013) study the subjects were children from low-income areas. In contrast, Jones who identifies with this community, brought to her research an “insider” understanding (Banks, 1996) of her students’ daily lives and cultural experiences. Her work was not based on assumptions about the children’s cultural identity, illustrating that a teacher’s familiarity with the outside lives of the children generates the opportunity to engage in informed practices with her students based on their experiences, interests, and needs.

Her strategies for critically engaging the children extended the role of the text analyst. Critical engagement for Jones and her students meant giving the students the power to alter the text to represent their own lives and was productive for helping the children promote and construct positive attitudes about their own lived experiences. By positioning the children as co-constructors capable of independent thought she asked their opinions “What would you change?” (Jones, 2013, p. 212). Having the children compare how the character behaved in ways similar or not to how people in their own lives allowed the children to reposition themselves in relation to a mainstream children’s

book that portrays “perfect lives”. Jones’ research reveals that power, position, and perspective have significant implications on how a child’s sense of identity is promoted through text. She found that it was particularly challenging for working-class children to independently and critically engage with books that represented middle-class experiences, especially when the images did not match their own lives. Jones provides a space where children as active agents could reposition themselves to reconstruct texts that will reflect their own identities (p. 205). To be critically engaged with text she encouraged positive constructions, deconstruction, and reconstructions of students’ lived experiences.

Similarly, Robinson’s (2013) ethnographic study with her class of third grade students were based on her ideas that critical multicultural engagement with children’s literature inspires empathy and understanding for communities whose experiences may be different from their own. Her research participants were from a semi-rural college town community where the socio-economic population was very diverse, and included students whose parents’ employment were affiliated with the local colleges in various capacities, and there were students whose families were considered low-income, (p. 47). The purposes of her study were to discover the understandings students learn about themselves and others while engaging with multicultural literature, and to describe the experiences that invite children to respond critically and emotionally with multicultural texts. Robinson’s strategies for critical engagement included using a variety of genres of texts including biographies, using interactive reading process where the children were asked to respond using multimodal tools (drawing writing, role play), and having discussions where the students could pose questions and concerns about ideas raised in

the texts. Following a whole class interactive reading and discussion of a biography about the early life of Dr. Ben Carson (p. 48), some of the students responded by suggesting that Carson, “was pretty much maybe a little disrespected.” Eve, another student asks, “Why would they mistreat somebody?” (Robinson, 2013, p. 48).

Robinson’s findings revealed that interactive and critical reading of multicultural literature offered students the opportunity to articulate and challenge their understandings of social phenomenon “When you’re famous it doesn’t matter what race you are, you’re automatically respected” and, “I think it is harder for Black people to get famous” (p. 49). Robinson argues that critical engagement offers children opportunities to “identify the hegemonic structures in society and how racial identity has been used to position people of color, which ultimately reveals how they perceive who holds the power: White people, wealthy, and some famous.” (p. 49). Another reading lesson involved the interactive read aloud of *How Many Days to America? A Thanksgiving Story*, by Eve Bunting. Abigail’s family had had similar experiences as refugees fleeing a war-torn country and this story proved to be significant for her, but also provoked emotions in the other students, “As I concluded the discussion, a group of them approached me and hugged me. They thanked me for sharing this story with them” (p. 43). Robinson’s findings suggest critical engagement promotes empathy and offers cathartic experiences where children can reflect on their own lives, as illustrated in the excerpt where Abigail approaches Ms. Robinson and declares that the critical experiences “makes me relate to stories, because it makes me feel that I am not different to anybody else” (p. 50). Additionally, as seen here, children appreciate and need critical multicultural experiences with text.

The following sections will focus on questioning practices. This includes a comparison of practices for questioning texts, interviewing, playing roles for considering multiple perspectives, and participating in literature circles.

Prioritizing Students Asking Questions

Questioning Opportunities Position Children as Facilitators

Commeyras' (1994) research goal was to promote critical thinking while engaging in story book discussions with the intention to inspire her students' "interpretative reading and the ability to defend interpretations"; and "to identify the specifics involved in handing over aspects of critical thinking-oriented discussions to second grade students" (p. 517) where the students would facilitate discussions with limited teacher input. This was a seventeen-week collaborative study between a second-grade classroom teacher and a college professor. The class was comprised of twenty European American and African American children. The theoretical framework included ideas about the importance of teacher generated questioning strategies based on reciprocal teaching practices conceptualized by Palincsar and Brown (1984). The research was supported by the idea that: "questioning was identified as one of seven strategies employed by thoughtful readers" (p. 517). The data was collected by engaging students in critical practices through discussions about the stories that were read aloud, and by individual interviews with the children.

The teachers took turns selecting the multicultural texts and leading the discussions. As the children listened to the story the teacher asked them to think about questions that could have more than one answer to a major event in the story. These questions required the children to analyze and discuss alternative endings to the stories.

The children also used the illustrations to challenge previous ideas, to construct new ideas, create discussion points, and to challenge impressions “Keisha used the illustration on the book cover to point out a difference in height between the two girls” (p. 520).

Having individually interviewed the children about ways to improve the whole class discussions, Commeyras (1994) learned that when identifying questions for discussion it was more helpful for children to discuss issues and develop questions centered on their concerns and not the interests of the teacher because “they need opportunities in school to think about the issues they see as relevant and interesting” (pp. 519-522). In the transcript of the classroom discussion the children wanted to question the presence of the protagonist’s imaginary friend at school, Commeyras made three attempts at redirecting this inquiry “I decided that this was not a good question and tried to lead the students to agree with me” (p. 519), but the children were intrigued and persisted with the discussion which led to the development of further explanations. Commeyras deduced that children require opportunities “to develop and share their explanations and to have others react to their thinking” because this promotes “thinking that is necessary for making sense of unusual and puzzling circumstances” (p. 520). Commeyras’ comments here also allude to the importance for children having opportunities to think in private and as well as within a group.

Commeyras acknowledges a critical democratic practice of positioning the children as equal participants in the learning: “Let’s agree that we can discuss it” (p. 519). For promoting critical engagement, she argues that “The convention in teaching has been on teacher posed questions as opposed to student questioning” (pp. 517-519). Commeyras discovers that classroom activities should include inquiry based on the

children's interests and experiences. Her strategy involves exploring the questions she felt children need to have answers to and not just the questions derived from the teacher's own interpretations or understandings. In her study, the children have the power to influence and promote their ideas. Also, we see one of the Four Dimensions, interrogating multiple viewpoints, used as a process where children have power over their own learning, positioning them as facilitators of their own learning through the construction of questions that have meaning for them. This practice was also researched by Souto-Manning.

Souto-Manning (2009) explored culturally responsive pedagogy through multicultural children's literature. Her goal was to show that using children's literature benefits the "educational needs of all children" (p. 50). This was an eight-week teacher research of literacy events in her first-grade classroom of nineteen students. Children were diverse in terms of ethnicity and household composition including grandparents, single parents, foster children, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds some were wealthy, and others lived in government-subsidized housing.

Her research design was a teacher action research where the focus question was based on her students' concerns about pull out programs where the students questioned why certain children went to certain classes while others could not choose to do so. A teaching assistant transcribed the dialogue as it occurred, also tape recorders were placed at various places around the classroom capturing whole group discussions and that also focused on diverse dialectically different conversations addressing the same topic, inside and outside of the classroom. She adopted a critical theoretical framework that "aims to challenge uneven power relationships" (Souto-Manning, 2009, p. 55). Her framework

also acknowledged the ideas of Janks (2010) who claims that with the deconstruction of ideas there must be opportunities for reconstruction, agency, and the possibility of change (p. 53). Her data analysis included a constant comparison approach.

Locating and Validating Identity

Priority was given to cultivating a collaborative classroom that involved children learning about their backgrounds and issues in the classroom. In her work Souto-Manning began at a point inspired by children's observations and concerns, she involved the use of children's multicultural books as conversation starters for: examining competing narratives and writing counter narratives to dominant discourses. She read aloud books on similar themes or topics but from different perspectives this excerpt shows a student's response "I get it ...even when we read the same story, we can understand it differently!" (Souto-Manning, 2009, p. 62). Her process for inquiry with the children drew on the Four Dimensions of critical practice as described by Lewison, Seely-Flint, and Van -Sluys (2002) particularly the practice of disrupting the common place and interrogating multiple viewpoints for making differences visible. Additional text resources such as media reports and articles were used.

Souto-Manning highlights the importance of having dialogic experiences while children engage with multicultural texts for uncovering social issues and for extending conversations. As in Enciso's (1994) study, she read aloud books about the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to foster empathy and further their discussion. An example is when she and the children decided to investigate that the racially and socioeconomically segregated nature of pull-out programs can be replaced by programs that use multicultural children's literature for better serving the needs of all children. For

making the children and their interests central in the classroom Souto-Manning considered issues “through problem posing” (p. 59). She found that her students started to question prior assumptions, and respect different voices and perspectives; they questioned classroom and school routines. She found that classroom dialogue about a book is as important as reading the book “It is the role of the teacher to facilitate the dialogue and to pay attention to the critical turns, supporting them, so as to promote and enable problem solving and action among young children” (p. 65). Souto-Manning’s argument also illustrates that in some instances the transference of power between the teacher and the students is needed for supporting the students’ engagement and understanding.

Souto-Manning asks, “How can we value students’ diversity of experiences and backgrounds as something we can build on, instead of something that needs to be fixed?” (p. 55). Consistent with points argued in the Enciso’s discussion of practices concerning a child’s sensitivity, this study also raises the point that teachers need to acknowledge how to discuss certain issues with children, without the risk of provoking awkward and uncomfortable realizations in children’s consciousness about themselves that may not have existed prior to participating in the discussions.

Interviewing Community Members

Souto-Manning (2013) extends her previous study where her critical practices were based on students’ interests, questioning strategies, and an inquiry approach with multicultural literature. In this research she promotes active learning that builds “on the strengths of young children – encouraging them to continue asking” questions (p. 23) by interviewing experts and community members who major sources of information are.

This study was a collaboration between a professor and teacher–researcher, in a semi-rural college town. There were twenty second-grade students from diverse socio-economic, ethnic, and generational family households.

Souto-Manning (2013) again adopts the Four Dimensions for engaging critical practices. She presents the perspective of interrogating multiple viewpoints by challenging traditional practices by asking “Who told the story? Is there another possible narrative? What are other perspectives? Are there additional points of view or explanations?” (p. 14). In disrupting the common place, she uses multicultural children’s literature and then poses a philosophical discussion. There are no right or wrong answers. The classroom teacher invites the children to ask questions, by inviting members of the public and neighborhood to be interviewed by the children (2013, pp. 34-40). Souto-Manning believes that “accuracy and completeness” (pp. 14-15) promotes equal opportunity and cultural pluralism. When the teacher asks “Is there anyone who is brave all the time?” (p. 34), this led to a discussion about Jesus, the teacher and the children were motivated to seek answers by inviting a pastor and a rabbi to be interviewed by the children.

Souto-Manning (2013) finds that critically engaging children with multicultural literature respects diverse points of view and encourages children to value multiple viewpoints; it lays the foundation for further teaching of positions statements to support the individual’s point of view, to agree or disagree, and encourages strong oral language and persuasive practices. Her students learned “that they can get so much more from an interview and from a relationship than they could from reading an impersonal answer on a computer screen” (p. 37). Through face-to-face interactions in the interviews, children

could develop their oral language skills, and “develop listening and speaking skills, with high motivation to comprehend others’ ideas” (p. 38).

The salient point in this study is that the teacher realized the significance of having the children enhance their learning experience by having community members contribute their knowledge to assist the children construct further understandings. Engaging children with critical questioning practices reveals that when they are given the power to steer inquiry their understandings have a deeper clarity and relevance. In traditional classroom contexts the teacher controls the questioning situations and events and controls the power. In Souto- Manning’s (2013) research she acknowledges that from “a critical perspective, inquiry is multicultural because it transforms the curriculum in ways that address both personal and culturally relevant teaching as well as rigorous educational opportunities” (pp. 41-55). Another important point here is, as Souto - Manning alludes, that interviewing “allows us to move away from teaching Eurocentric curricula” (p. 24) that has been privileged in education. Multicultural discourse and perspectives are promoted when community members are invited into the classroom, and children’s connection to their community identity can be affirmed.

Price-Dennis, Holmes, and Smith (2016) approached their study with the understanding that “children’s literature can provide a starting point for addressing issues of social justice or injustice” (p. 315) where children can explore racism. The context for their study was a fifth-grade elementary language arts classroom in an urban setting where most of the population were students of color, 51% of whom were Latino (p. 317). The focus of their study was to better understand how discussions about race impacted student’s responses to text, and how this influenced the student’s interpretations of texts

about race (p. 315). Their theoretical framework was informed by critical race theory and critical literature inquiry. The data was collected during a series of 90-minute lessons where some lasted over a period of two days. The literature and digital resources used included works by African American writers: *Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry*, by Mildred Taylor, poetry “Let America Be America Again”, by Langstone Hughes, and “Little Things Are Big”, by Jesus Colon a Puerto Rican poet. The researchers approached their study with the idea that literature “is a potential site for critical inquiry” (p. 315) for students to better understand themselves and the world, where literature provided a space where students could ask questions that were significant in their lives, such as questions about social class and life choices “They don’t want to do it, It’s their only option,” and “But don’t they have a choice to pick that job?” (p. 330). Some of the themes that emerged from their study indicated that the students had a more nuanced understanding about the historical and contemporary issues involving race, that multimodal and digital tools influenced student participation, and there was an increase in student agency. The findings of this research suggest that critical inquiry impacted a change in the student’s ideas and advocacy regarding marginalization and inequality.

Playing Roles for Presenting Multiple Perspectives

Labadie, Wetzel, and Rogers (2012) conducted teacher research to investigate critical literacy development. A significant goal of their research was to focus on how the teacher included critical reading practices. Their emphasis was to explore ways for critical engagement while introducing new literature and to expand the mandated guided reading⁵ methods for introducing texts that includes a picture run-through of a text where

⁵ **Guided Reading Programs** support a comprehensive **reading program** by integrating differentiated small-group instruction, assessment, and independent practice into your classroom. Teachers begin by

children make predictions about the plot and themes, and vocabulary run-throughs where the teacher will focus on key vocabulary in the text. By reframing the use of book introductions to include a critical approach that would allow the reader to interact with text in more powerful ways. In this year-long study in a second-grade classroom in racially diverse working-class urban community in St. Louis, the children were grouped according to guided reading assessment levels and interests, with selected texts that had illustrations and child protagonists. Labadie, Wetzel, and Rogers (2012) study was informed by Rosenblatt's transactional theory, and feminist post-structural ideas that consider text as social transcripts. The data of four videotaped guided reading lessons were analyzed using critical discourse analysis and multimodal theories (pp. 118-119).

In their study the teacher introduced the new text and invited the children to critically engage with the literature using two of the Four Dimensions: considering multiple perspectives and disrupting the common place for encouraging the children to view themes in the literature from a variety of perspectives. The teacher and her students explore abolition, slavery, civil rights, and resistance, and the children are given a variety of books (at various reading levels) on this topic. As "doorways into critical literacy" (p. 120) the teacher expands the picture run-through strategy by drawing on the children's prior understandings of the Civil Rights Movement (i.e., Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.) and include open-ended questioning strategies such as "What do you notice?" She also includes drama strategies for promoting emotional response by having the children react the way people in the illustrations were depicted. In one scene, the

grouping students, then prompt, encourage, and confirm how students apply problem-solving strategies as they read. Proponents of the guided reading approach are Fountas, I. C. & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading: Good first teaching for all children*. Portsmouth: Heinemann

teacher asks the children to demonstrate how the White bus driver reacted to the African American girl on the bus “shot her an angry look” (p. 120).

Additional strategies (p. 121). for using illustrations to introduce books in critical ways included: highlighting characters’ emotions and feelings; looking at how the characters and settings are depicted; examining whose point of view is represented in the illustration; and, considering looking at how the illustrator uses technique and color to show importance, emotions, and mood.

Labadie and colleagues (2012) suggest that for White teachers and students, their understanding of African American history could be supported by including representatives from this community into the classroom which is similar to Souto-Manning’s (2013) work. They present five ways teachers can promote critical literacy practices: (1) Teachers should consider how they use book introductions in read-alouds and guided reading, (2) observe how the children’s participation changes when the books concern critical social issues, (3) use videotape to capture the students’ verbal and nonverbal responses when books are being introduced, (4) evaluate to see if the children are using background knowledge for book introductions and if participation is impacting their reading strategies, and (5) reflect on the critical practices that need to be modeled for students (p. 126). Critical literacy practices are used for opening spaces for conversation, interrogating the viewpoints of peers, valuing multiple viewpoints, and taking stances about justice.

Interactive practices and role-plays offer multi-modal opportunities for critically engaging with multicultural literature. In their role plays a salient feature, children demonstrate key emotions featured in the illustrations and texts which can foster

empathetic responses and influence their construction of meaning. However, the teacher must be aware of having the children dramatically respond to the actions of just one character in the story. The children were asked to pretend to be the White bus driver. The teacher wanted them to demonstrate the meaning of the phrase, “shot her an angry look” (p. 120) to reveal the bus driver’s emotions towards the girl. The children were not asked to empathize with the protagonist by role-playing her emotions too. The White bus driver is being positioned as more important than the female African American protagonist. A possible interpretation by these African American children is that they too are being positioned as inferior and unimportant.

Using critical questioning strategies for looking at illustrations is a vital component of any critical classroom resource, Janks, Dixon Ferreira, Granville, and Newfield (2014) describe the power and positioning constructs that are conveyed in illustrations. Having students focus on the illustrations is a practice that I have adopted in my own work. The required practice of a quick picture walk through in the guided reading program, becomes a more profound experience that not only draws on the literal and concrete images, but becomes more provocative and meaningful when approached in critical ways. By comparing illustrations to previous experiences or texts or using prompts such as “What do you notice?” children can begin to analyze the images particularly if the illustrations have positioned the characters in socially undemocratic ways. *Voices in the Park*, by Anthony Browne⁶ is a disturbing example of this. In the critical practices described in the study the children facilitated and led the discussions and

⁶ *Voices in the Park* Paperback – December 19, 2001 by DK Publishing. In the illustrations European people are represented as White and human, and people of color are represented as apes, with slight humanoid features.

the teacher's role is diminished, a democratic perspective is shown in the language that is used to engage the children as they are invited to consider multiple perspectives and disrupt the common place.

Dramatizing Social Issues

The purpose of the Lewison, Seely Flint, and Van Sluys, (2002) research was to study how teachers were using critical literacy practices and the Four Dimensions model. The research was an eight-month collaborative study with two teachers; grade five, where the teacher had little experience with critical practices, and a K-2 multiage classroom, where the teacher had a broader understanding of critical pedagogy.

The theoretical framework included racial identity theory, critical literacy, and the study was guided by the Four Dimensions. Data collection included pre-workshop and post-workshop questionnaires, transcripts of student literature circle discussions, and observation field notes. Social issues books were used to invite students to be less passive as they read, but more actively engaged in texts.

In the fifth-grade class the teacher, Nancy, introduces her students to issues of poverty and social class in realistic fiction texts. In the K-2 classroom, Kevin, the teacher, uses a non-fiction article to engage children in reflective discussions. The discussions then extended into a dramatization of the events. The children take on roles of various people in an article about a factory that was polluting fish, and as these characters the children debated the issues to solve the community's problem.

Disrupting the common place (Four Dimensions strategy) was most widely used by the fifth-grade students for critical engagement, and was the chosen strategy by the teacher with limited experience with critical practices "Nancy's experience ... challenged

her beliefs about children's responses to text" (p. 386), and she was surprised at the depth of conversation by her students who were reading and discussing characters whose lives were far removed from their personal experiences. Engaging her students by reading social issues books about topics such as homelessness and discussing them enabled her students to " 'go from the surface kind of stuff to getting into the content' " (p. 386).

In Kevin's class he drew on the Four Dimension practice of considering multiple viewpoints for dramatizing critical pedagogy. This was effective because children began to question how power was enacted in their lives, for example some children questioned why girls got to sit in certain chairs during reading time (p. 389). Dramatization was also described in Leland and Bruzas' (2014, p. 28) study, where the children created tableaux of scenes from *Encounter*, by Jane Yolen about the Taino people and their encounter with Christopher Columbus. Each child assumes a character and takes turns speaking as that person. In one tableau, the children present images of "the nice Columbus" giving gifts, and another showed him dragging off Taino people. Exploring multiple perspectives may not be the only practice for describing the lives of marginalized communities such as the Native American people, especially in relation to the hero worshiping of Columbus. Botelho and Rudman (2009, pp. 106, 128–129) suggest that critical engagement includes looking at how marginalized communities are represented in the literature by looking at stereotypes, the power relations, positioning of one group in relation to another, and the invisibility or exclusion of marginalized groups; as in Enciso's (1994) study, when Marisa, asks "Where would like Mexicans or Chinese or someone like that be?" (p. 524).

A recurring theme in practices that explore multiple perspectives through role play and dramatization is brought up by Kevin's concern regarding the appropriate depth

of exploration of social issues with elementary aged children, especially children in younger grades (p. 387). Souto-Manning, Labadie and associates, and other studies have shown that even kindergarten children can engage in serious conversations and have opinions about social justices and fairness. An effective strategy is to approach these issues when the students themselves raise them, or when the teacher observes problematic situations.

Participating in Literature Circles

The purpose of Wies-Long and Gove's (2003) research was to investigate the educational practices that prevented children in the upper elementary classes from independently engaging in reading and writing, to explore the ways that these age groups could be encouraged to reflect and take action in and outside of the classroom. Wies-Long and Gove wanted to learn how to inspire their students. The community where the study occurred is described as "many poor urban and rural regions in the United States, has been negatively distinguished because of bad press and damaging stereotypical commentary" (p. 354). This Washington, D.C. community had low economic opportunities and many of the neglected neighborhoods were in need of increased city funds. Their study took place in a fourth-grade classroom where the students and teacher were of African American heritage. The researchers were White. Sixteen of the twenty-seven children in the class participated in the study. The children brought different reading and writing experiences.

The study was a teacher and researcher collaborative effort, conducted in twelve sessions over four weeks. Their study was informed by critical perspectives, Rosenblatt's transactional theory, and three strategies for engagement developed from drama process

theories: (1) ask open-ended questions, listen, honor, respond, and encourage; (2) invite students to investigate; and (3) pose and solve problems. Data was gathered from students' discussions and responses to text, observations, and videotaped recordings of literature circles.

In the literature circles the students worked in self-directed groups which were formed by grouping according to the children's book interests. The theme for the literature projects was racism and their research opted to include a focus on justice versus injustice in the segregated South. For initiating a discussion about injustice, the researchers and the classroom teacher used primary source documents of Jim Crow Laws. Exploring these themes through drama could be highly emotional, the teachers adopted a detached strategy by providing the children with photographs of that time in history. In pairs the children were positioned as photojournalists observing the scenes and commenting. The partners selected a photograph and were asked to focus on what they would want people to know and what headlines would they write for their newspaper article. Using drama, the students as photojournalists observing the Civil Rights violations in the south were invited to testify at the Civil Rights Commission about their experiences. The children prepared formal speeches "Madam Chairperson, ladies and gentlemen of the..." (p. 358) to present to the whole group.

Much of the literature circle dialogue occurred when the children questioned the characters' actions. More critical responses were observed from the students when the teacher and the students participated together in reflections, making connections, and asking questions as the stories were read aloud. Emotional involvement in literacy is important for elevating reading and writing experiences. The researchers had success in

inspiring emotional responses when they used the children’s figurative expressions “craving it like they crave chocolate” (p. 359). Reading and writing in terms of fluency were promoted not only through practice, but when the students made emotional connections.

Wies-Long and Gove (p. 359) suggest that emotional involvement in literacy is important for elevating reading and writing experiences. I would add that emotional involvement is also essential for constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing meaning. Consistent with the ideas of Bomer and Bomer (2001), emotional involvement is important at every stage of the reading process and is central to critical engagement. For example, Bomer and Bomer show in their reading process diagram that thinking with print involves understanding, taking pleasure, and being affected, and these are connected to memories in personal life, feelings and recalled emotions (p. 41). Being emotionally engaged gives children the power to interpret and use text in personal ways.

This study also demonstrates that interactive strategies provide multiple ways to critically engage the students while the text is being read aloud. The drama process, as Wies-Long and Gove suggest, promotes the use of imagination, investigation, and interpretation to deepen meaning with fiction and non-fiction texts.

Social Justice Picture Books

Analyzing Texts

The purpose of the research conducted by Leland and Bruzas (2014) was to identify multiple perspectives, compare the discrepancies in information and representations of historical events between non-fiction books and realistic fiction books based on the same theme. The study, a teacher and researcher collaborative effort in a fourth-grade class based in an affluent suburban community. The families are mainly

of European-American heritages, and some Mexican families. Data was gathered over a three-week period during guided reading and social studies lessons. The teacher was required to comply with the Common Core State Standards that dictate the inclusion of non-fiction and informational texts. Teacher selected topics from the social studies curriculum but used the students' questions as a basis for the whole class inquiry project. The study was informed by a theoretical framework that includes Comber's, and Luke and Freebody's, critical theories about literacy teaching and Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys' Four Dimensions.

Initially the teacher used student's questions to position them as researchers and text analysts with the intention for the students to gain personal and social meanings, and to examine how the text positions them. The students were guided by the questions: whose views are being represented, whose voices are not included, and what the author wants them to believe. As the books were read aloud the students, in small groups, were invited to draw or write their thoughts on a large sheet of paper, and then discuss with the whole class. Engaging in artistic transmediation, the students created drawings, having listened to the story they recreated their perspective of the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in the second World War. They compared different textbooks on the same subject. The teacher supported her practice by using visual media about this period.

The teacher found that children's literature could be used successfully to critically analyze nonfiction texts. Successful pedagogy included giving guiding questions to help the students think like text analysts. Providing opportunities for students to think about themselves in a historical context fostered perspective that were not necessarily presented in social studies textbooks and presented opportunities for students to take action (p. 34).

“Our social studies book doesn’t make slavery sound so bad ... Why is it so different in *The Slave Dancer*? Which book is true?” (p. 23). These alarming comments and questions were made by the students in the study and emphasizes the too common dissonance between information in non-fiction texts and fiction stories based on historical events. Representations or facts are omitted, or the authors point of view is prominent which may not be representative of the views of the communities being discussed or historical moments. With the demands of mandated testing and Common Core State Standards, there is more emphasis in teaching children to read for information and how to read and write non-fiction genre, and less emphasis on spending time to explore historical events. Critically engaging students with parallel fiction texts, and multicultural literature, as the students in the study discovered, allows students to analyze and critique in socially just and democratic ways.

Analyzing Illustrations

The objectives of Pyterek’s (2006) study were: to gain authentic⁷ cultural understanding through children’s literature, and to focus on social issues such as stereotypes through discussions of the representations and inaccurate depictions of Native American people in books. Her goals were to personalize, universalize, and empathize her students’ feelings, broadening their knowledge, and engaging them in a curriculum project (p. 3). The study included twenty-nine kindergarten children in two separate classes. The groups comprised of boys and girls, English language learners, special needs children, and a combination of ethnic, cultural, and religious heritages. This was an action teacher research project that covered a year. A variety of methods were used to collect data: children’s drawings, individual and group

⁷ Pyterek (2006) defines authentic in two ways as: "reliable and valid understandings" (a dictionary definition), and a cultural definition "the realistic depictions of people true to their culture".

interviews, large group discussions, small focus groups and teacher observations. Her theoretical framework included critical literacy, critical race theories, Dewey's perspectives about how "children learn by doing", a constructivist approach to pedagogy where the participants engaged in multimodal activities. Discourse strategies were used for analyzing student development as they progressed through the unit also to inform her planning.

Pyterek engaged her students with literature that presented various images of Native American people. The students discussed depictions of skin color, and discovered that people cannot be defined by the one color of their skin (p. 1). She engaged the children in multimodal experiences, which she presents in her curriculum planning matrix (p. 6). The matrix describes her day-to-day plans and includes activities, discourse strategies (such as identifying and contextualizing), and data collection. For example, the first-day activities had the children drawing their own ideas of Native American people and then comparing these ideas to the depictions in books; the children had to find vocabulary using Native American terms, and different tribes represented in the text. The children were also engaged in constructing text-to-text and text-to-world connections. Their discussions were based on identifying, contextualizing, and broadening the children's perspectives about Native peoples.

Pyterek's (2006) findings consider the learning her students acquired in terms of being more critical of books about Native American people, being less biased towards Native Americans as a cultural group; and using discourse analysis strategies proved effective for providing analytical opportunities of her students' understanding, while simultaneously informing her decisions for constructing and planning the unit. In her

reflexive process, she determines that as a teacher research, using a project approach for engaging her students in a controversial topic, allowed for children to co-construct the unit of study, and provided opportunities for assessing the students' learning. She describes the collaborative student and teacher possibilities by using multicultural literature to broaden viewpoints. Engaging in critical literacy practices helps children learn how to learn.

My concerns with her facilitation of her critical action project are in determining how effective were the experiences for diminishing the initial stereotypical images the children had about Native Americans. This study raises issues that educators have to consider in terms of school culture and home points of view. Teachers may attempt to cultivate positive perspectives about different ethnic groups, or other social constructs, but there may not be a mutual sensitivity in students' families which may place the student in a conflicting position.

As a teacher researcher, Pyterek includes a reflexive component to her research design. When she asks the question "What purpose did this unit serve?" (p. 4), she reminds the reader about the importance of providing well-constructed critical experiences that position children and teacher as participants in meaningful, intellectual, and emotional ways with multicultural literature.

Taking Action

Wies-Long and Gove (2003) found in their research that critical engagement with multicultural literature students were thoroughly immersed in a sociopolitical issue, students were positioned as authorities on a topic and they could act as agents of change (2003, p. 358). A similar study was described by Powell, Chambers Cantrell, and Adams

in (2001), and the objectives of this study was to (1) discover the connection between democracy, literacy and power, and (2) to learn ways for teachers to challenge “current inequities that exist between rich and poor, white and black, men and women” (p. 772). The study also demonstrates how critical engagement is enacted and complete when children take action. This was a collaborative classroom teacher and researcher study with fourth grade students from a small mining community near Lexington, Kentucky. The area is experiencing an economic crises and high unemployment. Because Adams, the teacher, has a strong belief in inquiry-based learning, the project design includes brainstorming and inquiry lessons, interviews of the children, interviewing members of the public, discussions, formal reading lessons, lessons on effective writing in various genres, lessons on Appalachian culture, and lessons on government and civil rights. The theoretical framework includes an understanding of Dewey’s perspective that democracy depends upon collaborative inquiry to arrive at mutual aims – a goal that benefit the whole community.

The students’ research includes visiting and interviewing people involved in the mining of Black Mountain and those who opposed it and looking at both sides before deciding which side to support. This led to writing letters to gain support from financial donors, newspapers, and television stations. The students conducted press conferences and met with mining officials. Other literacy activities included research using books, articles, government documents, social studies textbooks, and the internet. Writing involved response journals, poetry, songs, letters, and writing in other genres. Critical practices involved multimodal literacy activities of listening, speaking, inquiring, reading, writing, observing, and using technology.

The authors maintain that critical literacy can lead to social action as students internalize social problems, “critical literacy is real-world literacy in that it is integral to the discovery of societal inequities and subsequent action” (p. 779). The students learn that “literacy has power”. The authors also propose that children with special needs benefit the most from critical learning experiences because they have been excluded due to their school reading experience.

The authors describe their project with the students as critical literacy in action. The work of the researchers and teacher include all the Four Dimensions and reaffirms the premise that critical engagement cannot be defined or enacted without them. This research project originated from a teacher’s interest in what was currently happening to a local landmark which the children had been learning about in social studies lessons, thus providing the children with some background knowledge to guide their intellectual and emotional response to the events. The teachers suggest the importance of critical approaches to literacy in a multicultural society when they state “We can either teach literacy as a series of skills, or we can teach it as if words matter” (p. 780). In conducting this research action project, the adult collaborators provide whole language experiences that create opportunities for the children to be intellectually and emotionally with social issues. The children were invited to express their opinions, take control of their learning, and take action. In this case, it meant finding ways to adhere to the requirements of the Common Core Curriculum and to seek ways for teachers to challenge inequities in society.

Some educators may want to explore taking action for helping students understand the possibilities of being change agents and undertaking critical involvement

in community issues. This may not be possible in all instances, and considerations such as school policies and parental views may present implications. Engaging students to think and discuss social issues and to respond emotionally and critically is the start of building understanding. Using multicultural literature that are based on authentic experiences and historically accurate information is essential, especially for motivating students, and to deepen their experiences. Wies-Long and Gove's (2003) study shows that critical practices can be applied to mandated curriculum.

Discussion of Empirical Research Practices

The critical practices identified in the literature review for critical engagement with multicultural children's texts include making connections and disconnections, prioritizing students' questions, analyzing multiple sources, and taking action. Using critical discourse analysis where I drew on my understandings of power, position, and perspectives, several themes began to emerge from the review of practices and are discussed in the following order: children as text analysts, affirms identity, assumptions impact positionality, critical engagement with non-fiction texts, critical engagement being an inclusive process does not exclude, promotes multiliteracies and multimodalities, and the drama process supports critical interactive engagement. The themes resonate the democratic processes described earlier in the theoretical framework critical engagement involves all the participants, children, and teachers, constructing the discourse and learning events. Critical discourse analysis is a way to discuss how power relations operate through language, and how position and perspectives are also nuanced. Discussing the themes extends an understanding of the power relations at work in critical engagement with multicultural children's literature. These themes have implications for

children, for classroom teachers, teacher educators, and the positioning of multicultural literature in different areas of the school curriculum.

Children as Text Analysts

A salient feature of all the empirical studies presented in this review is that they stress the importance of children being critically and multiculturally literate, and that the teacher's role is to facilitate critical engagement with text and encouraging students to think critically as they independently facilitate their own reading and discussions. The pervasive resource that invites children to be critically and emotionally engaged is that of the text analyst from Luke and Freebody's (1997) model. All four of the resources are interdependent, and critical literacy activities are dependent on them, but as text analysts, students can use the tools of the Four Dimensions (Lewison et al., 2002), to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct meaning. The text analyst assumes a power position that enables students to question social constructs, and to respond to literature in intellectual and emotional ways.

Affirming Identity

In reflecting on the following three studies: Jones' (2013) with working class children and their challenges with self-identity while engaging with books that predominantly depict affluence; and, Enciso's (1994) , and Robinson's (2013) ethnographic studies where students draw on their personal experiences to construct their understandings about self-identity, and reconstruct their perspectives of how they identify other people. While the Four Dimensions model and the six practices described by Behrman recognize the role of emotionality in critical work, it appears they are insufficient for exploring personal and individual issues concerning identity and class. It

is suggested that these models would need to be extended to create the possibility for addressing and affirming self-identity when analyzing text.

Another related observation here is that selecting topics based on ethnic or cultural identity may not be that affirming for some children. Many of the teacher studies were in classrooms that comprised of predominantly African American children or classrooms where there were diverse children from socio-economically deprived communities. The topics chosen to be explored using multicultural resources often were about stereotypes, prejudice, civil rights, etc. My argument is that these topics may be useful in these classroom contexts for discussing social issues from historical perspectives, or for drawing parallels with contemporary concerns. However, Dudley-Marling (1997) suggests practices that only focus on identities in terms of race “ignores the complicated ways that class, gender, sex, language, ethnicity, and so on affect the lived experience of our students” (p. 308). Topics about race may be problematic for some children they may reinforce negative aspects of self-worth and identity for some children. Yoon, Simpson, and Haag (2010, pp. 109–188) also present the idea that well intentioned use of multicultural literature may promulgate assimilation versus pluralistic values. These arguments suggest challenges for critical engagement with multicultural literature for providing opportunities where children may make connections and disconnections. These arguments also have implications for the teacher’s selection of texts, the use of textual resources, the ambience that is created to invite critical multicultural work (Nichols & Campano, 2017, p. 249), the critical practices used to engage children, and the positions children assume as readers and responders to the literature.

A counter argument is that children bring firsthand knowledge to the learning event that provides for a more deeply shared learning experience. Teachers have to know their students and their communities, this has been argued by Banks (1996), Ladson-Billings (2009), Jones (2013), and Nieto (2013). More recently World (2019) includes that teachers should appreciate the diversity of their students and not choose to “treat all students the same as those considered to be in the “dominant” group celebrate the differences that each unique child brings to the classroom.” (p. 3).

Assumptions Impact Positionality

Enciso’s work reveals that we also must consider how we teach the topic because that also has implications for how students are positioned. In selecting a multicultural theme for critical literacy activity, the teacher must ask as Pyterek (2006) stated “What purpose did this unit serve?”. How does this benefit the students? Souto-Manning (2013) and others in this literature review point out that teachers must begin by knowing their students and what their needs and interests are, and not develop lessons solely on the teacher’s interests or unrelated to the children’s lived experiences.

Questioning and the development of questions are essential critical practices that should not be determined by the teachers’ assumptions. There is a paradox that is generated by teacher’s assumptions about how children will respond in a particular activity that has implications for the type of questions that teachers ask their students and the teachers’ motives. In my experience on one occasion when I asked a child why she selected a particular picture of a woman for her cultural collage. I presumed the student identified with the skin color of the female in the picture, upon further inquiry the child simply stated that she liked the woman’s smile and her red dress. The danger here was I

positioned this child as having poor self-image based on an assumption. Dudley-Marling's (1997) also discusses a similar situation when he used literature that represented the ethnic diversity of the children in his class, he assumed that one boy was from Pakistan and shared a Pakistani folktale while pointing out the boy. The boy protested, "I'm not from Pakistan" (p. 309). Again, this discussion about assumptions supports my earlier claim that teachers must be acquainted with the students' personal stories for effective critical engagement with multicultural literature.

Critical Engagement with Non-Fiction Texts

Enacting critical engagement requires multicultural literature resources where the themes reflect social issues. This review took into consideration studies that based their work on engagement with realistic and historical fiction texts, but there were also researchers (Leland & Bruzas, 2014; Robinson, 2013; Varelas & Pappas, 2006) who used critical strategies for engaging students with non-fiction texts such as biographies, and social studies texts. The mandated Common Core Curriculum⁸ requires non-fiction texts in grades kindergarten to grade five, and fulfilling the standards requires a 50-50 balance between informational and literary reading. Critical engagement practices would enable children to construct and reconstruct concepts in ways that further their understanding and perspective through these books.

Critical Engagement Does Not Exclude

Access for all children to critical engagement practices in literacy education, particularly for reading comprehension is essential. The empirical studies support my point of view concerning the inclusion of every child as a participant in critical activities;

⁸ This information located at <http://www.corestandards.org/other-resources/key-shifts-in-english-language-arts/>

children cannot be excluded because of underachievement on any formal reading test or writing proficiency test. Opportunities for engaging with literature in critical and meaningful ways should not be reserved only for children who can successfully decode and match letters (graphemes) to their sounds (phonemes) on grade level according to formal assessed placement standards. In some mandated reading practices children are encouraged to only read books at their assessed reading levels often referred to as “Just Right” books, and they have insufficient opportunities to experience more complex themes outside of the teacher reading aloud a story (Robinson, 2013, p. 47).

Multiliteracies and Multimodalities

The Four Dimensions emphasize the point that critical engagement with multicultural literature promotes literacy for all children using diverse teaching practices. Janks and colleagues (2013, pp. 2-3) recognize that there are multiple ways to make meaning, therefore multiliterate and multimodal practices are essential for critical engagement with texts in our contemporary world, and literacy experiences should consider diverse practices including literature inquiry using digital tools, “students were excited about sharing their work with the global community (they checked their blog daily for comments)... Digital platforms created a fluid space for building collective responses with contrasting perspectives” (Price-Dennis et al., 2016, p. 332). These arguments substantiate that critical work may also involve collaborative and interactive practices that include reading, drama and role plays, group discussions, writing, use of visual images, virtual spaces, and other modes of transmediations⁹. Regarding critical

⁹ Transmediations are ways of transferring or representing what is known in one art mode into another (Leland & Bruzas, 2014).

engagement with multicultural children's literature and other texts, pedagogical practices would have to consider the many semiotic ways that children may draw on for constructing, communicating, representing meaning, and meeting the diverse modes of learning for a classroom of individual children, each with his or her own unique way of engaging with the world. Kress (2010) argues modes of expressing and representing meaning be it writing, speaking, listening, drawing and others are shaped by social contexts. Ernest Morrell and Jodene Morrell (2012) also suggest that cultivating a climate for critical engagement requires access to the diverse modes of literacy practices that allow students to skillfully engage with texts in multiple ways. Delpit (2013) argues that by not providing multimodal experiences (needed to negotiate today's multi-literate society) we run the risk of perpetuating "a pedagogy of poverty" (pp. 71-78), which disadvantages children already politically, culturally, and economically marginalized.

The Drama Process Supports Critical Interactive Engagement

Using the drama process as a critical practice was described in three of the studies in the literature review (Lewison et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2001; Weis-Long & Gove, 2003). The researchers maintained that the use of drama can encourage reflection, critical exploration of literature, taking action, and inquiry practices that capture children's imagination. Drama in education is a process that has been used (especially in the United Kingdom) since the 1960s and was part of the progressive education movement for promoting self-knowledge and creative expression understanding (Davis et al., 2015). Drama clearly is an example of the ideological paradigm "Drama is about making significant meaning" (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 4), and key features of drama include: role play, active engagement, dialogical experiences driven by dramatic tension,

investigation, and problem solving, create dramatic encounters, and to extend learning and understanding (Davis et al., 2015, p. 7). Dramatization allows for “interactional and collaborative performance” (Bloome & Beauchemin, 2016, p. 154), within active involvement (Phillips, 1999) with literature students can interpret, represent, conceptualize, construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the literacy and literary experiences collectively.

Since writing this review of the research literatures I have conducted further research to include current empirical studies.¹⁰ De Bruijn (2019), Osorio (2018), and Fontanella-Nothom (2019). De Bruijn’s work as described in her study of 500 elementary children in Holland, addresses the need for the specific use of multicultural folktales in language intervention programs with young children. She suggests that children who live in multicultural communities where there are various ethnic groups, from diverse heritages their engagement with folktales help children to find common themes in their lives while “valuing children’s culturally diverse contributions in today’s culturally diverse classrooms” (p. 329). Osorio (2018) conducted research with young children and included the use of multicultural literature to promote appreciation for diversity, to honor students’ voices, make connections to students’ linguistic and cultural heritages, and to promote critical consciousness (pp. 48-50). Race is a theme that is a sensitive area that educators often shy away from discussing with students (Fontanella-Nothom, 2019, p. 11). Fontanella-Nothom’s work with pre-school students illustrate children “engaging with critical dialog to make connections and develop new understandings” (p. 17) while affirming their identities in discussions about skin tones, color, and race. It is interesting

¹⁰ See Appendices A & B.

to note that these three qualitative studies continue the conversation for the necessity of critical multicultural engagement with children's literature and resonate the significant impact multicultural texts have in the lives of all children in various communities here in the United States and other countries.

Conclusion

In this literature review I presented research of practices for critical multicultural engagement with children's texts in elementary classrooms. The research was guided by the question: What does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts? I presented arguments illustrating that multicultural literature in the classroom is a literary category that describes texts about communities of color, diverse socio-economic and ethnic populations, and marginalized people, it is not reserved just for read aloud or for posturing representations of diversity by having an eclectic library. Critical multicultural processes are concerned with both the production of children's literature and its use in classroom teaching and learning for promoting students' critical multicultural consciousness. We want children to be not just thoughtfully literate, but more specifically, critically and multiculturally literate.

The empirical practices in the review illustrate, that critically and multiculturally engaging children with texts occur as situated practices, determined or naturally occurring through the events in the classroom, where the students are invited to be active participants by contributing their experiences and understandings to the learning. Critical multicultural processes are concerned with promoting critical consciousness, and as suggested by Freire (2000, p. 81) children question the *status quo* and engage in problem-posing education. Involving children with ideological models for constructing,

reconstructing, and deconstructing meaning positions them to be critically and multiculturally literate, socially, intellectually, and emotionally engaged with the themes and world views conveyed in text. To summarize I present a synthesized list of concepts discussed in the review of empirical studies. Critical multicultural engagements with texts in the classroom:

1. affirms the inclusion of multicultural literature as essential resources for our pluralistic classrooms.
2. are democratic.
3. promotes comprehension of concepts, reflexivity, introspection, activism, and agency.
4. are situated practices and are pragmatic and dynamic – literacy in action that promotes comprehension for describing human existence and experiences.
5. affords the use of multi-modalities, including the drama process, for representing understanding, and recognizes the significance of multi-literacy approaches.
6. activates a participatory culture and creates a space for discourse.
7. affirms identity and locates its significance in discourse.

From a pedagogical standpoint, Botelho and Rudman (2009) suggest that critical experiences with multicultural children’s literature “will not solve social injustice, teachers as facilitators of these critical and collaborative processes help children to engage with texts at a deeper level, contributing to their overall literacy learning ... and understanding of themselves and the world” (p. 269). I also suggest that critical engagement with multicultural literature creates opportunities for children to be empathetic, compassionate, and understanding. Engagement practices with multicultural

literature should provide the opportunity for children to respond to text in ways that reveal our common human experiences and emotions while respecting our distinct cultural identities.

There now follows a description of my research design that includes a rationale for critical ethnographic study, descriptions of the: research site, classroom context, participants, teacher-researcher, a matrix describing the research questions in relation to the research design, the data collection procedures including the multimodal literacy and literary artifacts, descriptions of how critical discourse analysis and critical multicultural analysis is used, and how a reflexive process informs the research.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

What does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts? This question is researched by adopting a critical ethnographic process. This critical ethnography provides descriptions of the learning experiences of a group of third grade elementary students and me their teacher. The children and I are co-participants in all the activities contributing to a classroom atmosphere that reflects my beliefs of an educational process based on democratic, critical, and multicultural perspectives in all aspects of the school curriculum, where space is provided for the students' experiences and funds of knowledge to inform the learning. Within this classroom structure children can redesign and extend learning activities independent of my input. A warm inviting classroom ambience is created by nurturing bonds among the children themselves and with me, the children safely share ideas and use expressive language such as "fight with love" when describing how to have a more caring and empathetic classroom.

Next, I describe the research design that includes a description of critical ethnography, and the relevance for the teacher-researcher's exploration of critical multicultural engagement. This is followed by a description of the research site, the influences of the macro community, and the establishment of classroom routines. Included are descriptions of the participants, profiles of some of the child participants presented as monologues, and member checking. I describe the critical multicultural experiences that have inspired my role as a teacher-researcher. I conclude this section

with an explanation of the data collection process and how it is presented in this dissertation, how the texts were selected for the students' engagement, and the tools for analysis.

Teacher Research and Critical Ethnography

My position is that teachers are researchers and that the term teacher researcher is a more accurate way to describe what teachers do in their classrooms. As discussed by Whitman and Keller (2016) professional practices are characterized by “reflective, iterative, collaborative, research-informed practice that is disseminated” (p. 107) , the role of the teacher-researcher is a necessary conceptualization for acknowledging the contributions of classroom teacher research to the field of pedagogical and theoretical educational research. Teacher research is informed by critical ethnographic process because it is inductive and invites the formulation of new theory by observing participants in context, and lays emphasis on dialogue, where the interactions between human beings, in this case, students with students, or myself (the teacher) and students, are open and ongoing. Nuanced in this conceptualization of critical ethnographic research is a commitment on the part of the teacher-researcher to democratic processes as argued by Madison (2005) critical ethnographers are focused on “social justice...based on social change and the wellbeing of Others” (p. 84) and questions the operations of power and control moving from “what is [to] what could be” (p. 5). The critical ethnographer operates from a democratic perspective and attempts to represent the voices, meanings, and experiences of the research participants by using available resources “to break through the confines in defense of ...the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach” (p. 5). As argued by (Jerolmack & Khan, 2017)

an abductive (both inductive and deductive) analysis of the data supports the understanding that there is a range of “analytic sensibilities ...for making critical observations” (p. 10). Critical ethnographic research process presents data and artifacts where the participants’ design and redesign practices allow the teacher-researcher to lead to discoveries about “how the choices and actions of all the members constitute an enacted curriculum—a learning environment” (Erickson, 1985, p. 42). Therefore, this research is a qualitative investigation, in contrast to replicable quantitative deductive research procedures informed by statistical data collection that are employed to explicate theory(s).

Studies by Jones (2012), Souto-Manning (2009, 2013), and Robinson (2013) are examples of studies involving the classroom teacher as the researcher. My teacher research design mirrors these empirical studies regarding the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the student participants, and the dialogical focus of the lessons where students are actively engaged in critically and multiculturally critiquing and analyzing texts. Additionally, as teacher researchers we have similar life experiences as some of our student participants. My research design differs in that I not only consider the students’ critical multicultural responses to text, but I explicitly seek to understand and name the experiences that promote critical multicultural engagement, where the three studies mentioned were based on exploring specific texts and concepts, and the students’ responses to those texts.

Banks (2006) suggests that an objective of the multicultural researcher is to “reveal the ways in which research is influenced by the lives, cultures, and positionality of the researchers” (p.57). An important role of the critical teacher researcher is to present

a learning context that seeks to enhance and transform students' understandings about communities that have traditionally been marginalized and as stated by Rex, Steadman, and Graciano (2006) "to promote pedagogical and curricula change" (p.752). Critical ethnography informs teacher research by providing a lens that looks at social constructs and relies on a strong relationship between the researcher (in this case me, the teacher-researcher) and the student participants, for example some of the students in my class I have had their siblings, parents, and even aunts and uncles as former students. I live near the school and have seen their families grow and change. Critical ethnographic research recognizes that the researcher (in this case the teacher) and the participants (the students) are all participants in the research context, which is shaped by historical and sociopolitical factors. Researching and telling this research story about critical multicultural engagement with children's literature includes these ideas about dialogue and conversation, and acknowledges the students' perspectives, position, and power for design and redesign, and their impact on the learning.

Critical Ethnographic Teacher Research is Reflexive

Reflexivity is fundamentally at the heart of the teacher-researcher's position, guiding inquiry and consistently problematizing and questioning. In reflexivity one seeks answers that possibly challenge several perspectives, and as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) describe, "inquiry provides teachers with a way to know their own knowledge...how they and their students negotiate... knowledge in the classroom and how interpretations of classroom events are shaped" (p. 469). Reflexivity is a critical process for knowing. The following discussion describes the use of a reflexive process as an important component to the research design; also, critical discourse analysis (CDA) as

theorized by Rogers and Schaenen (2013), is helpful in the reflexive process for describing the subjective positions of a teacher researcher in critical ethnographic study.

This teacher research project includes a recursive critical reflexive component that continuously informs the study and “aids in understanding ...the workings of our social world” (Pillow, 2003, p. 178). Consistent with Kamler and Thompson (2014, pp. 74-78)

a reflexive process looks at how discourse, social, political, and cultural practices frame our responses to events, promotes further inquiry, and raises questions. Reflexivity informs the discussion of the findings, and allows me to further examine perspectives, power, and positioning (Janks, & Dixon, 2014, pp. 5-12) as the participants (teacher researcher and students) engage with texts. Pillow (2003) explains that the reflexive process should contribute to an understanding of how knowledge is produced, and how the social world is constructed. In critical ethnographic inquiry the teacher-researcher’s subjective position is very much a part of the interpretations and analytical process, and as Rogers and Schaenen (2013) suggest a reflexive process not only regards the researcher’s self-positioning, but may also include how context, power, agency, and social action are considered in the ethnography (p. 123). Critical discourse analysis according to Rex and Schiller (2009) allows teacher research to “capture interactions in the moment” (p. xi), and facilitates an emic insider perspective of the discursive choices.

Wasserfall (1993) argues that the goal of the reflexive process is to diminish incorrect assumptions and to promote ethical ethnographic research. As a teacher researcher who facilitates critical multicultural engagement with children’s literature, one of the salient observations of my work is that I cannot presume how students will respond to a given text, or how my personal critical multicultural perspectives and experiences

will influence the discourse in this research. These factors significantly impact the events, actions, and learning that is constructed and reconstructed as my students and I critically engage with text.

Additionally, I build my argument for critical ethnography because I have the dual position of a teacher who is also a researcher attempting to describe the complexities and challenges of not only the position, power, and perspective of the teacher-researcher, but of the student participants, and the elements of critical multicultural approaches with literature in the elementary literacy curriculum. As a teacher researcher my subjectivity influences what I select to present and discuss and what and how I discuss is also influenced by my many roles: a member of a marginalized community of color; a woman; a feminist; a mother; an immigrant; a former drama in education teacher in the United Kingdom; an amateur theatre performer and playwright, and a veteran teacher and scholar.

Critical ethnography is supported by feminist poststructural perspectives for discussing research data regarding the power relations at play (Clandinin, 2007, p. 158). Within a feminist poststructural paradigm, I understand that my obligation as a teacher researcher involved with critical literacy practices, is to uphold the integrity of the research (Madison, 2005, p. 84), especially in terms of fairness and equality, and how the participants are represented. This leads me to reflect upon how some students present their authority. Whose voices are included or excluded? Whose responses do I select to discuss and support my findings? How does the methodology contribute to how the participants are positioned?

It has been established *writ large* that critical approaches to curriculum development and pedagogy are an accepted teaching philosophy (Aukerman, 2012; Luke, Woods, et al., 2011; Behrman, 2006). Additionally, critical approaches with multicultural literature, working in concert together, have also been recognized *writ large* (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Morrell & Morell, 2012; O'Brien, 2001; Price-Dennis et al., 2016; Souto-Manning, 2013) as a process that significantly supports students' emotional and intellectual responses to text. From a qualitative perspective the research topics would suggest the need to gather data in multiple ways, and critical ethnographic process would seem most suitable, particularly for observing the social nuances of classroom literacy practices, critical engagement, students' responses to text, students' representations of their understandings of the literature, and their understandings of the responses from other participants. Literacy practices as argued by Heath and Street (2008, p. 104) involves the social situation, and the verbal and non-verbal responses that arise as participants interact not only with literature, but also with each other as they design and redesign their experiences with text. I have created a matrix (see Appendix E) that shows the relationship among the research questions, data collection practices, data analytical strategies, and theoretical tools in my study.

The Research Site and Classroom Context

For this study, all names of people and places are pseudonyms. Priory Park School is in a semi-rural New England town. The town is near several private colleges and one university. I have been teaching in this town for twenty-seven years, and in that time, I have seen many changes in the cultural and ethnic heritages of my students. With a population of around 37,000 it is a diverse community, while predominantly White,

there are African American, Latinx, and Asian people from India, Korea, Cambodia, China, Vietnam, and Laos. There are wide differences in socio-economic status among the population with many households earning income well above the state-average level, but also around 20 % of the population living below the poverty level.¹¹ The ethnic student population of the entire district includes: White students which are about 50%, while the numbers of African-American are 10%, Asian is 13%, and Hispanic students are 20%. This representation is reflected in the micro context of Priory Park School, for example, of a faculty of about one hundred, there are three Black faculty members (two of whom were born abroad), five Latinx, and two Asians. There are currently 421 students in this K- grade 6 school.

My classroom is organized in ways that allow for students to construct knowledge together. Classroom routines are based on socialization and community building goals where the students learn to show respect and empathy for each other as in the practice of morning meetings. The meeting area on the rug is where the students and teacher greet each other and make plans for the day's work. This area is also used for whole group instruction, storytelling, dialogue, and interactive activities. Comfortable clusters with cushions and private areas are located around the room for students to utilize for smaller group interaction and areas for independent work. In my classroom, I try to create a warm and inviting learning environment in which all students find spaces to express themselves. The room is colorful with many posters on all the walls that remind the students about the topics we will be learning, and photographs of the students and their families. The classroom library is filled with an assortment of books that address a

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amherst,_Massachusetts

variety of interests and topics, books and materials are displayed in ways that clearly identify not only the multiple genres, but the diverse ethnic and cultural representations of society. The library includes photographs of the authors on the respective book boxes, including African American, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native American, and White American authors.

My instructional practices are based on giving students many opportunities to construct and reconstruct meanings and ideas, so an observer will see children engaging in partner or group discussions. Students were permitted to choose friendship partners; this gave them the opportunity to feel safe and trustworthy, where they could share ideas without inhibitions. There were occasions where I did assign groups because children also need to experience working with all people, to acquire the perspectives of others and not be limited in their views by consistently choosing someone who feels the same as they do, or who has similar life experiences. An observer would also see children not only representing their learning through writing, but also drawing, or acting, these practices are carried on in math, science, and social studies classes throughout the day. My classroom is self-contained which allows for a research design where the mandated curriculum subjects can be integrated and affords the possibility of extended time to construct and engage because the space and time is not fractured, and children are not taken out for support work.

Mandated Influences on the Classroom Literacy Practices

The kinds of literacy practices that are valued in this school community, and that our students are expected to produce, are heavily influenced by the learning standards expressed in state-wide curriculum frameworks. As a result, the context of the school

culture at Priory Park School is heavily impacted by the need for preparing the students for state-and district-mandated standardized assessments. Five years ago, to improve student literacy scores the school district introduced the reading and writing workshop model that was developed by Lucy Calkins and the Teacher's College research team at Columbia University. While this program is extensively scripted and incorporates the use of suggested mentor texts (fiction and non-fiction literature which are used to emphasize teaching points or concepts) for reading and writing instruction, it does offer increased opportunities for students to respond to the themes. Students now have opportunities to partner talk and to share ideas in their literacy practices. There are increased opportunities for interacting with the teacher, other students, and text in ways which deepen the students' understanding. It is against this backdrop that teachers also have the autonomy to select additional "mentor" texts if they so choose. Some teachers may not be aware of the possibilities for using multicultural children's literature as mentor texts, or they are so pressured by assessment requirements that they use what traditionally they are accustomed to, or for convenience, rely only on what has been suggested by the literacy program and the state assessment requirements. It is in this area especially where this research can contribute.

Student Participants' Monologues

There were eighteen children involved in the study. All their parents gave permission for them to participate, and all the student participants completed an assent form (see Appendix A). My methodology includes presenting the student participants' personal data in monologue format, a process taken from ethnodrama, where the student participants, are viewed through their own words as they each describe their

backgrounds. For the profiles I selected students to represent a cross section of the broader class in terms of socio economic, ethnic, and cultural heritage, gender, family composition, and students who frequently appear in the transcripts. The monologue format allows the teacher-researcher as argued by Saldaña a “unique way of describing the human condition” (2003, p. 229) and to include more details from the data than would be possible if it were presented in traditional third person narrative. The monologues present the child participants as if they are each speaking to the reader in the “ethnographic present” (Emerson et al., 1995, pp. 183–184) and provide an opportunity for the reader to become acquainted with the experiences and understandings the students enlist for engaging with text. Additionally, this approach is not a simple composition of the teacher-researcher but allows the child participants to speak about themselves and as Saldaña (2003) argues “a monologue showcases a character...[and] reveal both personal and social insight”. The reader and is positioned as a voyeur in the lives of the student participants. The monologues are derived from my field notes that included: personal responses in their journals and diaries, posters and multi-modal representations, transcripts of discussions and plays, and responses to questionnaires. The names of the students in the seven monologues are pseudonyms and are presented in this order: Eve, Rose, Evan, Monica, Ross, Tom, & Mia. During the member checking process, I asked the students for their approval of the random names I had given them:

Eve: I am eight years old, I have two moms, and a little brother (he is four, and sometimes annoying) my favorite things to do are horseback riding, reading, and hugging. We just love going to P town (that’s short for Province Town on the Cape). There are lots of other gay families there in the summer. You will notice

that I talk about being in a gay family a lot. Gay rights are very important to me. I like to make sure people in society understand that gay people have rights too. I told Ms. Robinson that she needed to have more books about gay families. So, the next day I came to school and there they were a whole collection of books, but not only books about gay families, but other types of families too. When Ms. Robinson showed me the books, I had a big smile on my face. I am very good at most of the subjects in school, but I am really good at writing, especially writing about my feelings and poems.

With our reading partners my friend Rose and I chose to read *Alvin Ho* by Lenore Look. We discussed it many times, one of the times with the boys, and other times just us girls. I still don't like the character Alvin, because he is afraid of girls. When I was in second grade I went on a women's march in Washington, D.C., so I know a bit about stereotypes, and he stereotypes all girls, so I don't like his character at all. Me and Rose, for the Dr. Martin Luther King play wrote a scene about women's pay. It was about a phone call I made (I had a fake cell phone) to my boss to tell him that I did not like the poor wages I got because it was less than a man's pay. I really enjoyed being in the play, I learned a lot, and it was fun.

Rose: Hello, I am Rose, and I live with my mom, dad, and younger brother and a barn cat (we have a huge barn). My parents are very involved with what is happening in society, my dad even took me on a women's march. My parents are boycotting stores or business that have to do with Donald Trump. My mom is very good friends with Eve's moms.

Eve and I sometimes get into fights, but we have known each other since grade two, and really do like each other, so we often find ways to talk about our disagreements. I like to work with Eve in class, but sometimes I prefer to work alone. I am really good at most subjects, especially reading and math, but literature and writing are my favorite.

I just love drama and acting, so I am ever so happy to be in Ms. Robinson's class. Every opportunity we have I choose to act things out. For instance, we did a whole unit on characters. We had to choose a character and as we read, we took notes on their personality. Ms. Robinson said that everyone has more than one side to their personality and so do characters in books. So, we had to describe two sides to the character we chose. Then we were given choices about how to present our character studies. I was so excited because I could choose drama, other kids chose posters, or making a diorama about their person. We made a stage with curtains and rope hung across the classroom. Steven's grandma came to watch she said I was amazing. I loved working on the Dr. King play, and I thought about how we were a group of children of different colors, "if only Dr, King could see us."

While we were working on our brochures about Massachusetts at the start of the school year, I had the idea of interviewing people in the class for their ideas about Massachusetts, and to include their responses in my brochure. It was great, and then other people started to use interviews in their work too. Later, in our class newspaper, some people included interviews for on-the-spot reporting.

Evan: This year in grade three is my first year at Priory Park School. I am so happy, and so are my parents. When my dad first visited our classroom, he was really impressed. He could not believe the amount of books Ms. Robinson had that were about African American people, and many other cultures too. He said to Ms. Robinson, “I am so glad to see books about people who look like my son.” In my last school in Maryland, we didn’t have as many books like these. My mom too, also liked the life-sized poster of President Obama standing against a wall in the classroom. As soon as you enter the classroom you can’t miss seeing it. I really work hard in school, I am best at math, and I always do my homework.

My mom loves to help Ms. Robinson out with snacks for the class, and chaperoning on field trips, she brings my baby brother too. My dad often comes to have lunch with me in the cafeteria. I have made lots of friends in this class, both girls and boys. Will, one of my friends in the class, and I like to come to school early and help Ms. Robinson get ready for the day, we come almost every morning. I do like to play outside, but I think Ms. Robinson needs my help.

When we were presenting the play about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. our group: Julie, Eve, Rose, Ross, Sam, and I researched and wrote the scene about equal pay for women. We decided that Ross and I should introduce the scene and the girls should act it out. I was one of the first ones to learn my lines by heart. My mom came to see it, and at the end she had tears in her eyes, she felt like crying she was so proud of the whole class for all the work we did.

Monica: Hello, I am Monica, and I am half Cambodian. My dad is white, and my mom’s heritage is Cambodian, but she was born in Texas. I don’t have any

siblings, but I have lots of friends in this class, in fact I am friendly with everyone. I especially like to work in groups with Diane, Sue (the new girl from Japan who does not speak much English), Will, he is a small kid and sometimes shy, but he and I have been really good friends since kindergarten. He often chooses me as a partner for classroom projects. When he is sad or hurt, I like to help him. I work really hard in school to improve my skills. I love to discuss books, and when we did the picture book discussion about how authors and illustrators use pictures it was very important for me to show how we can react to the pictures and not just the words.

I am very close to my parents, they came to the beginning of the year field day and helped to organize one of the games. I love everything about my Cambodian heritage, especially the food. My favorite dish is rice with eggs. Diane's family is also from Cambodia, and she likes eggs with rice too. Diane is really quiet, but we love to talk about Cambodia. I attend a Cambodian afterschool club here at Priory Park. I am so glad that I am here in this afterschool because we learn: dancing, reading, and the history of Cambodia. We even participate in the multicultural festival here and wear our traditional clothes. I also like to explore other cultures and when Ms. Robinson said we could write a book of our own I chose to write about my favorite pop group from South Korea called BTS.

Ross: Hi, I am Ross and guess what? I am the same height as Ms. Robinson, and she is five feet two inches. I am the tallest kid in the class. Ms. Robinson says that I also have the biggest, gentlest, and kindest heart. I have lots of friends in this

class and most of them look up to me because I try to be fair. I also like to protect the smaller kids, especially at recess when things can be rough, sometimes. I love football and I am on a team outside of school. I am getting much better at reading, I like math, but I am trying my best in everything.

My dad is black, and my mom is white. She is having another baby I am really excited about it. I hope it is a girl because I already have an older brother in grade four, he sometimes pretends that he doesn't know me, and he does not like to speak to me at school, he says that I am weird. Ms. Robinson, said that I was not weird, and that deep down he didn't mean it. Every Friday night we go to my dad's mom's house and we watch videos and eat junk food together.

When we presented our book characters, I chose to be Milton Daub, a twelve-year-old boy in *The Snow Walker* who was a hero in the terrible blizzard of 1888 in New York. I wanted to act his story, so I dressed up as he did and pretended that I was out in the cold. At the end of my presentation, I made everyone laugh by reading my props, Ms. Robinson said that I did not have to tell the props because I was wearing them, it was funny. I also liked our Dr. King play, and we all did our parts perfectly. I especially liked the bus boycott scene and the acting.

Tom: I am Tom, and I am very good at reading, math, and writing. Ms. Robinson loves my writing because I use a lot of descriptions. I have a mom, dad, and two sisters (one in the middle school and one in high school). I am very close to my family and we like to go on mini vacations sometimes over the weekends. I

like that my family celebrates both Hanukkah and Christmas. My mom's side is Jewish, and my dad's side is Christian.

For our character reading project, I chose to do *Alvin Ho* by Lenore Look. Alvin is from a Chinese American family who live in Concord, Massachusetts. Alvin is afraid of many things, especially girls, and he stereotypes girls, but I liked his character a lot. I liked reading about him so much that I went to the public library to get more books about him. Ms. Robinson was very impressed with that. My friend was not in the same reading group as me, but when he heard us discussing Alvin, he called out across the room to Ms. Robinson and asked if he could read it too. Ms. Robinson was so happy that he was interested and said that of course he could read it with me. Then other kids wanted to join in too. We had a good discussion with some of the girls about it (Rose and Eve) and they really don't like Alvin, but I like him because some of the things he gets himself into and some of his feelings reminds me of things that some boys do and how they feel.

While working on our class play about the Civil Rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I really wanted to make our props realistic. I had the idea to make a newspaper about things that were really happening at that time. I was in the restaurant scene, so we could be reading the latest news while we were waiting to be served. I went on the internet using our Chrome Books to research news stories and I wrote about the sit-ins and people being arrested. Then a group of us stuck our stories in big pieces of paper to look like real newspapers. The best part is when we finished the play some of the other kids asked Ms. Robinson

if we could make a class newspaper, and she got really excited and said we could. She gave us a worksheet and did a mini lesson on what should be in a newspaper (byline, date, headline, that sort of thing). She brought in real newspapers, and we looked for interesting articles for us to discuss. Then we all wrote our stories. I wrote about a Black man being arrested in a grocery store just because of the color of his skin. I gave it the headline *Something to Fight For*. So, me and Rose made a newspaper station where the kids could bring their stories once they were printed and we would organize them and paste them onto the large sheets. Some of the other kids said we should have different sections of the paper. Julie wanted ads, so she and a couple others made ads about shops in our town. We had a *Back in Time* section, a *Current News* section, and a *Daily Gossip* section. What was Ms. Robinson doing you may wonder while we were doing this? Well, she was helping kids revise and correct their spelling before they printed it out, but we kids were the ones who really created the paper.

Mia: I am Mia, and I have a very strong personality. This is who I am, and Ms. Robinson knows this very well. But I love school and I am quite smart. I have friends in this class, but I also have lots of friends in the other third grade classes too, so I guess I am quite popular.

My family is my mom, dad, little brother in pre-school, and an older brother in the middle school. We love to watch football together, but I am very interested in hockey; I used to be on a team. I have a very interesting family. The first thing is Ms. Robinson used to teach my mom and my aunt (my mom's sister). My dad is white, my mom is part black, my aunt is black, and my

grandmother's (my mom's mothers) are gay. One of my grandmothers is an ordained minister. So, you see I have a very interesting family. I think this has helped me understand things about life, especially about unfairness.

In our class play I chose to learn about Claudette Colvin. We each got into groups and discussed what we were interested in having in the play. My group was Diane, Monica, Will, Joan, and Julie. Everyone knew about Rosa Parks, but Ms. Robinson mentioned that she was not the first one to refuse to give up her seat and be arrested for it. She told us to research it on our chrome books. That night I also went home and asked my mom if she knew about any of this. We looked it up and found some interesting facts that my group and I added to our part in the play. I also wrote about what I had learned about these women in our class newspaper. I think we were awesome to tell about these other women because they were brave too. A few days after the play Ms. Robinson interviewed me to find out what inspired me to do further research with my mom, and what did this mean for me. I told her that was I inspired by Claudette Colvin, that she was a teenager, yet she was brave to stand up against unfairness, and that she had rights too:

Ms. Robinson: Do you remember when we were doing the play and the audience was asking you about how you felt about learning about the women, the other women besides Rosa Parks, who refused to give up their seats on the busses?

Mia: Yeah, yeah. I remember.

Ms. Robinson: I was very intrigued that you went even further when you answered the question about it, and you said that you had watched a movie about it.

Mia: Yeah, when I got home, I asked my mom, “Were you alive when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous “I have a dream speech”?” and she looked it up on You Tube, and we watched a video of Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin so everything I said was true and meaningful.

Ms. Robinson: What interested you the most about Claudette Colvin you think? Because everybody knows about Rosa Parks, but very few people know about her.

Mia: Well, I thought it was very cool that more than one person wanted to stand up to the unfair laws, and they were right it was really unfair.

Ms. Robinson: Hmm (agreeing)

Mia: They were really special people because they knew what they had to do.

Ms. Robinson: I think they were really special people myself; I really do. In your own personal life to do you think these ladies have any message for you yourself, these women?

Mia: Yeah

Ms. Robinson: What do you think?

Mia: I think stay strong, no matter what happens. It will all be Ok in the meantime if you stand up.

Ms. Robinson: Thank you. I really appreciate that. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Mia: Well one thing I learned was that Irene Morgan was the first woman to do that, and I am pretty sure that those women the first time they did it they were a little scared.

Ms. Robinson: I can imagine them being very scared because they were going up against society.

Mia: Yeah, and all the White people they were probably furious with them, but it was the right thing to do because now we're, well not all of us are treated equal, but some of us.

Ms. Robinson: it's better than it was?

Mia: Yes.

Ms. Robinson: Thank you so much for your share _____, it was some very mature insights. Thank you, Sweetie.

Member Checking

In reflecting on the student profiles once they were written I needed to authenticate how I represented them in this writing. I interviewed each of the selected seven, they read each monologue and advised me on what to include, correct, and omit, for example, I assumed that Tom only had only one older sister, where in fact he had two. Evan reminded me that his mother also reacted to the President Obama figure when she first entered our classroom, indicating the importance to him and his family. Rose is from a heterosexual family, and her family are good friends with Eve's family. Rose's parents are politically active to the extent of taking Rose to protest rallies in Washington DC. Eve has two mothers and matters concerning gay rights are of importance to her. At the start of the school year, she commented that I did not have enough books that represented gay

families. She wanted to be visible in the class, I also felt that she wanted assurance of my sensitivities about her gay family. She told one of her mothers about the lack of literature resources, who casually mentioned her daughter's concern to me. I immediately researched books about many types of families, in the class we had a variety of family dynamics, so I asked the children to bring in photographs of their families. We created a display, and the children were proud to show their families.

The books depict a variety of family dynamics and multicultural issues that address mixed families, adopted children from other ethnic heritages into White families, gay families that include two fathers and two mothers.

Constructing A Teacher Researcher's Heteroglossic¹² Journey

My Anglo-Caribbean immigrant identity plays a significant part in influencing my



Figure 2: Display of texts about a variety of family dynamics

role as a teacher (as illustrated in the introduction), my beliefs as a multicultural educator,

¹² In reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1982) of the intertextual nature of language and the influence on the development of ideas. See Theoretical Framework.

my critical and constructivist approaches to pedagogy, appreciation for diversity, and how I have chosen to design and conduct this research. I have always preferred to teach in multicultural contexts, where I feel that the classroom situation should reflect the plurality of the world and society in which children live. The curriculum context is influenced by my belief that children are knowledge seekers, curious language learners and users, and they need opportunities to practice using language to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct concepts while interacting with the text, each other, and the teacher.

Humanizing the Classroom Context

In my position as the teacher-researcher, I bring to this research a willingness to listen to the students and learn from their contributions to the learning. I want to create a democratic classroom environment where the children can feel free to question, argue, and shape the learning experiences. I am a veteran teacher whose responsibilities include facilitating learning experiences. I automatically have the power to impose my will. This may cause fear on the part of some students. That is why humanizing the classroom and establishing a nurturing relationship is vital to this project. The children regard me as having the power of authority. I appreciate that relinquishing this position may be challenging, but foremost, this study looks at how children respond to text, therefore the focus is child centered and content centered approached in concert. The students' contributions are essential for learning how to engage children critically and multiculturally with children's literature. Enciso's work (1994), Dudley Marling (1997), and Robinson (2013) described in the literature review, all discuss planning critical engagement that is rooted in the children's interests, their arguments support pedagogy

that helps diminish conflicts of culture, alienation, or children feeling “spotlighted” or held as representatives of their ethnic community.

Cultivating Relationships

As the classroom teacher, I attempt to nurture a unique relationship with my students which may not be of significance within quantitative statistical inquiry but is important for critical ethnographic study. As Madison (2005) argues “a temporal conversation constituted by the Other’s voice, body, history, and yearnings. This conversation with the Other, brought forth through dialogue” (2005, p. 10) is significant in terms of my critical ethnographer’s presence because my critical ethnographic research seeks to be informed by the subjective, intellectual, and emotional responses of the participants. For these responses to occur and to avoid inhibitions, the student participants should feel at ease and safe knowing that they can be honest and not intimidated, that who they are and what they share will be validated. Pillow suggests (2003, p. 184) that subjective inquiry and self-reflexivity presents an over familiarity with the other research participants, in the case of my research design, I would suggest that familiarity with the respondents, the children in my classroom, is essential to the research design. I also live in the same community as many of the children which also supports an insider relationship that informs the data and its analysis. This relationship will ultimately affect the types of response that the students present, as illustrated in my earlier research when the children hugged me after participating in an interactive read-aloud (Robinson, 2013, p. 43). These factors promote an intersubjectivity that is particularly unique to this research design because the student participants are invited to collectively share in experiences and to respond empathetically and emotionally to the themes conveyed in

texts. Intersubjectivity also relates to the author's perspective conveyed in the text, the responses of the students (the readers) and the responses of the teacher-researcher, again reiterating Cia's (2008) discussions on transactional theory about the transactions that occur between the reader and the text.

Madison (2005, p. 175) describes intersubjectivity in relation to performance ethnography where the audience is asked to "travel" or imagine and empathize with the world of the characters in the performance. I think this construct is also helpful here in describing my work as the teacher-researcher and my relationship and understandings of the perspectives of the young participants, in relation to the texts and how the texts are used in literacy and literary practices in the critical multicultural classroom context. In the daily course of their work classroom teachers are expected to observe their students' responses (intellectual and emotional); assess student's acquisition of information; plan, revise and evaluate, record, and give account of their pedagogy and instruction of content and concepts. Consequently, teachers have a first-hand relationship and emotional connection with their students that gives them a unique subjective position to be emic/insider teacher researchers (Banks, 2006).

Procedures

Parental Consent

I presented the research goals and objectives to parents and to the students at an informal gathering before the official start of the new school year. See Appendix B for actual script. As described by Duke and Mallette (2004, p. 99) validity of ethnographic research requires entering the field (my classroom of new students) where the participants have been informed and know exactly the objectives of the research. Developing rapport between the student participants and their parents was essential to

this research because students were being asked to respond to texts honestly and openly, a trust had to be established between me the teacher-researcher and the students. I was privileged to have met all the families throughout the school year during formal occasions such as parent teacher conferences and curriculum night, and less formal classroom presentations, field trips, and school wide social events. My classroom had an open-door policy which meant parents were invited to spend time with us at any time of the school day, even recess and lunch. All these opportunities to engage and include families contributed to the promotion of a caring family atmosphere in the classroom. Additionally, I used these opportunities to learn about the children's family dynamics for example one student had two mothers; another had grandmothers who were gay, and her household was dual heritage (African American and European American); a male student also had a similar dual heritage household, there were a few children who shared two homes because their parents were divorced, there were homes that had both one male and female parent, and homes that included grandparents.

I designed this research where the significant features of the classroom would provide access for critical engagement with multicultural children's literature to be integrated into the daily school curriculum and across disciplines. The research design was based on providing many opportunities for promoting listening, speaking, rehearsing, writing, drawing, viewing, reading and drama (Holland et al., 1993) in the following ways:

1. Establishing classroom routines and promoting a dialogical classroom, based on community building and friendship. The day began with a morning meeting. Here the children would sit in a circle, shake hands, greet each other

wish each other “Good morning_____, I hope you have a nice day.” “Thank you,_____, I hope you have a nice day too.” Students could share important news. On many occasions I did not restrict it to just a small number of people, especially at the start of the school year, because the importance was for the children and I to learn about each other. We would play a team game often associated with what was to come in the day. For example, if we were doing creative writing, I would play *Interrupted Scenes* where the students could practice dialogue, the game begins with one person in the middle beginning a conversation, and then another person joined in, then a third person would join the conversation, and the first person would leave, making room for another person to change the story or continue it.

A daily fifteen-minute diary. I would write simultaneously with the students. I would place my diary under the overhead so they could see my thoughts and feelings. In so doing I modeled that it was safe to share emotions and experiences. The students wrote about their lives and experiences in and out of school. The diary became a favorite activity for the students because they enjoyed sharing their personal lives and listening to each other. These diary entries would later provide material to be developed into lengthier personal narratives during writing practice.

2. Cultivating and humanizing the classroom space. A classroom space that affirms and validates each child is highly important to creating an atmosphere where children can critically discuss issues related to themselves and others. Activities include:

- * the students writing acrostic poems about themselves using their own names. They would then share these informally amongst themselves and help each other write adjectives to describe their characteristics.
 - * Each student created a poster sized newspaper titled *All About Me*. Here they shared pictures, photographs, and information about their families, their future dreams, favorite places, important events in their lives, and favorite book, or movie.
 - * Students shared family photographs.
 - * Families were invited to participate in classroom events such as a meet and greet gathering at the beginning of the school year, and a Thanksgiving feast where families were invited to bring favorite foods representing their heritages.
 - * I would often refer to the student participants as “My friend_____”, building a connection and relationship with the student.
3. Identifying and promoting an appreciation of multicultural literature.
- * The students completed a questionnaire indicating their previous experiences and understanding of multicultural literature.
 - * The whole class participated in a group discussion for constructing their understanding of multicultural, and multicultural literature.
 - * Children created symbols depicting how they respond to text.
4. Establishing a democratic classroom, where the students are positioned as leaders and not just subordinates. In this critical ethnography the reader will

observe students repositioning the teacher-researcher and facilitating the learning experiences for themselves and for the teacher.

5. Providing a variety of reading material and multicultural literature. Through student choice several texts became classroom favorites. These books were not only selected to be read by students on a particular reading level but were chosen by students on various assessed levels especially when the students overheard conversations (as seen in the transcripts of *Alvin Ho*).

Data Collection Sources

The data collection covered a period of five months beginning in September when we returned to Priory Park elementary school. Critical ethnographic inquiry may use multiple ways for gathering data (Elizabeth A. St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014), and includes information obtained from the dialogue that is produced during classroom activities and practices, students' intellectual and emotional responses, and other student or teacher-researcher generated artifacts. In late August I arranged the classroom as described in the classroom context. I invited the students and their families to an informal gathering. Here the student- participants acquainted themselves to the classroom arrangement and met their classmates. I discussed the research and provide information about the process, disseminated parental consent forms (I mailed those to families who did not attend). Beginning on the first official day of school I established classroom routines and activities for promoting relationships and friendships such as the whole group morning meeting. The students completed a questionnaire (Appendix B) about his/her reading experiences with multicultural children's literature. I read the questions to the whole group as they proceeded through the questions. Data collection included:

- (1) Pre, mid, and post semi-structured interviews of the students and open-ended interviews. (See sample questions in Appendix B). The pre-interviews help to reduce any assumptions on the part of the teacher-researcher for background knowledge about family life, interests, and their reading lifestyles. I also planned an initial open house where I served refreshments and had an informal gathering with the families to discuss my work. Mid-semester and post-semester informal interviews served to inform the study by asking the students to reflect on their learning and the classroom activities.
- (2) Artifacts: student writing and drawing, lesson plans and how literature is selected for use, the plans for multimodal and multiliterate activities for critical engagement (design and pedagogical practices). However, I selected multicultural read-aloud texts specifically for motivating student's critical thinking and formulating ideas about social issues and themes in the literature. Students were also invited to select literature for classroom investigation. I selected non-fiction and fiction multicultural texts for not only supporting the mandated curriculum but were also representative of diversity in terms of gender roles, physical differences, ethnic and racial groups, cultural themes, and social issues. I collected artifact samples of student work to analyze the types of multimodal and discourse practices students employed in their responses to texts. I tape recorded students whole group conversations about specific texts. As discourse events occurred, dialogue about literature was a regular feature of the daily classroom environment, there was no time of day when I specifically chose to collect data, however literary experiences and

responses occurred during scheduled writing and reading workshops, which were usually an hour each lesson daily. I continuously conducted observations of interactions in the classroom.

As the class and I engaged in our daily curriculum and lessons I incorporated literature and texts featuring multicultural themes, historical and contemporary social issues. I employed a critical literacy approach to questioning such as those described in the role of the text analyst (Luke & Freebody, 1997) where the text analyst reader discovers whose interests are served by the text, and how power relations are presented in the text.

Text Selection

I followed the mandated literary genres that are required reading in the third-grade curricula, but I particularly sought books that featured diverse ethnic people, cultures, and socioeconomic status. I began the year with realistic fiction. This genre speaks to my research design because it has culturally diverse literature and the themes address a plethora of social, political, cultural, and human conditions, emotions, and experiences. I gave the children choices of what they wanted to read, but I used books from my own collection and books from the school's book closet accessed by all the teachers. I presented for the students an array of books representing the spectrum of assessed reading levels attained by the children. For example, in our first exploration of realistic fiction the books were: *Alvin Ho*, by Chinese American author Lenore Look; *Keena Ford*, by Melissa Thomas; *Drita*, by Jenny Lombard; and *Donovan's Word Jar*, by Black-American author, Monalisa Degross. A few of the students continued with books they were already reading Julie for example was into *Esperanza Rising*, by Pam Muñoz Ryan. Simultaneously, I selected for our classroom read

The Tree House, by Lois Lowry; *Stone Fox*, by John Reynolds Gardiner; and *The Hundred Dresses*, by Eleanor Estes. All these books speak to issues of class, socio-economic status, bullying, ethnic identity, privilege, power, and critique not only of the characters' position and perspectives but also the perspectives and position of the authors.

At first, I organized the books into groups and assigned them according to the children's assessed reading level, but the children became interested in each other's books and gravitated to the ones that captured their interests. Some of the girls also wanted to read Alvin Ho, so I have presented a script of the boys discussing the book; and the girls being invited to bring their perspective to the discussion it is interesting to note is that the girls picked up on Alvin's stereotypes of girls. The boys on the other hand were interested in Alvin's fears and his survival kit. The children went on to develop character studies based on these books and by that time I had given them free range of which ones to use I had also given them options on how they wanted to represent the characters either through creating a diorama, acting, or a poster presentation. After the children presented their work, we had a debriefing session that included discussions about the modalities and their reasons for choosing their methods for representing their characters.

Presenting the Data

My research data, of critical multicultural engagement with children's texts in the elementary school setting, are written as mini scripts of the critical multicultural engagement (CME) events. The mini scripts selected are described in chronological order as they occurred in our daily classroom activities. I am only focusing in depth on six of the CME moments because they are lengthy, and to present each of the fifty – three recorded transcripts would involve time and length beyond the scope of this

dissertation. However, the selected CME events illustrate a salient feature that becoming critically conscious is not a linear process, the moments of CME build on each other and illustrate how the student participants' literacy learning impacts each event, and how they collectively construct critical multicultural consciousness and inform each other in ways that I could not have envisioned; these connections and the relationship of the CME events will be addressed in the discussion chapter. The mini scripts present the participants (students and the teacher-researcher) responding to texts and each other, and the students' representations of their understandings and critical constructions. The students were invited to participate in multimodal literacy strategies (thinking, speaking, listening, visualizing, drawing, drama, reading, and writing) to represent their critical multicultural understandings, and the research occurred within the context of our daily teaching and learning experiences. An outline of the data, chapters 5–7, is presented below:

Chapter 5 presents critical multicultural engagement (CME) events CME #1 and

CME #2

CME #1 Cultivating critical work – What is multicultural literature?

Kids want to know!

CME #2. Discovering criticality – The Pledge of Allegiance.

Chapter 6 presents CME #3 and #4

CME #3 Engaging critically -*Alvin Ho*, the protagonist, is from an affluent Chinese American family.

CME #4 Communicating criticality – *Drita, My Homegirl* is about a recent immigrant.

Chapter 7 presents CME #5 and CME #6

CME #5 Dramatizing as Deconstruction – A Class Act

CME #6 Re/Constructing Criticality – Kids Rule OK! The newspaper projects.

Presentation of the mini scripts includes the use of pseudonyms while referring to all the participants. I will indicate myself as Ms. Robinson. Words written in bold indicate a moment where the speaker used strong emphasis. Sections of the scripts that have been omitted are delineated within braces {}. Directions and participants actions are delineated with box brackets [].

Data Analysis to Code or Not to Code

As mentioned earlier critical practices involves dialogue and the discursive events that occur (in this case) in the classroom. For my critical ethnographic study capturing these moments and writing about them is as Richardson and St. Pierre (2008) suggest are not necessarily two separate processes, and they argue many qualitative researchers are adopting “*writing as a method of inquiry* to be a viable way in which to learn about themselves” (2008, pp. 473–475). Writing is a way of knowing and analyzing data (2008,pp. 486–487) challenges the more limiting conventional practices of data collection constant comparison; coding, sorting, categorizing data and sorting into themes. As suggested by Greig, Taylor, and Mackay (2007) “Qualitative research [in opposition to quantitative] strives for depth of understanding in natural settings” (pp. 135-142) and for my work, writing is the most complementary and descriptive way to capture critical work with children. From my field notes of observations and transcripts of audio recorded classroom conversations I

developed notes that were later used for presenting excerpt commentary and for writing a “research story” as suggested by Richardson and St. Pierre (2008).

Representing the Ethnographic Data as Mini Scripts

I have reflected and rewritten several versions of how I would present the data for this ethnography. I attempted to present the data as vignettes where I would detail my perspectives on what I observed, and as third person narratives, each time I felt that I was not preserving the experiences for these young readers or doing justice to the depth of their understanding regarding representing their embodiment and understandings as users of critical multicultural consciousness or as text analysts. In presenting the writing as vignettes, I was diluting the essence of their responses and diminishing their epistemological journey. I decided to present the data as mini scripts of their critical engagement events. Saldaña (2003, pp. 226–228) argues ethnographic research observes participants in action and presenting my research as scripts affords the reader to also observe what I see regarding emotional, critical, and intellectual responses, as the participants respond to each other and interact with the texts. Adopting a mini-script narrative more accurately presents for the reader “a unique, insightful, and engaging text about the human condition” (Saldaña, 2003, p. 229). Through the scripts “dialogue we not only advance the action, we reveal character reaction” (p. 226), and offer the reader a sense of being there along with the participants as they construct and reconstruct their perspectives, design and redesign their epistemological journey for understanding how power relations, position, and perspectives influence their daily lives, and how these concepts are enacted in children’s literature.

Additionally, through the script writing I was attending to how perspectives, power, and positioning were constructed through language among the research participants and through the subjects of the texts “Language is how social organization and power are defined and contested ...where one’s sense of self is – ones subjectivity – is constructed” (Richardson & Adams St.Pierre, 2008, p. 476). Through the lens of critical multicultural analysis and critical discourse analysis I present my observations about how the student participants construct their consciousness of critical multicultural engagement with texts. Critical multicultural analysis and critical discourse analysis affords an examination of how equity, position, perspective, and power relations are revealed in the constructions and reconstructions, design, and redesign experiences of the participants. Theories that formulate critical multicultural analysis are identified in the formative work of Botelho and Rudman (2009), who argue “In the process of critical multicultural reading, power is located and a site is created for social justice and social transformation” (p. 108). Critical multicultural analysis provides readers with the tools where they can identify “dominant messages in children’s books by locating how power relations of class, race, and gender are exercised in text and images” (p. 108) and explore not only the representations of the characters, the plot, and the themes, also readers can deconstruct and reconstruct themselves socially and politically and are able to reflect on the implications as they relate to themselves and others as they engage with texts. Teaching with multicultural literature includes critical multicultural analysis that supports students for “connecting our reading to sociopolitical and economic justice” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 268).

Critical Discourse Analysis Supports the Data as Mini Scripts

In chapters 5 through 7 I present the data as mini scripts, where the participants' discourse is presented in its entirety. St. Pierre and Jackson (2014) argue that all data and utterances are "worthy of analysis" (p. 715). The mini scripts allow the reader to follow the participants' constructions of meaning as they are situated in context of the critical multicultural events. Nuanced in this perspective is that data analysis is more than coding data and attributing or labeling words with other words. Analysis requires the researcher to make recursive connections to the theories, use "theory to determine, first, what counts as data [and guard against] looking for patterns where none exists" St. Pierre and Jackson (2014, p. 716). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used within a democratic perspective to identify and examine the moments of critical engagement, how language is used, and how the students and teacher are positioned through their utterances and roles in the literacy events. According to Rex and Schiller (2009) CDA allows the teacher-researcher to "capture interactions in the moment" (p. xi) and discursive choices. It also allows for discussion about the ideas and prior understandings that the children and the teacher have brought to the learning events including the intertextual influences, which in turn contributes to the responses and observable phenomenon. CDA helps the researcher to analyze the data inductively, while describing the power relationships that are constructed through discursive events; and deductively for analyzing how the theories and influences of the macro society are nuanced. I developed a data collection chart for describing and organizing data in relation to the research questions (see Appendix E), the chart is organized as follows: The subject of the lesson or moment of critical multicultural engagement (CME), the context or antecedent of the CME, the students' and/or my

responses, mini scripts of dialogue, excerpt commentary, my findings, and reflexive commentary.

Engaging Reflexivity

The following chapter presents mini scripts of events that illustrate children engaging critically and multiculturally with text. When first developing this chapter the title I had in mind was *'Practices that Matter'*, but as I thought deeper about the connotations implicated in the meaning of the term 'practices' there is suggested a set plan to be followed, an academic and pedagogical nuance. In the educational arena "practices" is a term often used to describe authoritative prescriptive teacher objectives that adhere to the requirements of the curriculum, state frameworks, instructional strategies, and assessments for measuring student skill attainment. With critical multicultural engagement in action the participants are not carrying out practices, instead they are responding to texts and embodying their understandings through critical literacy in action. Street (1984,1995, pp. 95–103) describes literacy as social practice that is influenced by the setting and the particular group of participants interacting together; where students construct their understandings and knowledge and draw on their own perspectives and literacy experiences (inside and outside of school) to construct their understandings. Additionally, Street's argument of literacy as "social practice and activity supports the idea of student production of their own texts as opposed to passive consumption of them" (Street, 1984, 1995, p. 213).

My conceptualization of literacy in action supports the student participants' critical multicultural engagement because it is an invitation to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct social/political discourse and ideology. The teacher's position regarding literacy in action attends to how I create conditions for children to create units of

meaning not just from printed texts, but also drawing on the utterances and thoughts of each other as textual resources. I suggest that critical multicultural engagement are not practices, rather they are critical multicultural responses to text situated in the moment (Barton et al., 2000, pp. 7–18), where responses are not predictable, or controlled by the teacher facilitator. The responses are created and generated by a unique group of student participants and the teacher facilitator, who come together in a particular event, time, and place (that cannot be replicated as the term “practices” suggests). The participants in these events critically, intellectually, and emotionally engage with literature and construct new text consistent with Street’s (1984, 1995, pp. 89 – 95) ideological model of literacy. Also nuanced here are the cultural, multicultural, social, and political discourses the students and teacher-researcher have experienced and bring to these unique literary and literacy moments in action. My role as the teacher-researcher is to create conditions for the student participants to:

- engage with texts intellectually, emotionally, critically and multiculturally.
- utilize their own text resources.
- be critically creative and produce new text.
- be positioned as text analysts.

And to observe and reflect on the use of critical multicultural discourse in the micro-interactions between students and with me the teacher-researcher as we engage with texts. The findings are next presented in Chapters 5, 6, &7, ‘*Critical Multicultural Engagement in Action*’.

CHAPTER 5

CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

“Reading is not exhausted merely by decoding the written word or written language, but rather anticipated by and extending into knowledge of the world.”

Freire 1981

“I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?”

Eve, Age 8

Introduction

The research question, what does critical multicultural engagement with children’s texts offer students as they read and respond to texts? Will seek to understand: 1. How does a teacher-researcher promote critical multicultural engagement in the elementary classroom? 2. What happens when elementary students critically and multiculturally engage with children’s texts? 3. In what ways do critical multicultural engagement offer elementary students opportunities for making meaning of power relations? 4. In what ways do critical multicultural engagement with children’s texts support students’ negotiation and affirmation of their own identities in relation to people of diverse ethnic and social communities. The data in the form of mini scripts describe the moments of critical multicultural engagement (CME). For each event I present the title, describe the orienting information (context and setting), and the use and purpose of specific texts included in the lesson. This is followed by the data (mini script) detailing the participants’ engagement and discussions, the constructions and reconstructions of ideas that emerge in their transactions with texts, each other, and /or the creation of new text. Following each mini script, I present my findings explicated with excerpt

commentary, and then an analysis. Presentation of the mini scripts includes the use of pseudonyms while referring to the participants. I will indicate myself as Ms. Robinson. Words written in bold indicate a moment where the speaker used strong emphasis. Sections of the scripts that have been omitted are delineated within braces {}. Directions and participants actions are delineated with box brackets []

CME #1-Cultivating Critical Work

“You can’t be completely different. You can’t have everything about you different because if you’re saying that you’re completely different about another person then that’s not true. Because if you’re another person then you’re both humans, so.”

Tom, Age 8

This mini script (data) is presented first because it is important to establish the students’ awareness about the concept of ‘multicultural’ and their experiences with multicultural issues, providing a foundation of the research and inspiring and informing

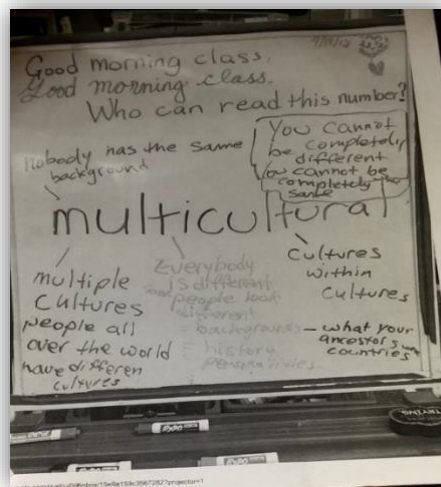


Figure 3: Easel displaying students’ ideas about the meaning of multicultural. our further work.

Context and Setting

This was the second week into the new school year, and I had to complete the mandatory math and literacy formal assessments for each of the students, therefore much of class time had been surrendered to testing. I was eager to get into the research and the children had been spending reading time on independent work. In this event the students were seated in their workshop places on the rug in front of me and the easel. My goal was to prepare and inspire them for completing a survey (Appendix B) I had prepared. The survey sought to find out what the students knew about multicultural literature and what they had read. In the discussion I was also interested to learn what they understood about the meaning of multicultural. The mini script begins with me setting the stage for introducing the students to the idea of multicultural in preparation for our critical work, and hopefully a thought-provoking conversation where we can identify what they understand about multiculturalism. This discussion did not include the use of any written text and I wanted to start this research without any imposed ideas from me. From a teacher-researcher's perspective I considered this an essential activity for laying the foundation for this research and identifying what the children understood about multicultural literature.

Ms. Robinson: I'm going to be talking to you today. {} I'm going to be asking you to do something for me. Something really special and important.

Eddie: **[He makes a woohoo excited sound]**

Ms. Robinson: I've only got a few people to finish testing reading and then we can start into our reading projects and our reading activities, which is really great. Now then, as you know you all signed the form to help me teach you in ways to

help us be ... (quick change of thought) so I can give teachers some good ideas on how to help kids really learn and how to be good students and how to help them progress and read, be able to think about what they read. Now, {} I'm going to have you complete this survey [I hold up the survey] {} It's really about books and the types of books that you like to read, the books that you have read. {} [I begin to write the word 'Multicultural' on the easel].

So, if I said this word. If I said this word... who can read it out with me?

The whole class begins to sound out the letters as I write Mmm....

Eve: [Enthusiastically] Mythical!

Ms. Robinson: [Elongates the sound of each letter as I speak] M.u.l

Evan: Multiplication.

Ms. Robinson: Mmulltt

Ross: Multitool!

Ms. Robinson: Mullliti..... culllll

Joan: Multicultural.

Rose: Multicultural.

Ms. Robinson: What does multicultural mean to you? What does multicultural mean to you? Anybody? Just raise your hand. Anyone.

Rose: Multiple cultures.

Ms. Robinson: Multiple cultures? [writes this on the easel] Ok. Can you explain to us what you mean by that?

Rose: It means people all over the world have different cultures.

Ms. Robinson: Right. People all over the world have different cultures. Does anybody want to add to that? People all over the world have different cultures. [Writes this on the easel] I like that. Anybody else want to add to that or say something about that?

Eve: Different people. Like, everybody's different.

Ms. Robinson: Everybody's different?

Eve: Yea.

Ms. Robinson: Right. Everybody is different. [Writes this on easel] Ok, what do you mean by that Eve?

Eve: I mean like, some people might look similar but they're not really the same.

Ms. Robinson: Some people might look similar but they're not necessarily the same.

Eve: No, maybe they have different personalities, maybe a different background.

Rose: Different family histories.

Ms. Robinson: Right. So, the ways people can be different. [Writes the list on easel] There's different backgrounds, histories. Oh, and you said personalities which is a big one. Personalities. Now these are all very serious things. These are all very serious things that are important to helping us grow, understand, and become stronger, better readers and listeners. Stronger, better readers, listeners. I love the way Eddie's listening right now. Eddie, I'm so proud of you. You're trying hard to listen.

[I make a point of praising Eddie because he would normally walk around the room, or hide under the tables during lessons, but at this moment he is sitting attentively with the group]

Joan: Like a culture that has different parts of another culture?

Ms. Robinson: Right. A culture within a culture? That's very interesting, wow! A culture, cultures within cultures. [Writes this on easel] So, all of you have great ideas of what multicultural means. Cultures. Now, when we say cultures does anybody have an idea of what cultures means? I think you've all gotten it like when you said their backgrounds are different, their histories are different. Can you extend and elaborate that a little bit?

Joan: The history about other parts of the world.

Ms. Robinson: Right the history of how other parts of the world came about. What does it mean? Backgrounds? I heard somebody ask, "what's a background?". Mia, what's a background? I love the way you're participating,

Mia. What's a background?

Mia: A background is like.... (Pauses). I forget.

Ms. Robinson: A background is a... you forgot Hun? Ok.

Julie: A background is like a um... it's sort of like what your ancestors were?

Ms. Robinson: Alright, so what your ancestors were. Anybody else can you explain a bit more? What your ancestors were. [Writes this on easel] I like that.

Julie: I don't know, like what countries....

Ms. Robinson: What countries they came from? Yup. You did get it right, what your ancestors were you said? Your countries. What do you think? Backgrounds.

Does anybody here share the same background?

Mia: No, nobody.

Ms. Robinson: Nobody. Can you tell me why Mia?

Mia: Because even if some people look alike....

Ms. Robinson: Right. When you say look alike what do you mean specifically?

Mia: Ummm, like have the same skin tone or color.

Ms. Robinson: Right, but they don't necessarily....

Mia: But they don't necessarily have the same personalities or things they like.

Rose: Like you and your sibling have the same history but very different personalities.

Ms. Robinson: Ok. So, I think I have a very bright class and I'm so glad you're here.

Tom raises his hand.

Ms. Robinson: Tom?

Tom: There's one thing – you can't be exactly the same or exactly different.

Ms. Robinson: You can't be exactly the same or exactly different. You have got a very good point. When you say about exactly different could you be a bit more specific?

Tom: You can't be completely different. You can't have everything about you different because if you're saying that you're completely different about another

person than that's not true. Because if you're another person then you're both humans, so ...

Ms. Robinson: Ohhh, that is, oh my goodness. You cannot be completely different from anybody else. You cannot be completely the same, but you can't be completely different. {Voice changes to a slow and softer level of excitement here almost mysterious} We're going to be doing lots of work, lots of really good stories *based* on that idea.

Peter: If we were still in _____'s class [referring to their second-grade teacher] and Tom said that she would've went on Twitter and tweeted that.

Children chuckle

Student: Yea, she would!

Ms. Robinson: [Reiterating the student's ideas] You cannot be completely different, and you cannot be completely the same. Oh my gosh. That is just so amazing! All of you! From the idea of multiple cultures, people all over the world have different cultures, everybody is different, some people don't look different, but they have different backgrounds, different histories, different personalities. Your backgrounds mean your ancestors, the countries that they came from.

Cultures within a culture, wow! And who said little kids don't know anything?

High five to all of you, this is amazing because the work that I've been talking about and the work that we'll be doing is exactly what this is. How I can help other teachers realize that in our work as teachers and the way we engage children with books, they can come to some realizations about who you are as people and that nobody is completely the same and that nobody is completely different.

We're all connected in some way. Wonderful thinking! **Wonderful thinking.** I can't wait to start and do some deep-thinking work with you because you are amazing.

Findings for CME #1

The findings in this research suggest that pedagogy centered on critical multicultural engagement with children's texts invites and promotes critical multicultural consciousness and agency and offers students the possibility for critical constructions as they negotiate meaning of sociocultural themes. CME # 1 illustrates that the construction of critical multicultural knowledge and understanding of social phenomenon is promoted through collective discourse. The following excerpt from the mini script above illustrates the students' collective contributions as they construct and produce knowledge:

Mia: A background is like.... (Pauses). I forget.

Ms. Robinson: A background is a... you forgot Hun? Ok.

Julie: A background is like a um... it's sort of like what your ancestors were?

Ms. Robinson: Alright, so what your ancestors were. Anybody else can you explain a bit more? What your ancestors were. [Writes this on easel] I like that.

Julie: I don't know, like what countries....

Ms. Robinson: What countries they came from? Yup. You did get it right, what your ancestors were you said? Your countries. What do you think? Backgrounds.

Does anybody here share the same background?

Mia: No, nobody.

Ms. Robinson: Nobody. Can you tell me why Mia?

Mia: Because even if some people look alike....

Ms. Robinson: Right. When you say look alike what do you mean specifically?

Mia: Ummm, like have the same skin tone or color. {}

Mia: But they don't necessarily have the same personalities or things they like. {}

Rose: Like you and your sibling have the same history but very different personalities.

This excerpt illustrates that as students use language to construct their understanding of “multicultural”, they also show an awareness of their critical understanding of social phenomenon. My role as facilitator guides the discussion while not imposing my understandings. I validate the students’ utterances and comments when I repeat and echo their phrasing and definitions in my own language usage. The students are positioned as teachers facilitating and contributing to the collective learning. The teacher’s role includes supporting and affirming the students’ critical understandings of their own identities in relation to our diverse world. Mini script CME #1 shows the children extending the conversation about the meaning of multicultural:

Eve: Different people. Like, everybody’s different.

Ms. Robinson: Everybody’s different?

Eve: Yea.

{}

Eve: No, maybe they have different personalities, maybe a different background.

Rose: Different family histories.

{}

Ms. Robinson: You can't be exactly the same or exactly different. You have got a very good point. When you say about exactly different could you be a bit more specific?

Tom: You can't be completely different. You can't have everything about you different because if you're saying that you're completely different about another person than that's not true. Because if you're another person then you're both humans, so ...

The data suggests that the children's understanding of multicultural is synonymous with their understandings of differences in social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, and signifies the importance of inviting students to think about social phenomena in relation to their own identities. Joan, Eve, and Rose identify that humanity is comprised of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. Tom further extends and promotes their critical multicultural consciousness in his statement of our combined humanity. Nuanced in his comment is a sense of empathy, and his declarative authoritative tone imposes his position as being more influential than my own.

Critical multicultural literacy invites students to offer perspectives that affirm and incite as they negotiate their understanding. As CME#1 continues more student participants contribute to the discussion:

Mia: No, nobody.

Ms. Robinson: Nobody. Can you tell me why Mia?

Mia: Because even if some people look alike....

Ms. Robinson: Right. When you say look alike what do you mean specifically?

Mia: Ummm, like have the same skin tone or color.

Ms. Robinson: Right, but they don't necessarily....

Mia: But they don't necessarily have the same personalities or things they like.

Rose: Like you and your sibling have the same history but very different personalities.

}

Tom: You can't be completely different. You can't have everything about you different because if you're saying that you're completely different about another person than that's not true. Because if you're another person then you're both humans, so ...

As the students contribute to the discussion, they critically use language to contradict, affirm, and incite as they negotiate their understandings which is significant for the development of ideas. In the transcript we see the students extend and provoke deeper understandings of what multicultural means. Their discourse can be contradictory, but this also supports the formulation of their collective understanding as indicated by Tom, Mia, and Rose.

Analysis of CME#1

Establishing Collective Group Understandings Early. The whole class discussion in CME #1 illustrates the importance of establishing a conceptual framework for students as they consider multicultural themes. In the research of empirical studies, we observed students participating in analytic ways as they engaged with text but identified in this research is the significance of the teacher early on in their interactions cultivating a collective group experience for thinking and speaking critically and multiculturally.

The Teacher-Researcher's Influence and Resource. The pedagogical choices I made were to cultivate a discursive classroom for promoting students' critical multicultural engagement and responses to text. This introductory lesson did not include references to texts, but the object was to have the students arrive at an understanding and appreciation for diversity, and for the students to formulate language conveying critical multicultural consciousness that they could draw on to express their learning and responses to texts. Consequently, the children collectively conceptualized their idea of multicultural, and their ideas were written on the easel where they could reread, refer to it, and reflect. This first critical multicultural engagement event presents the children being critically conscious in their efforts to offer ideas about societal concepts and frames their perspectives. The children are uninhibited about sharing, and my role is to facilitate and not to impose. The transcript also shows children assisting others to extend ideas for each other in ways that do not privilege one student over another but allows for a democratic approach where every student has an opportunity to be recognized.

Inspiring Critical Multicultural Consciousness. This introductory lesson addresses the argument that as critical multicultural educators we must consider how we facilitate and select multicultural themes. What is the purpose and how does it support the students? (Osorio, 2018). In the transcript the children arrive at an idea of multicultural that embraces a humanistic, inclusive, and democratic perspective (also shown in other mini scripts) that resonates throughout their experiences with texts including the texts that they create. The students' responses in this introductory lesson to multicultural concepts reveals that as the teacher I can use language to affirm, restate, coax, and guide the lesson. I also invite the children to construct meaning for each other, and it is the

students' comments that steer their collective understandings and illustrates the impossibility of predetermining what is going to occur in the lesson. I observe in this transcript that I frequently want to justify and validate what I am trying to do with the students,

“you all signed the form to help me teach you in ways to help us be ... (quick change of thought) so I can give teachers some good ideas on how to help kids really learn and how to be good students and how to help them progress and read, be able to think about what they read.”

It would also seem that I am seeking their approval to have them complete the survey, but simultaneously by making myself appear vulnerable I am repositioning myself so that they can understand that what they have to say is valuable.

“I'm going to be asking you to do something for me. Something really special and important.”

Positioning Students as Equal Participants. My physical placement of having the children sit on the rug and I am seated on a chair in front of them positions me as the authority figure. But my language entreats the children's help, and in so doing I am also positioning them as equals having authority to contribute. I am also positioning the idea that their work and contributions is just as (if not more important) than the formal assessments, and my comment “be able to think about what they read” suggests that reading includes thinking about what texts conveys and what it means to be a good reader.

Power Relations. Critical pedagogy involves literacy processes that support students' comprehension of ideas, making meaning, and is concerned with understanding

how ideologies (Street, 1984, p. 17, 1995), and power relations are conveyed and circulated within and through language. In CME # 1 we observe the classroom discourse moving back and forth from teacher to students while the students begin to conceptualize “multicultural”. In the transcript we see the children identifying the elements that constitute a perspective of “multicultural”. This discussion pertains particularly to research question 3. In what ways do critical multicultural engagement offer elementary students opportunities for making meaning of power relations? In Joan’s comment,

Joan: Like a culture that has different parts of another culture?

We see that I do not use my language to impose my ideas on the students but allow them to collectively construct their understandings. From a constructivist’s perspective the transcript identifies that critical engagement with multicultural themes offers children the opportunity to develop a “critical consciousness” as conceptualized by Freire (2000, p. 81). The children arrive at an understanding of our basic humanity we all may be different, but we “can’t be completely different” illustrating an appreciation for cultural differences, realizing our disconnections (Jones, 2013) and connections as Tom emphasizes,

Tom: Because if you’re another person then you’re both humans...

Tom’s comment contributes to the children’s collective understanding and is affirmed and made significant in contemporary literacy modalities expressed in Peter’s comment,

Peter: If we were still in _____’s class [referring to their second-grade teacher] and Tom said that she would’ve went on Twitter and tweeted that. {}

Student: Yea, she would!

Peter's reference to "Twitter" also suggests the importance of making Tom's ideas public. The children are acquiring a critical consciousness of how people relate to one another. The collective language becomes culturally sensitive and affords a collective understanding and positioning of our humanity that recognizes our similarities and differences.

Locating a Multicultural Identity. As the students attempt to read the word multicultural I assist them by employing autonomous decoding resources (Luke & Freebody, 1997) to phonetically sound out the letters and the students engage their language usage and semantic experiences, their responses nuance their social world – mythical, multitool, multiplication (in math class we were studying the times tables). Joan and Rose though, initiate a more ideational (Street, 1984, 1995) and globally inclusive (Lapp & Fisher, 2011) understanding in their comments:

So, if I said this word. If I said this word... who can read it out with me?

The whole class begins to sound out the letters as I write Mmm....

{}

Joan: Like a culture that has different parts of another culture?

Rose: Multiple cultures.

Ms. Robinson: Multiple cultures? [writes this on the easel] Ok. Can you explain to us what you mean by that?

Rose: It means people all over the world have different cultures.

By writing their ideas on the easel I am affirming their perspectives. Rose extends the idea of differences and multicultural by suggesting that there are many cultures within a culture. This is a class of students' whose heritages span many continents, Rose's and

Joan’s comments serve to illustrate that who we are impacts how we see the world and our place in it “Identities play a role in how we perceive ourselves sociopolitically” (Botelho, & Rudman, 2009, p. 103).

Critical multicultural discourse afforded for these students an empathetic mindset that I would later observe to be recursive and pervasive in their critical discourse and critical constructions while promoting social justice ideas (noted in the other CME events). Of course, this is just one of a series of experiences that helped build a collective consciousness.

CME #2 Discovering Criticality!

“I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?”

Eve, Age 8

“What about people who don’t believe in God?”

Rose, Age 8

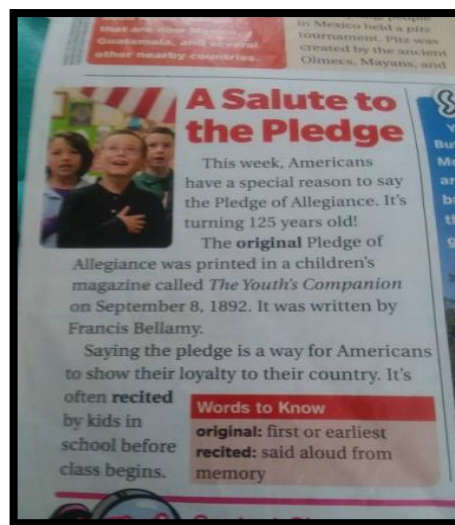


Figure 4: Article about the Pledge of Allegiance
The Pledge of Allegiance script details our first opportunity for the students to respond thoughtfully, emotionally, critically, and multiculturally with written text. The

topic was current in the social and political arena, and as revealed in the mini script the students clearly shared their critical understandings about the injustices occurring in society.

Context and Setting

This lesson took place during the scheduled daily forty-minute block for social studies. The third-grade social studies unit is supplemented by using the Scholastic News magazines. Not all classes choose to use this resource, but I like this publication because it has many articles which provide opportunities for promoting critical thinking and multicultural perspectives for discussion, and current affairs topics that are of interest to the students. I often extend some of the topics and draw on other resources and texts (as shown in this CME event) to support or offer counter ideas. This edition is a non-fiction article that would not typically fall under the category of multicultural text, but it is a newspaper produced for children and it does challenge their thinking on issues relevant to their lives and includes sections where young students give their opinions. The seventy-three-word Pledge article is about a subject that relates to all American citizens in this culturally, and socio-economically diverse population of the United States. From a critical multicultural educator's perspective, the article seemed simplistically pedestrian, its focus was presenting historical facts which neutralized the complex concepts embedded in the Pledge and obscured the political ramifications. A close reading would mainly be based on the literal comprehension of the text because the article was just about presenting the facts. I would have to guide the student participants to appreciate the critical, emotional, and intellectual nuances or so I assumed, (this assumption would be contradicted by the students' astute responses in the mini script). The lesson continues

over two days which I had not anticipated doing, but the children were excited to extend the lesson to write their own pledges for America.

The lesson begins where student participants are seated on the rug in their assigned spots in front of me. They later split off into groups at their desk clusters for independent work. I distributed copies of the Scholastic News Edition #3. September 4, 2017 *A Salute to the Pledge* (photograph above is included in the article), this was our first edition of the school year. I wanted the children to have a social and historical background connection to our country's traditions; in planning this lesson I contextualized the subject of the Pledge of Allegiance by including a video sequence of Whitney Houston singing the National Anthem. I hung a poster of the Pledge on the easel. I also referenced in my discussion the current discourse in the public media involving the story of Colin Kaepernick, who protested racial injustice in the United States by refusing to stand, instead choosing to kneel on one knee while the United States national anthem was being played before the start of NFL games. Some of the children play on football teams and are football enthusiasts, (Mia, for example, wrote in her daily diary about her family watching a football game) and during recess male and female students play American football type games. My objectives were to identify:

1. What did the child participants understand about the Pledge, and the social, political, and cultural ramifications in the Pledge?
2. Was it important to the student participants? And for them to think about the relevance of the Pledge in their own lives.

The Lesson

I began the lesson by not immediately reading the article, but by having the children say the Pledge out loud. Reciting the Pledge was not a usual

practice in this classroom, but the students were quite willing to participate. I then read the seventy-three-word article:

Ms. Robinson: This week Americans have a special reason to say the Pledge of Allegiance. **It's turning 125 years old!** [*I emphasize 125 years old by increasing the volume of my voice*]

Ms. Robinson: [*Continues to read article with a tone that suggests interest and excitement*] The original pledge of allegiance was printed in a children's magazine called *The Youth's Companion* on September 8th, 1892. It was written by Francis Bellamy. Saying the Pledge is a way for Americans to show their loyalty to the country. It's often recited by kids in school before class begins.

Ms. Robinson: [*Addressing the students*] Now original means first or earliest. And recited means just how we recite our poems. {} But, if you travel south, or Midwest, many schools start their day off by saying the Pledge of Allegiance.

Ms. Robinson: [*Speaking with an excited tone signifying an interesting mystery to be discovered*] Now, I have a question for you, I have a question for you. Who can give me an idea why do you think those schools have the children everyday say the Pledge of Allegiance?

Eve: To make them respect their country.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, good answer! To make them respect their country. Anybody else? Anybody else got an idea? My friend Evan. You had your hand up. Is it because of where you came from in...?

Evan: Maryland. We had to say it.

Ms. Robinson: Yea, you had to say the Pledge of Allegiance

Eve: I had to say it at my old school.

Ms. Robinson: Can I see a show of hands? How many of you think that it's important to say the Pledge of Allegiance? And how many of you think we should say the pledge of allegiance in this school? Ok. Alright. Can any of you give us your reasons why?

Tom: Because I think it respects our country.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, anybody else? Anybody else have an idea? Those of you who put your hand up that think we should say the pledge of allegiance why do you think we should?

Ross: Because it respects some people.

Ms. Robinson: Ok. It respects some people. Ok. Can I tell you that's one of the reasons why we don't say it in this school? Because... some groups of people, especially in this area, they feel that it's against their religion... They say that the only being you should pledge your allegiance to, is your God and you shouldn't pledge your allegiance to a flag because it's just an object... In _____ we try to please everybody, and we try to acknowledge everyone's beliefs and ideas and opinions. So that's one of the reasons we don't do it here in the _____ Schools. But you know, I think maybe if it's something that some of you think really seriously about maybe you would want to say the Pledge of Allegiance, maybe it's something you could talk to your parents about and see what they say about it.

Rose: (Interjects with a serious yet curious tone) What about people who don't believe in God?

Ms. Robinson: Yea, because it's got that in there too. Because there's some people who don't believe in a God. That's one of the reasons why here ...we don't have it said here, in our school. There's a lot of people who don't believe in the God that is spoken of there.

Eve: (interjecting, her tone is sarcastic) I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?

Ms. Robinson: Ahh... That's an excellent idea! Because that leads me to my next thing.

Sam: Freedom?

Ms. Robinson: Now here's something you might have heard in the news. My friend Ross, could you come up here? Put your clipboard right there and we'll have you and Mia come over here. Alright. Go right over there. (The pair move to the sides of the group where they could be seen by everyone.)

Ms. Robinson: Yea go on, do it right from there. He's going to do it. Alright. Mia, could you do it from there? They're doing what's called...

Student: Kneeling!

Ms. Robinson: Take a ...

Sam and Ross: Knee!

Ross: That's what we do at football.

Ms. Robinson: Right. Take a knee.

Ross: That's what everyone's talking about. That's what they do at football games.

Ms. Robinson: Right. They're taking a knee. Now you notice this is associated to what Eve said. Does anybody know why they're taking a knee?

Eve: Because some football players believe that their country doesn't really [she pauses] ...the pledge of allegiance isn't really true and at football games they usually sing the national anthem.

Ms. Robinson: Yea, right. We're going to sing it right now.

Student: And then basically, usually you'd stand but instead they kneel.

Ms. Robinson: They kneel. They kneel because they feel in this country there are groups of people who are not given their liberty and justice for all... Ok. This all started with Collin Kaepernick. {} He's a famous football player.

Ms. Robinson: (Addressing Ross and Mia) You can come back to your seat now. I chose you because you play football.

Ms. Robinson: Alright. Collin Kaepernick is a very famous football player. His mother is White, and his father is African American. Collin Kaepernick is dual heritage, that means that he's both ethnicities. Collin Kaepernick did this to show his loyalty to other black men and women because there's so many black men and women who've been killed and they feel that the person who did it has not been brought to trial and has not had to pay a consequence, so this is their way of protesting all these deaths of people of color. As Eve said, they feel that they've not received their justice in the American law courts. So, they thought this was their way of silent protesting. {}

Ms. Robinson: Now, before I play that to you, the Star-Spangled Banner is the national anthem, right?... is usually sung at football, at NFL games. And when it's being sung, instead of standing up the football players take the knee.

Ms. Robinson: Now the national anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance are all symbols of what? What do they symbolize? What do they represent? [I call on Monica because she has been sitting attentively and has not raised her hand to contribute to the discussion] Monica?

Monica: America.

Ms. Robinson: They represent America. Right? Every country has its own national anthem. { } So, every country has their way of honoring their country and the fact that you are a citizen of that country. But, as Eve says and as some of you reminded us, often times in this country it would seem that these rules are only made for certain people and not for everyone. And when the football players take a knee, it's their way of telling us that we need to fix it. We need to make these words not be contrary or hyp... [pause] What's the word I'm looking for? When you say something, but you don't really mean it, you're being ...

Rose: Hypocritical.

Ms. Robinson: Good girl! So, they want it to be not hypocritical but to be honest and trustworthy and to help everybody experience the same kind of liberty and justice for all... But I'm very sad to say that often times many people, many American people aren't treated with liberty and justice. So, I'm going to play this for you because it is your national anthem. { }

[The students and I stand while the National Anthem is playing and they sing along]

Ms. Robinson: Ok. Please be seated. Now, when you hear those words, for the land of the free and the home of brave you can understand why Colin Kaepernick and the other players take a knee instead of standing and putting their hands there because they feel that this doesn't relate to them... when you think of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. he was arrested too and he was protesting for people to have liberty and justice for all.[I refer to Dr. King because the children have heard about this civil rights leader,]

Student: Why was he arrested?

Ms. Robinson: Because in those days it was the law that black people couldn't have the same rights as white people.

Ross: And his house got burnt down right?

Rose: That seems stupid.

Ms. Robinson: It does seem stupid doesn't it?

Eve: I mean, you wouldn't want to be a liar, would you? [Here she is responding to the hypocrisy of the Pledge and the National Anthem].

The class is then divided into smaller groups to discuss and explain the definitions of the words in the Pledge in the magazine.

Ms. Robinson: Tom would you read from Bellamy's version?

Tom: Bellamy's version didn't include the phrase "Under God". Cong...

[stumbles at word]

Ms. Robinson: Congress, that's the American government.

Tom: Congress added these words to the pledge in 1954.

Ms. Robinson: Wow! {} They added those words. Now that is something, I didn't even know that. Now, I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation indivisible with liberty and justice for all. See they didn't have under God in there before. I wonder why congress chose to add it and not the people, because we don't mix religion and state. Isn't that a contradiction? That's what we call real hypocrisy. Because as somebody said, as Rose said, some people don't believe in God. That was interesting. Ok, now read this part, liberty means... Liberty means freedom. Ok, Evan could you read this bit about what indivisible means?

Evan: Indivisible means unable to be divided or separated. Bellamy wanted to remind people how important it is for the whole country to come together and be united as one nation.

Ms. Robinson: [Calls out loudly, so that the different groups scattered around the room can hear] Do you think it's important for the country to come together and be one nation?

Students: **Yea!**

Ms. Robinson: It's important right? I think so. [Addresses boys in a far corner] Boys what do you think? Is it important?

Rose and Eve: [Call out excitedly] **We should have a new pledge of allegiance.**

Ms. Robinson: What was that?

Rose and Eve: I think we should write a new pledge of allegiance.

Ms. Robinson: We should write a new pledge of allegiance? What would a new pledge of allegiance sound like?

Rose: It would have all religions.

Ms. Robinson: Now that's a really, really, really good point. Right Eve?

Eve: It would make more sense

All students discuss what a new pledge of allegiance would include for words.

Respect the Statue of Liberty. And respect all animals.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, alright, good thinkers!

Ms. Robinson: I'd love to continue this discussion another time because you girls raised a great question on writing our own pledge. And maybe that's something we can work on. A pledge that appreciates and recognizes everybody in this country. So that's what we're going to be talking about.

Writing Their Own Pledge -Day 2

The Setting

After lunch during a social studies period. I opted for a more informal seating and the children could sit anywhere on the rug and not in their usual assigned spot, some children brought cushions to the space. The poster of the Pledge is posted where all could see it, and on the easel were written the ideas that the students need to think about for writing their own pledges these were derived from the previous lesson: To whom? Why? And what would you include in your pledge? What topics?

Ms. Robinson: Yesterday you proved that you're a smart group of kids. Could you all come a bit closer? Just a bit closer, doesn't matter where you sit [Meaning the students do not have to sit in their usual designated spots on the rug]

Peter: [Moving really close under the teacher's nose, using a playful teasing tone]
you mean this close!?

Students: The children all laugh.

Ms. Robinson: [Laughing] That's close enough honey! Yesterday we talked about this American Pledge of Allegiance and how we pledge our what to our country?
Our...

Students: Loyalty.

Ms. Robinson: Yes, right good job. Our loyalty to our country. And they usually have people such as myself who are immigrants to this country say this to show that they are pledging their loyalty to America. But yesterday some people had a really good idea. They wanted to write their own pledge.

Rose: (mutters to Eve) I'll do one for the gay pride flag.

Eve: (mutters to Rose) Can I do that? [Eve has two mothers, and this is particularly important to her].

Ms. Robinson: (not hearing the girls' conversation) They wanted us to write our own pledge because they said not everyone in this country believes in God, Rose brought that up, and it says liberty and justice for all and not everybody in this country has freedom. Liberty means freedom. And Justice means fairness, right? Not everybody has that in this country. {} If we were going to write our own pledge, our own promise to show loyalty, first of all to whom would you want to show your loyalty, why do you want to show your loyalty? What's your reason for showing your loyalty? To whom, why? And what would you include in that? What topics? Now this Pledge of Allegiance has the flag mentioned in it, we have

the United States the country mentioned in it, we have the fact that we elect, we vote for our leaders. Here it talks about the unity of one nation, the unity of one country. It means it cannot be separated. It is one country with freedom and fairness for everyone. So, I was thinking today that we could have just a quick little discussion of your ideas. So, Mia's hand was up first. Mia, what would you like to say?

Mia: As I said yesterday, some people don't get respect because some people choose to grow up to be gay or not and some gay people aren't getting treated fairly.

Tom: (Interjects) Not always.

Ms. Robinson: Could you come a bit closer because I want to get your good point of view. Say that again and then he had a comment. Remember to raise your hands.

Mia: Um, some people when they're grownups choose if they can be gay or not and some gay people aren't getting treated fairly because, well they're gay and it's not fair.

Ms. Robinson: That people in society don't treat gay people fairly. Now can you explain to some people what gay means?

Mia: Gay means like if you're a man then you marry a man.

Ms. Robinson: If you're a woman...

Mia: You gotta marry a woman.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, right. Does anybody here agree with what Mia's saying?

Raise your hand if you agree with what Mia's saying. Alright what do you agree about?

Julie: Um, I agree because my aunt is gay.

Ms. Robinson: Your aunt is gay? Is she married to another lady?

Julie: Yea.

Peter: _____ is gay (referring to another teacher in the school)

Ms. Robinson: Ok, and she's actually married.

(Student voices in discussion)

Eve: My moms are gay.

Ms. Robinson: Yup.

Rose: We should make a pledge of allegiance to the gay pride flag.

Ms. Robinson: Yup, ok.

Rose: I know I've said that a million times, but...

Ms. Robinson: Yup. Can I just say something? You can do that individually. {}

But in here I feel, and this is my personal belief, everybody should embrace everybody else. What does it matter? Right? Personally, this is what I feel.}

This is what I feel. Everyone is entitled. [as I speak out loud, I write on the board - Everyone is entitled to love]

Student: [Interjecting] To their belief.

Ms. Robinson: {} So, the idea of us making a pledge – you can do that personally in your own book. But yesterday we thought we wanted to write a pledge that could be based on everyone in America together. Not just gay people. Everybody.

We wanted a pledge that included everybody. Because we know as Eve and somebody else said this country does not have liberty and justice for everybody and not everybody here believes in a god. So, to whom are we writing this pledge? Who is this pledge for?

Student: Everyone.

Ms. Robinson: This pledge is for everyone, right? This pledge is for everyone.

No one should be excluded from this pledge. {} It's a pledge that everybody would want to say. Right? Because right now as we saw with the football players, they don't want to say the National Anthem because they don't feel that they're included in that. They don't feel that they're included here. {} Alright so we're making a pledge for our...

Ross: State?

Ms. Robinson: Country.

Ross: Country.

Ms. Robinson: Remember our country is made up of 50 states. For our country, what else? What else?

Eve: I mean, we're making this pledge so it's true.

Ms. Robinson: So, it's true because right now this one is not true. Oh, good point.

So, we want a pledge that is...

Eve: Truthful.

Ms. Robinson: That is truthful. A pledge that's truthful. Anybody else?

Rose: To make America see that we can now make the Pledge of Allegiance now truthful.

Ms. Robinson: Right to make people...

Rose: I mean the liberty and justice for all part.

Ms. Robinson: [speaking aloud while I write their ideas on the easel] So that people in America can see that we need to have liberty and justice for all. So that people in the USA can know liberty and justice is for everyone. What would we want to include in this pledge? What would we want to include in this pledge?

Rose: A pet lover's pledge.

Ms. Robinson: Right, you could make a pet lover's pledge. But this is about people's lives in this country and how we live every day. So, what would this include?

Rose: What it's like to be an American.

Ms. Robinson: What it's like to be an American. Anybody else? What should we include in this pledge? What should this pledge have written in it?

Student: It should have written in it, um.... It should really make us think about how we treat each other.

Ms. Robinson: It should make us think about how we treat each other. Now then, don't you think it mentions that? It mentions that in here, right? But people don't take it seriously. They forget it. Liberty and justice for all. So, think about what it's like to be an American. It should make us think about how we treat each other. What else should our pledge be? Our promise to show our loyalty. As somebody said, we're not just showing the loyalty to the country, we're showing the loyalty to each other. So, what else should this show?

Student: Everyone.

Ms. Robinson: Yup. We've got everyone.

Student: So, people when they say or read the pledge that they have justice and liberty if they don't'.

Ms. Robinson: Say that again.

Student: So, like if people don't have justice and liberty when they read this or say it, they can feel like they do have justice or liberty.

Ms. Robinson: Ok. So that it should be written in a way to make people feel that they do have liberty and justice. Or so that they can be assured that there will be liberty and justice.

Student: That America is trying.

Ms. Robinson: That America is trying to be truthful and honest to everybody.

What else should this pledge have it in? Who else should this pledge be written for? Monica?

Monica: A lot of people.

Ms. Robinson: Alright, why are we writing it?

Student: Because it respects a lot of people.

Ms. Robinson: So, we want to write it to respect a lot of people. Right. So, we're going to write it for our country so that people in USA can know liberty and justice for everyone.

Ms. Robinson: What did you just say Monica?

Monica: That we need respect for everyone.

Ms. Robinson: So that we have respect for everyone. So that everyone is respected. Remember a pledge is a promise. {} I think you should do this in your

poetry book because your poetry book is where you're creative and you can use all kinds of colorful descriptive language. {}

Ms. Robinson: It says here I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. I'm making a promise, I pledge, I make a promise to...

Student: A pledge.

Student: Everyone.

Ms. Robinson: To everyone who is in America. Remember the pledge is for America. I promise to everyone in America that

Ms. Robinson: Alright, I'll be very interested to see what your pledges look like.

Student: So, we're writing our own pledges?

Ms. Robinson: Yea. I'm thinking use some of these ideas. You can write it with two people. There's 16 of you. I'll wait for you to get with a partner. Get with a partner.

Student: What if we don't want partners?

Ms. Robinson: You want to do it on your own?

Student: Yea.

Ms. Robinson: Yea. That's fine. You don't have to have a partner if you don't want to. You can work on your own. If it will help, you can start with I promise.

[Students get into partners and start discussing their ideas for pledges.]

Ms. Robinson: Would it help you if we just generated a bunch of words to do with making promises?

Some students respond with no, some respond with yes.

Ms. Robinson: (addressing a small group while the others work independently)

So, a pledge is a promise, right? So, I promise. Who knows another name for promise? When you make a promise to someone?

Student: Loyalty.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, loyalty. Allegiance, loyalty. Another word for promise is a vow.

This mini script ends, and the student participants continue with their work. Examples of their pledges can be seen in the conclusion.

Findings for CME #2

Integration of supplementary texts and multimodal tools supports students' critical multicultural understanding of sociocultural themes and societies' disparities. The whole class discussion about the Pledge of Allegiance draws attention to the students emerging critical and multicultural consciousness:

Ross: That's what everyone's talking about. That's what they do at football games.

Ms. Robinson: Right. They're taking a knee. Now you notice this is associated to what Eve said. Does anybody know why they're taking a knee?

Eve: Because some football players believe that their country doesn't really [she pauses] ...the pledge of allegiance isn't really true and at football games they usually sing the national anthem.

Ms. Robinson: Yea, right. We're going to sing it right now.

Student: And then basically, usually you'd stand but instead they kneel.

In this excerpt I offer the students supplemental texts that address the themes of loyalty and representations for all Americans, as nuanced in the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem, I capture the students' interests and they begin to question social norms and traditions:

Eve: I mean, you wouldn't want to be a liar, would you? [Here she is responding to the hypocrisy of the Pledge and the National Anthem].

Additionally, by incorporating a critical multicultural perspective of historical and contemporary textual resources I extend and support students' understanding of issues beyond the required curriculum content:

So, I'm going to play this for you because it is your national anthem. {}

[The students and I stand while the National Anthem is playing and they sing along]

{}

Rose and Eve: [Call out excitedly] **We should have a new pledge of allegiance.**

Ms. Robinson: What was that?

Rose and Eve: I think we should write a new pledge of allegiance.

Ms. Robinson: We should write a new pledge of allegiance? What would a new pledge of allegiance sound like?

Rose: It would have all religions.

Ms. Robinson: Now that's a really, really, really good point. Right Eve?

Eve: It would make more sense.

Students' questions invite resistant perspectives and positions. The Pledge discussion illustrates the students' efforts to disrupt social norms while promoting their

critical multicultural consciousness. Consistent with Street (1984, pp. 95–103, 1995) critical work involves literacy practices that support student's' comprehension of ideas and meaning making and is concerned with understanding how ideologies and power relations are conveyed and circulated within and through language. The students draw on local literacies and narratives to question and argue normalized socio-political concepts such as racism, access, freedom, privilege, xenophobia, and heteronormative ideology. They express a need to promote inclusivity and diversity in their discourse and to resist normalized or traditional socio-political ideology:

Rose: It would have all religions.

Eve: I mean, you wouldn't want to be a liar, would you? [Here she is responding to the hypocrisy of the Pledge and the National Anthem].

Mia: As I said yesterday, some people don't get respect because some people choose to grow up to be gay or not and some gay people aren't getting treated fairly.

Students consider their own multiple identities. In the mini scripts the students are uninhibited about sharing information about their personal family dynamics and life experiences. In the statements below, we see that Rose and Eve are very proud of their affiliations to gay family life especially Eve who has two mothers:

Rose: (mutters to Eve)'I'll do one for the gay pride flag.

Eve:(mutters to Rose) Can I do that?

They both want to create a pledge that honors gay pride and their lives.

Mia, who has gay grandmothers, state:

Mia: As I said yesterday, some people don't get respect because some people choose to grow up to be gay or not and some gay people aren't getting treated fairly.

In support of reciting the Pledge in school to show loyalty for America Tom argues:

Tom: Because I think it respects our country.

In contrast another student suggests that the class writes an improved inclusive Pledge of Allegiance:

Student: It should have written in it, um.... It should really make us think about how we treat each other.

Student agency invites design and redesign. In the transcript of the second day, we see the children expressing their need to continue to conceptualize and reconcile their understandings with their life experiences while simultaneously arguing for a pledge that is representative of the diversity in the United States. The children extended the lesson and redesigned what their understanding and representations of a pledge should be on their terms. The children's critical multicultural consciousness is enacted and embodied through their critical creative representations, and illustrates that giving the students the power to make decisions about their modes of learning influences their personal and group understandings:

Rose and Eve: [Call out excitedly] **We should have a new pledge of allegiance.**

Ms. Robinson: What was that?

Rose and Eve: I think we should write a new pledge of allegiance.

In effect the children are provided a space to not just produce counter texts, but in doing so they are questioning the old hegemonic rules in society that does not relate to their

“new” world that they want to live in one that appreciates diverse perspectives and experiences,

Eve: (interjecting, her tone is sarcastic) I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?

Eve’s question emphasizes her understanding of the injustices happening in our society. Her question also pertains to her understandings and experiences being a child in gay family and provides the opportunity to provoke thoughts from the other students that deepen the discussion as resonated in Ross' statement and Eve's question below, children are aware of what is going on in the media and macro society:

Ross: That’s what everyone’s talking about. That’s what they do at football games.

Eve: Because some football players believe that their country doesn’t really [she pauses] ...the pledge of allegiance isn’t really true and at football games they usually sing the national anthem.

In the mini script we see that I am not only moderating the lesson but actively engaging with the students’ ideas. I draw on the students’ ideas to inform the lesson, but she is also informing their understanding of the issues. The discussion also identified that critical engagement provokes questions that are needed to further the child participants’ understanding of equality and social justice concerns (racial and cultural concepts, power relations, and civil rights). Students posing questions on issues of concern to them transfers power to the students. The second lesson was inspired by the student’s’ perceptions of what the Pledge represented, and for whom was the Pledge applicable.

They were eager to create their own pledges in response to the constructions and reconstructions of their understandings.

Rose and Eve: I think we should write a new pledge of allegiance.

Ms. Robinson: We should write a new pledge of allegiance? What would a new pledge of allegiance sound like?

Rose: It would have all religions.

The dialogue in this mini script illustrates the social world of the students and how they bring and share their daily lives to the learning occurring in the classroom context.

Analysis of CME #2

The Pledge lessons identifies how critical multicultural engagement creates possibilities for integrated approaches to curriculum design. I presented a lesson that juxtaposed a contemporary social issue with an article that is an example of children's non-fiction text, that provoked the students' comments to exposes the Pledge as an example of a hegemonic historical cannon, that serves to offer a diluted peripheral understanding of the social nuances involved. Here critical multicultural engagement invited deeper understandings of social norms and traditions and how these implicate children's understanding of what is happening socially and politically as depicted in Eve's question:

Eve: I mean, is it true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?

The children are given insights about how people are positioned in society and how they as children are positioned within the political and social discourse. The children articulate their awareness and ask questions about who is privileged and included and who are marginalized and excluded?

Reading from a resistant perspective and disrupting the common place. This mini script of the Pledge of Allegiance lesson illustrates the children's discourse aligning with concepts outlined in the empirical practices for critical multicultural engagement: reading from a resistant perspective, disrupting the common place, conducting student-choice research projects, promoting social justice, and focusing on sociopolitical issues (Lewison et al., 2002). Consistent with a critical multicultural analysis as conceptualized by Botelho and Rudman (2009), the students are participants in a discourse where they can identify “dominant messages in [texts] by locating how power relations of class, race, and gender are exercised” (p. 108), and explore, deconstruct, and reconstruct themselves socially and politically and are able to reflect on the implications as they relate to themselves and others:

Tom: Bellamy’s version didn’t include the phrase “Under God”. CoL. [stumbles at word]

Ms. Robinson: Congress, that’s the American government.

Tom: Congress added these words to the pledge in 1954.

{}

Ms. Robinson: We should write a new pledge of allegiance? What would a new pledge of allegiance sound like?

Rose: It would have all religions.

{}

Eve: It would make more sense

Problematizing the status quo. The Pledge lesson additionally illustrate the students’ roles as text analysts and critics as conceptualized by Luke and Freebody

(1997). As the student participants engage with this text, they question the adult world, and they are aware of how power is enacted in the macro society,

Ms. Robinson: What it's like to be an American. Anybody else? What should we include in this pledge? What should this pledge have written in it?

Student: It should have written in it, um.... It should really make us think about how we treat each other.

I selected the Pledge article as a resource that could be approached from a critical multicultural perspective and it provides an opportunity for problematizing (Freire, 2000, p. 81) the topic and “conscientization” (Street, 1984, p. 186, 1995), raising the awareness of the children’s own position of the issues. When viewed in conjunction with the national Anthem, the controversial undemocratic underlying values that exist in the Pledge would incite the children’s emotions and critical thinking responses. The public discourse surrounding the classroom discussion afforded the students the opportunity to collectively construct and share ideas of fairness, racial prejudice, democracy, equality, and promote their critical consciousness. The students also raise the issue of the heteronormative structures in society as they discuss the inclusion of writing a pledge that includes gay people. Eve problematizes the statements that have been normalized in public discourse and questions the validity of the Pledge of Allegiance,

Eve: I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country

Subjectivity as a teacher-researcher’s resource. The mini script illustrated that my critical multicultural discourse conveys subjectivity that is closely nuanced in the events and the lesson processes in terms of how I cultivate critical multicultural engagement and the lesson objectives:

1. What did the child participants understand about the Pledge, and the social, political, and cultural ramifications in the Pledge?
2. Was it important to the student participants did it have any relevance in their own lives?

Here it is pertinent to further interrogate my objectives for selecting to focus on this article, and for bringing the current discourse involving Colin Kaepernick, into the discussion? Additionally, how do I justify extending the lesson more than the allotted 40 minutes, to an hour for two days.

The discourse is situated in the event and the students' discourse that emerges cannot be predicted or predetermined, but in terms of critical multicultural consciousness my agenda is observably influential in inviting the children's critical emotional and intellectual response. My perspectives and language position this topic as something the students need to know, it is important to their lives and they must have opinions about it,

Ms. Robinson: Right. They're taking a knee. Now you notice this is associated to what Eve said. Does anybody know why they're taking a knee?

Eve: Because some football players believe that their country doesn't really [she pauses] ...the pledge of allegiance isn't really true and at football games they usually sing the national anthem.

Ms. Robinson: Yea, right. We're going to sing it right now.

The students are eager to point out the injustices and this enthusiasm carries over for a second day. The second lesson was inspired by the students' perceptions of whom and what the United States of America represented in the Pledge, and they were eager to

create their own pledges in response to their constructions and reconstructions of their understandings.

Students posing questions on issues of concern to them. Critical multicultural experiences support a democratic classroom where students ask critical questions, and as Janks has argued (2010, pp. 19–19), children are able to redesign what school should look like for them which assists in promoting learning. The children problematize Freire (2000, p. 81) the social injustices conveyed in the Pledge of Allegiance and question the *status quo*. In comparison, Enciso's (1994) research presented in the review of empirical studies described the teacher's interest in exploring bigotry and racism as depicted in the realistic fiction text *Maniac Magee*. She invited her students to share in a discussion about one of the scenes, one of the White students refers to the African American character as a thief because he loves Mars bars so much: "He probably steals them" (1994, p. 524). The student only focused on perpetuating stereotypes and not questioning them. In this study it is observed that when I position the children as equal contributors by having their questions and inquiries informing the learning, their discourse is not superficial nor is it insensitive to the discrimination and bigotry some people face. The Pledge lessons demonstrated that children regardless of assessed reading levels can all participate in complex understandings of political nuances and promote their comprehension. The students extend meanings and concepts for each other while engaging in critical discussions and redesigning the lesson.

For these students, the affordance of viewing the Pledges from a resistant perspective offered them a position to locate the historical, social, and political influences and extend their understanding and perspectives of societal norms that occur in the macro

society that filters to their world, and for them to participate in a very public discourse surrounding the ideas conveyed in the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.). Engaging the student participants in a critical discussion related to their understandings, reveals the emotional and intellectual responses in their transactions with a text that completely ignored the current media discourse concerning why some Americans were refusing to publicly honor the flag. Also, the photograph accompanying the article depicted children saying the Pledge who could be visually identified as White or having Eurocentric heritages, perpetuating the idea that American people with Eurocentric identities are the only ones politically recognized as Americans, and they only can express loyalty to the flag. We see the children drawing on their funds of knowledge and experiences to extend the article and make it meaningful in their social world, and to construct understandings about the social world for each other. My teacher researcher's discourse seemed at first to dominate the discussion, but I could not have envisioned the students' responses and critical questions. I initiated this discussion by mentioning the Collin Kaepernick story, but then the student participants expanded the conversation by wanting to write their own pledges, promoting their metacognitive understanding of their own critical thinking.

In chapter five the students draw on critical multicultural literacies as they further their understanding of inclusion and difference presented in the experiences of two characters whose lives and cultural identities at the initial reading appear to be dissimilar to their own.

CHAPTER 6

ENGAGING CRITICALLY AND COMMUNICATING CRITICALITY

“Um. yeah. It’s seems kinda of... it’s all little offensive to girls because like if you’re afraid... it’s like, to be afraid of a certain gender, it feels a little bit hurtful(?)”

Rose, Age 8

Introduction

Chapter 6 presents CME #3 and #4 these two moments illustrate the students building and sharing their critical understandings centered on the lives of characters in two stories whose lives may offer experiences very different from their own.

CME #3 Engaging Critically

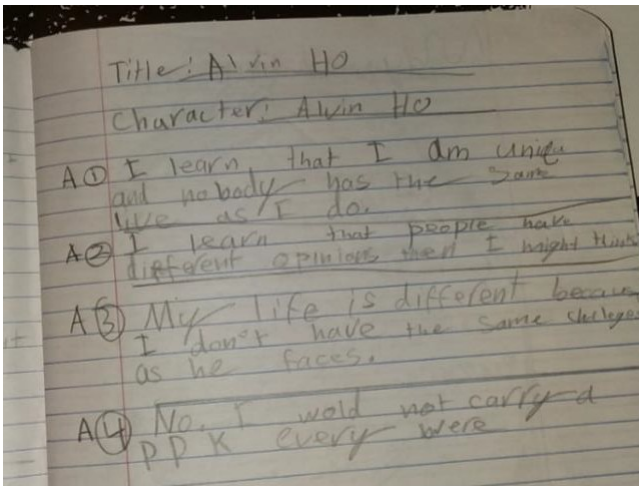


Figure 5: Rose' reading journal

Rose' reading journal entry in response to the question: What do we learn when we read about characters whose lives are sometimes different from our own?

A1 I learn that I am unique and nobody has the same live as I do.

A2 I learn that people have different opinions then I might have.

A3 My life is different because I don't have the same challenges as he faces.

A4. No, I would not carry a PDK every were (in reference to the character's personal disaster kit)

Rose, Age 8

Context and Setting

This CME event is an afternoon reading class. The students were in discussion groups centered on realistic fiction books they had selected. The mini script begins with a

group of boys Peter, Tom, and Sam (all three are of European ethnicity, with Sam and Tom also having Jewish heritage). They are sitting at a large table reading and discussing the book *Alvin Ho*, by Lenore Look. Peter who was assessed at a different reading level recently completed another book and asked me to join this group, “Can I read that too?” H’ is Tom’s best friend. Later in the discussion I invite a group of girls, Julie, Rose, and Eve (they also share European heritages) to participate in the discussion. The story is set in the affluent town of Concord, Massachusetts. Alvin Ho, the protagonist is a Chinese American boy, the illustrations attempt to realistically depict his ethnicity, who has many fears especially about anything he considers strange, and he has created a personal disaster kit for emergencies.

Ms. Robinson: Good afternoon boys.

Boys in unison: Good afternoon Ms. Robinson

Ms. Robinson: How are you doing Sam? (speaking endearingly to Sam,)

Sam: Pretty good

Ms. Robinson: [Addressing all the boys] So how much of Alvin Ho did you read?

Sam: Almost the whole book. Well, I read the whole book two times.

Ms. Robinson: Ok that’s great. How about you two? (Speaking to Tom and Peter)

Well, you read it months ago [Tom has gone onto others in the series that he discovered on his own from the public library]. So, what do you think about the story, what were you talking about when you were discussing it?

Tom: We were talking about, like the Houdini part of it.

Ms. Robinson: Explain what you mean the Houdini part of it.

Tom: We were talking about ...

Tom and Sam: [in unison] the great escape.

Tom: In the box we were wondering what happened.

Peter: Was he going to get out or not?

Ms. Robinson: What did you think Sam?

Sam: I thought that maybe when their parents got home, they will notice he's gone and check the basement, and ah...Anibelly would tell maybe that he's in the basement trying to do an escape and he is in a box tied up

Tom: In a strait jacket.

Ms. Robinson: What's the background story? What's the point leading up to this?

Sam: They were watching this Great Escape thing and um they wanted to try it.

Ms. Robinson: Who's they?

Sam: Calvin, Anibelly, and Alvin Ho

Ms. Robinson: Ok.

Sam: They wanted to try to do the same thing, but then when they did it the first time, then Calvin said something's missing, and then Anibelly was like "a strait jacket".

Ms. Robinson: Where did this interest in escapism come from?

Tom: The whole thing was, like they have like I forget if it was a boy or girl, 'hey don't know when their birthday so they I just get presents at one time and they gave him a kit.

Ms. Robinson: Oh, so they give Alvin an escape kit a magician's kit.

Tom: Yeah

Ms. Robinson: Okay is there anything else about this story that you found interesting I mean what about Alvin himself what do you think about Alvin?

What kind of guy was Alvin?

Sam: Weird! He is afraid of many things, but Explosions (with drawn out emphasis).

Tom:(interjects) Explosions.

Sam: He's like yeah, I like explosions, but that doesn't explain it bullets! He is afraid of bullets but why not explosions?

Ms. Robinson: Okay. What do you have to say Tom?

Tom: It's weird when he's afraid he can't talk.

Ms. Robinson: Okay.

Tom: He has a certain code called PDK

Ms. Robinson: Do you know what PDK means?

Sam: Personal...

Boys look back into the book.

Peter: I think it's on this page...

All boys in unison: Personal disaster kit.

Ms. Robinson: [Smiling] He has a personal disaster kit, right? And what was in his Personal Disaster Kit?

Sam: Next page

Boys in unison: [Reading from the book] A whistle

Sam: "in case I lose my voice".

Sam: [Role playing being Alvin]”, a three-leaf clover “Because I couldn’t find a four leaf one”

Boys in unison: garlic, dental floss,

Sam: [Continues reading] Band-Aid, and a magnifying glass for general curiosity, but also could be used to start a fire. A mirror for sending signals in case you can’t start a fire, a bandana, for preventing smoke inhalation,

Tom: [interjecting] A scary mask for keeping girls away.

Ms. Robinson: A scary mask for keeping girls away? What do you think about that? What was he trying to say?

Boys in unison: ’e doesn't like girls.

Ms. Robinson: Why do you think he is afraid of girls?

Sam: Let’s see.

Ms. Robinson: Is he afraid of all girls?

Sam: Yes, I think, especially the girl with the eye patch.

Tom: [Disagreeing with Sam] No! he’s not afraid of her.

Sam: He is, he is.

Tom: No, he was talking to her at the house. I think it is only at school.

Peter: Yes, it is only at school.

Ms. Robinson: So, what about Anibelly? His sister Anibelly?

Sam: Well, no ‘cause she is younger

Ms. Robinson: So, he not afraid of all girls

Boys: No not all girls

Ms. Robinson: Can you understand Alvin in some way? Does he remind you of anybody that you know?

Sam: (emphatically) Nope! Not that I know (sarcastically)

Ms. Robinson: Well, do you know anybody who's a scared of a lot of things?

Long pause from others except Sam.

Sam: Not that I can think of. (in a funny sarcastic voice)

Ms. Robinson: What you think about Alvin as a kid? Is he the kind of kid you would like to play with, or hang out with?

Tom: Kinda.

Ms. Robinson: Tell me why?

Tom: He can be really funny.

Ms. Robinson: He says some really funny things, right? Can you remember any of the funny things he said?

Long Pause from boys Sam makes a giggle sound.

Ms. Robinson: I think his personal disaster kit is funny, right?

Sam gives a funny giggle.

Ms. Robinson: But I think it is a way his personal disaster kit is a way of... you know how little kids when you grow up and to get through life you always have kind of safety things to help, to make you feel safe, like some kids have a safety blanket, you know, some kids have a comfort blanket little blankie, other kids have a teddy bear right? So, what you think about Alvin Ho?

Tom: He has a kit

Ms. Robinson: He has his kit.

Tom: (Reads from book) How to meet your new teacher: 1. Put on a scary mask.
2. Rub on garlic. 3. Stay back 100 feet...

[Boys continue to take turns to read from Alvin's personal disaster kit.]

Ms. Robinson: So, what do you think about Alvin Ho's advice? He gives a lot of advice.

Tom: Yeah.

Peter: Yeah, I know.

Ms. Robinson: Why do you think he thinks kids need a lot of advice?

Tom: He might think you'll like him; they are right.

Ms. Robinson: Can you relate to Alvin Ho yourselves? Do you see any of yourselves in Alvin, some of the things he says and does? Does he remind you of yourselves in some way?

Sam: Um (thinking sound)

Tom: He reminds me of how I like to stay home on the weekends.

Sam: (In loud excited agreement) Yeah!

Tom: Cause on the weekends my grandma, my parents always have me go and I am like noooo.

Ms. Robinson: Well, Alvin is a little third grader like yourselves you know.

Sam in agreement: (chuckling and reading from the book) And this is Calvin's rules for making friends "Say hello, trade baseball cards... just trade baseball cards".

Ms. Robinson: Now what do you think about Alvin's attitude towards girls?

Sam: Weell, they're not that harmful if you'll just be nice.

Ms. Robinson: What? Girls are not that harmful. That means girls can be harmful?

Tom: Anybody can be harmful.

Ms. Robinson: Anybody can be harmful. What do you think about girls being harmful? What kinds of harmful thing do girls do?

Sam: Oh, they can slap!

Ms. Robinson: Are you talking from personal experience with your sisters?

Sam: Yeah, you would not want what my sister ... did to me.

Ms. Robinson: How does that relate to what Alvin Ho is saying?

Sam: I don't know.

Ms. Robinson: Well, it reminds you of something Alvin Ho says he is allergic to school, girls, and other scary things.

Sam: Well, he thinks (stressed) he is allergic to it.

Ms. Robinson: Yes, he thinks he is allergic.

Tom: They have nail polish.

Ms. Robinson: (Calling the girls over) Would you like to come over and give us your opinion of Alvin Ho?

Eve: Yes, should we bring the book?

Ms. Robinson: If you want to.

Girls gather their books and join the group of boys at the table.

Rose: (From a distance) Yes, I am hearing them, and I disagree.

Ms. Robinson: (speaking to Julie) You read *Alvin Ho* didn't you?

Julie: Yes.

Ms. Robinson: Come on over.

Ms. Robinson: So, the boys are saying a lot of things about *Alvin Ho*, and I would like to know what you think about it?

Sam: [interject by making a continuous buzzing sound] Ms. Robinson touches his arm softly.

Ms. Robinson: Did you hear what they were saying?

Julie: Yes, I heard

Eve: Well, I heard that the whatever you call it kit...

Ms. Robinson: Oh, his personal disaster kit.

Eve: Yes, was funny, but that's basically it.

Julie: Anyone can be harmful I heard that part. But, one thing, this is for the girls.

That's from your experience Sam but it is not from Alvin's and the author's.

Ms. Robinson: Ok. What do you think the author was trying to say?

Julie: Em, I think the Author {} when she was a little girl people, were like that.

Ms. Robinson: Okay.

Rose: [Having a calm steady voice] The author was a woman and that's really interesting because this book is at first kinda against girls.

Ms. Robinson: Right. Did you notice that the author was a woman, Sam?

Sam: Right.

Eve: Like, when they talked about like, Halloween it was kind of against girls.

Ms. Robinson: Yes, there are a lot of things against girls in the book, but as you said it was a woman author writing from what she thinks as a boy's perspective.

Right? A lot of the things, his attitude towards girls. Sam agrees with some of it,

his attitude towards girls [referring to Alvin Ho] he says girls can hurt sometimes.

That's because you're relating your own personal, you're making a connection with how you and your siblings your two sisters relate, and you're the youngest.

Tom: Same I'm the youngest in my family too.

Ms. Robinson: [Addressing Tom] Are you afraid of your sisters?

Tom: Yes, sometimes.

Ms. Robinson: [Surprised] You are! Tell me why? Why are you afraid of your sisters? Is it because they are bigger?

Tom: They can be harsh.

Ms. Robinson: They can be harsh. Tell me a harsh thing your sisters do.

Tom: I don't know

Sam: Sometimes I am not afraid of my sisters; they are afraid of me.

Ms. Robinson: I think the author was trying to say that there's things that boys and girls, you're just growing up, and there's things that you get to learn about yourselves and there's things that you get to learn about, you know girls and boys.

Eve: I like when Alvin was doing that Shakespeare person. That was kind of funny.

Julie: That was interesting. Wait, wait [Julie makes a comment that is inaudible]

Sam: [asks] What?

Julie: [asks] Can I borrow book for a minute to see that page?

Ms. Robinson: So, would you recommend this book?

Girls make negative sounds.

Ms. Robinson: Well, there's lots of it you seemed to have liked.

Eve: Well, it depends on who I am recommending it to.

Ms. Robinson: That's a very good point. Well to whom would you recommend this book?

Eve: Well, I might recommend it to like [turns to Rose] You go first.

Rose: I might recommend it to somebody who had a younger sister that they had trouble with, or a girlfriend they had a problem with.

Ms. Robinson: Was that a boy or girl you would recommend the book to?

Rose: Probably a boy.

Ms. Robinson: You would recommend this book to a boy?

Rose: Yes.

Sam: Are we allowed to say names?

Ms. Robinson: Who would you like to recommend this book to?

Sam: Emm, I would recommend this to_____.

Ms. Robinson: Why?

Sam: Em, everyone knows he's small, so they think they can pick on him.

Ms. Robinson: Alvin Ho gave some tips on how to survive being picked on?

Sam: Well, not the PDK part, but if you just be nice to them, they might not be bad.

Ms. Robinson: It will give_____some suggestions on what to do because he is small?

Julie: He is not nice to me.

Eve: I think I might recommend it to_____.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, why?

Eve: Because it seems to [thinks to herself] well I may or might not, it depends on what mood she was in.

Ms. Robinson: [Addressing the whole group] Did you learn anything from this story about yourself that would help you in your own life?

Eve: I learned that it might be helpful to be prepared for almost anything. {}

[The discussion ends]

Findings for CME # 3

As text analysts, students question the author's intent. In the discussion about the protagonist Alvin, and his fear of girls the students critique the author's characterization of this boy.

Julie: Em (pauses), I think the Author {} when she was a little girl people, were like that.

Ms. Robinson: Okay.

Rose: [Having a calm steady voice] The author was a woman and that's really interesting because this book is at first kinda against girls.

Ms. Robinson: Right. Did you notice that the author was a woman Sam?

Sam: Right.

Eve: Like, when they talked about like, Halloween it was kind of against girls.

The students construct critical questions that talk back to the author and raise questions concerning the author's heteronormative perspectives and stereotypes. In the mini script the girls have an oppositional perspective of the protagonist regarding the author's agenda and they suggest that the author is projecting her own life experience

through Alvin's story. As text analysts and text participants (Luke & Freebody, 1997) critical multicultural readers ask whose interests are served by the text? Engaging in critical multicultural discourse, students draw attention to the relationships and feelings of the characters in books. Students further their understandings by offering counter argument and asserting their perspectives:

Sam: Yes, I think, especially the girl with the eye patch.

Tom: [Disagreeing with Sam] No! he's not afraid of her.

Sam: He is, he is.

Tom: No, he was talking to her at the house. I think it is only at school.

Peter: Yes, it is only at school.

The excerpt above shows the boys not only clarifying information for each other in their argument but asserting their own perceptions of the characters' relationships and behaviors. The groups discussion alerts the students and teacher to the conflicts that may arise from gendered narratives.

Problematizing gendered narratives inspire personal reflection. In the discussion the students reflect about and disrupt the gendered narrative (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 102) that is a main theme in the book *Alvin Ho*:

Ms. Robinson: A scary mask for keeping girls away? What do you think about that? What was he trying to say?

Boys in unison: He doesn't like girls.

{}

Ms. Robinson: Now what do you think about Alvin's attitude towards girls?

Sam: Weell, they're not that harmful if you'll just be nice.

Ms. Robinson: Alright so, girls. {} I'd like your impressions of Alvin Ho. Rose; would you like to go first?

Rose: Um... yeah. It's seems kinda of... it's all little offensive to girls because like if you're afraid... it's like, to be afraid of a certain gender, it feels a little bit hurtful.

{}

Tom: Same I'm the youngest in my family too.

Ms. Robinson: [Addressing Tom] Are you afraid of your sisters?

Tom: Yes, sometimes.

Ms. Robinson: [Surprised] You are! Tell me why? Why are you afraid of your sisters? Is it because they are bigger?

Tom: They can be harsh.

{}

Eve: Well, I think it's a pretty good book. Except, I think it could be a little more descriptive and a bit less stereotyped. But it's kinda cool because the stereotype is kinda part of the story. Like without him being afraid of girls, then none of it would have really happened.

The conversation seems to conflict with some students' inclusive non-binary perspectives, and other students reflect on and share their personal relationships for clarifying their ideas. Sam has two sisters and seems to be using Alvin's perspective to offer advice about how to relate to girls. The groups' discussion alerts the reader to problems that may arise from gendered narratives but suggests that this theme provokes

interest for the students and inspires critical multicultural consciousness in their discussion.

Making connections and disconnections support close reading. In the discussion of *Alvin Ho*, some of the student participants share comparable socio-economic status with the protagonist but as Tom expressed in his diary excerpt when asked “What has your character taught you?” He responds:

Question 3: Some humans live lives with problems you will never have.

Rose also responds in her journal entry:

A1 I learn that I am unique and nobody has the same live as I do.

A2 I learn that people have different opinions then I might have.

A3 My life is different because I don't have the same challenges as he faces.

In Jones' (2013, p. 210) study she presents the argument that the use of texts that focus on presenting middle class lifestyles have the effect of influencing the responses and interactions with the text of children from marginalized communities to the extent that they negate their own life experiences, and they would often align themselves to the characters' life experiences. Tom and the student participants in the mini script recognize that human relationships are complex, and we all have complex lives. Students discuss characters and their relations in more emotional and personal ways and are not exclusively sociopolitical. These ideas again support the argument that binaries perpetuate fixed understandings (Botelho, & Rudman, 2009, p. 102), and students evoke deeper personal connections and understandings if they are able to contextualize their own relationships and experiences and make disconnections and connections and with characters.

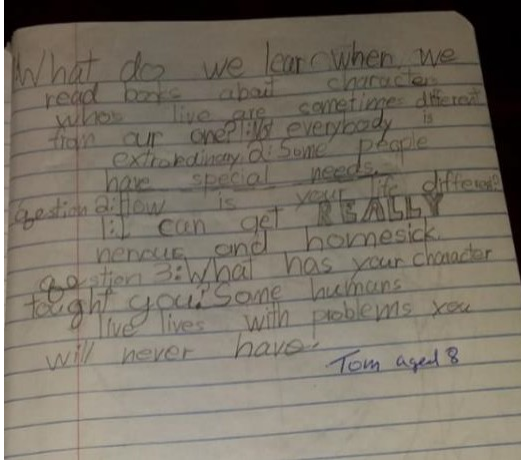


Figure 6: Tom’s reading journal

Tom’s reading journal entry in response to the question: What do we learn when we read about characters whose lives are sometimes different from our own? 1: Not everybody is extraordinary. 2: Some people have special needs. Question 2: How is your life different? 1: I can get really **REALLY** nervous and homesick. Question 3: What has your character taught you? Some humans live lives with problems you will never have.

Tom, Age 8

Tom’s response shows him making comparisons to with the protagonist Alvin’s experiences. The students spent a considerable amount of time reading, rereading, and locating their points of view in the *Alvin Ho* text. These engagement practices are aligned to close reading experiences as argued by Beers and Probst (2013), “Close reading should suggest close attention to the text...relevant experience, thought, and memory of the reader...to the responses and interpretations of other readers...and to the interactions among these elements” (p. 37). Rose’ comment, “I learn that I am unique” written in her response journal (pictured at the start of CME 3) shows her disconnection to the character but also her appreciation of his situation and supports her inferential understanding as well as her own identity and position:

Analysis of Findings for CME #3

Bakhtin’s (M. Bakhtin et al., 1982) conceptualization about social heteroglossia¹³ supports the critical and the dialogical possibilities of critical multicultural engagement

¹³ In reference to Mikhail Bakhtin's (1982) theory of the intertextual nature of language and the influence on the development of ideas. See Theoretical Framework

because it describes “that a student's own [language constructions are] structured and emerges in conversation and constant tension with multiple other voices” (Aukerman, 2012, p. 46). The students discuss and argue their points about the protagonist *Alvin Ho*, and they critique the author’s agenda. Consistent with Adams St. Pierre (2000), I am obligated to invite students to identify and describe how power relations and patriarchal concepts are exercised in literature, and in the classroom discursive events, to promote the analysis of whose “ideas are revealed or omitted” (Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). As the teacher-researcher listening to the students’ conversation about this book, I was wondering about the author, Lenore Look, when she wrote *Alvin Ho* did, she have in mind that eight-year-old third grade students would be able to construct the understandings about stereotypes, or did she just want to present a little boy with these idiosyncrasies? In the class many of the boys gravitated towards this book, suggesting that this was the primary intended audience of the book if any. The girl students overhearing the conversations, picked up on his attitude about girls, and I wondered how intentional this was by the author? This inspired some of the girls to read the book. The children also bring this up in the mini script. From a teacher-researcher’s perspective this book was ideal for attending to how children respond and engage with critical multicultural themes, and for students to draw on their critical multicultural discourse to articulate their responses. It is most interesting that the child participants use the idea of the author’s age to describe and rationalize why a female author would present a male protagonist in such stereotypical stance against girls. CME #3 addresses how children perceive gender and how females are positioned in society. and questions male authority.

The students were not just talking about the author but critiquing and analyzing the author's rationale for presenting an image of girls that can be construed as sexist,

Julie: Em (pauses), I think the Author {} when she was a little girl people, were like that.

{}

Rose: [Having a calm steady voice] The author was a woman and that's really interesting because this book is at first kinda against girls.

From a feminist poststructuralism perspective, critical engagement with *Alvin Ho* invited the children to look through a window at the life of a child whose cultural experiences are different from their own, and mirror back societies issues of generalizations and stereotypes and how these positions the female gender. The female students found it incredulous that another female would present such ideas through Alvin's character. It is interesting to note that both Rose and Tom reflect upon differences and make connections with their lives:

Rose: I learn that people have different opinions then I might have

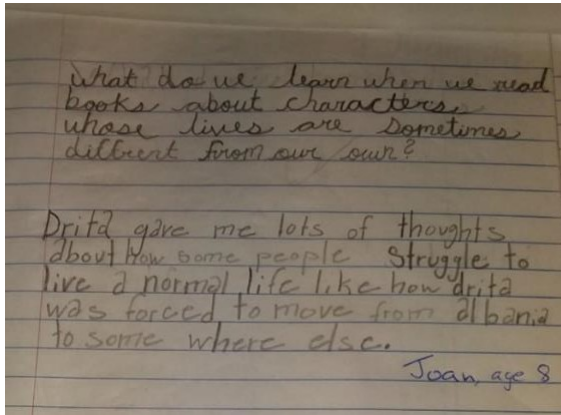
Tom: Some humans live lives with problems you will never have.

Even though Alvin is a fictitious character he has a message for their own lives. The students realize that reading a book is a step into the world of the character and the ideas of the author, and asks what is the author's intent? The students as readers and responders to text realize that the author has the power to present images and concepts that reflect the author's subjectivity, that is not necessarily their perspective and in challenging the author they are extending meaning making while relating the concepts to their own lives.

CME #4 Communicating Critically

"Some people will just judge you when they first meet new people."

Joan, Age 8



Joan's reading journal entry in response to the question: What do we learn when we read books characters whose lives are sometimes different from our own?

Drita gave me lots of thoughts about how some people struggle to live a normal life like how Drita was forced to move from Albania to some where else.

Joan, Age 8

Figure 7: Joan's reading journal

Context and Setting

This mini script is of another realistic fiction reading discussion group. The ethnicities of the student participants are Joan - Black American, Monica - (Dual Heritage) Cambodian and White European American, Mia - (Dual Heritage) White European American and Black American, and Diane - Cambodian. The girls in this group were assessed as having different reading levels according to the formalized reading assessment. Initially, I placed a variety of books within the reading level ranges of grade three and above, with about four or five copies of each title on a large table where I gave a short synopsis about each of the books, and I invited the students to choose the ones that interested them. Having selected a book, the children worked in small groups. Admittedly, the group sizes were determined by the quantity of a particular book in the collection, I also feel students gravitated towards what their close friends were also selecting. At the time there were four copies of *Drita, My Homegirl*, by Jenny Lombard.

The illustration on the front cover depicts a White girl with Kosovo written on her backpack standing abreast with a Black girl with NY written on her backpack, presenting a captivating image for some students. I enter the discussion after the girls had read a few of the chapters either independently or partner shared reading.

Ms. Robinson: Good afternoon girls.

Students: [In unison] Good afternoon Ms. Robinson

Ms. Robinson: I've been really looking forward to talking about this story with you. I bought these books. {} I know that teachers aren't supposed to have their own favorite books and let the kids choose the books, but {} you probably would not have picked this book ...

Students: [mutter agreement]

Ms. Robinson: {} not many people know of this book.

Joan: [Interjects] I've heard of it in the library.

Ms. Robinson: But never picked it up. {} I have read this book several times, I just love the story. I love to know if you liked the 'tory. You don't have to like it...

Joan: [Interjecting enthusiastically] I liked it, It's interesting

Mia: [Shouting out inaudibly at first with excitement] ... we have notes in here. [referring to the comments they have written in their reading journals and post-it notes.

Ms. Robinson: Oh, yeah

Ms. Robinson: I 'd love to know if you liked the story, and what you liked about it and I will tell you what I liked about the story. So, who would like to go, start first?

[Joan's hand goes up quickly]

Ms. Robinson: Ok, Joan first.

Joan: I like how it has these different languages in it and we're learning it, and we can learn how they do it, and how they speak and stuff. I like how both of the girls are very interesting. I like how Maxi talks about all the things in her house and how she does things.

Ms. Robinson: Ok

Joan: It's very interesting.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, next person what do you like, or if you don't like about this book?

[Calling on Monica]

Monica: I like how she em ...she describes who she is with, and like what's going on...

Ms. Robinson: Alright. Ok

Monica: and like what her family has been through, and like ...

Ms. Robinson: Who are you talking about?

Monica: Drita and like her ..., all the people that she brought with her.

Ms. Robinson: All her family members?

Monica: Yeah.

Ms. Robinson: Mia you said you read a couple chapters of the book. What do you think? What is your impression of it so far?

Mia: Umm ... I think she's... really nice because she ...

Ms. Robinson: [interjecting] When you say she who, because remember there are two main characters in this book Drita and Maxi?

Mia: I think Drita is pretty nice, 'cause I know that I really like Drita because she is from a different country and she moved to America, New York city, I think ...

Ms. Robinson: Yeah, yeah

Mia; and umm... I think she knows a lot about her country other than, other than America and when she got there then she felt kinda like weird out because she doesn't know where she is, and like she doesn't like it there because she doesn't know where she is, and she is not used to it.

[Monica makes a signal with their fingers]

Ms. Robinson: When you make that signal what does it mean?

Girls together: It means like you agree

Ms. Robinson: Monica just made an agreeing signal.

Mia: And this is disagree.

Ms. Robinson: Show me again how you make disagree?

{ }

Ms. Robinson: Diane would you like to contribute anything to the conversation?

Diane: [Silence as she thinks]

Ms. Robinson: Do you agree or disagree with what has been said?

Diane: I agree with what Mia said.

Ms. Robinson: What specifically do you agree with about what Mia said?

Diane: I agree that Drita is nice and kind.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, can anybody tell me one kind thing that Drita did?

[pause] Does anybody here prefer Drita to Maxie?

Mia: I like them both the same

Joan: I like them both the same, but probably Drita because she describes what she's been through like Monica said, and she says how she got there, and she describes it, and Maxie yes, she describes things, but she's also got all this stuff that Drita doesn't have.

Ms. Robinson: Like what for instance?

Joan: She has like a really nice house and stuff like that. And I like Drita because, just because she doesn't have all that she still thinks positive.

Ms. Robinson: Ohh, good so, it seems to me that umm there may be some things about Drita that you all like. Is it because you can make some kind of connection to her? Or are there a lot of things that are different to you? Can you make a lot of connections to her? Or similarities to her, or are there a lot of things that are different to her? Do you have things in common with Drita, and things that are not in common with her? Would any one like to tell me some of the things that you have in common and some of the things that you don't?

Joan: I moved from somewhere else?

Ms. Robinson: Oh, yes! you moved from somewhere else. I can see that.

Anything else?

Joan: She has siblings like I do.

Ms. Robinson: Yeah. Do you think that that's one of the reasons why you like Drita, you like her more than Maxie?

Joan: No. [Joan nods in disagreement]

Ms. Robinson: No, that's not one of the things. Oh, that's interesting. But you recognize similar things with Drita and with you?

Joan: I identify with Maxie.

Ms. Robinson: Oh, you identify with Maxie too. What things do you identify with Maxie?

Joan: I have a pet; I have a dog. Maxie has a hamster, but she still has a pet and that she has people to talk to like her dad, or something, and I have people to talk to like my mom and my brother, and it is just similar things that we have.

Ms. Robinson: What about you Monica?

Monica: My country has been through war; I have moved around a lot. We had our own house, but then we moved to my grandpa's house, then we moved to where I am now.

Ms. Robinson: So, you've all picked up on a lot of the feelings Drita would have.

Ms. Robinson: How about you Mia? What do you feel about what Joan and Monica said? Are there some things that are similar to Drita or Maxie?

Mia: Well, I've only seen one country, America. I have not moved around that much. I did move to my grandma's house, then I moved to where I am right now.

So, it's ... {}

Ms. Robinson: So, tell me some of the things you have read about Maxie?

Monica: I think she is becoming good friends with Drita.

Joan: She tries to.

Monica: Yeah

Ms. Robinson: She tries to?

Joan: Yeah, only at one certain part she is just saying hi and stuff. In her thoughts when she first meets “er she is like, "Oh, wow! This girl’s weird”.

Ms. Robinson: Why do you think she thinks she is weird?

Joan: She is new, and she doesn’t know her very well, and she just... some people just judge you when they first meet new people. She was acting kinda judgy.

Ms. Robinson: Yes, she was, she was judging her. Ok, so tell me some of the things you wrote down about it while you were reading?

Monica: Well, I wrote that she described how she was feeling, and she described how it looked.

Ms. Robinson: America?

Monica: Yes,

Joan: My first one is how American air feels. Drita, “The air is sticky on my skin.”

Ms. Robinson: So, even the air here is different to her. So, what do you think about the author? The author is really the one who is telling the story. Right? What do you think about how the author has used words?

Joan: I think the author was doing a great job on how she... the author was describing Drita and Maxie, in helping them live in the world in two different ways.

Ms. Robinson: Oh, ok excellent. How about you? [speaking to the other girls] What do you think about how the author presents it? For me I like the author’s style. In one chapter it’s Drita telling her point view,

Joan: [interjecting] and then it’s Maxie.

Ms. Robinson: Then in the next chapter it's Maxie's turn.

Joan: I like that too because they take turns on telling different parts of the world, or how they live.

Ms. Robinson: Right and giving their perspectives on things. Yes, anybody else got anything to say? Read what you wrote in your notebooks please. Mia, read what you wrote in your book.

Mia: One is she had to move to America, but she is afraid she wouldn't recognize her father.

Ms. Robinson: Ah, what does that tell you? If she is afraid that she won't recognize her father what does that tell you?

Joan: That she is scared to meet him.

Ms. Robinson: What does it tell you about her father though?

Joan: That she loves him.

Ms. Robinson: Yes, but she says she doesn't know if she will recognize him...

Mia: Because she hasn't seen him in years.

Ms. Robinson: In a long time. Right? Diane what did you write down?

Diane: She left Albania because there was a war.

Joan: Yes, I wrote that she left Albania because it was not safe for her family. Her family was forced to move out of their home. Drita hadn't seen her father in one year.

Ms. Robinson: Yes, Monica, do you have anything else you would like to say from your post-it notes?

Monica: Yes, me and Mia have a couple post-its. She says how it feels to be in school where she sees different people.

Ms. Robinson: Oh, yes can you find a part in the book where she says that.

[the girls look through the book]

Ms. Robinson: This is Maxie talking and saying how she feels about school. {}
Can we turn to page 29? I love this scenery about Maxie's house when she gets home, and there's a lot ...

Joan: [interjects] How she describes the smells

Ms. Robinson: How she describes the smell and her grandma.

Monica: [interjects] Chicken and {inaudible}

Ms. Robinson: What does this tell you about her relationship with her grandma.

[It is nearing the end of the lesson, and the girls are directed to keep reading]

Findings for CME#4

Students respond empathetically through subjective discourse. In this mini script we observe the students emotionally responding to the text and to the characters by stepping into the lives of the characters:

Monica: I think she is becoming good friends with Drita.

Joan: She tries to.

Monica: Yeah

Ms. Robinson: She tries to?

Joan: Yeah, only at one certain part she is just saying hi and stuff. In her thoughts when she first meets her, she is like, "Oh, wow"! This girl's weird".

Ms. Robinson: Why do you think she thinks she is weird?

Joan: She is new, and she doesn't know her very well, and she just... some people just judge you when they first meet new people. She was acting kinda judgy.

Joan describes Drita's life experiences empathetically:

Joan: Some people struggle to live a normal life.

The characters become real and present, and the students discuss the protagonists in ways that present them as having relationships with the reader. Joan criticizes Maxie for being judgmental towards Drita before Maxie even gets to know anything about Drita and what she has endured as a new immigrant. The students empathize and become involved with the characters inspiring the students' emotional connections:

Joan: I think the author was doing a great job on how she... the author was describing Drita and Maxie, in helping them live in the world in two different ways.

Ms. Robinson: So, you've all picked up on a lot of the feelings Drita would have.

The mini script presents the girls' critically communicating their understanding of differences and their emotional perspectives about the main characters Maxie and Drita.

Students reflect on their own privilege. The mini script illustrates the students' making connections and disconnections with the characters and the themes in the book, and reveals their understanding of privilege:

Joan: I identify with Maxie.

Ms. Robinson: Oh, you identify with Maxie too. What things do you identify with Maxie?

Joan: I have a pet; I have a dog. Maxie has a hamster, but she still has a pet and that she has people to talk to like her dad, or something, and I have people to talk to like my mom and my brother, and it is just similar things that we have.

Ms. Robinson: What about you Monica?

Monica: My country has been through war; I have moved around a lot. We had our own house, but then we moved to my grandpa's house, then we moved to where I am now.

Monica identifies with Drita's experience of having to lose her home because of war, and Joan points out life experiences that parallels Maxie's life. They examine their own life experiences and the privileges they enjoy contributing to a validation of their own identities. The mini script also illustrates the need to include realistic fiction and other texts that address multicultural life experiences including the experiences of our immigrant populations. In offering the students a chance of exploring this book I provided an opportunity for the students to critically examine and reflect on their own lives.

Independent student led engagement asserts their power. I invite the students to engage with the texts independently or in small groups prior to me participating in their conversation. They constructed ideas and notes in their books and on Post-it notes. In this discussion they are concerned that Drita has not been with her father in a long time:

Ms. Robinson: In a long time. Right? Diane what did you write down?

Diane: She left Albania because there was a war.

Joan: Yes, I wrote that she left Albania because it was not safe for her family. Her family was forced to move out of their home. Drita hadn't seen her father in one year.

Ms. Robinson: Yes, Monica, do you have anything else you would like to say from your post-it notes?

Monica: Yes, me and Mia have a couple post-its. She says how it feels to be in school where she sees different people.

It is interesting that Monica responds to Drita's experience at seeing "different people", alluding to the contrasting multicultural communities here in the United States. Having the students construct their ideas and understandings about the text provides an opportunity for thinking about themes that matter to them and they not dominated by my concerns. Additionally, this independent exploration of the text assists the students to formulate their own understandings of the characters and emboldens them to present authoritative counter arguments:

Ms. Robinson: Yeah. Do you think that that's one of the reasons why you like Drita, you like her more than Maxie?

Joan: No. [Joan nods in disagreement]

Monica: I think she is becoming good friends with Drita.

Joan: She tries to.

Monica: Yeah

Joan also contradicts Monica, but in so doing Monica rethinks her position. Joan's, perspectives and position indicate that she is not afraid of interrupting me or disagreeing with me, and she does so more than once. The students constructed ideas about themes

that mattered to them contributing to student generated discourse and their own meaning making.

Analysis of Findings for CME #4

A critical multicultural approach to reading engagement offers students the opportunity to view the impact of the socio-political world on the lives of the characters and make comparisons with their own lives. As the student participants engage in dialogue about *Drita, My Homegirl* a salient tone of empathy and respect is conveyed in their responses. They emotionally connect with Drita and express sadness at her poverty and loss:

Mia: I think Drita is pretty nice, 'cause I know that I really like Drita because she is from a different country and she moved to America, New York city, I think ...

Ms. Robinson: Yeah, yeah

Mia: and umm... I think she knows a lot about her country other than, other than America and when she got there then she felt kinda like weird out because she doesn't know where she is, and like she doesn't like it there because she doesn't know where she is, and she is not used to it.

[Monica makes an agreeing signal with their fingers]

The students communicate their critical consciousness through their responses to Drita and Maxie. Drita is considered empathetically and Maxie (even though her character has lost her mother) is considered privileged and materialistic. The students' critical multicultural consciousness promotes the students making inferences influenced by their intellectual, emotional, and critical responses that further their own understanding of a character even if their social worlds are disconnected. Stephanie Jones' (2012) research

and conceptualization of the importance of readers making disconnections resonates in this CME. In the discussion Maxie and Drita are discussed as actual people and not just characters in a story,

Joan: I think the author was doing a great job on how she... the author was describing Drita and Maxie, in helping them live in the world in two different ways.

As text analysts (Luke, & Freebody, 1997), the students critique the characters' roles, and the transaction (Cai, 2008) that is observed between these four students and the text is one where their sense of obligation to the Drita character is more so than to Maxie who lives in a similar privileged society as their own emphasizing the importance of providing opportunities for students to empathize,

Joan: I like them both the same, but probably Drita because she describes what she's been through like Monica said, and she says how she got there, and she describes it, and Maxie yes, she describes things, but she's also got all this stuff that Drita doesn't have.

{}

Monica: Well, I wrote that she described how she was feeling, and she described how it looked.

The CME event shows the girls seeking answers to how the lives of the two protagonists mirror their own or is different from their own, yet they all express a deep empathy and connection for Drita and want to align themselves to her, even Joan who is Black American only relates to the character Maxie (who is also Black American) in terms of the things that they have. The role of the teacher as seen here is to ask questions that

position the characters as real people and remind students that the contexts of the characters' lives can be real. These questions invite students to make connections and disconnections with their own lives, and as illustrated in Monica's response, can be cathartic:

Monica: and like what her family has been through, and like ...

Monica: My country has been through war; I have moved around a lot. We had our own house, but then we moved to my grandpa's house, then we moved to where I am now.

The mini script also illustrates that students extend the construction of ideas and language use for expressing their ideas. At first it seems that Joan dominates the conversation, but through her language she is supporting the other students to construct and convey their own thoughts.

CHAPTER 7

DRAMATIZING AS DECONSTRUCTION

CME #5 A Class Act

"Imagine if we had Martin Luther King as a principal...and as President!"

Peter, Age 8

CME # 5 presents the mini script of the students' planning preparations for creating their own text and represents their critical multicultural consciousness. The dramatic production presented in the introduction to this dissertation illustrates the student participants' critical multicultural, emotional, and intellectual responses to text. Through the act of constructing new text (the play) the students apply new knowledge and build on prior experiences with texts in ways that extend their understanding of critical multicultural themes and issues in literature, history, and current events.

Context and Setting

Priory Park school has an annual tradition since 1993, to celebrate the life and message of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. From the time the children enter kindergarten they have heard the name of Dr. King, other Civil Rights activists, and diverse people (nationally and internationally) who have contributed to bringing, peace, justice, social and political improvement to their communities. Each grade in the school participates in lessons and presentations within their own classrooms, and contribute readings, poetry, music and drama as part of a final school wide assembly. Over the years I have enjoyed facilitating students in producing and presenting a whole class dramatic production of a theme associated with the life of Dr. King. This year marked the fiftieth anniversary of his assassination, and the school would be acknowledging this as the theme in the school wide assembly.

Preparations for presenting the play occurred over twelve lesson periods, during writing, reading and social studies, and music blocks. There was also an additional debriefing lesson after the children had presented their production. Prior to designing our class production, the context of the struggle for Civil Rights period and Dr. King's messages were created by having posters of Dr. King his family, quotes from his speeches, other civil rights leaders, and events on display around the school and in our classroom. In preparing for the play the children and I engaged in discussions and readings about what was happening socially and politically in the United States during the struggle for Civil Rights. Our weekly reading included several opportunities to immerse the students in reading material and online resources that would contextualize the time and era politically and culturally for the students. Some of the materials that we read included a Scholastic News article, and I had provided a plethora of books about Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement (some of which the children had seen in previous grades), they also researched information on the internet, especially about the women who took part in bus protests before Rosa Parks, and the protests at the Woolworth's lunch counter sit-ins, some children were interested in the contemporary public discourse surrounding the inequality in women's pay, which they conducted further research. In an earlier discussion we talked about our personal family traditions and cultures. This led to the whole group discussion about our school's tradition of annually honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. During the month of November, the students and I had just concluded a social studies unit on the lives of the Wampanoag people living in Massachusetts before and after the arrival of the European colonists, so the children were well acquainted with the themes of racism, injustice, segregation, and inequality.

The children were invited to form groups to write about how they would like to present Dr. King for the assembly and what was the important ideas they would like people to know. Each group took notes of their plans and as I circulated around the room I listened to their ideas (sometimes mediating arguments), ensuring that everyone was contributing and being heard. The students then returned to a whole group sharing of their ideas. I would gather their notes and create a first draft script which I presented to them. The students would then assign parts and make changes and offer suggestions as we rehearsed the play. Their changes were often about how they were going to emphasize specific points or emotions. Evan and Joan for example added the word "Then" to emphasize at that time in history having to sit at the back of the bus. Rose in the restaurant sit-in scene added:

(As waitress) Oh, my gosh, this is too MUCH! [Places hands on hips in exasperation].

Other changes concerned how they wanted to contextualize and create an ambience of this period. Some children researched the internet for menus at a Woolworth's lunch counter and then created their own for the tables and for display behind the lunch counter. Tom wanted to have a real newspaper articles of events at that time to read as he sat in the restaurant, he researched some of the boycotts and sit-ins and created a newspaper. After the play presentation the children would extend this to the newspaper project discussed in CME #6. Peter's question at the start of the transcript of CME #5 led to the birth of a class production.

Peter: Imagine if we had Martin Luther King as a president

Ms. Robinson: As a principal or as a president?

Peter: As a principal and a president,

Ms. Robinson: Wow!

Eve: That would be cool!

Ms. Robinson: Why would it be cool to have Martin Luther King as a principal

Eve: I mean. Don't get me wrong but it would depend on what point in his life he would be principal.

Peter: (whispers he is such a good person)

Eve: (continues) but it would not be pretty cool because

Ms. Robinson: If Dr. King was to walk into this classroom right now how do you think... (I could not finish my sentence the children started to interject excitedly

Sam: [Excitedly] **That would be amazing.**

Peter: He would be proud

Evan: He would be happy.

Ms. Robinson: He would be happy.

Evan: Because he made this.

Joan: He made different places in the world multicultural

Ms. Robinson: What do you think he would feel about the tradition of honoring him every birthday?

Evan: He would kind of feel like...

Tom: He would feel proud.

Ms. Robinson: He would feel proud that people all over the country celebrated and honored his birthday.

Ross: But he is watching us up there.

Joan: In heaven.

Ms. Robinson: We really don't know how he feels, but we can just guess.

Monica: I feel he feels good about himself cuz he sees happy faces on children.

Evan: He made this happen.

Monica: Yeah, without any of us being here we would never ...

Sam: He would feel happy for the for the people that like Evan skin color they can finally have better things than they...

Ms. Robinson: And my skin color

Joan: and my color

(All the students started to call out the members of the class who had brown skin colors)

Ms. Robinson: You know what even Jewish children are treated badly

Sam: ... I will be treated badly.

Ms. Robinson: There's a lot of misconceptions that Dr. King was fighting just for people of color he was fighting for fairness for everybody because even Jewish people, even Italian people were discriminated against.

Lesson Three Planning the Play Followed by Discussion About the Newspaper

Context and Setting

I am sitting with a group of boys Joe, Mark, Steven, Sam, and Eddie and the guys have come up with this idea that they want to do the MLK *I Have a Dream* speech. there is a hubbub noise of chattering as the other children are planning their scenes in their groups. The children are writing their scenes as they work. The children either organized themselves into friendship groups, or just gravitated to a particular group.

Ms. Robinson: What did you say about it? Why did you want to do that speech in particular?

Sam: Because it was the biggest, it was the most important part that we remember.

Ms. Robinson: Part that you remember?

Sam: Yes.

Eddie: Everyone knows it.

Ms. Robinson: Everyone knows it. Ok. So, how would you like to do it?

Steven: We're thinking like draw so many heads, you know like those cards of heads for people or those sign heads and we could be like Martin Luther King

Joe: Or we make those sign heads for the audience to hold and we act like Martin Luther King doing the speech.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, could you?

Mark: [interjecting] Or, we could just do the boycott

Ms. Robinson: Hang on we could come to that too.

Ms. Robinson: Alright, number one you were thinking drawing like heads of people in a crowd. Ooo I like that idea as if they were listening to a speech.

Joe: [Interjecting] That was my idea.

Ms. Robinson: Right, now who is going to be the person giving the speech?

Eddie: Wait we could have it like the people who are holding the posters are Martin Luther King.

Sam: I have an idea. We could have a guy mouthing the words but have recording of the speech.

Ms. Robinson: We could have somebody standing there as Dr. King, but have the actual person saying the speech.

Sam: No, the speakers recording out Martin Luther King Jr.

[Steven is scribing for the group as they plan their scene and asks for a spelling]

Ms. Robinson: Crowd -c.r.o.w.d { } Now number two idea, so number two Sam said was to ... have a recording of the actual speech

Sam: Aha. [Nods in agreement]

Ms. Robinson: Which we can do from a projector.

Sam: How do you spell recording?

{ }

Eddie: I have another idea.

Ms. Robinson: Can I listen to Marks idea? He had an idea. Mark

Mark: I made a mistake I wanted to say the other thing { } You know when they had signs and they were walking.

Eddie: [Interjects] Protesting.

Ms. Robinson: So, you want us to make some protest signs?

[speaking to Steve to write "Make protest signs"]

Ms. Robinson: And then what?

Mark: [exasperated] Say the protest signs!

Ms. Robinson: So, the people in the crowd could say the protest signs? What are some of those things could the people in the crowd be saying?

Steve: How do you spell signs?

Mark: We won't ride the bus. We want to be free.

Ms. Robinson: So, the signs say “We won’t ride the bus. We want to be free?”

Eddie [Eddie repeats in unison with Ms. Robinson] Ooo “We want freedom!”

Ms. Robinson: those are all good ideas.

Eddie: I have another good idea.

Ms. Robinson: Alright.

Eddie: The people who are looking at the posters is Martin Luther King and see what he sees.

Ms. Robinson: Ooo Eddie has an excellent idea, so what Dr. King would be reading the posters of the protesters?

Eddie: Yeah.

Ms. Robinson: And then what we could say what he would be thinking?

Eddie: What he was thinking when he was doing the speech.

{}

Ms. Robinson: [Addressing the whole class] Alright, umm it seems lots of you have got lots of ideas, so come on back to the group we are going to share some of these ideas.

[The whole class returns to the rug area]

Ms. Robinson: Choose a person who is going to speak for your group.

[A lot of loud chatter as children decide]

Ms. Robinson: Let’s regroup sit with your group. Ross sing that song again.

Ross: “I have a dream...” [stops shyly]

Ms. Robinson: So, let’s start with this group first. In this group it is Monica,

Diane, Eve, and Rose, and they're going to share what their group came up with.

Rose: So, we are going to do 'Then and Now', we are just trying to consider what we are going to make "then" and "now" with.

Eve: My idea was to do a restaurant.

Rose: We are thinking that it is going to be like two different restaurants, because like if a white restaurant owner did not let a black person into their restaurant it would be fine, but if they did they would get arrested. And a black person would have to let a white person into their restaurant.

Ms. Robinson: Ok. [turns to Monica] Monica

Monica: I had an idea of maybe like people who are doing the bus scene, and since we are doing the restaurant, we

Ms. Robinson: Did you write this down?

Eve: No because we couldn't agree on anything.

Ms. Robinson: But you didn't have to agree on anything. [To Monica] Go on

Monica: We can like combine those and have like some people getting on the bus, and they could get off to go to the restaurant. And then we could have like them excluding some people and having them say go to the other restaurant.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, {}

Eve: I was thinking that we could do a "Then and Now" restaurant with two people in the "then" restaurant and the other two would be the "now" restaurant, and then restaurant would basically have someone be the restaurant owner and saying something like

[speaking sternly] "You have no place; you don't belong here." Something like that.

Ms. Robinson: Ok. You all need to write your ideas down and then over the weekend I am going to try and craft a script for you with it.

Monica: Oh, yes, we would exclude the people from the restaurant, and then we would do the “now” and show how everyone got to go to the restaurant.

Ms. Robinson: Ok. Your group [Addressing a third group]. Did you write it down please?

Julie: Yes. I think that what we could do

Ms. Robinson: Well, it is not just what you think. It is what your whole group came up with.

Julie: My group decide that we could do the Rosa Parks scene. Like when all the stuff was happening, and if she got on the bus now. Like when she got kicked off the bus.

Ms. Robinson: Ok so you want to act out the Rosa Parks scene?

Girls: [in unison] Yes.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, because that was a “Then” scene.

Julie: Then we could do what happened.

Ms. Robinson: [Addressing a fourth group] What did your group come up with

Tom: We came up with acting the *I Have a Dream* speech

Ms. Robinson: Acting the *I Have a Dream* speech, and how were you planning on doing that?

Tom: We were planning on getting a microphone and a stand like a stage.

Ross: There is a stand on the stage.

Tom: Yeah.

Ms. Robinson: Then what?

Tom: We had another idea, acting the bus scene or bus scenes with Rosa Parks

Ms. Robinson: Alright. So ... [Evan raises his hand]

Ms. Robinson: Evan.

Evan: Does everybody get a script?

Ms. Robinson: Everybody has a part in the play I never exclude anyone.

{

Ms. Robinson: So, you have all come up with a lot of very good ideas. Does anyone else have anything they would like to say or add to it?...

Ms. Robinson: Ok. Well, I'm thinking it would be good if we could do it on the stage

[Voices agree] Yes,

Ms. Robinson: But when we do it on the stage not everybody gets to see and hear. Would you agree? Because, when Steve's grandma came to see our character presentations what was the number one thing, she said we needed to do?

[Voice calls out] Speak loudly!

Ms. Robinson: speak loudly right? [more excitedly] And because everyone wants to be heard, and all these amazing scenes that people are thinking. I am thinking we could transform the classroom back into that time and place...

[Student voices call out we could make a restaurant!]

Ms. Robinson: We could have different sections for each of the scenes. Like we could make a restaurant in one scene, {} we could do the bus 'Then' and the bus 'Now' scene. What do you think about that?

Evan: [Excitedly] Yeah, we could decorate the classroom like what we did with the Wampanoag projects.

[Voices agreeing with excitement]

Eve: Yeah

Ms. Robinson: Yeah. What do you think, then people could see your ‘Then’ and ‘Now’ signs?

Tom: [in background already planning with his group] Yeah, in one side we could ... (inaudible)

[Voices in the background planning who was going to make what signs]

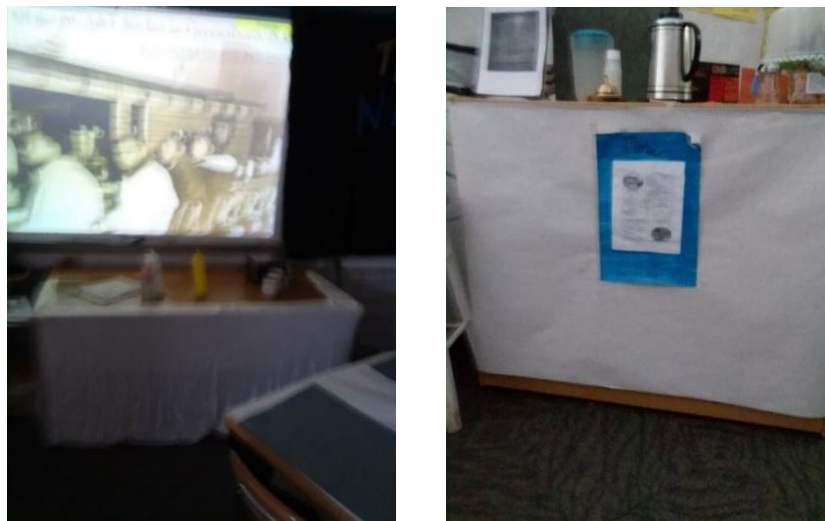


Figure 8: Recreating a Woolworth’s Lunch Counter Sit-In

Findings for CME # 5

Students contextualize by reading multiple texts and interrogating multiple viewpoints. In their project groups the students used a variety of resources including interviewing family members, on-line tools, non-fiction historical facts about the struggle

for Civil Rights, autobiographic resources, and historical fiction sources to research the scenes they wanted to depict:

Ms. Robinson: I was very intrigued that you went even further when you answered the question about it, and you said that you had watched a movie about it.

Mia: Yeah, when I got home, I asked my mom, "Were you alive when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I have a dream speech"? and she looked it up on You Tube, and we watched a video of Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin so everything I said was true and meaningful.

{ }

Sam: No, the speakers recording out Martin Luther King Jr.

[Steven is scribing for the group as they plan their scene and asks for a spelling]

Ms. Robinson: Crowd -c.r.o.w.d { } Now number two idea, so number two Sam said was to ... have a recording of the actual speech

Sam: Aha. [Nods in agreement]

As text analysts (Luke & Freebody, 1997), the students illustrate that critical analysis of socio-political issues require multimodal resources that offer varied perspectives of a topic, and employs diverse ways for them to be text participants and users (Luke & Freebody, 1997), in the excerpt above we even see Mia interviewing her mother, she was inspired to go beyond the limits of the classroom resources to ask her mother about other women besides Rosa Parks, she and her mother even watched a movie on the subject. Souto-Manning's (2013) study argues for the importance of students interviewing community members, her students learned "that they can get so much more from an

interview and from a relationship than they could from reading an impersonal answer on a computer screen” (p. 37). The students’ curiosities and questions inform their decisions about how to locate data for their play and serves to support their quest for truth facts about this moment in America’s history.

Integrated classroom management structures support students’ critical exploration. I encouraged their independent exploration and development of ideas by creating a fluid ambience where the students could select their groups, move from group to group sharing ideas, work from their interests, and represent their understanding in diverse modes:

Mark: I made a mistake I wanted to say the other thing {} You know when they had signs and they were walking

Eddie: [Interjects] Protesting?

Ms. Robinson: So, you want us to make some protest signs.

[speaking to Steve to write “Make protest signs”]

{ }

Mark: [exasperated] Say the protest signs!

{ }

Mark: We won’t ride the bus. We want to be free.

{ }

Eddie [Eddie repeats in unison with Ms. Robinson] Ooo “We want freedom!”

Mini script #5 illustrates that by adopting an integrated approach to curriculum design, I assisted the students to construct critical multicultural perspectives by their explorations of different genres and modes of literacy. The student participants felt the need to further

their understanding of this time in history and their independent research aids to contextualize the learning for promoting understanding. Tom researched newspaper articles on the internet, and other students used the internet to locate images of what a lunch counter and menus would look like as seen in the images in the introduction to this chapter and what protest signs depicted at that time.

Positioning Students as Ethnodramatists

The mini script shows the students designing and constructing their own dramatic production texts to represent their understandings of the social injustices of the time and the social transformation that occurred. They also went further comparing contemporary social issues regarding women's pay:

Evan & Sam: 'strong emotion] **But**, a woman's payment today is still not always equal to that of a man doing the same job—

Rose: [Still as waitress - frustrated] Hey, did you know that I get paid a third of what the men get here?

Eve: Well, that's not fair! Makes me wonder what I get paid!

[Monica and Julie enter off the bus]

Monica and Julie: Hey, what are you talkin' about?

Eve: She gets paid a third of what the men get paid! [looks at her imaginary cell phone]

I get paid 80 cents for every dollar a man gets paid!

{}

Eve: I was thinking that we could do a “Then and Now” restaurant with two people in the “then” restaurant and the other two would be the “now” restaurant,

and then restaurant would basically have someone be the restaurant owner and saying something like

[speaking sternly] “You have no place; you don’t belong here.” Something like that.

{

Monica: Oh, yes, we would exclude the people from the restaurant, and then we would do the “now” and show how everyone got to go to the restaurant.

The students’ decision to perform their understandings of this period in American history illustrates an embodiment and visual representation of their critical consciousness about racism, social injustice, and marginalization in American society. They have collectively collaborated in presenting an ethnodrama, Goldstein (2012). They not only present a research story of their understandings about the struggle for Civil Rights, but they also construct text and counter text that is informed by their own responses to the information they gathered and the issues.

As playwrights the excerpts show the importance of collaboration “ in producing research informed-theatre” Goldstein (2012, p. 126), and the importance of the student participants not only presenting a story of historical events, but they share their understanding of the efforts of people fighting for their rights and the importance for their own lives today. As they engaged in their daily explorations, it became clear that collectively and individually they wanted to be designers of their own texts and of the ways to represent their understandings. As playwrights in this ethnodrama, they become participants in a particular time and place, promoting their understanding of the emotional and social and political nuances through dramatic representation.

Student curiosities and questions inform and inspire emotional responses and critical constructions. The mini script illustrates the children discussing and building excitement for their dramatization of the struggle for Civil Rights:

Monica: We can like combine those and have like some people getting on the bus, and they could get off to go to the restaurant. And then we could have like them excluding some people and having them say go to the other restaurant.

Ms. Robinson: Ok, {}

Eve: I was thinking that we could do a “Then and Now” restaurant with two people in the “then” restaurant and the other two would be the “now” restaurant, and then restaurant would basically have someone be the restaurant owner and saying something like

[speaking sternly] “You have no place; you don’t belong here.” Something like that.

The mini script of the students’ planning and constructing the play illustrates my (the teachers’) willingness to have the students take charge of how they want to represent and share their knowledge. The teacher’s role becomes one that negotiates power with the students and offers them control of what they want to say and how they want to say it. The teacher provides cohesion and connects the whole group into a final production. In choosing to dramatically represent their understanding of the struggle for Civil Rights the students’ discourse presents an empathetic and social justice perspective; and illustrate that critical multicultural engagement reconciles a combined content and student-centered focus of the curriculum. The teacher’s role is positioned as a bystander and learner as the students become facilitators of the learning. I could participate with the students as a

learner observing this process of critical multicultural consciousness as the child participants construct, design, and redesign the learning experience within the production of this play.

Analysis of Findings for CME #5

Critical multicultural engagement with children's literature and other texts afforded for the student participants a collaborative opportunity to explore, extend, and represent their understanding of a critical moment in our nation's history. During collaborative language use there is what Bloome and Beauchemin (2016) describe as a shift in "attention from what individuals bring [] to what individuals collectively do as constituting classroom events." (p. 154), which in this situation applies to responding to social issues and themes conveyed in texts. The production positioned the student participants as collaborative researchers telling their unique research story and proves objectives of this dissertation research.

The intentions of this dissertation were to understand the what happens when children engage with critical multicultural reading experiences and attends to how a teacher-researcher and her students use language and the power relations that operate within the classroom as they are critically and multiculturally engaged with children's texts. Nichols and Campano (2017) refer to students' response being influenced by texts, "books themselves exert a type of agency in creating conditions for meaning making or supporting critical orientations toward the world ... drama with language arts learning ... can transform classroom environments and the ways students engage" (p. 248). The planning discussion for the dramatic production (presented in the introduction to this dissertation) illustrates how children can engage with texts, apply new knowledge, and

build on prior experiences with texts in ways that extend their understanding of critical multicultural themes and issues in literature in historical and current terms. The student responses also serve to illustrate situated practice as conceptualized by Street (1984, 1995, pp. 95 – 96) that occur through the literacy events in the classroom and what the student participants bring to the learning. As the students dig deeper in their discussion about how and what to present, they are also extending construction of their understanding of the political and social nuances evoked by the struggle for civil rights.

The dramatic production also addresses the ways critical practices with multicultural literature and other texts support students' negotiation and affirmation of their own identities in relation to people of diverse communities. This mini script illustrates the importance of including role models of people of color in the school curriculum, especially texts of people of color in positions of authority and leadership who have contributed to the development of society. In their discussion of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. this diverse group of children readily have no inhibitions of pointing out their ethnicity and the children show their allegiance and acceptance of each other,

Monica: I feel he feels good about himself cuz he sees happy faces on children.

Evan: He made this happen.

Monica: Yeah, without any of us being here we would never ...

Sam: He would feel happy for the for the people that like Evan skin color they can finally have better things than they

Ms. Robinson: And my skin color

Joan: and my color (All the students started to call out the members of the class who had brown skin colors)

This is significant because it presents the children as having a democratic position and socially equal perspective of their roles in the classroom in relation to each other.

Facilitating and promoting critical multicultural consciousness calls on the educator to invite students to be invested in the importance of looking at the inequities and challenges that confront marginalized people, and to acknowledge those of us who have privileges that are not available to all people. The students' roles in the play illustrate that by embodying their understanding through their representations they are validating and recognizing the contributions and experiences of people from marginalized communities, and these students can practice and promote their critical multicultural consciousness.

CME #6 – Re/Constructing Criticality

"So, Johnny, what do you think about that experience?" "Well, I think that we need to stop all this separation, and just consider that we are all equal. Just for everyone to realize, that no one is better than anyone else." Johnny spoke boldly, but very sad."

Tom, Age 8

Context and Setting: The newspaper article below was researched and written by Tom, who created the idea of having authentic news articles about the struggle for civil rights, and he inspired the class to create their own newspaper articles. My role in this project was purely editor and that was only if the students felt they needed advice. I brought in actual current newspapers and had the children in pairs find a newspaper article that interested them to share with the class. We had previously discussed the format elements of the newspaper genre (see Appendix E). I then created a newspaper template using an actual newspaper account of the assassination of Dr. King. The children could then write their first drafts and then cut and paste it into the template this

would then guide their reading and writing process to a create a final piece. The children then added their articles to a whole class newspaper' as shown in Appendix G. CME#6 is Tom's actual article titled *Something to Fight For*, presented as he typed it.

Something To Fight For

By _____

Greensboro, NC 1927- Johnny Pompeii, Jr. goes for a walk in Greensboro, North Carolina to the supermarket, to buy some food. Once he gets there, he looks at his list of things to get. Johnny hunted and found the first thing on the list. He grabs the food and pulled out a pencil, and started to cross off the the first thing on the list. In the middle of crossing it off, a white person shoves Johnny to the ground. "Excuse me, but why did you just shove me to the ground?" Johnny asked. "Cause I can." Said the white person. Johnny asked for his food back. The white person refused to give back the food. "Why not?" Johnny asked. "Because I'm white, and your black, so I'm better than you." Said the white person. "NOT TRUE!" Johnny screamed. "Oh ya, well then I'll get you arrested, how do you feel now?!" The white person had an evil smirk on their face. Suddenly two police officers appeared on the scene. "You are under arrest." The police officers shouted. "For what?" Johnny asked frightened. "Because you were arguing to a white person" The police guards said, boldly. "What's wrong with that?" Johnny asked, offended. Then, one of the officers pulled out shiny, silver handcuffs. Quick as a flash, the police officers put Johnny, in handcuffs, and locked the handcuffs. Johnny is now in jail.

I was allowed to visit Johnny in jail, and in the interview, I asked “So Johnny, what do you think about that experience?” “Well, I think that we need to stop all this separation, and just consider that we are all equal. Just for everyone to realize, that no one is better than anyone else.” Johnny spoke boldly, but very sad. “Johnny, excellent description, and for all of you out there, I just hope that you all know that this segregation, and loss of equal rights, is something, to fight for.

Findings for CME #6

Students assert their authority as they engage in critical multicultural discourse. The following excerpt is from the concluding paragraph of Tom’s newspaper article:

I was allowed to visit Johnny in jail, and in the interview, I asked “So Johnny, what do you think about that experience?” “Well, I think that we need to stop all this separation, and just consider that we are all equal. Just for everyone to realize, that no one is better than anyone else.” Johnny spoke boldly, but very sad.

In Tom’s article his critical multicultural consciousness is embodied in the critical story he has constructed. Tom’s criticality offers him language that is emotive, empathetic, and convincing of the harms that are perpetuated by social injustices; in constructing new text he embodies critical multicultural literacy. In the findings of the previous mini script, I argued that the critical multicultural process has implications for the teacher’s role where power and control of the learning is negotiated as the students choose their modes of representing and sharing their understandings. The description of the context of the newspaper project illustrates that the students appreciate my authority and knowledge as I interact with them. I model critical multicultural discourse and the students emulate this language in their conversations with each other, with me, and in their thinking. But this is

their project their critical construction, and Tom takes the lead by assigning me the post as newspaper editor for correcting spelling and grammar before he adds their articles to the final newspaper.

Students Take Social Action, Promote Social Justice and Focus on Sociopolitical Issues

Tom created his newspaper article to contextualize the events in their dramatic production of the Civil Rights protests of the 1960's, and to support what he wanted to share with the audience about the harsh inequalities during the struggle for civil rights:

Johnny, excellent description, and for all of you out there, I just hope that you all know that this segregation, and loss of equal rights, is something, to fight for.

Critical multicultural engagement supports students' redesign of the ways they respond to text and/or represent how they communicate and share their ideas in ways that furthers their independent meaning making and comprehension of issues. Through his exploration of a critical moment in our nation's history, Tom's article illustrates that he is not afraid to speak out about the social injustices in our society and shows his willingness to take action for social transformation. This experience was an opportunity for Tom and the other students to think about their personal perspectives and position for people who suffer injustice and the impact they may have on change.

Analysis of CME #6

Tom's leadership position in the class inspires the other students to also want to produce more and extend their understanding of what was happening in society during the protests for Civil Rights. Tom constructs the newspaper and invites the other students to add articles to it. Aukerman, (2012) argues that critical "literacy practices invite

students to inhabit positions of textual authority” (p. 43), where they (students) also recognize that their own reading of text is just one of many positions and understandings. Power and perspective are not static, individuals exercise position with every utterance and every action; "an individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through various discursive practices in which they participate" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 5) These characteristics are evidenced in Tom and his interactions in the classroom with his friends, with me the teacher, and as he researches and creates his own texts. Here Tom and the other students share not only in a dramatic collaboration, but they extend it to reconstruct a collective literary experience.

Tom’s critical consciousness is embodied in his newspaper article. We see him through his critical creativity not only telling the story from as an empathetic bystander, but as a young person who is questioning the injustices in our society. His comprehension of the struggle for Civil Rights is significant as it represents his articulation of his social awareness. His writing response is not pedestrian and based solely on presenting facts. He is actively participating with the text and creating his own critical text and discourse. This CME event resonates the students’ social justice and democratic perspectives as presented in *CME #2 Reconstructing the Pledge of Allegiance*. Critical multicultural engagement supports students’ awareness and empathy of marginalized people. Tom’s article illustrates that he is not afraid to speak out about the social injustices in our society and shows his willingness to take action and honors his need to be informed. Tom’s responses illustrate that as a critical multicultural educator I can create the conditions for the promotion of critical multicultural literacy and consciousness by inviting children to

respond intellectually and emotionally, and most importantly to represent/or embody their understandings through critical constructions that question the social and political norms in society.

In chapter eight, the discussion section, I reflect, make connections, and comment on the data in relation to the research questions, social implications, and theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Supported by critical constructivist and feminist poststructuralist perspectives this critical ethnographic teacher research identifies classroom experiences that position students as learners, teachers, constructors, designers, re-designers, and agents of change. The findings illustrate that pedagogy centered on critical multicultural engagement with children's texts invites and promotes critical multicultural consciousness and agency offering students the possibility for critical constructions as they collaboratively negotiate meaning of sociocultural themes. The theoretical tools I engaged for analyzing the findings are summarized here: knowledge is polyvocal and constructed through social interactions; reader responses are influenced by the intertextuality of language events, and the intellectual and emotional significance in those events. Critical multicultural perspectives promote intellectual and emotional understanding of how hegemonic structures influence discourse, and the influences of race, class, and gender on discourse and text (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, pp. 117–122) and critical multicultural understandings promote democratic possibilities enacted through perspectives, power, and positioning. Knowledge is power and within a critical perspective it is possible for everyone to exercise power through discourse (Foucault, 1980, pp. 93–119). The mini scripts illustrate a diminishment of my intellectual authority offering more egalitarian opportunities for the children to promote their understandings for impacting the learning that they wanted and needed. On the other hand, their collective discourse and constructions did not diminish the individuality of the students as presented especially

through Tom, Rose, and Eve, for example when Eve asks, “I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?” Their individual contributions and questions helped to guide the collective critical constructions of the whole group. The critical classroom (Freire, 2000) is one that offers democratic opportunities where children can have positions of leadership and participate in the construction and reconstruction of the learning activities that lead to new epistemologies for all the participants including the teacher.

For conceptualizing my ideas, I argued that positioning students as contributors, co-teachers, and co-learners, who question the status quo and engage in problem-posing education (Freire, 2000), inspires thought, and questions education that reiterates and promulgates societal and political ideologies. A salient feature located in the mini scripts of the learning events, or moments of critical multicultural engagement, is the progression of the student’s critical multicultural consciousness where the students’ discourse and responses inform and extend the learning events culminating with their critical construction of the dramatic production. Additionally, the mini scripts illustrate how my democratic critical multicultural perspectives informed how I interacted with the students, how I informed my questions by centering on their interests and curiosities, opinions, and how I influenced the critical multicultural constructions the students produced. The questions I developed for researching critical multicultural engagement with children's texts: perspectives, power, and positioning began with an overall question: What does critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer students as they read and respond to texts? This dissertation sought to understand:

1. How does a teacher-researcher promote critical multicultural engagement in the elementary classroom?
2. What happens when elementary students critically and multiculturally engage with children's texts?
3. In what ways do critical multicultural engagement offer elementary students opportunities for making meaning of power relations?
4. In what ways do critical multicultural engagement with children's texts support students' negotiation and affirmation of their own identities in relation to people of diverse ethnic and social communities.

Further discussion of the findings that address the research questions, incorporates a synthesis of the ideological concepts concerning critical multicultural engagement identified in the literature review: the Four Resource Model (text decoders, text users, text participants, and text analysts) Luke and Freebody (1997), the Four Dimensions (disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, taking action and promoting social justice) Lewison, Flint, and Sluys (2002), the six key practices reviewed by Behrman (2006, p. 492) - reading supplementary texts, reading multiple texts, reading from a resistant perspective, producing counter texts, conducting student-choice research projects, and taking social action. Based on my synthesis of the empirical studies including my own previous research (Robinson, 2013, p. 50) I also contributed to these ideational concepts, affirming identities and locating its significance in discourse.

During the initial conceptualization of my research paradigm, I decided against directly identifying and describing to the children these ideational ways of knowing and

engaging with texts for making meaning. Direct instruction would influence their responses and steer the research into researching the efficacy and pedagogical strategies for implementing these models. Although these models are nuanced in describing the students' responses, this study identifies how students engage with texts, inspired by their intellectual emotional and critical responses to text.

These concepts are all evident in critical multicultural responses of the research participants in this research. Chapter 7 represents the students taking social action by producing and presenting a play; Chapter 5 illustrates the students designing their own pledges that speak to contemporary issues and conducting student-choice research. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 address the students participating in reading multiple texts, genres of text, reading from a resistant perspective, and producing counter texts. For engaging with texts as readers and constructors of texts this study illustrates that as text decoders and text users (Luke & Freebody, 1997), the students draw on contextual and visual cues, and their funds of knowledge for constructing meaning, but as text participants and text analysts they are positioned to ask whose interests are served by the text and how power relations are represented in the texts.

I have suggested that a salient feature of the mini scripts is that they illustrate the progression of the students' critical multicultural consciousness where the students' discourse and responses inform and extend the learning events. The discussion now follows how these learning events relate to the research questions and how they are nuanced in the empirical studies. I begin with the role of the teacher-researcher and how this is implicated in the study.

The Role of the Teacher

Critical multicultural engagement with children's texts is made possible by the teacher's critical multicultural perspectives, willingness to enact fluid power relations, and an understanding that one's position is not static. The mini scripts illustrate that as the teacher I actively engaging with the students' ideas, inspiring, and encouraging their opinions. I facilitated the lessons but invited the children's contributions. I willingly surrender my agenda and position the children's questions and comments to inform the learning that aided in their critical consciousness. Comparing my teacher's role to those in the empirical studies there are similarities in our goals for providing more critical experiences that extend their students' understandings of our social world. Similarly, the activities that took place in this classroom provided opportunities for the students to promote their critical understandings of social issues. However, this study presents a process where the students collectively built on one experience after the other that supported their critical consciousness, in contrast the other studies research were based on responding to specific themes or the "what?". This research was concerned with the "how?" and illustrated how these student participants extended their critical literacies and embodied their understandings in products that emphasized how they would go forward with engaging with future texts and the world.

The Role of the Student Participants

This study illustrates that critical multicultural engagement with children's texts is not only centered on the texts and what the students read but how they read these texts and extend their comprehension of texts through the critical construction of their own texts, and by presenting their critical multicultural understandings. Consistent with

Botelho and Rudman, “Critical multicultural reading engagement involves the reader participating with texts as a researcher of language and creator of meaning” (2009, p. 44). Additionally, the findings illustrate that as children critically and multiculturally engage with texts they construct new texts (verbal and written), and these new texts extend meaning for them. The critical multicultural events reveal that becoming critically conscious is not a linear process, the events build on each other and illustrate how the student participants’ literacy learning impacts each event, and how the students collectively construct critical multicultural consciousness and inform each other in ways that I, the teacher-researcher, could not have taught, facilitated, or envisioned. The participants-students and the teacher-researcher, and the curriculum, were impacted by critical multicultural events, shaping the students’ discourse, extending the curriculum regarding content, expanding concepts to include multiple perspectives, transforming classroom management, and how the students responded and represented their understandings in critically creative ways.

Enacting Critical Multicultural Consciousness and Agency
Through a Dramatic Process

Many of the empirical studies showed the student participants inspired to take action, (Price-Dennis et al., 2016; Souto-Manning, 2009; Weis-Long & Gove, 2003). My work illustrates that for my student participants taking social action included presenting for an audience and making public their understandings about the historical and current impact of racism. They extended their engagement activities to not only include reading critically and multiculturally, but to be agents of change in a public way, representing their perspective of our nation’s history with social change. Wies-Long and Gove (2003)

showed in their study their focus was on improving fluidity and reading skills, but for the students in this study presenting a dramatic performance was for representing their understanding of their world and how in *reading the word they read the world*.

Critical multicultural engagement offered students the opportunity to draw on local literacies and narratives to question and argue normalized socio-political concepts such as racism, access, freedom, privilege, xenophobia, and heteronormative ideology. It is evident that critical multicultural engagement offered a window into students' life experiences and offered the critical use of language to compare and validate their life experiences as shown in this excerpt where Mia, who has gay grandmothers, express her understanding about the treatment of gay people in our society in the mini script of the Pledge of Allegiance:

Mia: As I said yesterday, some people don't get respect because some people choose to grow up to be gay or not and some gay people aren't getting treated fairly.

Critical multicultural engagement supports the possibility for the student to represent their understandings in multiple art forms, or transmediation (Leland & Bruzas, 2014, p. 30) aiding students to construct, represent, and deepen their understanding of social constructs:

While working on our class play about the Civil Rights movement and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I really wanted to make our props realistic. I had the idea to make a newspaper about things that were really happening at that time. I was in the restaurant scene, so we could be reading the latest news while we were waiting to

be served. I went on the internet using our Chrome Books to research news stories and I wrote about the sit-ins and people being arrested.

The excerpt above is taken from Tom’s monologue in chapter 4. The children created a dramatic production to present to an audience their understanding about a historical event. Then continued to affirm what they had learned and to continue to share their understandings by creating the newspaper. The newspaper project and the mini script of the drama production process in Chapter 7, models for students how to “dig deeper”, asks critical questions, and makes research connections and disconnections. Additionally, inviting students to read multiple texts, nuances the transmediation idea, because students expand their perspectives, promote critical multicultural literacies, and support interrogating multiple viewpoints (Lewison et al., 2002, p. 384). Engaging diverse textual resources (fiction and non-fiction) inspire and promote critical multicultural consciousness and literacy and provides further textual resources for students to make sense of texts and challenge “social constructions” (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. 117). As illustrated in the play in the introduction, and in the newspaper project CME 5, the students draw on the use of diverse resources and art forms in their own critical constructions for representing their ideas and taking action.

Why Is All This Happening?

Problematizing impacts students’ discourse. The responses of the student participants presented in the critical multicultural engagement events (mini scripts) illustrate that what I was initially offering them was not enough in terms of (1) the extent they wanted to critically engage with texts, and (2) how they wanted to represent their understandings. As Freire (2000, pp. 79-81) describes they needed more of a “problem-

posing education”. They wanted opportunities to represent their understandings and to draw on their own experiences. Critical multicultural engagement event #2 the Pledge lessons, illustrate the students’ local literacies and personal connections to the political and social issues in the macro society. Through the integration of a variety of texts to explore themes (as in the situations of the Pledge of Allegiance lesson, and the dramatic production of the Civil Rights movement) the students construct their understanding through language, they adopted the language of their peers to collectively construct new texts and collectively engage in critical creativity.

Critical Multicultural Engagement Extends the Metaphor

Mirrors, Windows, and Doors

By presenting and making public their collective representation and discourse the students become agents of change, writing their own pledges, the dramatic production of the struggle for Civil Rights, and the newspaper project extend the metaphors “mirrors, windows, and doors” by not only reflecting life, viewing someone else’s world, offering access to everyday conditions, inviting self-affirmation, and inviting interactions (Botelho & Rudman, 2009, p. xiii). Critical multicultural engagement offered these students the opportunity to not only be text analysts and designers of how they represent their understandings, they also publicly shared their constructions and reconstructions of social disparities and presented their understandings in a way that invited a sense of being there for the audience who are also receiving information, and therefore, in viewing they are reading the students’ text constructions. Transferring their understandings to an audience that promotes their conceptual knowledge around a topic or issue. Through the dramatic production students became ethnodramatists: They (and the audience) become

participants in a particular time and place, promoting their understanding of the emotional and social and political nuances. The students created an "informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative" (Saldaña, 2003, p. 220):

Evan & Sam: [strong emotion] **But**, a woman's payment today is still not always equal to that of a man doing the same job.

Rose: [Still as waitress - frustrated] Hey, did you know that I get paid a third of what the men get here?

Eve: Well, that's not fair! Makes me wonder what I get paid!

[Monica and Julie enter off the bus]

Monica and Julie: Hey, what are you talkin' about?

Eve: She gets paid a third of what the men get paid! [looks at her imaginary cell phone]

I get paid 80 cents for every dollar a man gets paid!

Everyone: Gasps!

The student participants not only present a story of historical events, share their understanding of the importance of the efforts of people fighting for their rights, but they also furthered their understanding and knowledge of the continued struggle for civil rights in the United States.

Critical Multicultural Engagement Repositions Teachers and Students

Discussing the power relations enacted in this study involves an understanding about the repositioning of the teacher's role and students as was demonstrated on many occasions throughout the moments of critical multicultural engagement. The power and

authoritative influence of the teacher was frequently diminished, contributing to a democratic and critical classroom where there were opportunities for students to pursue their interests, while cultivating a feeling of solidarity with the other participants and teacher. The reader will observe that the first two mini scripts (Chapter 5) appear to be heavily laden with teacher discourse as I facilitate the learning, but as the student participants become more critically and multiculturally conscious through several CME events a release takes place where the students assert their understanding and contribute to extending and facilitating the learning, therefore repositioning my authoritative role as the teacher. The students' roles changed from being passive learners to active leaders while repositioning my teacher-researcher leadership role. The transcripts illustrate the student participants engaging in a variety of literacy and literary events that surround texts, where the teacher is not the sole authority in the production of knowledge, and what emerges in the students' transactions with text is an acknowledgement of their democratic position in the classroom.

Foucault's (1980, p. 77) understanding of the connection between knowledge and power, positioning, and perspective suggests that discourse and knowledge must consider how power relations are enacted. This dissertation recognizes democratic strategies of power for engaging children with literature, and the CMEs identify that power to construct knowledge cannot be the intellectual property of the adult facilitator, or any one participant. Some student participants were more vocal than others, but their ideas and products were constructed collaboratively and supported by their funds of knowledge and experience. Through critical practices all the participants are co-constructors or re-

constructors of the epistemological products. Consequently, dominance by any one individual within a critical context would be antithetical to these social commitments.

Promoting a Critical Multicultural Identity

Bakhtin's (1982) idea of social heteroglossia, is ubiquitous in this research within the students' language constructions while they converse or are in tension with each other, or when they explore and consider textual meaning. Language is socially constructed and intertextual contexts of language; how anything anyone says, or thinks is comprised of previously uttered discourse. The child participants create a collaborative multicultural identity and perspective of their world. As the children acquire and use language to further their understanding of social constructs such as racial inequality, social justice issues, and living in a multicultural community, they begin to assert their learning by redesigning experiences with literature. This affords them the possibility to extend their understandings through their construction of new texts which offers a deeper comprehension of social constructs and issues conveyed in the literature.

From a critical constructivist perspectives as Freire (2000) suggests, learning "involves a constant unveiling of reality" (p. 81), in this research the moments of critical multicultural engagement have shown how the child participants are affirmed as contributors, co-teachers, and co-learners, they are able to question the status quo and engage in problem-posing education that inspires thought, and question education that reiterates and promulgates societal and political ideologies, while intellectually and emotionally, engaging with multicultural literature and other texts. Additionally, on individual terms the students eagerly discuss their heritage, culture, family life, and social experiences. The personal connections are affirming for the students, and contribute to

deeper, richer, and more meaningful discussions and conceptual understandings.

Honoring students also honors their point of view and is consistent with the results

Commeyras (1994) found in her study “I find that the children’s point of view at times seems much different than my own, but it is their reality” (p. 522).

A Reflexive Thought

Feminist poststructuralist perspectives claim power relation “operate within and through language” (Jones, 2013, p. 199). I feel this applies to the power relations and patriarchal concepts exercised in the classroom discursive events, to discuss whose “ideas are revealed or omitted” (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 485). For example, Tom’s contributions and leadership is featured quite prominently in the CME events. Yet, as the events unfold, we see through his discourse his position being egalitarian, empathetic, and multiculturally sensitive:

“Well, I think that we need to stop all this separation, and just consider that we are all equal. Just for everyone to realize, that no one is better than anyone else.”

In retrospect it was not intentional when designing the research method that contributions from individual student participants would feature more prominently than others. From a researcher standpoint this would not be possible to foretell. As the CMEs began to emerge it is evident that some students dominated the discussions and shared more of their personal thoughts, including ideas of their identity, family background, culture, and experiences (even though all children were given the same opportunities to share). As a researcher I had to take into consideration those children who were diffident and more inhibited, therefore providing multimodal ways (such as including personal diaries and response journals) for sharing and representing their ideas, affirming their contributions

was imperative for my research and teaching. CME # 5 *Dramatizing as Deconstruction*, in preparing for the production, illustrates how all the students wrote a place for themselves into this collaborative effort. If we return to the student profiles it is evident that the children who have had many experiences with discussing social issues with their families are more vocal in the mini scripts. Implied here is that a critical multicultural teacher- researcher is required to not only think about ways to address the need for inspiring awareness of what is happening in the broader society but to help all children be knowledgeable and dialogical, more thoughtfully, critically, and multiculturally literate, and show interest in taking action. It is also important to think about ways to include and affirm students' personal experiences and contributions to help them make connections and disconnections in the learning.

Transactional Theory at Work

The moments of critical multicultural engagement as demonstrated in the CME events afforded the student participants the opportunity to transact with the texts in ways that promoted their epistemological constructions and reconstructions of social and cultural ideologies. Cai (2008) extends Louise Rosenblatt's¹⁴ (1978) transactional theory when he argues that critical engagement allows the "reader to respond with resistance ...we should regard their resistance as a springboard for discussing and clarifying critical issues related to multicultural literature" (p. 217). Cai's ideas about resistance alludes to theories about the roles of power, positioning, and perspective in relation to critical engagement with multicultural literature. Throughout this research I have included a

¹⁴ Louise Rosenblatt developed an interest in each reader's unique response to a given text. She is best known for her influential texts *Literature as Exploration* (1938) and "The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work" (1978), in which she argues that the act of reading literature involves a transaction between the reader and the text.

reflexive debriefing process in the design to have the child participants be reflexive about their learning. The excerpt below is an example of the affordances of critical multicultural engagement that creates the possibility for teacher and student to intimately further dialogue around a theme and validates the student's efforts. The interview with Mia was done after the *Class Act* production CME #5, and the excerpts below illustrate Cai's (2008) ideas about resistance, and its significance of affording reflexive opportunities for even young students.

Ms. Robinson: Do you remember when we were doing the play and the audience was asking you about how you felt about learning about the women, the other women besides Rosa Parks, who refused to give up their seats on the busses?

Mia: Yeah, yeah. I remember.

Ms. Robinson: I was very intrigued that you went even further when you answered the question about it, and you said that you had watched a movie about it

Mia: "Yeah when I got home I asked my mom, "Were you alive when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I have a dream speech"? and she looked it up on You Tube, and we watched a video of Rosa Parks and Claudette Colvin so everything I said was true and meaningful.

Ms. Robinson: What interested you the most about Claudette Colvin, you think, because everybody knows about Rosa Parks; but very few people know about her?

Mia: Well, I thought it was very cool that more than one person wanted to stand up to the unfair laws, and they were right it was really unfair.

Ms. Robinson: Hmm (agreeing).

Mia: They were really special people because they knew what they had to do.

Here we see Mia having the opportunity to promote her inferential understanding and meaning. Her conclusion also indicates how through her thoughts she is now positioned as a leader that not only can extend meaning for herself, but for the other students, and for me as her teacher. Her comment "they knew what they had to do" emphasizes her critical understanding of the time, place, and resistance against the status quo. For critical multicultural educators, the implications are to consider how we inspire our students to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, how do we promote autonomy. In Mia's responses in this transcript, Tom's newspaper article, and the actions of the class in creating their own newspaper it is evident that the democratic classroom promotes profound emotional, and critical opportunities for students:

Ms. Robinson: I think they were really special people myself; I really do. In your own personal life do you think these ladies have any message for you yourself, these women?

Mia: Yeah,

Ms. Robinson: What do you think?

Mia: I think stay strong, no matter what happens. It will all be Ok in the meantime if I stand up.

Her response here seems naive and simplistic of the complex issues of the adult world in terms of racism and the hegemonic structures that dominate the larger social and political issues. But the personal message of courage, what is important, and justice, indicates a

learning that is internalized for her, and indicates the importance of having critical multicultural engagement with literature in the elementary experience.

Ms. Robinson: Thank you. I really appreciate that. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Mia: Well, one thing I learned was that Irene Morgan was the first woman to do that, and I am pretty sure that those women the first time they did it they were a little scared.

Ms. Robinson: I can imagine them being very scared because they were going up against society.

Mia: Yeah, and all the White people they were probably furious with them, but 't was the right thing to do because now we're, well not all of us are treated equal, but some of us.

Mia refers to “us” collectively in her understanding of all the American people together “as some of us,” she says, are treated equally, and some are not. Here she is acknowledging her social community influences, relating “us” to herself and her dual heritage family:

Ms. Robinson: It's better than it was?

Mia: Yes.

Ms. Robinson: Thank you so much for your share _____, it was some very mature insights. Thank you, Sweetie.

Mia’s responses in this interview, and the findings described in the monologues in Chapter 3 suggest the importance that critical multicultural engagement supports and affirms the intellectual, critical, and emotional transactions that occur between the reader

and the text and in many cases other readers. The understandings children produce are products of collective transactions.

Power Perspective and Positioning

Power exercised through discourse, (Foucault, 1980, pp. 93–119) has a polyvocal texture, and is influenced by the macro society, ideologies, multi-modal devices, and mass media (Agger, 2006, p. 63). In the pledge lesson (CME #2), this critical multicultural engagement event is based on the use of text that clearly supports and validates the ideologies of our hegemonic dominant culture, but the student participants are positioned as text analysts, they critique the hypocrisy in the Pledge of Allegiance by asking the questions that pinpoint the injustices: “I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?” The children agree that it is important to have a pledge, and a few of them would like to have it recited in the class. The transcript also shows the article in its simplicity as a factual account, that often the adult world make assumptions about what younger children can and cannot make sense of or have feelings about:

Ross: That’s what everyone’s talking about. That’s what they do at football games.

Eve: (interjecting, **her tone is sarcastic**) I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?

Freire (2000) argues “In problem -posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world” (p. 83). We see in Ross's statement and Eve's question that they are aware of what is going on in the media and macro society. The ensuing discussion also shows that children have a sense of what social

justice is, and what it is not. Sam interjects “Freedom”, and this is not addressed in the script but here it indicates his inferential understanding of how freedom and liberty are not given to everyone it is not a privilege for all.

The Power and Authoritative Influence of the Adult World

From a feminist poststructural perspective the pledge discussion illustrates how critical multicultural engagement invites students to explore how power relations are at work in their lives. In the transcript it appears that the child participants are aware of the hypocrisy and contradictions of the adults in their lives who exercise power over them. I asked the students to offer comparisons with other schools they knew about where the pledge was recited. During the recording of the lesson, I asked how many children would like to say the Pledge in this school, a show of hands indicated more than 50% of the students said they would like to say the Pledge in school:

Ms. Robinson: [Speaking with an excited tone signifying an interesting mystery to be discovered] Now, I have a question for you, I have a question for you. Who can give me an idea why do you think those schools have the children everyday say the Pledge of Allegiance?

Eve: To make them respect their country.

Eve's comment here suggests that children perceive teachers as authority figures who perpetuate sociopolitical ideology, teachers have power and dictate how children engage in the school context do what they want, and not necessarily what the children want. In their study Wies Long and Gove (2003) argue for teachers to be more discerning when approaching controversial topics with students “The goal was to distance them emotionally so that they could explore racism and injustices, but not feel inundated by the

topic.” (p. 357). In contrast the findings in the mini scripts illustrate that as teachers we cannot make assumptions about what the child participants can or cannot intellectualize or have feelings about. Critical multicultural engagement presents opportunities for students to appreciate inclusivity and diversity and these understandings are supported when student can express their emotions, but teachers must consider what the students want to know. Critical multicultural engagement supports a democratic classroom where students ask critical questions, and as Janks argues (2010), children are able to redesign what school should look like for them.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The significance of this dissertation is that it presented research that challenged how children engage with texts and how reading comprehension practices are currently conceptualized in elementary education and the possibilities afforded to them for responding critically and multiculturally to text. Additionally, this research identified the relationship of critical and multicultural engagement with children's texts, where reading multiculturally is supported by using critical processes (Ávila & Pandya, 2014; Shannon, 2011; Vasquez, 2017). The goals of this dissertation were to understand what happens when children engage with critical multicultural reading experiences and attend to how a teacher-researcher and her third-grade students use language, and the power relations that operate within the classroom as they are critically and multiculturally engaged with children's texts. The study shows as Paulo Freire (2000) argues “Reading is not exhausted merely by decoding the written word or written language, but rather anticipated by and extending into knowledge of the world” (p. 139). Additionally, students’ responses are influenced by texts as “books themselves exert a type of agency in creating conditions for meaning making or supporting critical orientations toward the world (Nichols & Campano, 2017, p. 248).

The goal here is that we want children to be not just thoughtfully literate, but to be critically and multiculturally literate. Critical multicultural engagement embodies literacy as social practice (Street, 1984, 1995), and critical engagement experiences offer children the possibility to expand their literacy and language use for understanding their cultural and social realities, and the cultural and social realities of others; children become

socially literate linking their ideas to an awareness of the classroom and social worlds. My arguments are supported by World (2019) where she suggests the need for teachers to provide more diverse books and to consider how they engage students "in meaningful reading opportunities...teachers have a responsibility to take the initiative to create atmospheres that are thick and rich with literature from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds" (p. 18). The research also demonstrates how critical and multicultural practices support multimodal ways (such as discursive practices, drama, graphics etc.) that offer students the possibility to make multiple meanings of our world and for representing their understandings. This dissertation draws on the constructed experiences of the research participants that offers a complex and collective perspective of reading engagement, that extends critical multicultural experiences with multicultural children's literature and other texts.

Additionally, I regard critical engagement with multicultural literature as a literary process that promotes children's understanding of social constructs such as racism and other power relations, and how children perceive themselves and others. From historical and traditional perspectives, literature and canonical texts have been used in education to convey hegemonic ideals of the dominant culture as argued by Luke, Iyer, and Doherty (2011), and pedagogical practices for engaging with these texts have insufficiently addressed and/or have underrepresented the critical issues of our increasingly diverse communities. Luke, Iyer and Doherty (2011) suggest that an awareness of literacy in global contexts supports "cogent analysis of the effects of the global on educational media, youth identities and cultures, and literate practices" (p. 104).

Accordingly, critical, and multicultural pedagogy validates diverse ethnic identities and acknowledges social issues in contemporary society.

Nichols and Campano (2017) remind us that today the educational arena is heavily impacted by assessments and data collection, "such accountability measures are not neutral indicators, but rather they reshape curricula and instruction in their image" (p. 245), impacting how children are assigned reading levels and the type of instruction children receive. Consequently, the study identified critical engagement that supports and promotes literacy, literary learning, and reading comprehension opportunities for all children and not exclusively just for the children who decode on or above grade level as determined from assessed reading evaluations. In addition, Luke and colleagues argue "the rapidity, volatility, and uncertainty of ...new worlds...will require nothing less than a critical literacy of the global" (2011, p. 109) for promoting critical multicultural literacies for all students.

The following sections will discuss ideas for promoting critically multiculturally literate children, and the challenges that may impact critical multicultural engagement in the elementary school contexts.

Implications

Promoting Critically Multiculturally Literate Students

Pluralistic Versus Homogeneous Contexts. Ideally, critical multicultural engagement is a process that is supported in a classroom where the ethnic composition of the students is representative of the plurality that exists in the United States regarding: socio-economic, ethnic, gender, and family diversity, and cultural plurality, but this dissertation supports the idea that critical processes are equally as important in

classrooms where the ethnic composition is primarily representative of white European American heritages and experiences.

Relevance to Educational Policy. Currently, students' knowledge and attainment are impacted and measured by quantifiable data collection and assessment measures. As Nichols and Campano (2017) argues assessments may impact how children are assigned book levels and the type of instruction young readers receive. This ethnographic study considers the personal experiences and responses as the participants (teacher-researcher and students) critically and multiculturally engage with children's texts, identifying critical engagement that supports and promotes literacy, literary learning, and reading comprehension opportunities for all children and not exclusively just for the children who decode on or above grade level as determined from assessed reading evaluations. Comprehending text should not only be accessible to experienced text decoders. This research will offer educators, administrators, policy makers, and curriculum designers more critical, multicultural, and democratic pedagogical approaches for considering the multiliterate and multimodal needs of our contemporary, culturally diverse, and dynamic classroom communities.

Close Reading and Common Core Requirements. The Common Core State Standards have perpetuated data-driven attainment objectives for influencing classroom instruction. To further this agenda close reading expectations are dominating reading pedagogy (Short et al., 2017). The Common Core's view of close reading involves a focus on careful text analysis and initial focus on literal comprehension, while disregarding the relevance personal responses to text which are viewed as hindering comprehension. Consistent with Beers and Probst (2013) this dissertation promotes the

idea that close reading comprehension strategies should not primarily be text dependent, but include the critical, emotional, intellectual, and experiential nuances and dis/connections that students bring to their engagement with the text, bringing the text and the reader close in favor of comprehension pedagogy that engages personal background knowledge vs. text-dependent knowledge.

Critical multicultural engagement with texts needs to be integrated throughout all areas of the school curriculum, and not a process reserved exclusively for reading and literature lessons. CME # 2 The Pledge lesson particularly illustrates the possibilities for integrated approaches to curriculum design. Critical multicultural engagement affords deeper understandings of social norms and traditions and how these implicate children's understanding of what is happening socially and politically. How they are positioned within the political and social discourse who sees themselves as privileged and who sees themselves as marginalized. An increase in books published that is representative of our nation's social diversity continues to be a necessity. The infographic below presents diversity in children's books in 2018 compiled by the Cooperative Children's Book Center, School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madisonⁱ. It is still alarming to note that there are more books printed featuring animals as the protagonist than books where the characters represent our diverse population combined. The infographic is significant and symbolic in that the characters depicted are holding mirrors, the dominant White 50% and the 27% animal groups see happy contented reflections, and the other groups have alarmed, dissatisfied reflections of themselves, suggesting that the lack of representation in children's texts of marginalized groups may impact their self-image.

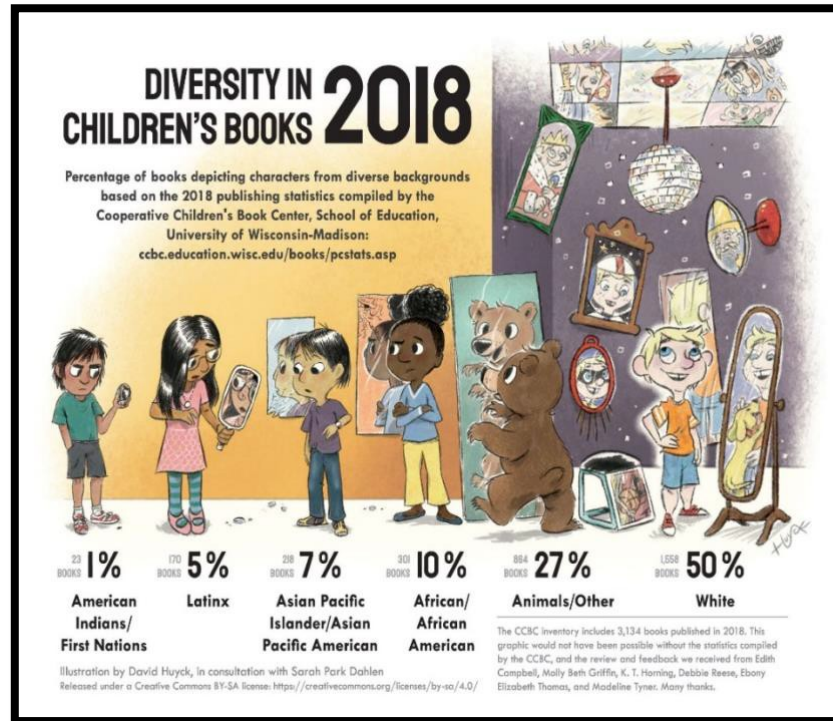


Figure 9: Infographic presenting diversity in children's books in 2018

Promoting critically and multiculturally literate students requires access to diverse reading resources that depict our pluralistic society, where ethnic groups can be represented in all genres of children's literature. The research for this dissertation was undertaken with eight-year-old child participants who through critical multicultural and dialogical transactions with published and child-generated texts, were afforded opportunities to engage critically, multiculturally, intellectually, and emotionally. They produced astute responses to multicultural issues and illustrated their understandings through redesigning or extending learning experiences. The moments of critical multicultural engagement (CME) illustrate that young people are not only capable of discussing and understanding the political, social, cultural, and historical influences in their lives, but their insights contribute to our adult understanding of what matters to

them, contributing to a more student informed pedagogy that nuances students' power, position, and perspectives.

Pedagogy: How to Read Critically and Multiculturally. Dudley-Marling (1997) reminds us of assimilation concerns. Some teachers have suggested to me that literature depicting African Americans or other marginalized groups would create a feeling of being “singled out” for some students especially for those children who number far less in the classroom. I would suggest that classroom teachers are obligated to diminish discomfort by discussing the hard and messy topics as illustrated in the CMEs. I would suggest that these issues can be addressed in sensitive ways that affirm the students' identities and cultures. Here, I am thinking about the importance of humanizing the classroom. One strategy involves families being invited into the classroom to participate in activities and talk about their family experiences and histories and herstories. The classroom curriculum should include opportunities where the children can talk about their personal interests and create friendships and trust amongst each other. Another practice involves teachers promoting books of Black people and other underrepresented communities, and making them more visible in the classroom, to be used in a variety of curriculum areas, not just restricted to reading classes. Books must depict the lives of marginalized groups in ways that people are not “Otherized” or polarized. We cannot have classrooms where the dominant hegemonic culture is depicted in many forms of texts (magazines, posters, non-fiction, fiction, text and reference, television, and media) and is the only social group represented. Moreover, by only including books that depict Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other people of color being treated in historically cruel and inferior situations will certainly make children from these

communities feel uncomfortable, especially if he, she, they, are the only children of color in the class. Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other people of color children should not have to feel that they are representative of their communities or ethnic groups or be placed in a position that makes them feel different than anyone else.

Books in the classroom library should depict positive and affirming images and contributions of Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other people of color. Comparative texts can be used that depict the variety of socio-economic status of a variety of diverse groups in our society. Included should be books that depict the immigrant experiences of Europeans and the challenges they faced in this country. A White child whose family may have different socio-economic situations than other members of the class may also experience a certain discomfort when these topics are discussed. Here, I am particularly thinking of two books *The Hundred Dresses*, by Eleanor Estes, and *Potato: A Tale from The Great Depression*, by Kate Lied. But teachers must first help students to cultivate a kind and caring classroom where children do not feel ashamed of their families, their histories, traditions, and their lives. Children need books that depict hope, positivity, contributions to society, and love in underrepresented communities.

Pedagogy: Contemporary Texts Portray Global Themes. Including more contemporary themes in a school's multicultural children's literature collection would provide a balance with more traditional issues. The previous argument discussed that the genre of books traditionally and currently being used in classrooms (to the point of almost becoming normalized) that speak to the lives of marginalized communities, would often follow the themes of either the orphaned Black child seeking to find long lost relatives such as in *Bud, not Buddy*, by Christopher Paul Curtis; life and hardships during

the struggle for civil rights as in, *Freedom Summer*, by Deborah Wiles; the enslaved person escaping or gaining freedom, *Henry's Freedom Box*, Ellen Levine; or the experiences of Black families returning to Southern states and the racism that they encounter, *The Gold Cadillac*, by Mildred D. Taylor. The literature used in my class in this ethnography included books that represented traditionally marginalized communities in situations of leadership and power within their own spheres of influence. We do not only see books that portray the lives of people of color in deprived, impoverished, and disadvantaged situations. The books also present contemporary situations where characters living in ethnically diverse communities having experiences that their peers may encounter across cultures and ethnic affiliations, such as *Drita, My Homegirl*, by Jenny Lombard, providing opportunities to make connections and disconnections to compare their own lives. Asking a child to compare his or her life to a character who is enslaved would be much harder, culturally anachronistic, and cruel, for the young student to comprehend, than to ask that same child to tell their experiences bullying or comparing their life to a character in a school where a bully is on the prowl.

Pedagogy: "Just Right" Texts. Books that correspond to a child's assessed reading level often referred to as 'Just Right' books. Some students may have attained their grade level requirement and others maybe above or below. My argument against 'Just Right' books being the only strategy used, is of course, students need to be able to decode the symbols on the page, but at what point do they acquire new vocabulary, and the conceptual understanding or nuances associated with more complex words and ideas. At what point do children begin to think and respond as members of a diverse community of learners engaged in validating other's perspectives, and affirming their identities

through extended reading opportunities? Classroom teachers must provide diverse reading opportunities in their daily reading programs. The students' book boxes should include not only the books according to their assessed reading level, but books that are of interest, that offer more challenging vocabulary. In the introduction to mini script CME # 3, I show how a student who was on a lower assessed reading level asked, "Can I read that too?" about the book *Alvin Ho*. My affirmative response indicates that the child's interests and sense of self needed to be validated. So, I encouraged him to pair with his pal and read the story together. Moreover, demonstrating the importance of collaborative reading opportunities (regardless of reading level) with students extending vocabulary and constructing meaning with each other without the teacher's involvement. Here, it is noted that the student was invited to make choices for himself, which supported his access to higher level reading opportunities, and demonstrates that given more autonomy and flexibility for adapting the curriculum, and not adhering to pedagogical norms, offers teachers the possibility to teach to the child's interests and not only to the child's "Just Right" reading Level.

Critical multicultural engagement in literacy activities such as interactive reading, dialogue, and drama extend the focus on 'Just Right' books, and allow teachers to offer more challenging vocabulary, therefore providing students with the linguistic and dialogical tools to express their ideas and feelings, and advances students' thinking and understanding of critical concepts. While simultaneously supporting multimodal ways for students to represent their ideas and acquire new ways of seeing and understanding from each other. Interactive and drama processes involve children in conversation as they explore new vocabulary, role play, talk with characters, try on characters, write, and

draw. These literacy practices and processes afford students opportunities to flourish and potentially extend being assessed more than ‘just right’. I would also include more opportunities for individual student debriefing moments with the teacher for helping those students who were reluctant to share collectively in whole group and build in more opportunities to observe students designing and finding out how and why they select particular modalities for representing or extending their comprehension of concepts in the literature.

Research and Policy. Close reading should not mean closed reading. A requirement of the Common Core State Standards is for educators to focus on close reading (Aukerman, & Shuldt, 2016) as part of their reading instruction. These strategies have become ubiquitous throughout not only in middle and high school reading lessons but has even filtered down to the elementary setting. As presented by Aukerman & Schuldt (p. 286), proponents of the Common Core suggest that there should be rigorous text-dependent questions. Catterson and Pearson (2017) also argue that the “Common Core close reading paradigm may be more text-centric...situates meaning entirely within the text, without acknowledging the role of the reader or sociocultural context in interpretation” (p. 460). Reading, rereading, and locating text-dependent information are practices aligned to close reading experiences as suggested by (Beers & Probst, 2013): “Close reading should suggest close attention to the text...relevant experience, thought, and memory of the reader...to the responses and interpretations of other readers...and to the interactions among these elements” (p. 37). Questions and investigations of the text should not solely be concerned with the information conveyed in the text and ignore the students' personal and emotional connections or understandings.

This dissertation presents counter arguments to reading practices that concentrate on the facilitation of standardized reading practices. The findings in this research show that reading comprehension questions should include the critical, personal, emotional, and intellectual questions derived from the students which in turn supports students' inferential and critical understanding of the literature through and connections, disconnections, and multimodal meaning making.

Future research could study the efficacy of how close reading strategies and critical multicultural concepts are implicated in the standardized core curriculum.

Teacher-Researcher Research - Inductive, Deductive, Abductive. Jerolmack (2017) argues that ethnographic research can be considered abductive as it nuances both inductive and deductive analytical lenses for describing observable phenomenon. This teacher research is inductive because it is situational and describes phenomenon over several instances from which I created assertions based on the data and observations. It is deductive in that I draw on existing theories to describe the macro influences in the data.

A significant challenge to my position as the classroom teacher-researcher, was in transcribing and analyzing the CME events. I found that I had to refer to myself as Ms. Robinson to present an objective commentary about the data, from having pedagogical stance to being an ethnographic researcher. In this teacher-researcher role, I think that one is supported by the other, the teacher me was creating the data alongside the students, and the researcher me was asking what and why. But this process involved considerable time writing and rewriting the narratives and then deciding on the mini scripts. The additional challenge here though is that it was not always easy to capture and record the

events while managing a classroom of children, a second pair of eyes and ears would have been beneficial.

Disruptions and Challenges to Critical Multicultural Engagement

- * Relying only on books provided by the school. I would provide additional resources to support the diverse books available.
- * Privileging only typical school literacies and practices (e.g., reading practices where only assigning literature and reading materials according to assessed reading levels). Not including multimodal ways of representing understandings for acknowledging diverse learning styles.
- * Not just about extending reading comprehension of canonical texts.
- * Following regular school schedule. The transcripts show that there were occasions where lessons needed to be extended.
- * Acquired understandings of other ethnic cultures may lead some students to question and possibly having conflicts with their own lives outside of school.
- * The teacher's limited experience with children's lives - biases/ prejudgments
- * Children's inhibitions about their own lives or sharing about their lives in the school context - cultural disconnections and children's willingness to participate in critical work.
- * The importance of making connections and disconnections relies on students having experience with dialogical experiences and transactions with multicultural texts.

In summary, I restate that this dissertation is intended to support the critical teaching philosophy that classroom literacy and literary practices need to include critical

multicultural engagement with children's texts. Through critical multicultural engagement with texts students can explore and understand the effect sociocultural constructs such as racism and other power relations have on their perceptions of themselves and others, and how these constructs also shape their overall comprehension of text. This research investigated practices for critically engaging children with literature that speaks to their experiences and reflects their lives. As a teacher-researcher, I am in the unique emic position to both construct the conditions for the complex micro interactions that occur in classroom literacy, as well as observe and study learning and teaching in context. This research offers perspectives for considering the multiliterate and multimodal possibilities and challenges of our contemporary, culturally diverse classroom communities, and contributes to the scholarly dialogue on critical multicultural literacy pedagogy that supports all children.

It is hoped that critical multicultural engagement with children's literature and other texts in the classroom is understood to be not a structure or prescription of pedagogical practices. What has been identified in this dissertation is that critical multicultural engagement processes are situated in a particular time and place. This process is constructed, designed, and redesigned by:

1. The literacy events.
2. The participants (students and teacher), their cultural capital and cultural linguistic knowledge that supports and shapes their responses.
3. The participants intellectual, emotional, and critical responses to the literature.

4. The individual's freedom of choice to explore and represent understandings in multimodal ways, (listening, speaking, reading, writing, drawing, drama, and viewing).

The foundation for all this work is based on building nurturing, and bonding relationships with the students, where the students are democratically positioned as co-designers and facilitators of the learning experiences. The class developed a group identity, a community focused on reading, learning, and enjoying literature in new ways, and these experiences gave the students the opportunity to reflect upon their own lives.

Next Steps - Where Do We Go From Here?

Make the Common Core Relevant. In November of 2018 I facilitated workshops to pre-kindergarten through high school educators where I presented my research of critical multicultural engagement with multicultural children's literature and other texts. The focus was on how to read multicultural children's literature, and not only what to read. I commenced the discussion by emphasizing the importance of creating a classroom setting (as described in the Chapter 4) where all the children can be validated regarding their ethnic, cultural, gender, and social identities. I also stressed the understanding that cultural and social identities can be dynamic and fluid, that young people may have multiple associations that intersect their intrapersonal understanding. I received considerable resistance towards some of my research ideas. I found that some teachers' arguments were not focused on the scholarship and theoretical basis for critical work, but on traditional pedagogical practices, and their need to adhere to the requirements of the Common Core standards and their assessments. How does the Common Core acknowledge and appreciate diversifying texts and diversifying reading?

How is critical multicultural engagement with children's texts understood within the frameworks of the Common Core State Standards? The answers to these questions have been addressed by (Lewison et al., 2015) where they support my ideas that some teachers who rely on standardized practices and ignore critical experiences with texts position students in deficit ways "personal response to text is not emphasized in the standards..." (p. 176) and they argue that addressing the standards would be better served by including the critical, emotional, and intellectual responses of students.

"We Need More Diverse Books". Some teachers requested more explanations of the children's textual resources, the themes associated with each book mentioned in this research, the objectives for selecting these books, and concrete descriptions of how to engage students with these books. Agreeably, the request for more diverse books addresses the current initiative "We Need More Diverse Books", that started in 2014 also speaks to this need, the organization has partnered with the Scholastic Books to provide diverse literature. We need more educators sharing their critical multicultural experiences and the multimodal ways they use multicultural literature across the curriculum.

Further Research

The data for this research was collected during one semester of the school year, it would have been pertinent to conduct the research during the whole school year to observe how the students continued growing their understanding and use of critical multicultural processes as they engaged in their discourses, personal relationships, daily lives in school and at home. For further research It would be helpful to do a comparative study where the students are directly introduced to the ideational themes for engaging with texts - Four Resource Model (Luke & Freebody, 1997), the Four Dimensions

(Lewison et al., 2002), or Behrman's (2006) synthesis of Six Practices to see how this extends the students critical constructions and engagement. This was not a deductive research process and direct instruction would have influenced the students' responses and steer the research into researching the efficacy and pedagogical strategies for implementing these models. Although these models are used to name the students' thinking tools.

Reflect the Interests of the Students. Text selection for classroom use should reflect the interests of the students, facilitated by inviting collective discourse experiences. The findings indicate that when students are collectively engaged in critical creativity for representing their understandings of issues and social phenomena, they are more reflexive, and this contributes to them designing and redesign what learning should be for them. Regarding the teachers' role the findings indicate that there is required a flexibility and democratic understanding on the part of the teacher that students are active participants constructing knowledge together with the teacher.

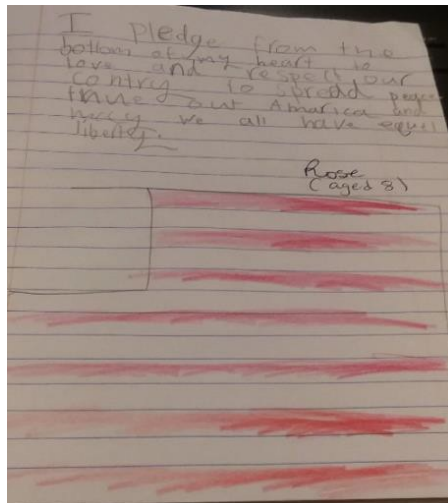
Cultivate a Critical Multicultural Context. My role as a teacher-ethnographer impacted this research in that I was acquainted with the students, living in their community provided for me an emic understanding, and contributed to diminishing inhibitions and establishing a trusting warm relationship for students to share their life experiences in their discourses. Standardized practices insufficiently prepare our children to make meaning of their world and for engaging in the world. Cultivating a critically and multiculturally informed school curriculum invites culturally sensitive and problem-posing informed lessons where students can question issues, acquire, and contribute more empathetic and culturally sensitive awareness for living in a pluralistic world.

One last thought to return to Behrman (2006) who presented the argument that there were not any theorized methods for implementing critical practices in the classroom contexts that "would mark it as a coherent curricular approach"(p. 490). This dissertation has presented research that argues in support of critical multicultural process that offers the classroom curriculum cultural and critical approaches, particularly regarding integrated and multimodal literacy activities. This dissertation identified how the promotion of critical multicultural engagement with children's texts inspires young people to be critically conscious and critically creative while responding emotionally, intellectually, and critically. The pledge lessons CME 2 and the play CME 5 illustrate students critiquing socio-political issues in their own lives and the lives of other people.

The research presented in this dissertation extends and redefines reading comprehension. As traditionally practiced in contemporary elementary classroom settings, the focus is on teaching the texts, especially in relation to preparing students to respond to formalized assessment type questions in ways such as "close reading" strategies and often negates the personal and emotional and intellectual transactions that occurs between the reader and the texts. This study identifies moments where critical multicultural engagement invites young readers to engage and respond to multicultural literature and other texts dialogically, critically, emotionally, and intellectually; where the child's personal experiences with the literature is appreciated and these engagement opportunities transform the learning experiences of all children. Ubiquitous throughout the study the child participants engage in ways that illustrate how critical multicultural engagement provides the possibility for power to be transferred from the teacher (being in a position of designing and facilitating learning experiences) to the child participants,

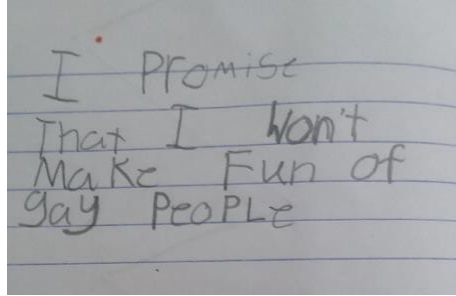
which in turn affords the possibility for deeper comprehension of the ideas, concepts and messages conveyed in texts. We see the students engaging in a variety literacy activities and events that acknowledge that children can have a democratic position in the classroom and that the teacher is not an authority on the knowledge production, or on how to respond to texts.

As students acquire the language of critical text analysts who use their critical multicultural consciousness to address socio-political issues, they take note of power relations, and then apply their learning to share or represent their understandings in critically creative ways. Through my research with critical multicultural engagement with children's text I see children growing in empathy, compassion, and understanding, regarding each other with respect and acceptance as depicted in their desire to make the Pledge of Allegiance true:



I Pledge from the bottom of my heart to love and respect our country to spread peace throughout America and may we all have equal rights.

Rose (Aged 8)



I promise that I won't
make fun of gay
people
Student, Age 8

Figure 10: Examples of student pledges

These ideas are also substantiated in these final quotes one from Eve where she questions the disparity and discrimination in the United States, from Tom's reading response journal about *Alvin Ho*, and the final quote from Joan in her critique of Jenny Lombard, the author of *Drita, My homegirl...*

Eve: (interjecting, her tone is sarcastic) I mean, is it really true that everyone really gets liberty in this country?

Eve, Age 8

Tom: Some humans live lives with problems you will never have.

Tom, Age 8

Joan: I think the author was doing a great job on how she... the author was describing Drita and Maxie, in helping them live in the world in two different ways.

Joan, Age 8

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT AND ASSENT FORMS

Third Grade Student Assent Form

Dear Third Grade Students,

I am asking you to be a part of a research project I am doing in our classroom. A research project is a way to learn more about a topic. My topic is about finding ways to help children learn using multicultural stories. I am asking you to join the study because you spend a lot of time reading and writing stories, and you could give me some good ideas about multicultural books.

If you agree to join this study, you will be doing usual school things: listening to stories, reading, writing, drawing, and talking about the stories during our regular daily reading and writing lessons. For the research, if you agree to be a part of the study, you will complete a questionnaire to tell me about your favorite books, and how you choose books, I will make copies of your writing and drawing, but your name will not be written on any samples of your work. No one will know this is your work.

This study has nothing to do with your grades or your report card, or if you choose not be in the study, and there are no advantages or risks for you being a part of this study either.

This study will help me, and other teachers learn about the best ways for using multicultural children's literature with our students.

Your parent or guardian knows about this study, and that I am asking if you would like to be part of it. You do not have to join this study. It is up to you. You can say

okay now and change your mind later. All you have to do is tell us you want to stop. No one will be mad at you if you don't want to be in the study or if you join the study and change your mind later and ask to stop.

Before you say **yes or no** to being in this study, I will answer any questions you have. If you join the study, you can ask questions at any time. Just tell your parent or me that you have a question.

If you want to be in this study, please write your name on the line below that says child participant.

Child Participant's Name _____ Date _____

Name of teacher-researcher _____ Date _____

Parent Consent Form

Dear Parents:

This consent form is to request your permission for your child to participate in a research study. It will give you information about the study so you can make an informed decision about your child's participation.

I am not only your child's classroom teacher, but I am also a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, in the Language, Literacy, and Culture Concentration at the College of Education. I am currently at the research stage of the doctoral process. My proposed project will examine how multicultural children's literature can be used in critical ways for analyzing texts, promoting comprehension, and helping children learn about themselves and others. All the students will engage in their

regular classroom lessons and activities, and I will include multicultural literature to facilitate the learning especially during our regular reading and writing activities, therefore all the children in the class will be invited to participate. However, your child's participation in this research is voluntary, and if you choose not to have your child participate, he or she will have time to do independent work.

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, during our regular weekly scheduled lessons the parts that are specific to the study include:

1. Children will be invited to respond to literature they have listened to or read by participating in small or whole group conversations (often referred to as literacy circles), writing, drawing, and role-plays.
2. At the start of the school year the children will be asked to answer questions on a questionnaire about favorite genre of books he/she likes to read, favorite themes (love, friendship, heroes. etc.) any multicultural books he /she has read. This questionnaire will be sent home for you to see. Children not in the study will have time for independent work.
3. Participating in group discussions on a weekly basis that will be audio-recorded. Children who are not participating in the study will have opportunities to discuss literature, but only for regular classroom learning and teaching needs. Children who are not participating in the study will not have their responses (writing, drawing and verbal responses) included in my data. Discussion groups for the study will be audio-recorded separately. Children not in the study may participate in independent discussion groups or activities.

Participation in lesson activities will take place daily for a total period of 16 weeks beginning in late August until December 2017.

With your permission, I may select your child's schoolwork as representative of the diversity of the learning experiences in the class. I also seek your permission to photocopy your child's work, and audio-record your child's oral responses. There will be no direct benefits to your child, but the samples of student work and transcripts of dialogue will help me to better understand how students experience multicultural concepts such as diversity, an understanding of global issues, and empathy. This research is important because it will offer educators, administrators, policy makers, and curriculum designers more inclusive and multicultural ways for considering the diverse needs of student populations.

There is minimum risk to breach of confidentiality because my research will only be shared with my professor Dr. Maria José Botelho. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can identify your child will remain confidential, and will be maintained by means of using pseudonyms to identify each child participant, list of their corresponding real names will be kept locked away in my filing cabinet as will any samples of student writing or drawings, any data in regards to audio recording and transcriptions of your student's responses will be kept on my computer which is password protected and only accessible by me.

I might use your child's work to illustrate and support my presentation of data. I will not use his/her name or anything else that might identify your child in my written work, oral presentations, or documents. This information remains confidential. I will be the only person with access to the research data. It will be disclosed only with your

permission or as required by law. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw your permission even after you have consented to allow me to copy your child's work and classroom participation. There are no known risks or benefits to your child for participating in this project. This study has nothing to do with your child's grades or report card, or if you choose not to have your child participate in the study, and there are no advantages or risks for your child being a part of this study either.

If you continue to have any questions about this research project, please contact me at 413-256-6646, or my advisor at the university,

Dr. Maria José Botelho, Associate Professor
Language, Literacy, and Culture Concentration
Dept. of Teacher Education & Curriculum Studies
College of Education
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003
413-545-1110
mbotelho@educ.umass.edu

If you have questions about your child's rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researcher about the study, please call the Human Research Protection Office at (413) 545-3428 or email humansubjects@ora.umass.edu

Please sign the attached form, if you permit me to use and review your child's schoolwork and contribution to group dialogue about multicultural children's literature,

and if you consent for your child to participate in study. The second copy of this consent form is for your records. If you wish to receive a summary report of the research findings, I would be happy to do so. Feel free to contact me if you should have any questions.

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Robinson

E-mail: robinsj1@arps.org

PARTICIPATION in the STUDY (Please write a check next to your preference)

I agree for my child's classroom work, specifically their writing and drawing, to be used for research purposes.

I do not agree for my child's classroom work, specifically their writing and drawing, to be used for research purposes.

I agree for my child to be audio recorded.

I do not agree for my child to be audio recorded.

I agree that segments of the audio recordings made of my child in this research may be used for conference presentations, as well as education and training of future researchers/practitioners.

I do not agree to allow segments of recordings of my child's participation in this research to be used for conference presentations or education and training purposes.

Participant Signature:

Print Name:

Date:

Your child does not have to be in this study if you do not want him or her to participate. If you agree for your child's participation in the study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to my child participating in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____	_____
Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant
_____	_____
Signature of Participant's Parent/Guardian	Date

By signing below, I indicate that the participant's parent has read and, to the best of my knowledge, understands the details contained in this document and has been given a copy.

_____	_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Print Name:	Date:

*WITHDRAWAL FROM STUDY

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I do not agree for my child to participate in this study, or any samples of my child's work to be used. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____	_____
Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant
_____	_____
Signature of Participant's Parent/Guardian	Date

Colleague and Support Staff Consent Form

Dear Colleague:

I am not only the classroom teacher, but I am also a doctoral candidate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, in the Language, Literacy, and Culture Concentration at the College of Education. I am currently at the research stage of the doctoral process. My proposed project will examine how multicultural children's literature can be used in critical ways for analyzing texts, promoting comprehension, and helping children learn about themselves and others.

I will be conducting my inquiry over a period of 16 weeks beginning in late August until December 2017. My third-grade students will engage in their regular classroom lessons and activities, and I will include multicultural literature and concepts to facilitate the learning.

Your role, having been assigned to my classroom, is primarily to support your assigned students, (e.g. those who are on individual education plans) in their classroom work, and

you will not be included as a subject in my research. This document is for your information, and in signing you are acknowledging that you are aware of this project and your role in the classroom for supporting children in reading, writing, drawing, listening, and speaking.

I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or documents. This information remains confidential. I will be the only person with access to the research data. There are no known risks or benefits to you for being present during the research period.

If you continue to have any questions about this research project, please contact me at 413-256-6646, or my advisor at the university,

Dr. Maria José Botelho, Associate Professor
Language, Literacy, and Culture Concentration
Dept. of Teacher Education & Curriculum Studies
College of Education
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003
413-545-1110
mbotelho@educ.umass.edu

Please sign the attached form. The second copy of this consent form is for your records.

Thank you for considering this collaboration. Feel free to contact me if you should have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Robinson

E-mail: robinsj1@arps.org

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Colleague

Signature of Colleague

APPENDIX B
STUDENT SURVEY

This student survey will be introduced to the children at the start of the school year because the students' responses will provide information: for familiarizing the teacher-researcher with each student's reading interests and experiences and will inform my lesson planning. The children will be given the survey as a whole group during a morning when they are most alert. I will read aloud each question and give assistance as needed. I will read aloud the words written at the head of the survey. Student will be identified using a numerical system and kept separate from the list of actual names.

This is Your Reading Life



"Boys and girls, by completing this questionnaire you will be helping me to improve my teaching of multicultural children's literature. The following questions below are optional so you may skip the ones you don't feel like answering, and you may ask for help."

"Please do not write your name on the paper. "

1. How old are you? Age: _____
2. Circle your gender: Female Male
3. At what age did you start to choose your own books? _____
4. Tell me about the best book you have ever read or had read to you? What did you like about the book and /or reading experience?

5. What genre (s) /type(s) of book do you like to read? You may check (+) more than one.

Science Fiction Adventure Mystery Realistic Fiction

Facts/Non-Fiction Other (describe) _____

6. What themes do you like to read about? You may check (+) more than one.

Friendship Good overcoming Evil kindness

Problems at home Problems at school Problems in the world

Success Life in other countries kids Teenagers Heroes

Other (describe) _____

7. What does multicultural books mean to you?

8. Which books have you read where the character's (s') life (lives)

were very different from your

own? _____

9. How do you like to share with others about a book you have read?

In the space below draw a picture of a scene from a favorite book you have read or a story you have had read to you. Use lots of color.

The Title:

APPENDIX C

TABLE OF RESOURCES FOR THE RESEARCH

Key to Matrix of Resources for critical approaches with literature:

- chronological order in terms of publication date
- the country of origin of the work (*provenance*)
- the conceptual focus the writer represented, (*field*):
 - elementary pedagogy (EP); multicultural education (ME); reading education (RE); urban education (UE); critical literacy (CRL); children’s literature (CL); literacy (L); education reform and policy (ERP); education theory (ET); qualitative research (QR).

Table 2: Table of resources for the research

Author	Date	Provenance	Field
Nieto	1992	U.S.	ME, ET
Commeyras	1994	U.S.	EP, UE, CL, ME, CRL, QR
Enciso	1994	U.S.	EP, UE, CL, ME, CRL, QR
Probst	1994	U.S.	ET
Banks	1996	U.S.	ME, ET
Connell	1996	U.S.	ERP, ET
Dudley –Marling	1997	Canada	ME

Allen	1999	U. S	EP, ET, QR
Hammond and Raphael	1999	U.S.	RE, QR
Gallego and Hollingsworth	2000	U.S.	ERP
Carlisle	2000	U.S.	RE
Comber and Simpson	2001	Australia	L, QR
Powell, Chambers-Cantrell, Adams	2001	U.S.	EP, CL, ME, CRL, QR
Ramirez and Gallardo	2001	U.S.	UE
Lewison, Flint, Van Sluys	2002	U.S.	EP, CL, ME, CRL QR
Long and Gove	2003	U.S.	EP, UE, CL, ME, CRL,QR
Willis, Garcia, Barrera, and Harris	2003	U.S.	ME, QR
Boyd, Brock, and Rozendal	2004	U.S.	L
McLaren	2004	U.S.	UE, QR
Barnes	2006	U.S.	ME, UE, QR
Louie	2006	U.S.	ME, CL, RE

Pyterek	2006	U.S.	CRL, EP, QR
Botelho, Rudman	2009	U. S	CRL, ME, CL, ET,
Wooten, Cullinan	2009	U.S.	CL, RE
Souto-Manning	2009	U.S.	EP, CL, ME, CRL, QR
Nieto	2010	U.S.	ET, ME, ET
Yoon, Simpson, Haag	2010	U.S.	ME, QR
Craft Al – Haaza	2010	U.S.	ME, CL
Luke, Dooley, Woods	2011	Australia	RE, L, QR
Stricklin	2011	U.S.	RE
Jones	2012	U.S.	EP, UE, CL, ME, CR, QR
Labadie, Mosley - Wetzel, Rogers	2012	U.S.	CRL, QR
Morrell & Morrell	2012	U.S.	ME, CL
Allen, Alexander	2013	U.S.	EP, CRL
Bloome, Willis	2013	U.S.	L.ET
Nash, Morton- Rose, Reid, Miller,	2013	U.S.	L, ME, ET

Mosso-Taylor			
Nieto	2013	U.S.	ME, QR
Robinson	2013	U.S.	ME, CL, CRL, EP, QR
Souto-Manning	2013	U.S.	ME, CRL, EP, CL, QR
Varga-Dobai	2013	U.S.	ME, CL, ET, PR
Allyn	2014	U.S.	L.RE, ET
Gichiru	2014	U.S.	L, ME
Glenn	2014	U.S.	ME, QR
Janks	2014	South Africa	CRL, L, QR
Leland & Bruzas	2014	U.S.	EP, CL, ME, CRL, QR
Myers & Myers	2014	U.S.	ME, CL.ERP
Nishida	2014	U.S.	ME, CRL
Stillman, Anderson, Struthers	2014	U.S.	RE, L
de Bruijn	2017	Holland	EP, UE, CL, ME, CRL, QR

Osorio	2018	U.S.	EP, UE, CL, ME, CRL, QR
Fontanella-Nothom	2019	U.S.	EP, CL, ME, CRL, QR
World	2019	U.S.	ME, CL,ERP

APPENDIX D

EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF CRITICAL PRACTICES

Table 3: Shows a condensed view of the empirical studies selected
for the literature review.

Source & Title	Date	Purpose	Setting	Research Design	Findings
Enciso - Cultural identity and response to literature: Running lessons from "Maniac Magee".	1994	Examining how participants drew on their cultural experiences for defining identities.	Fourth and Fifth grade, arts- based, diverse urban, low - income.	Four weeks, teacher/research ethnography. Analytic tool based on transactional theory.	Students' ideas about identity are influenced by the teacher's strategies for discussing and responding to literature.
Jones - Critical literacies in the making: Social class and identities in the early reading classroom.	2012	Evaluating the efficacy of using the Four Resources model when working with children from marginalized	Urban, high poverty, second grade; students are mainly White, Mexican, and Guatemalan.	Eleven weeks, teacher/research ethnography. Feminist lens for analyzing agency, identity, and power	Children from marginalized communities align their identities with those portrayed in the class privileged texts

		communities, particularly when children are positioned as text analysts.			that are frequently used.
Commeyras- Were Janell and Nessie in the same classroom? Children's questions as the first order of reality in story- book discussions.	1994	Promoting critical thinking while engaging in literature discussions. Identifying the critical implications involved in student led discussions	Twenty second grade students, European and African American ethnicities.	Seventeen weeks, a teacher and researcher collaborative study. Informed by reciprocal teaching theories.	Student developed questions support responses that reveal students' concerns.
Souto - Manning Negotiating culturally responsive pedagogy through	2009	Exploring culturally responsive pedagogy with multicultural	First grade, nineteen students from diverse: socio-economic, ethnic, and	Eight-week teacher/research action research study. Analysis adopted critical theoretical lens was	Critical engagement promotes opportunities for students to construct their own questions.

<p>multicultural children's literature: Towards critical democratic literacy practices in a first-grade classroom</p>		<p>children's literature. Affordances of children's literature benefiting the educational needs of all children.</p>	<p>family compositions.</p>	<p>to identify uneven power relationships.</p>	<p>Teacher facilitated critical discussions promote problem solving and action with young students.</p>
<p>Souto - Manning - Multicultural Teaching in the Early Childhood Classroom: Approaches, Strategies, and Tools Preschool-2nd Grade</p>	<p>2013</p>	<p>To extend students' critical questioning practices through the use of interviewing. To use community members as primary sources for promoting active learning.</p>	<p>Second grade. semi -rural college town, twenty students from diverse: socio-economic, ethnic, and generational family members.</p>	<p>A teacher and researcher collaborative study. Includes home visits to forge relationships with families.</p>	<p>Critical literacy is promoted when students develop questions for interviewing community members; interviewing fosters children's understanding of society.</p>

<p>Labadie, Wetzel, & Rogers - Opening spaces for critical literacy: Introducing books to young readers.</p>	<p>2012</p>	<p>Exploring ways for critical engagement while introducing new literature, and to expand mandated reading instruction methods for introducing texts.</p>	<p>Second grade, ethnically diverse, urban</p>	<p>Yearlong teacher/researcher study. Informed by transactional theory, feminist post-structural ideas. CDA used for data analysis</p>	<p>Promoting understandings for White teachers and students about African American experiences could be supported by including people from the community. Teachers should be aware of how critical literacy is being used for opening spaces for conversation, interrogating viewpoints.</p>
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<p>Lewison, Seely Flint, & Van Sluys</p> <p>Taking on Critical Literacy: The Journey of Newcomers and Novices</p>	<p>2002</p>	<p>Study how teachers use critical literacy practices and the Four Dimensions.</p>	<p>A fifth-grade class where the teacher had little experience with critical practices, and a K- 2 multiage class where the teacher had a broader understanding.</p>	<p>Eight-month Teacher and researcher collaborative studies with two teachers in grades five, and a K-2 multiage classroom. A Framework of the Four Dimensions.</p>	<p>Effective use of critical practices and the Four Dimensions requires teachers to be confident and experienced. Dramatization promotes critical exploration of literature.</p>
<p>Long &Gove</p> <p>How engagement strategies and literature circles promote critical response in a fourth -grade, urban classroom.</p>	<p>2003</p>	<p>Investigating practices that prevent children from independently engaging in reading and writing. Investigating ways to capture children's imagination, encourage</p>	<p>Fourth-grade, poor urban area African American students and teacher, study included sixteen of twenty-seven students at various levels of assessed literacy</p>	<p>Twelve sessions in four weeks. Critical, Transactional, & drama process theories. Three engagement strategies and literature circles were implemented.</p>	<p>Teachers' familiarity with students enables facilitation of discussions. The drama process promotes critical responses and in- depth discussions of social issues.</p>

		reflection, and take action.			
Leland & Bruzas- Becoming text analysts: Unpacking purpose and perspective	2014	Identifying multiple perspectives, comparing the discrepancies in information and representations of historical events between non-fiction books and realistic fiction books.	Fourth grade, affluent suburban families of European ancestry, some Mexican families.	Three weeks. Critical theories. Four Resources, and Four Dimensions models.	Critical analysis of historical events is supported when nonfiction texts are used in conjunction with fiction.
Pyterek- Gaining "authentic" cultural understandings through children's literature	2008	Identifying stereotypes through discussions of representation and inaccurate depictions of Native American people in	Kindergarten, twenty-seven students, two classes, ELL and special needs, diverse cultural and ethnic heritages.	Teacher research. Critical literacy, & critical race theories. Data included interviews; children's drawings collected five times during the study period, and transcripts of	Engaging in critical literacy practices helps children learn how to learn. Discourse strategies provided analytical opportunities of

		books. To promote empathy		discussions.	her students' understanding, which informed her planning.
Powell, Chambers-Cantrell, Adams - Saving black mountain: The promise of critical literacy in a multicultural democracy	2001	Discovering the connection between democracy, literacy and power; identifying ways for teachers to challenge social constructs such as the inequities that exist between rich and poor. To demonstrate how critical engagement is enacted and complete when	Fourth grade, small mining community in Kentucky experiencing hardship and high unemployment.	Collaborative teacher & researcher study. Project based inquiry. Critical literacy, Dewey's ideas on Democracy.	Through their writing and speeches students have the power to influence others. Special needs students gained confidence in literacy skills. Important to use critical literacy practices for promoting democracy in multicultural societies.

		children take action.			
de Bruijn - From representation to participation: Rethinking the intercultural educational approach to folktales.	2017	To illustrate how children from diverse ethnic backgrounds draw on their cultural capital to explore folktales from various multicultural traditions.	A yearlong study in reading intervention programs in Holland. In ten schools of kindergarten and second - grade students ages 5 – 8 whose heritages include Turkey, Morocco, and Surinam	Ethnography, childhood studies, literary research, and education research.	The importance of children’s active role in the reading process. Using folktales from diverse ethnic communities enables children to build experience in active intercultural participation and validates children’s diverse experiences.
Osorio - Multicultural literature as a classroom tool	2018	How multicultural literature is used to promote appreciation for	Researcher’s own second-grade bilingual (Spanish English) class	A 2-year qualitative study	Using multicultural literature as a tool enhanced the learning

		diversity, honor students' voices, make connections to students' linguistic and cultural heritages, and foster critical consciousness	80% of her students were of Mexican heritage and some from Guatemala.		experience for the teacher and the students. Importance of teachers relinquishing their power. for student lead discussions.
Fontanella- Nothom – Why do we have different skins anyway?": Exploring race in literature with preschool children	2019	To illustrate how children's literature can open conversations about race	15 pre-school students ages three -five of diverse ethnicities in the mid-west,	A six-month practitioner action research	Young children can discuss themes centered on race, racism, and discrimination. Engaging with critical dialog promotes making connections, developing understandings affirming identities about

					skin tones, color, and race
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				exercised in text and images.	
3. In what ways do critical multicultural engagement with children's texts offer elementary students the possibility for making meaning of power relations?	Interactive engagement- teacher reads aloud selected texts and invites students to respond in multimodal ways (drawing, reading, writing, drama, role-playing, listening, & speaking. Use of the Four Dimensions and critical questions for inviting student responses.	Teacher-researcher Students	Journaling (<i>daily</i>) Transcripts of discussions & field notes (<i>daily</i>) Artifacts of student responses (writing, drawing) (<i>daily</i>)	<u>Freire</u> : Critical constructivist. <u>Bakhtin's</u> : socially constructed intertextual contexts of language. Feminist poststructuralist: perspective of power relations "within and through language" Power, Positioning, & Perspective. Botelho and Rudman - CMA: language in books position readers, dominant messages in children's books are	Reflexive Process, CDA, CMA, & Written Narratives

				exercised in text and images.	
4. In what ways do critical multicultural engagement with children's texts support students' negotiation and affirmation of their own identities in relation to people of diverse ethnic and social communities.	Interactive engagement- teacher reads aloud selected texts and invites students to respond in multimodal ways (drawing, reading writing drama, role-playing, listening, & speaking. Use of the Four Dimensions and critical questions for inviting student responses.	Teacher-researcher Students	Journaling (<i>daily</i>) Transcripts of discussions & field notes (<i>daily</i>) Artifacts of student responses (writing, drawing) (<i>daily</i>)	<u>Freire</u> : Critical constructivist. <u>Bakhtin's</u> : socially constructed intertextual contexts of language. Feminist poststructuralist: perspective of power relations "within and through language" Power, Positioning, & Perspective. Botelho and Rudman - CMA: language in books position readers, dominant messages in children's books are exercised in text and images.	Reflexive Process, CDA, CMA, & Written Narratives

The matrix illustrates my research design in relation to the research questions that support the study of critical multicultural engagement with children's literature in the elementary classroom. The data collection process will begin from the first day of the school year, and the methods column presents the multiliteracies and multimodal activities for engaging the students. The matrix also illustrates the connection of the theories to the methods and practices for engaging the participants, and the data collection processes. My research process includes participant observation, both open-ended interviewing, and semi-structured interviewing, selective investigation of targeted practices and responses, such as children's critical responses to specific texts, the collection of artifacts and data are described in the steps and procedures.

APPENDIX F

A DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Data Collection Tool I devised for describing data in relation to the research questions.

Lesson Cultivating an Affirming classroom for critical discourse - (moment of CME)

POSITION, POWER, & PERSPECTIVE

Context: I observed some of the students being unkind to each other that I felt were interrupting the learning and time together (constantly emphasizing group cohesiveness)

I began this discussion by having the students share their understandings of what kindness is and what it looks like in action. Then I directed the focus of the lesson on the students' themselves and their relationship with each other. This is the second lesson on this topic because some of the students were absent the first time.

Ms. Robinson: There's a reason why I'm having this discussion with you, because since we've been together since September until now and every time, I go outside at recess there's always someone not being kind to somebody else, by not sharing the swings, by throwing balls and hitting people, playing too rough, pushing people off the slide and not sharing the toys and the equipment outside. Is that being kind?

Critical practice the children are being asked to take action, to make connections, to focus on the social dynamics of the classroom.

I ask the children: I would like you to draw a picture to show people acting in kind ways. People acting in kind ways, or in any way showing kindness. I'm going to write it right here. Draw a picture to show kindness or people being kind.

Whole class discussion

Research Questions

1. What happens when students critically engage with multicultural children's literature and other texts?

2. What are the possibilities for understanding power relations?

3. How are students' negotiations and affirmation of identity supported in the literature being used? Ideas of text selection are nuanced in these moments of critical multicultural engagement (CME)

Here I had an idea to extend the children's understanding of exclusion by selecting to use *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes.

Students are selected for response I call on students with hands up first.

Critically the discussion also points out that the children are very much aware of social, and cultural, and ethnic differences amongst each other. but as Joan (pseudonym) suggests differences should not cause create divisiveness.

R: Alright. Now when we speak about kindness what do we think of? Joan?

Joan: No matter what, even if you are different, you can still be friends.

Ms. Robinson: No matter what, even if you are different, you can still be friends.

Now when you say different, in what way are people different? What does different mean? Different in what way?

Joan: Different skin color.

Ms. Robinson: Ok! Different skin color. So, we're talking about skin colors.

Student: Different accents.

Ms. Robinson: If you have different colored skin you can still be friends. What other ways are we different? In what other ways can we be different?

Student 1: Accent?

Student 2: Language.

Student 3: Different personalities.

Ms. Robinson: Personalities.

Student 3: Different Ideas.

R: Oh, ideas! Now let's talk about this word "ideas". People have different ideas.

What do they have different ideas about? Rose?

Rose: Presidents

Findings

Kindness- Before any activities for critical work with multicultural texts can happen there needs to be a climate of trust, caring, and empathy. Children need to feel comfortable expressing their views, especially for discussing issues in multicultural literature.

Reflection. - how do I bring other students into the conversation?

The transcript identifies that consistently the same vocal students in the class respond to the questions. The students bring up the idea of differences of accents and I this makes me think of the book *The Hundred Dresses* by Eleanor Estes, where the protagonist, Wanda Petronski, is bullied and ridiculed by the children in her school for having a Polish accent. I will use this book as a read aloud with the class.

The children presented two types of written responses to this discussion, one was a drawing showing scenes of kindness the second was a combination of writing and drawing. The heading on the second assignment asked the students to think about having a class where everyone can feel safe and comfortable, where people are kind and care for others. Who Do You Want to Be?

The students' responses all stated that they wanted to be helpful and kind to others, one student said that she wanted to follow her dreams and not let anyone shut her down. She interpreted the question as it relates to her individual ambitions and not in relation to how she treats others.

APPENDIX G

NEWS STORY TEMPLATE

Template for News Story - Use this template to organize your news story.

DR. KING FATALLY SHOT BY ASSASSIN IN MEMPHIS

Headline

U.S. Shocked, Saddened by Slaying, Johnson Says

Message Is Given Nation
After Assassination

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Johnson spoke Thursday night of an "America shocked and saddened" by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King as he condemned violence, lawlessness and divisiveness.

In a brief message to the nation via television and radio, Johnson disclosed that he is postponing a trip to Hawaii for a Vietnam strategy conference. He had been scheduled to leave around midnight. He said he will leave sometime Friday.

The President appeared in the doorway of the White House offices, stern-faced and spoke on all television and radio networks.

"I ask every American citizen," he said, "to reject the blind violence that has struck down Dr. King, who lived by nonviolence."

The President urged prayers for peace and understanding in the land and said:

"We can achieve nothing by lawlessness and divisiveness among the American people."

He said he hopes all Americans will search their hearts. At that point he said he was cancelling all plans for the evening and postponing until Friday his planned take-off for Hawaii and conferences there on problems of war and peace in Vietnam.

DINNER PLANNED

He was to have attended a

ANGUISH VOICED BY U.S. LEADERS

Shock, Grief, Is Reaction;
Violence Feared

NEW YORK (AP) — The nation's civil rights and political leaders reacted with anguish, shock and grief Thursday night at the slaying of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis.

There also was fear that the slaying could lead to more violence.

"We have been saddened," President Johnson told the nation on radio and television. "I ask every citizen to reject the blind violence that has struck Dr. King who lived in nonviolence."

TRIP PUT OFF

The President said he was postponing his trip to Hawaii, for a Vietnam strategy conference, until Friday. He had been scheduled to leave about midnight Thursday.

Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey said the slaying "brings shame to our country. An apostle of nonviolence has been the victim of violence."

The vice-president said, however, that his death will bring new strength to the cause he fought for.

A spokesman for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People said, "I am shocked and grieved by this



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING
Rifle Bullet Fells Rights Crusader

King: Been to Mountaintop No Matter What Happens

NEGROES SMASH AUTO WINDOWS

Jackson Scene of Disorder at News of Death

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) —

Non-Violence Advocate Dead Day Later

By JAY BOWLES
MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—"It really doesn't matter what happens now. I've been to the mountaintop."

The speaker was Martin Luther King Jr. His audience was

Dies Hour After Injury; Troops Recalled

By DOUG STONE
MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP)—Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King Jr., father of non-violence in the American civil rights movement, was killed by an assassin's bullet Thursday night.

King, 39, was hit in the neck by a bullet as he stood on the balcony of a motel here. He died less than an hour later in St. Joseph Hospital.

Gov. Buford Ellington immediately ordered 4,000 National Guard troops back into the city. A curfew, which was clamped on Memphis after a King-led march turned into a riot a week ago, was reimposed.

Police said incidents of violence, including several fire bombings were reported following King's death.

The 1964 Nobel Peace Prize winner was standing on the balcony of his motel here, where he had come to lead protests in behalf of the city's 1,300 striking garbage workers, most of them Negroes, when he was shot.

PAIR ARRESTED

Two unidentified men who were arrested were released several hours later.

As word of King's death spread through the stunned city.

Byline

Where?

Lead-What happened?

Body- More details

Ending-

Important point

Cut and paste your notes into the spaces below. Add or edit your information.

Headline:

Byline:

Where?

Lead-What happened?

Body- More details:

Ending- Important point:

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