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Effects of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices on the Literacy Learning of Latino Students

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EFFECTS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES ON THE LITERACY LEARNING OF LATINO STUDENTS

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Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Special Instructional Programs
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By
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August 2008

EFFECTS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICE
ON THE LITERACY LEARNING OF LATINO STUDENTS

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construct knowledge myself, all the while conveying a deep belief that I can achieve high expectations and go on to realize previously silenced dreams for future academic and career possibilities for myself and for lives I have yet to touch. It was a thrill and an honor to be introduced by Dr. Powers to accomplished colleagues and scholars whose writing and work I admire. Dr. Sherry Powers is a blessing in my life as a role model, teacher, mentor, and friend.

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EFFECTS OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING PRACTICES ON THE LITERACY LEARNING OF LATINO STUDENTS

Miriam Elizabeth Stroder   August 2008   219 pages

Directed by: Sherry Powers (Chair), Pamela Petty, and Tony Norman

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Raising scholastic achievement of diverse and struggling students as well as narrowing the academic achievement gap between students from mainstream and diverse backgrounds seems to be essentially dependent on educators' personal knowledge, perspectives, and definitions regarding the terms *multicultural education* and *equity pedagogy*. Research studies confirm that addressing student's culture, language, and social status with appreciation, inclusion, and sensitivity increases their academic successes. In classrooms, negative perceptions often maintained by educators about students perpetuate the false belief that diverse learners are unable to or struggle to grasp new learning. This ten-week qualitative study examined teachers' perceptions as well as implementations of multicultural education and culturally responsive instructional practices as a means of addressing the literacy learning needs of diverse and struggling students in two primary classrooms in an urban Southeastern elementary school. Reading instruction observations provided insight into teachers' self-descriptive beliefs and attitudes of multicultural education, how their perceptions of multicultural education differ from observed culturally responsive instructional practices, and how observed

culturally responsive pedagogy align with multicultural education theories outlined by prominent researchers.

All teachers and students come to school with personal backgrounds, languages, and attitudes concerning cultures and ethnicities. Their perceptions are formed by family members, prior experiences, and mainstream society. Frequently, teachers do not realize that personal and institutionalized perceptions, expectations, pedagogies, learning environments, curriculum and materials, grouping strategies, and assessment methods are at odds with learning needs of many students from diverse backgrounds. Findings of this study suggest that educators' academic goals are often at odds with instructional policies and practices, as demonstrated by the persistent academic achievement gap. Tragically, many students perceive that learning struggles and failures are their fault. They may experience marginalization and develop feelings of inadequacy. Consequently, many students from diverse backgrounds express feelings of anger and frustration that may be exhibited by undesirable behavior. They may give up, drop out, abandon opportunities for citizenship participation and responsibility, or surrender to jobs in adulthood that are less than those they dreamt of.

Finally, study findings suggest that teachers' lack of cultural awareness, understanding of multicultural education, and knowledge of equity pedagogy prevent them from recognizing several negative personal perceptions and biases. As a result, they implement self-selected, school, and district policies and practices completely unaware that they are unintentionally posing learning obstructions and academic success limitations as well as fostering students' frustrations. Demographics indicate that the predominantly Caucasian middle-class teaching population requires high levels of

cultural awareness and extensive knowledge concerning multicultural education, equity

pedagogy, and cultural awareness in order to address the literacy-learning needs of the

increasingly diverse student population effectively.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Most educators strive to provide instruction by setting high expectations that will guide all students toward reaching their full individual academic potential and become fair-minded, responsible, and contributing citizens. However, academic achievement and citizenship opportunity gaps between the mainstream and Hispanic populations persist due to the scholastic underachievement of the Hispanic population (USDE, 2002). Statistics confirm that the Hispanic population is not only the fastest growing group among the diverse populations in the United States but also the group attaining the lowest academic achievement and realizing the highest drop out rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). Given the current population statistics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, 2006), how can administrators and educators address the diverse learning needs that are increasingly presented in classrooms across the United States?

Raising Hispanic scholastic achievement and narrowing the chronic academic achievement gap seems to be fundamentally dependent on personal definitions and attitudes maintained by educators regarding such terms as *multicultural education* and *equity pedagogy*. Additional interrelated factors that affect the abilities of teachers to address students' individual learning needs include teachers' understanding of personal ethnicity and culture; perceptions of students' home cultures and languages, learning styles and abilities; as well as knowledge of how culture influences learning. (Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004; Au, 1993; Banks, 1979, 1997a, 1997b, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 1995, 2004; Delpit, 1992, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Grant & Tate, 1995; Hernandez, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004; Nieto, 1996, 1999;

Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002; Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Smith-Maddox, 1998; Wills, Lintz, & Mehan, 2004). Learning dynamics in classrooms are influenced by perceptions of cultures, ethnicities, races, and languages maintained by both educators and students.

Theoretical Framework

Mainstream students are likely to learn in educational settings that are similar to their first learning environments, their homes. Conversely, students from diverse backgrounds may experience educational settings that are significantly different from their home cultures. Therefore, students from diverse backgrounds may have difficulty acclimating to school learning environments and acquiring new knowledge. Research studies confirm that addressing students' culture, language, and social status with appreciation, inclusion, and sensitivity increases their academic successes (Grant & Tate, 1995; Jimenez, 1997). A teacher or school's inability to accept and include students' home cultures and languages may reinforce learning barriers, making it difficult for students to transition from prior home learning to new scholastic learning (Gay, 1994; Nieto, 1999). Multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching processes address various cultural and language issues Latino students bring from home to school (Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Banks & Banks, 2004; Delpit, 1992, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Majors, 1998; Nieto, 2004; Padrón et al., 2002; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Tatum, 1997; Wills et al., 2004). Culturally responsive pedagogy provides avenues that connect students' prior learning with new knowledge acquisition while demonstrating an appreciation for students' cultures and languages.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

In recent history, social perspectives concerning diversity and the status quo have influenced the inequitable division of academic provisions, which in turn have facilitated the deprivation of equal education for diverse student populations (Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Garcia, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2004; 1995; Nieto, 1999). While political, social, and economic events in United States history have contributed to marginalization of the Hispanic population, they have also served to fortify the rationale for the implementation of multicultural education as a means of addressing their diverse cultural and linguistic learning needs (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002). As the Hispanic population grows, the academic achievement gap between mainstream and diverse student populations perseveres.

The multicultural education theory came into being in the 1970s. Since that time it has continued to gain favor among many educators and researchers in the United States as a possible means of raising the academic achievement of students from diverse backgrounds. The academic achievement gap between diverse and mainstream students spurs continued research in multicultural education. (Andersson & Barnitz, 1998; Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Banks, 1996, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004; Jackson, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Moran & Hakuta, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Wills et al., 2004). Banks and Banks (2004) assert:

Multicultural education is a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporate, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles,

theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and

particularly from ethnic studies and women studies. (p. xii)

According to Banks (2005), the major appeal of multicultural education is that the theory

addresses instruction based on the philosophy that race, ethnicity, culture, social class,

gender, religious affiliation, language, and abilities influence students' unique learning

needs. Additionally, multicultural education strives to reduce prejudice; broaden student

understanding of how perceptions influence knowledge construction; and provide

students with transformative and social action citizenship skills (Banks, 1995).

The rapidly growing Latino population presents schools in the United States with

issues in teaching and learning that are unfamiliar to many teachers. Statistics show that

the majority of teachers in the United States are mainstream, Caucasian, middle-class

females (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) who are increasingly confronted with students

possessing cultural and linguistic learning needs different from their own (Ladson-

Billings, 1994, 2005; Nieto, 1999). The growing concern of educating diverse students

and narrowing the scholastic achievement gap prompts many educators to explore

instructional solutions in an attempt to overcome the cultural discontinuity that "centers

on a possible mismatch between the culture of the school and the culture of the home"

(Au, 1993, p. 8). Culturally responsive educators seek solutions that will provide better

academic and citizenship outcomes and opportunities for all of their students.

Multicultural education, implemented through equity pedagogy, is a theoretical and

research-based means of addressing the scholastic needs of diverse students. Educators

consider students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds when making culturally responsive

pedagogy selections to facilitate acquisition of new learning in predominantly

mainstream learning environments (Andersson & Barnitz, 1998; Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Banks & Banks, 2004; Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Grant et al., 2004; Jackson, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Moran & Hakuta, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Wills et al., 2004). Cultural discontinuity may be minimized or eliminated through the instructional support culturally responsive teachers provide.

Gay (1995) maintains that a gulf exists between the theory, research, and application components of multicultural education conception and explanation. In an effort to narrow the theory-research-practice gap, Banks conceptualized five "dimensions" (Banks, 1995, p. 4) or facets, of multicultural education: "(a) content integration, (b) the knowledge construction process, (c) prejudice reduction, (d) an equity-pedagogy, and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure" (p. 4). The attributes of the five dimensions facilitate the total integration of multicultural education and provide opportunities for transformation and social activism of students and educators throughout all academic areas (Banks, 1979, 1997a; Banks & Banks, 1995, 2004; Banks, 2005). Banks' five multicultural education dimensions present educators with a means of providing an equitable pedagogy for all students.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) became law on January 8, 2002, during the George W. Bush administration. NCLB is a national effort to assure that the country's educational systems will provide equal educational opportunities to all students. Title I, section 1001 of NCLB (USDE, 2004) states, "the purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality and equitable education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic

achievement standards and state academic assessments." According to Artiles et al. (2004) and Garcia (2004), many educational systems have responded, until recently, to increased student diversity by placing students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds into special education programs for the following reasons:

1. Students had difficulty responding academically or behaviorally to the Americanization process.

2. Educators lacked knowledge and skills specific to the needs of diverse learners.

3. Educators held negative perceptions regarding races, cultures, or languages different from their own.

Multicultural educators believe that all these reasons perpetuate power issues reflected in social and political arenas in the United States (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a). They believe that multicultural education provides equal and equitable educational opportunities for all students and may reduce power issues in classrooms.

Power Issues

 Power in the classroom is manifested in several forms. For instance, mainstream teachers bring their personal cultural backgrounds and learned perceptions of other cultures, languages, dialects, traditions, ethnicities, religions, and abilities. Hence, teachers often maintain stereotypical beliefs about the intelligence, capabilities, and motivation of diverse students based on any of those facets. Stereotypical perceptions perpetuate the structural inequality theory, which states that some social "groups are subordinate and some are dominant" (Au, 1993, p. 10). Furthermore, educators may

impose upon students their own personal perceptions regarding social and political hierarchy as well as perceptions of academic and citizenship abilities. This may happen in teacher discourse, the classroom environment, their pedagogy, through teaching of the curriculum, and in assessment processes and procedures. Frequently, educator philosophies of cultural discontinuity and structural inequality confirm that diverse students have a learning deficit.

Whether intentional or not, power issues contribute heavily to the perpetuation of denying students from diverse backgrounds equitable access to literacy-learning (Au, 1993). According to the theory of structural inequality, mainstream political, social, and economic perspectives are responsible for the gap in career, educational, and financial opportunities existing between mainstream and diverse populations (Au, 1993). Banks (1997a) stated:

> A fundamental premise of a democratic society is that citizens will participate in the governing of the nation and that the nation-state will reflect the hopes, dreams, and possibilities of [all] its people. Children are not born democrats. Consequently, an important goal of the schools in a democratic society is to help students acquire the knowledge, values, and skills needed to participate effectively in public communities. (p. 1)

Therefore, although scaffolding may be necessary for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, academic expectations must be equally high for all students regardless of ethnicity, culture, language, race, gender, religion, social status, economic level, physical ability, mental ability, or any other measure currently being used to determine the value or hierarchal placement of groups or individuals.

Structural inequality of social hierarchies viewed in the strata of United States culture can often be viewed on a smaller scale in the nation's classrooms. This pattern can be emulated in the placement of students in reading groups, selection and administration of assessments, or encouragement given upper grade students in their pursuit of career training. For example, a large number of diverse students are disproportionately placed in low reading groups. They are often administered tests that are either not in their own language or assess their language or dialect as inappropriate and valueless. In addition, diverse students are often encouraged to pursue vocational rather than professional careers. By contrast, mainstream students are more likely to be placed in higher reading groups, the language of the assessments agrees with their home culture and language, and they are often encouraged to pursue professional occupation training in colleges (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a). Therefore, the perpetuation of academic and citizenship underachievement can be generational.

Repeating patterns of discrimination and subordination in schools and classrooms perpetuates the underachievement of students, establishing generational living conditions or boundaries that prevent students from low socio-economic or diverse backgrounds from succeeding scholastically, occupationally, or civically. According to *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005* compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau (2006, p. 13), Hispanic population comprises 21.8 percent of the U.S. population living in poverty. Limitation of an equitable education has often denied many impoverished diverse students opportunities to seek improved living conditions in adulthood.

Medical research has investigated the long-term and devastating effects poverty can have on a child's ability to learn, such as the possible health issues that result from the lack of funds for healthy diets, doctor visits, and medications (Korenman, Miller, and Sjaastad, 1995). However, not enough focus has been placed on the accompanying pervasive problems that affect student learning. According to Artiles and colleagues (2004), a component that compounds power issues reflective in both United States society and its schools, is the issue of financial allocation. Many students who are living at the poverty level are attending schools that are functioning at the poverty level. Many schools located in impoverished neighborhoods are denied funds to access educational materials, curriculum, and staff needed to provide students with an education that is equitable to that received by more affluent mainstream students (Artiles et al., 2004). The implementation of equity pedagogy provides equal education opportunities for all students in an effort to reduce generational poverty and limited citizenship participation for people from diverse backgrounds.

Equity Pedagogy and Content Integration

Equity pedagogy is defined by Banks (1995) as the modification of teaching in such a way that "teachers use techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups" (p. 5). Equity pedagogy (Banks, 1997a, 1997b; Richards, Artiles, Klingner, & Brown, 2005) includes the availability of the following:

1. Culturally responsive educational materials and content

2. Educators knowledgeable about all aspects of multicultural education

3. Multiculturally supportive learning environments

4. Culturally responsive assessment batteries

5. Ongoing family and community communication and involvement

6. Ethnically and culturally responsive curriculum

7. Integration of cultural responsiveness throughout all academic areas

8. Personnel knowledgeable in culturally responsive behavior management practices

In the United States, power has traditionally been held by the mainstream, which primarily consists of middle-class Caucasian males. Conventionally, those who have the power are the ones who create the academic curriculum. Therefore, not only has the mainstream population traditionally determined the perspective in which the content is taught, they have also decided what is taught (Delpit, 1995). Reformation of curriculum and content instruction that is culturally responsive to diverse perspectives is fundamental in multicultural education. Culturally responsive educators illustrate concepts within subject areas by applying diverse cultural examples to assist students from all cultures to connect to new learning and to broaden their cultural perspectives (Banks, 1995). Implementation of the eight equity pedagogy components facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge for students from mainstream and diverse cultures.

A specific subject of importance in narrowing the academic achievement gap is literacy instruction. Literacy has been a primary power tool often used to control, or limit, academic achievement and citizenship opportunities available to those outside the mainstream. Teachers have the power to affect social change by understanding how the denial of knowledge is used to limit educational improvement, citizenship, and success of diverse groups (Banks, 1984). Culturally responsive teachers reflect on their own culture,

language, and position of power can actively value and incorporate students' culture and language. Additionally, incorporation of culturally responsive assessment, interventions, lessons, and activities that motivate and enhance learning for diverse students has proven beneficial for mainstream students. Multicultural education offers all students opportunities to gain real-world knowledge and power (Banks, 1984, 1997a, 1997b, 2001, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2004). Implementation of an equity pedagogy requires that teachers are informed about their own cultures and ethnicities, learn about their students' diverse cultures and ethnicities, and understand how personal backgrounds of teachers and students impact acquisition of new knowledge for students.

Home and School Language Differences

The mainstream has customarily determined the 'appropriate' language to be spoken or established the designated codes of expression (linguistic, artistic, or dress choice) and interaction (Delpit, 1995). Therefore, people are often stereotyped and judged negatively because of their language, accent, or dialect. This unfair practice is particularly damaging to children. Delpit (1995) affirms:

> First, they [teachers] should recognize that the linguistic form a student brings to school is intimately connected with loved ones, community, and personal identity. To suggest that something is 'wrong' or, even worse, ignorant, is to suggest that something is wrong with the student and his or her family. On the other hand, it is equally important to understand that students who do not have access to the politically popular dialect form in this country, that is, Standard English, are less likely to succeed economically than their peers who do. (p. 53)

Applying prior learning to the teaching of new language skills can help students learn the rules and process of Standard English and the skills of code switching. Studies demonstrate that children who feel proud of their home language and safe in the classroom environment also feel free to practice and apply new language skills (Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Banks, 1979, 1997a, 1997b, 2002; Delpit, 1992, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Grant & Tate, 1995; Hernandez, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2004; Nieto, 1996, 1999; Padrón et al., 2002; Sleeter & Grant, 1987; Smith-Maddox, 1998). Culturally responsive teachers establish a safe and welcoming learning environment, which includes an appreciation for the value of the home language that students bring with them to the classroom.

Oral language is much more than just the words that are spoken. Language incorporates cultural behaviors, social conventions, and social interaction. Those aspects influence diverse students' perceptions and can kindle confusion of the mainstream culture and school expectations. Likewise, the mainstream population's negative perceptions and confusion about cultures different from their own are fostered when they encounter speakers of foreign languages or dialects (Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Banks & Banks, 2004; Delpit, 1992, 1995; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Majors, 1998; Nieto, 2004; Padrón et al., 2002; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Tatum, 1997; Wills et al., 2004). Multicultural education provides opportunities for all students to learn more about their own cultures as well as cultures different from their own thereby minimizing possible cultural conflicts.

Studies conducted by Au (1993), Banks (1984, 1997a), and Gay (1995) affirm that the majority of mainstream children do not experience difficult transitions from

home to school because culture and language of home is similar to school norms. However, students from diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds may experience cultural obstacles that influence the ease with which they acquire new knowledge. Teachers often instruct and verbally interact with linguistically diverse students without any awareness of the invisible barrier that is dividing them. Students cannot participate effectively or give acceptable responses due to the linguistic barrier (Au, 1993; Delpit, 1995). In addition, students from cultures outside of the mainstream often find it difficult to bridge their understandings of mainstream academic and behavioral expectations with the conflicting perspectives of their home culture. Their perceptions of the demands made by the mainstream authority figures, such as teachers, could lead to or reinforce a lack of motivation to learn, low self-esteem, and frustration with expectations of people in authority. All of the aforementioned perceptions formulated by students from diverse cultures may foster defiant behaviors (Au, 1993; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Culturally discontinuity may be reduced or eliminated for students from diverse cultures through implementation of culturally responsive teaching strategies.

Another huge linguistic barrier for diverse learners in schools is assessment. Most formal assessments, such as standardized tests, do not consider a student's home language, whether it be a dialect of English or a language other than English. Some formal assessments require students to be very familiar with Standard English in order to accurately demonstrate knowledge (Flores, Cousin, & Díaz, 1998). Children from Hispanic cultures are often learning to read and write in two languages: the Spanish home language and the school Standard English language (Garcia, 2004; Padrón et al., 2002). An additional complication for diverse test takers is that assessment environments may

also be unfamiliar and frightening. The structure of questions or the manner in which questioning takes place (such as face-to-face) could be intimidating or considered inappropriate behavior in some students' home cultures. Students may not demonstrate their knowledge accurately under those conditions. In these situations, their inability to succeed during assessment is usually not due to their lack of knowledge (Au, 1993; Delpit, 1995). Culturally responsive assessments and environments provide teachers with more accurate representations of student knowledge with which to guide instruction.

Learning needs, specifically in the area of literacy, existing in today's increasingly diverse classrooms implicate the need for multicultural education and culturally responsive instruction. The Hispanic student population is increasing rapidly. Therefore, it is necessary to observe and examine the perceptions maintained by exemplary literacy teachers who incorporate the theory of multicultural education by implementing culturally responsive pedagogies to address the learning needs of their diverse and struggling readers. In addition, it is important to analyze how teachers' perceptions of the multicultural theory and applications of culturally responsive instruction align with theories of multicultural education conceived by prominent researchers and educators.

Purpose of the Study

Guiding this qualitative study were four purposes:

1. To examine the multicultural educational beliefs and attitudes of two primary teachers;

2. To observe their selection and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogies meant to address the learning needs of their diverse and struggling

students;

3. To analyze how each teacher's self-descriptive perceptions of multicultural education compare to culturally responsive pedagogy observed during literacy instruction; and

4. To examine how culturally responsive teaching practices implemented by both primary teachers align with multicultural education theories outlined by prominent scholars.

The researcher's objective was to:

1. Gather and analyze information collected from a first grade teacher and second grade teacher regarding their self-descriptive perspectives about multicultural education and culturally responsive instruction;

2. Observe and examine the culturally responsive teaching practices of a first grade teacher and second grade teacher during literacy instruction blocks within their classrooms;

3. Examine how each teacher's personal perceptions about multicultural education align with their teaching practices during literacy instruction with diverse and struggling learners; and

4. Analyze and compare how the culturally responsive teaching practices of each teacher align with multicultural education as defined by prominent researchers in that field of multicultural education.

General Research Questions

For the purpose of examining teacher perceptions of multicultural education and culturally responsive instructional practices they implement as a means of addressing the

literacy-learning needs of their diverse and struggling students in two primary school classrooms in an urban Southeastern elementary school, the researcher sought to answer two qualitative questions through the observation of reading instruction:

1. What are teacher self-descriptive beliefs and attitudes of multicultural education, and how do their perceptions of multicultural education differ from the culturally responsive instructional practices observed during literacy instruction?

2. How do the teachers implement multicultural education to address learning needs of their diverse students and how does their culturally responsive pedagogy align with multicultural education theories outlined by prominent scholars?

The study examined and compared self-descriptive data supplied by two participating teachers through questionnaires and interviews to the researcher's observations of culturally responsive instruction and discourse implemented by both teachers. Then, both teachers' perceptions and observed behaviors were compared with theories of multicultural education as defined by prominent scholars. It was possible for the researcher to compare each teacher's perceptions and attitudes about multicultural education and their applications of self-selected and culturally responsive pedagogies with the prominent research-based multicultural educational theories by analyzing data collected from interviews with teachers, questionnaires completed by teachers, and observations of teachers during literacy instruction.

Limitations of the Study

Results and inferences of this thesis project were based on the researcher's personal observations of two primary teachers during literacy instruction and the researcher's analysis of the teachers' self-descriptive data regarding their personal perceptions about multicultural education. Because the subject of multicultural education can be political, subjective, and based on personal interpretation, it is possible that teachers could feel unconfident about their responses, which may lead them to offer politically correct answers to questions during the interviews and on questionnaires. Although every effort was made to establish a trusting and cooperative rapport between the researcher and teachers, reliability of the gathered responses could be compromised by information contributed by teachers in an effort to respond in a way that they perceived was desirable to the researcher.

Both primary teachers are considered highly effective literacy teachers by their school's principal, a local university professor, a Kentucky Reading Project director, and a Reading First coach representative from the local university. It was the opinion of all of these professionals that the first grade teacher and the second teacher: (a) consistently demonstrate sensitivity toward diverse student populations and plan instruction to meet the unique academic needs of their young literacy learners, (b) consistently provide exemplary reading instruction, and (c) had a minimum of two years teaching experience. No comparisons can be made to teachers who are considered to be anything but exemplary literacy teachers and who do not meet the three previously stated criteria.

Teachers were observed during the daily two-hour literacy instruction block within their own classrooms and with all of their students present. While the focus of the

study was not on any particular student(s), it was necessary to observe teacher and student discourse during various literacy instruction settings (whole group, small group, centers, and one-on-one) occurring during the literacy block. Of primary interest was teachers' instructional transmission of information and discourse with their struggling Hispanic and other diverse students. Both teachers were observed two times each week, over a five-week period. The results cannot be generalized to other populations due to the small sample size of two teachers and the short duration in which the study took place.

Educators are reflecting more about their current teaching practices while considering the growing diversity, arising literacy-learning issues, and the academic achievement gap between mainstream and diverse student populations. This study illuminates the rationale for implementing culturally responsive instruction as a means of addressing the learning needs of diverse and struggling students in classrooms across the country. Educators reading this study may realize that they are not alone as they seek culturally responsive instructional approaches to provide equitable educational opportunities while facilitating interaction skills development intended to broaden social perspectives as well as future educational, civic, and career opportunities for all students.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Theories of cultural discontinuity and structural inequality have been refined to help schools assist diverse students in meeting high academic expectations. Cultural discontinuity theory focuses on cultural and communication differences between a students' home cultures and mainstream school culture. Each community has its own literacy traditions. Therefore, cultural differences can be in the form of any single or combination of language, customs, traditions, beliefs, and values. Structural inequality refers to relationships established between diverse ethnic groups in the United States and historical events and perspectives that formed the hierarchy of dominance and subjugation of races and ethnicities (Au, 1993). Educators wanting to stop the perpetuation of cultural discontinuity and structural inequality seek instructional avenues that connect students' home cultures with school cultures.

Although, most teachers do not intend to discriminate, behavior patterns are often perpetuated due to learned perceptions (Banks, 1997b). Often, teachers, like their students, mirror the teachings of their parents and mainstream society (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a, 2002; Delpit, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Nieto, 1999). Raising scholastic achievement of diverse and struggling students, thereby narrowing the academic achievement gap between students of diverse and mainstream backgrounds seems to be fundamentally dependent on educators' personal definitions, perspectives, and knowledge regarding the terms *multicultural education* and *equity pedagogy.*

Cultural discontinuity and educational inequalities that hinder the acquisition of new knowledge for diverse students is leading educators toward learning more about multicultural education and implementing culturally responsive pedagogies. Urgency to address learning needs of the increased population of students from diverse backgrounds has encouraged the implementation of culturally responsive instruction practices (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a, 2002; Delpit, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Nieto, 1999). Historical events coupled with past social and educational research are additional factors that have served to strengthen the credence of multicultural education among educators.

<div align="center">History of Social Influences on Education in the United States</div>

Throughout world history, various social groups have subjugated other groups as a means of maintaining dominance in political, social, and economic realms. It is certain that all eras of American history have been marked by dominant groups subjugating other groups in order to maintain power and supremacy. A principal tool of subjugation has traditionally been the denial or restriction of an equitable education. Specifically, the primary power tool of social constraint has been the denial or limitation of literacy education. By limiting or denying literacy education, prevailing social groups can control the degree of academic success, democratic achievement, and adult citizenship participation of members of subjugated groups. The inequality of power and education has had a profound effect on citizens of mainstream and diverse populations throughout the course of United States history in areas of political dynamics, societal hierarchies and benefits, social perspectives and interactions, academic achievement, and distribution of educational provisions. Furthermore, the marginalization of non-Caucasian ethnic and

culturally diverse groups, through the denial of knowledge, has enabled the perpetuation of other subjugation tools such as ridicule, racism, and stereotyping (Allport, 1958; Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a, 1997b; Garcia, 2002; Grant et al., 2004; Nieto, 2004; Tatum, 1997; Southern, 1987; Williams & Morland, 1976). Historically evidenced political, social, and economic marginalization of people from diverse backgrounds permeated schools and influenced academic policies and pedagogy choices of mainstream educators.

Nativist Paradigm Period

The portion of American history that made a particular impact on the multicultural education movement is the period between the late 1880s and the present. "The 'old' European immigrants—who had come largely from northern and western Europe—considered themselves 'native Americans' by the turn of the century" (Banks, 2002, p. 229). Therefore, the great immigration that occurred in the late 1800s and early 1900s of people from southern, eastern, and central Europe was of great concern to the previous European immigrants (Banks, 2002). In addition, a large number of the new immigrants were Jews or came from China or Japan. These ethnicities and races presented the *old* European immigrants with fears and uncertainties about non-Christian religions and different physical appearances. Banks (2002) coined the term *nativist* when he stated, "Out of this change in the demographics in the United States evolved a nativist paradigm, which was given voice and legitimacy by a number of influential books and other publications" (p. 229). Those who supported the nativist paradigm focused on how the new immigrants differed from the old. The dominant group perpetuated the philosophy that the new immigrants were genetically inferior and "a threat to American democracy [there was fear of the possibility of papal takeover] and to the survival of the

Anglo-Saxon 'race' [by mixing of the races]" (p. 229). Fears harbored by *old* European immigrants spawned several legislative acts designed to impede the flow of new immigrants into the United States.

During this period, the United States Immigration Commission, known as the Dillingham Commission, set out to investigate issues regarding immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Members of the Dillingham Commission were mainstream citizens and in a position of power; therefore, they aligned with the elite groups of the United States to strengthen their authority. The Commission fortified and reflected the prejudicial racial beliefs, feelings, and opinions of the dominant group (Harvard University Library, 2007). Several acts were passed that limited immigration. First, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 stopped immigration of the Chinese. Second, a requirement of the Immigration Act of 1917 was that immigrants had to pass a literacy test in their native language. Unfortunately, many immigrants were illiterate. Third, the Immigration Act of 1924 (Historical Documents in United Status History, 2007) stated that only 2% of the immigrant population from any specific country who were living in the United States in 1890 could enter the United States. This section of the Immigration Act 1924 was otherwise known as the *national origins quota system* (Banks, 2002). All these measures served to limit the arrival of new immigrants into the country, foster discriminatory sentiment, and further marginalize the nation's diverse populations.

Education was deeply affected by the nativist theory, from preschool to the university level. Nativist beliefs permeated the teaching approaches, textbooks, classroom materials, and all aspects of curricula (Banks, 2004, 2005). Henry Pratt Fairchild, a sociologist of that time, wrote two books: *The Melting Pot Mistake* (1913) and

Immigration: A World Movement and Its American Significance (1926). Fairchild

maintained that the new wave of "immigrants were responsible for lowering the

American standard of living, increasing crime, and burdening society with a

disproportionate number of people in insane asylums, as well as for the general decline in

the quality of American life" (Banks, 2005, p.13). Discriminatory perspectives such as

this translated to classrooms through teachers and writers of curriculum.

Banks (2002) labeled a unique social perspective, the *transformative pattern*,

which emerged in the early 1900s. The transformative paradigm was constructed by

social scientists and philosophers who experienced life and the world from the vantage

point of a marginalized ethnic community member, or from a non-mainstream

perspective. The transformative thinkers contended that racial differences were the result

of the relationship between the environment and the genetic makeup of different ethnic

groups. Banks (2002) refers to two philosophers of the transformative paradigm, Horace

Kallen (1924) and Randolph Bourne (1916), who maintained that new American

immigrants should be allowed to protect their cultures and heritages in their pursuit of

becoming citizens of the United States. Regardless of the transformative viewpoint, the

strong anti-immigration sentiment in the United States thrived.

The Intercultural Education Movement

"In the 1930s, [the intercultural education] movement emerged in the United

States to help immigrant students adapt to American life, maintain aspects of their ethnic

heritages and identity, and become effective citizens of the commonwealth" (Banks,

2002, p. 231). The years between 1940 and 1954 were socially and politically tumultuous

in the United States. As the country entered World War II, African Americans migrated

in large numbers to major cities seeking job opportunities, improved wages, and escape from discrimination. However, soon after arriving in the large cities, they became disappointed by the lack of promised jobs and justice. Racial riots exploded in many communities across the United States due to rising tensions between groups of people were competing for employment, citizenship rights, and justice (Banks, 2002). Despite the increased diversity in large cities, schools remained segregated.

According to the mainstream population in the United States, the answer to the provision of equitable educational opportunities before *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, KS* in 1954 was to provide separate-but-equal educational opportunities. This system, as hindsight now demonstrates, was definitely not equal (Brown Foundation, 2007). Three other noteworthy judicial cases that preceded the 1954 *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* case were the 1930 case of *Independent School District v. Salvatierra* in Texas; *Mendez v. Westminster School District* in California in 1946; and the 1948 Texas case of *Delgado v. Bastrop Independent School District*. All three cases involved issues in which school districts separated Mexican students from Caucasian students simply due to race. In the *Salvatierra* case, the school district won because they maintained that the separation revolved around the language deficiency. In the *Mendez* case, the school district lost because "the trial court ruled that separate schools with same technical facilities did not satisfy the equal protection provisions of the Constitution" (Contreras, 1994, p. 471). By 1948, courts ruled in the *Delgado* case that districts could no longer place Mexican American students in separate schools based upon "alleged language deficiencies" (p. 471). Nevertheless, the school district's solution to this ruling was to provide separate classes for students who were not proficient in English within the

school setting. Regardless of the *Delgado* and *Mendez* court decisions*,* racial segregation continued in both California and Texas. After the 1954 *Brown* decision, schools in communities that were comprised of Caucasians, African Americans, and Latinos were desegregated only for African American and Latino students (Contreras, 1994). Caucasian students still attended all-Caucasian schools. Schools attended by African Americans and Hispanics were still substandard to schools attended by all Caucasian students. Educational inequality endured.

Ultimately, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS* (1954) was the last straw to those striving for educational equality, and it became the impetus for plans and approaches that would address the treatment of culturally diverse students, specifically African Americans, within educational systems. The court's decision proved to be a launching pad for the improvement of educational benefits for other culturally diverse groups, especially Hispanics (Contreras, 1994). Scholars, such as Allport, formulated theories and conducted studies to explain the social phenomenon of prejudice.

Allport (1979) suggested that prejudice between mainstream and diverse population groups would diminish if contact between the groups was scaffolded by four circumstances. He felt that intergroup contact must include the following for both groups: (a) Equal status, (b) common goals, (c) support by authorities and environment, and (d) the contact must "lead to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups" (p. 281). Allport argued that if schools continue to segregate in any way, children will continue to learn that power determines status, which is the key factor in the hierarchy of human relationships (p. 511). Allport's social theory, and others like it, gave rise to the intergroup education movement.

The Intergroup Education Movement

The social dynamics that occurred during World War II, the era encapsulated from the 1960s and 1970s, ignited the intergroup education movement. World War II created jobs in Northern and Western cities for people who had previously lived in rural America. Competition for jobs and housing in the increasingly crowded cities amplified racial tension, which led to riots (Banks, 2004). World War II generated a period in the United States in which it became critical for the diverse cultural groups who were now residing and working together as well as sharing resources to strive to maintain some form of cohesiveness. Intergroup education emerged as the modus operandi to keep the nation's diverse cultural groups from splintering. The United States needed unity of its population in order to manufacture enough weapons and to fight foes abroad effectively (Banks, 2005). National unity sentiment was beginning to filter into educational philosophies governing the country's educational systems.

The intergroup education period preceded and influenced the multicultural education movement, but it was not the beginning of multicultural education. The intergroup education period served as a bridge connecting studies, such as the early ethnic studies conducted by Williams (1882-83) to the more recent studies of scholars such as DuBois in 1935, Woodson in 1919 and 1968, Covello in 1939, and Wesley in 1935 (Banks, 2004). During the intergroup education period, researchers concluded that children's racist and prejudiced viewpoints were a reflection of perspectives maintained by influential adults in their lives, such as parents, teachers, and grandparents (Goodman, 1946). Therefore, the primary objective of the intergroup education movement was to provide interactive activities that would promote an understanding of the diverse ethnic,

religious, and racial student groups within the United States (Banks, 2004). Adult viewpoints, reflected in students' attitudes and comments, were exhibited in civil rights demonstrations across the country leading to the formulation of significant civil liberties legislative acts.

Coinciding with the intergroup education period was the Civil Rights Movement that began in the 1960s. During this period, some of the people who had a profound influence on American democracy and education of growing diverse populations in the United States included President Harry Truman, President Lyndon B. Johnson, President John F. Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Events occurred that would shape education and policy in the United States. Four of those events were the desegregation of public universities and the armed forces in 1948; the *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka, KS* 1954 judgment, which declared that school segregation was unconstitutional; the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 offered equal rights to many diverse social groups in the United States, including immigrants. Of particular significance to Hispanic immigrants was the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. The Immigration Reform Act of 1965 was the precursor to the current influx of Hispanic immigrants, among other diverse groups, to the United States. The Act eliminated the national origins quota system established in the Immigration Act of 1924 (Historical Documents in United Status History, 2007). Without the quota system, for the first time in United States history, immigrants from Asia and Latin America could enter the United States without a limit to numbers (Banks, 2004). The influx of new immigrants and desegregation of schools required the United States

government to begin to focus on learning needs of students from diverse language backgrounds.

President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Title VII for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: the Bilingual Act in 1968. The law was the first commitment made by the United States government to focus educational attention on the English language skills of diverse students. According to the law, government money would be used to address learning needs of poor Latino students who could not speak English. The money would be used to guarantee equal educational opportunities for limited English proficient (LEP) students (Contreras, 1994). In addition to focus on learning needs of LEP students, studies focused on curriculum intervention and cooperative learning as means of addressing discrimination.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, several studies were done to assess children's racial attitudes. The assessments included reinforcement studies, perceptual studies, curriculum intervention studies, and cooperative learning and interracial contact studies. The reinforcement studies confirmed that Caucasian bias could be reduced using methods of reinforcement. The perceptual studies discovered that racial prejudices could be temporarily reduced by implementing interventions, such as "perceptual differentiation, vicarious interracial contact, direct interracial contact, and reinforcement of the color black" (p. 235). The curriculum intervention studies determined that racial beliefs could be changed in younger children easier than in older children if the curriculum interventions were of a significant length. Finally, the cooperative learning and interracial contact studies noted what effect student cooperative learning groups and student cooperative learning activities had on students' racial attitudes, selection of friends, and

scholastic achievement (Contreras, 1994). The series of reinforcement studies, perceptual studies, curriculum intervention studies, cooperative learning and interracial contact studies, and the small number of children's racial attitude studies done in the 1990s contributed to the establishment of the goals within the current multicultural educational approach (Banks, 2002; Banks & Banks, 2004; Garcia, 2004). Multicultural education challenged the cultural paradigm of *assimilation*.

A prevailing cultural paradigm that dominant mainstream United States citizens of that time constructed to take care of the education of diverse cultural groups was assimilation, otherwise known as Americanization (Elam, 1972; Garcia, 2004; Gonzalez, 1990). The educational philosophy of assimilation was that foreign languages, non-standard English dialects, foreign behavior, and unfamiliar ways of thinking were substandard (Carlson, 1987). Most immigrants assimilated as much as possible by learning Standard English, changing their cultural or ethnic behaviors, and adjusting their thoughts and beliefs in order to be fully included into the mainstream of the United States. Still, total assimilation was impossible for people of color such as Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and African Americans (Banks, 1997b). School districts espoused this process as a way of handling teaching increasingly diverse populations within a geographic area. Of course, due to linguistic and cultural learning differences, many non-mainstream students fell behind academically (Garcia, 2004; Nieto, 2004). The solution fashioned for school districts to address students who fell into the cultural academic gap was to create special programs that provided more small group or one-on-one situations teaching "English and American values" thereby preventing "educational failure" (Garcia, 2004, p. 498). Americanization paradigm presumes that once people of

diverse cultures were *Americanized*, the academic underachievement problem would disappear. Hence, the *melting pot* theory was created. People from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds would *melt* into the larger group, and the result would be a more favorable, more productive American culture, according to the philosophy of the mainstream population (Garcia, 2004). However, the theory of multicultural education disputed the idea of melting diverse cultures.

Banks & Banks (2004) wrote that a big issue with the intergroup philosophy was that it did not deal with the critical social issues of racism, empowerment, poverty, and inequities. Multicultural theorists assert that social issues must be integrated into content, knowledge construction, and social action programs that are components of multicultural education. Although the intergroup movement failed, ethnic studies conducted during the Civil Rights era by DuBois and during the intergroup education movement by Trager and Yarrow combined with early ethnic studies carried out by Williams (1882-83) are the basis of the multicultural education movement. Contreras (1994) emphasized that judicial projects and methods were critical in bringing about equal educational opportunities for diverse students, but Hispanic educators knew that in order for students of diverse races, ethnicities, and languages to achieve academic and citizenship equality, an appreciation and understanding of the relationship between cultural background and essential pedagogical and curricular improvements were necessary.

Emergence and Development of the Multicultural Education Theory in America

Influenced by social and educational studies conducted during the intergroup education movement, multicultural education emerged with goals of addressing issues of social discrimination and the learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds within

all aspects of instruction. "If multicultural education is to become better understood and

implemented in ways more consistent with theory, its various dimensions must be more

clearly described, conceptualized, and researched" (Banks, 1995, p. 4). The multicultural

education movement was born in the 1970s out of the need to establish political, social,

economical, and educational equality and justice for African Americans. Events

revolving around the 1954 judicial case of *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka,*

KS and the social injustice conflicts of the 1960s Civil Rights era are perhaps the largest

contributing factors to the realization that multicultural education was essential for the

cohesiveness, growth, and strength of the U.S. (Banks, 2002; Contreras, 1994). Contreras

(1994) asserts that, the most significant outcome of the 1954 *Brown v the Board of*

Education of Topeka, KS case was that the ruling would benefit Hispanic populations and

other people of diverse cultures and ethnicities with initiatives intended to provide an

education that was equitable to their Caucasian counterparts.

Multicultural Education as a Field of Study

There are several indicators that multicultural education is a field of study. One is

that multicultural education has become a topic on agendas of professional organization

meetings. Groups like the National Education Association (NEA) and the National

Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) have affirmed their dedication to the

multicultural education movement in several ways. The groups have initiated

commissions and delivered multicultural policy statements (Gay, 1995). Other

organizations that have joined the multicultural education crusade include the Association

for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the American Educational

Research Association (AERA), the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), and the

National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). NCATE has stipulated that colleges of education must include "ethnically and culturally pluralistic content and experiences in their curricula as a condition of receiving unqualified accreditation" (Gay, 1995, p. 35). All of these organizations are dedicated to multicultural education philosophy and culturally responsive instruction implementation as a means of addressing learning needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Another indicator that multicultural education has become an area of research includes the origination of two scholarly information sources: The *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* and the *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*. The *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development* was created by the Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development in 1987. The *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling* (Ponterotto, 2001) was written to address school counseling and guidance concerns of "ethnically diverse populations" (Gay, 1995, p. 36). The literature in these journals and handbooks are dedicated to addressing needs of students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds.

A final indicator that multicultural education is a field of research is the establishment of the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME).The association, formed by members of the Special Interest Group on Multicultural Education of the Association for Teacher Education (ATE), is dedicated to multicultural education issues. NAME publishes a journal called *Multicultural Perspectives* (Gay, 1995). Banks and Banks (1995) assert:

> Multicultural education is a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles,

theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and

particularly from ethnic studies and women's studies. (p. xii)

Multicultural education is a field of study evidenced by the formation of professional

organizations dedicated to its implementation and scholarly journals and books devoted

to multicultural education research.

Multicultural Education Research

Multicultural education and culturally responsive instruction are based upon

social and political historical events; passions for social equality, justice, and knowledge;

and decades of educational and social research. The majority of research dealing with the

investigation of children's racial attitudes was conducted by Jewish and African

American researchers in the late 1920s through the 1940s. Such studies include Lasker's

1929 *Race Attitudes in Children,* studies carried out in 1938 by the Horowitzes, and the

1939 study conducted by Kenneth and Mamie Clark (Banks, 2002). These studies found

that young children, from approximately the age of two and a half, are increasingly

conscious of ethnic disparities. Another renowned researcher, Goodman (1958), found in

her seven-month study of four-year olds that children's racial perspectives are, to an

extent, a reflection of the beliefs and attitudes maintained by the adults and older siblings

in their lives, which are influenced by mainstream society. In her study, African

American and Caucasian children conveyed a predilection toward the Caucasian race.

The study indicated that the preferences demonstrated by both groups of children,

African-American and Caucasian "appear to have accepted Caucasian standards for

personal appearances" (Goodman, 1950, p. 627). In addition to studies that focused on

the formulation of children's racial attitudes, were studies that focused on societal racial

perspectives.

Three studies that characterized the intergroup period in the 1940s and 50s are

significant to the conceptualization of the multicultural education theory. Myrdal (1944)

conducted a study, documented in *An American Dilemma*, in which he theorized that the

American public's principles were opposed to their racist opinions. Southern (1987),

author of *Gunnar Myrdal and Black and White: The Use and Abuse of* <u>*An American*</u>

<u>*Dilemma*</u>, points out that Gunnar Myrdal speculated that U.S. leaders could alter the

philosophical difference of race by informing people of the United States. The informed

U.S. public would in turn become fair-minded. The Carnegie Foundation had initially

funded the study, but was a key protector of interests of the mainstream public and

therefore, terminated funding because study findings on racism and other social and

political issues threatened the status quo for elite groups in the United States (Southern,

1987).

Another study was conducted by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and

Sanford in 1950: *The Authoritarian Personality.* The purpose of the study, which was

funded by the American Jewish Committee, was to identify "personality and social

conditions that caused individuals to become anti-Semitic" (Banks, 2002, p. 232).

Findings of the study indicated that people with "authoritarian personalities" (p. 232) are

the result of early childhood experiences that lead to feelings of insecurity. Those feelings

of insecurity necessitate domination over others (Banks, 2002). Adorno and colleague's

(1950) study indicated that attitudes of racial discrimination begin in childhood. Two

years after *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950) was published, Trager and Yarrow

released their findings concerning prejudice in young children.

In 1952, Trager and Yarrow published *They Learn What They Live*. The book

detailed studies of prejudice in 250 young children between the ages of five and eight

years old. Believing "prejudice represents a contradiction of values in a democratic

society" (p. 3), Trager and Yarrow used three tools to assess children's attitudes, the

effects of parents on the formation of children's attitudes, and the effects of teachers and

schooling on children's religious and racial attitudes. One assessment administered by

Trager and Yarrow was The Social Episodes Test, which involved a sequence of black

and white pictures depicting children in various social activities. The pictures also

included racial and religious suggestions. The Social Roles Test utilized brown and white

dolls, doll clothing, and doll accessories. Lastly, a set of standardized questions were

created to supplement each of the previously mentioned tests. The purpose of all the tests

was to determine the awareness and perception of each young child regarding racial,

religious, social, and economic differences in people. In addition, researchers wanted to

assess the extent to which parents influenced the formation of racial and religious

attitudes in young children and the effects teachers and schools had on the development

of children's social attitudes. The results of these studies indicated that the majority of

young children, ages 5-8, were aware of social differences such as race, religion, and

economic conditions. The study also demonstrated that children's attitudes were very

much a reflection of their parents' perspectives. Additionally, the study indicated that

teachers were in a position to affect social change and, very often, they ignored children's

prejudicial attitudes. Three possible reasons were offered to explain why many teachers

did not attempt to affect social change. One reason was that teachers were in denial of the prejudicial racial attitudes exhibited by young children. Another explanation was that some of the teachers taught in predominantly Caucasian schools, and people perceived by the staff and school population to be *troublemakers* were not members of the school population. A third possible rationale was that teachers did not perceive student actions or comments to be prejudicial because teachers shared the same social perceptions. To summarize, studies conducted by Trager and Yarrow demonstrated that young children are aware of social differences, children's racial attitudes reflect those of their parents and community, and teachers can affect social change in their students, although they often chose not to do so.

The 1960s and 70s were decades of idealism during which many American people sought to alter public racist attitudes, abolish poverty, and build a society based on equality. Caucasian colleges were welcoming teachers and students from diverse cultures and ethnicities. During that time, many of the multicultural researchers were people who represented these groups and could provide an *insider* perspective (Banks, 2002). For example, Rodríguez and her coauthors, I. M. Olmedo and Mariolga Reyes-Cruz (1995), sought to clarify the history of Puerto Rico, shed light on the diversity of Puerto Rican people, intensify awareness of social and political issues surrounding the United States and its control of Puerto Rico, and to contribute understanding of bilingual education and multicultural education.

Curriculum intervention studies of the 1960s and 70s indicated curriculum interventions successfully alter racial attitudes if experimental situations are done under specific conditions. Curriculum interventions included "teaching units and lessons,

multiethnic materials, role playing, and simulations" (Banks, 2002, p. 235). Specific

conditions included intense intervention focus, ample intervention length, and young

students. Banks (2002) stated, "Highly focused interventions of sufficient duration are

more likely to modify the racial attitudes of students than those that lack these

characteristics" (p. 235). As scholars of multicultural education gained insight concerning

the importance and impact of a culturally responsive curriculum on the formation of

students' social attitudes, other components of culturally responsive instruction were

evolving from educational research.

The majority of cooperative learning and interracial contact research in the last

thirty years is based on Allport's contact hypothesis (Banks, 2002). Allport (1979)

asserted in his book, *Nature of Prejudice,* intergroup relations would improve if the

following interaction qualities were present: (a) equal status, (b) common goals, (c)

shared interests between the groups, and (d) the support of the authorities. Several studies

done during the 1980s confirmed Allport's hypothesis and indicated that behavior and

academic success improved with effective interracial contact (Banks, 2002).

Multicultural education research done in the late 1970s and 1980s focused primarily on

children's racial attitudes. Reinforcement studies were designed to see if children's

perceptions of the colors black and white could be altered by using reinforcement

methods. Williams and Morland (1976) concluded that children tended to view the color

white in a positive manner and the color black in a negative manner. They maintained

that, through deliberate and carefully constructed and delivered behavioral modification

processes, children's negative attitudes toward the color black could be changed.

Williams and Morland believed that the children's newly acquired positive perception of the color black could then be transferred to attitudes toward "Afro-Americans" (p. 259).

Katz, Sohn, and Zalk (1975) carried out a series of studies involving second- and fifth-grade children in 1973 in which they investigated the acquisition of racial attitudes. They wanted to see how interventions involving the application of variables such as perceptual differentiation, vicarious interracial contact, direct interracial contact, and reinforcement of the color black affected students' racial viewpoints. Results of the studies indicated that variable interventions led to short-term reduction of prejudice.

Decades of research regarding the racial and cultural perceptions of U.S. populations, formation of racial attitudes in children, and effects of interventions on children's racial perceptions support the conception and growing strength of multicultural education. Past and current social and political events in the United States; passions for equality, justice, and academic equity; current population dynamics in the U.S.; and past and continuing research in the area of multicultural education implicate a need for culturally responsive instruction.

Multicultural Framework

Multicultural education is a process that infuses and continues throughout all subjects, times, and activities during the school day (Banks, 2001). Gay (1995) maintains that multicultural education includes three theorizing varieties:

> *Descriptive* analyses of educational systems and conditions that ignore or deny the importance of cultural diversity are frequently used to establish a baseline point of reference for changes. *Critical* explanations are then used to determine why these systems should be changed to be more representative of and responsive

to ethnic and cultural diversity. *Prescriptive* recommendations suggest what the

changes should embody in order for education to be maximally beneficial to an

ever-increasing variety of culturally, ethnically, racially, socially, and

linguistically pluralistic individuals, institutions, and communities. (p. 31-32)

Gay also explains that multicultural education is transmissive, transactive, and

transformative. Knowledge is transmitted from the teacher and is actively taught.

Contributions by people from all cultures are included in enabling students to learn about

their own culture and other cultures interactively. Multicultural education provides the

social insight and citizenship skills that cultivate students into activists and citizens that

the United States needs in order to become unified, socially just, and equal. Ladson-

Billings (1994) promotes the multicultural education transformative model, which is

inclusive of all cultures and cultural contributions as a continuous regular curriculum.

According to Banks and Banks (1995), multicultural education consists of

"theory, research, and practice that interrelate variables connected to race, class, and

gender" (p. 13). Banks encapsulated multicultural education into "five dimensions"

(Banks, 1995). The five dimensions include "content integration, knowledge

construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture" (p.

4). Within the knowledge construction dimension, Banks developed a four level

framework for curriculum reform. The four levels are:

Level 1: The Contributions Approach: The focus is on heroes, holidays, and

discrete cultural events.

Level 2: The Additive Approach: Content, concepts, themes, and perspectives

are added to the curriculum without changing the structure.

Level 3: The Transformation Approach: The structure of the curriculum is

changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes

from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups.

Level 4: The Social Action Approach: Students make decisions on important

Social issues and take action to help solve them. (p. 15)

According to Banks (1984), contributions to society that are representative of diverse

cultural groups should be present in a culturally responsive curriculum. In the past,

Western European perspectives and contributions were dominant in the traditional

curriculum. The balance in curriculum of diverse cultural representation with that of the

Western European representation teaches students from the mainstream group about the

contributions of American individuals from diverse cultures as well as confirms the value

of contributions for students of diverse cultures. Garcia (2004) and Sleeter and Grant

(1987) assert that the function of culturally responsive pedagogy is to provide an

equitable education and a richer educational experience for all students.

Implications for Culturally Responsive Instruction

Power issues that exist in the social and political spheres of the United States have

facilitated power issues that exist in schools and classrooms. Caucasian middle class

mainstream society has traditionally established the standards by which all others are

judged. Those who speak differently (either a foreign language or a non-mainstream

dialect of the United States), behave differently (by custom or due to a physical

handicap), or look different from the mainstream population (ethnically or physically) are

often deemed *substandard.* In classrooms, negative perceptions often maintained by

educators regarding their students' economic status, diverse home cultures, ethnicities,

appearances, abilities, and languages perpetuate the false belief that diverse learners are unable to or struggle to grasp new learning.

Culturally responsive education teaches all students about the contributions of individuals from all backgrounds while facilitating learning and building of cultural pride for each student's personal background. It is the role of teachers and schools to support all students in their acquisition of new learning as each student builds upon their valuable home knowledge. Culturally responsive education is transformative as it is ongoing and persistent throughout the school day and year (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Nieto, 1999). Culturally responsive instruction is transformative for educators and students and requires diligent reflection concerning power issues that govern personal, social, and instructional decisions that affect future academic, occupational, and citizenship opportunities of students from mainstream and diverse backgrounds.

Power Issues

Facilitation of a culturally responsive classroom and school environment and provisions of culturally responsive instruction are often met with obstacles in forms of a power struggle within the school or classroom. Teachers and students come to school with their personal backgrounds, languages, and attitudes about others, which have been formed by members of their family as well as mainstream society. Mainstream teachers often do not realize that their personal expectations, pedagogy selections, assessment methods, curriculum and materials choices, and grouping strategies are at odds with the learning needs of some students in their classrooms. Inadvertently, some teachers perpetuate mainstream social hierarchal beliefs and circumstances that limit many of their diverse students (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Nieto, 1999).

Power in schools or classrooms can be evidenced in several ways. First, unequal distribution or lack of funds provided for selected schools, which translates to unequal distribution or lack of materials, teachers, and professional specialists for selected schools. Next, perpetuation of prejudiced perceptions and expectations by teachers and administrators, including stereotyping students based on race, gender, culture, ethnicity, or language. Another power struggle often evident is the requirement of Standard English as the only acceptable form of expression in the school or classroom. Standard English, as the only form of classroom expression, limits or deprives many students from diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds opportunities to excel or participate academically. The selection of mainstream or Standard English biased assessments and curricula hinder diverse students from acquiring or accurately demonstrating knowledge.

Another way in which power is evidenced in classrooms is the practice of grouping students based on gender, ethnicity, language, ability, or race. Grouping according to these measures reinforces discriminatory attitudes (Nieto, 1999; Darling-Hammond, 2004). Nieto (1999) asserts that student learning will improve through "societal, institutional, personal, and collective levels" (p. 175). Transforming learning settings into culturally responsive environments requires acute reflection of several key instruction components. Ladson-Billings (1994) lists five multicultural education components that stand out as particularly important: "Teachers' beliefs about students, curriculum content and materials, instructional approaches, educational settings, and teacher education" (p. 22). The components mentioned by Ladson-Billings are also addressed by Banks (1997a) and Gay (1995) from their perspectives multicultural education.

Teacher Beliefs and Attitudes

Mainstream students adjust to school learning comfortably because their prior knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes about their culture and other cultures are often similar to those maintained by schools and teachers. Additionally, teachers' actions, discourse, pedagogy selections, and implemented curriculum can reinforce the social class, ethnic, cultural, and racial stereotypes that mainstream students have previously learned: diverse learners are seemingly fulfilling the false perception that they are academically inferior. Tragically, in an unfair twist, diverse learners are learning to perceive Caucasian middle class mainstream as superior and dominant while learning to feel inferior and subordinate about themselves and their own culture (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Garcia, 2004; Nieto, 1999). Teachers often do not recognize cultural or language differences that are causing diverse students to struggle or fail.

The requirement held by many educators that Standard English is the only acceptable form of expression in many classrooms leads students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to struggle with learning to read, write, and speak in school. Therefore, non-mainstream students are sometimes unfairly perceived to be inferior in academic achievement ability. A disproportionate number of culturally diverse and struggling students have been referred to special education groups, classes, or pullout programs due to inaccurate perceptions of educators. The power established in many classrooms by mainstream teachers or school administrators has created hurdles with only one way to succeed - the mainstream way (Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Delpit, 2002; Garcia, 2004; Nieto, 1999; Tatum, 1997). Frequently, diverse learners struggle or cannot overcome academic barriers without provision of equitable

instructional practices. Teacher perceptions concerning students, their parents, and diverse cultures and ethnicities influence their awareness of the need or motivation to implement equitable pedagogy for their diverse and struggling students.

Guiding principles of cultural proficiency, as described by Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003) include:

1. Culture is a predominant force; you cannot NOT be influenced by culture.

2. People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.

3. It is important to acknowledge the group identity of individuals.

4. Respect the unique cultural needs that members of dominated groups may have. (pp. 6-7)

Two barriers that prevent individuals from acquiring the principles of cultural proficiency are "the presumption of entitlement [and] unawareness of the need to adapt" (p. 7). Cultural proficiency is a journey of self-discovery and lifelong development. Lindsey, Robbins, and Terrell (2003) list six levels of the cultural proficiency continuum: "cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural pre-competence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency" (pp. 86-87). Teachers dedicated to provision of successful learning experiences for all students continuously seek to broaden their self-awareness concerning diversity and means of adapting and managing the challenges and enhancements diversity presents in learning environments.

Culturally responsive teachers demonstrate a dedication to provision of an equitable education for all students. This is done by employing culturally responsive instructional approaches; learning about students' cultural backgrounds and neighborhoods; bonding with every student; believing in each student's potential to

succeed; establishing a respectful classroom that is accepting of all cultures, ethnicities, and languages; developing trust and communication with parents and family members; and modeling culturally responsive behavior with students and colleagues. A teacher who is committed to culturally responsive instruction is knowledgeable and comfortable with his or her personal background, understands that diversity is personally transformative, and is a facilitator of social and curriculum reform. Culturally responsive educators are dedicated to the belief that all students have the ability to succeed and therefore supply whatever strategies, scaffolding, modifications, or alternative modes of task completion or means of assessment necessary to provide each student with an equitable opportunity to learn and demonstrate knowledge (Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993). Teachers' beliefs and attitudes influence instructional approach selections.

Instructional Approaches

Culturally responsive educators realize that "it may be necessary to treat groups differently in order to create equal status situations for marginalized students" (Banks, 1997a, p. 86). Therefore, they apply culturally responsive pedagogy and instruction to empower and motivate their students, set high academic standards for all of their students, provide positive and realistic images representative of diverse cultures throughout, interact with their students and coworkers in a culturally responsive manner, and facilitate culturally responsive curriculum reform and selection (Banks, 2005; Gay, 1995; Nieto, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices provides educators with skills and strategies to address the learning needs of diverse and struggling students.

Frequently, students from diverse backgrounds struggle to succeed academically in mainstream schools. Lindsey et al. (2003) state:

> Although some members of these [diverse] groups have been successful in school, their acquisition of English proficiency and dominant society mores has not necessarily ensured their access either to higher education or to the dominant culture in the United States. (p. 88)

The academic achievement gap that is created or perpetuated when teachers and schools fail to understand, value, and incorporate diverse cultural backgrounds and linguistics can establish learning environments that isolate students from diverse backgrounds. Consequently, culturally responsive educators seek pedagogies that afford each individual student unique instructional approaches explicitly needed to receive a truly equitable education (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Delpit, 1992, 2006; Garcia, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999). Awareness of second language learning processes and the need for educational support and English as a second language (ESL) teaching techniques are evident in lesson planning, strategy selection, assessment choices, task accomplishme 67 ent expression, and skill teaching order (Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993). The application of ESL teaching strategies connects diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to new learning.

Every student is given a variety of opportunities and means to succeed academically and behaviorally in order to build a positive self-image. Various resources, such as textbooks, community or familial speakers, technology, literature, the arts, newspapers and other scholarly print media are used as components of the curriculum.

Modes of technology, such as computers, are used to provide students with avenues of expression or completion of tasks, assessments, and research (Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993). These resources facilitate student-centered instruction by providing choices for task completion

Teaching is connected to each student's individual home cultures through provision of choices for study or research; completion of tasks, projects, and assessment; personal readings from multiculturally and multi-linguistically rich literacy-learning environments. Storytelling, literature, and oral expression are important components of reading instruction. The focus of culturally responsive literacy teachers is on meaning making rather than rote memorization. Instruction is provided through universally themed integrated units (Au, 1993; Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993). Implementation of multiple instructional resources and provision of choices for task completion, means of assessment, and topics of research address cultural and learning styles represented by students from diverse backgrounds.

Multicultural education can include culturally mediated instruction, in which teachers initiate discussions, activities, and learning experiences that encourage students to reflect on and question their social beliefs and attitudes. Teachers facilitate student discussions as a means of promoting respect and understanding of diverse cultures represented in the classroom, school, and community. In addition, culturally responsive instructional approaches include equitable opportunities for high-level thinking and problem solving for students as a means of providing students with the skills necessary for becoming contributing responsible citizens (Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; The Education Alliance, 2003; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993).

Before students are referred for intervention services or special education

programs, culturally responsive teachers and schools provide plenty of avenues for

students to learn and demonstrate knowledge. It may be necessary to transfer a student to

another teacher, supply a tutor, teach the child in his own language, provide culturally

sensitive and differentiated instruction, and involve parents. Students should be provided

with a means to demonstrate knowledge through multiple research-based and culturally

sensitive assessments (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006;

Garcia, 2004; Padrón et al., 2002; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993).

Before a student is referred for intervention services, changes in instructional approaches

or educational settings may be needed.

Educational Settings

Educators striving to deliver culturally responsive instruction aspire to provide an

environment in which students can learn about other cultures while identifying and

building pride in their own. Learning environments in which multicultural education

flourish value all students, cultures, languages, and dialects. Risk-taking and participatory

self-assurance on the part of students can be stifled when children feel alone and

different. Culturally responsive environment motivate students to contribute, take risks,

and learn from their mistakes (Abt-Perkins & Gomez, 1998; Artiles et al, 2004; Au,

1993; Banks, 1997a; Banks & Banks, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004). Au (1993) asserts

that the culturally responsive teacher's task is to create an environment in which students

can feel accepted, receive recognition for accomplishments, and learn literacy skills.

Additionally, culturally responsive learning environments include and value

parental participation in their child's education. Every effort is made by teachers to

explain academic and behavioral expectations to the students and families including

finding a translator if needed. Furthermore, abundant images are found throughout the

classroom that are representative of diverse populations as a means of connecting new

learning to students' home cultures, building pride in students' personal cultures, and

teaching about contributions of people from cultures different. Finally, a culturally

responsive learning environment affords students with many opportunities to express,

share, and teach others about their own culture (Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006;

Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993). Learning environments respectful of

diverse cultures involve people who are influential to students' learning and provide

students access to culturally responsive curriculum and materials.

Curriculum and Materials Selection

Educators' perceptions of the value of diverse cultures and ethnicities

representative of their student population influence curriculum and teaching material

selections. Non-culturally responsive curricula and materials fail to provide positive

representations and role models for diverse learners as well as address their unique

cultural learning styles (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Delpit, 1992,

2006; Garcia, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999). Curriculum selections often

reinforce societal, classroom, and school power establishments. Mainstream students

read, listen, and write about people from their own ethnicity who have made positive

contributions to the world. Unfortunately, in many classrooms the mention of

contributions made by people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups is rare. Often, a

selected day or month is the only opportunity taken to teach the class about contributing

individuals of diversity. This practice silently reinforces the incorrect belief that the great

contributors of benefits to humanity are Caucasian mainstream males only (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Nieto, 1999). Students need representations of role models from diverse backgrounds to expand their perceptions of diverse cultures and confirm positive attitudes regarding their own culture.

A culturally responsive curriculum presents information and visuals that encourage students to explore, understand, and develop positive attitudes about people, cultures, ethnicities, religions, languages, races, and perspectives about historical events that are different from their own. A variety of ethnic and cultural content is found throughout the curriculum. The curriculum encourages students to question their personal perspectives and actions as they learn about diverse people and communities. Prejudice reduction is facilitated through reading, discussion, and activities that address such topics as stereotyping, discrimination, and conflict (Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993). Culturally mediated instructional opportunities provided through curriculum allow students to understand diverse perspectives of events and concepts.

Another large contributor to the differences in the provision of equitable learning environments is the unequal distribution or the lack of funds allotted to schools and programs. A lack of funding denies some schools with a diverse or impoverished student population the staffing (teachers and professional specialists knowledgeable in multicultural education), culturally responsive curriculum and learning materials, and culturally appropriate assessment tools. Nieto (1999) and Darling-Hammond (1995) affirm that inequitable school funding may "influence academic failure or success" (p.

175). The provision of an equitable education for students from diverse backgrounds requires educators who are knowledgeable in multicultural education.

Teacher Education

Understanding multicultural education and improving one's knowledge of and delivery of culturally responsive instruction is an ongoing journey for teachers who desire to provide equitable instruction. Culturally responsive teacher education provides teachers with personally transformative knowledge and skills training that will enable them to teach beyond the traditional methods and address the learning needs of diverse students appropriately. The provision of culturally responsive instruction requires teachers to be continually reflective about personal biases and readily adaptable to diverse home cultures and languages of students. Teachers knowledgeable about culturally responsive teaching practices strive to align instruction with the unique academic needs each student brings to the classroom to provide equitable opportunity for academic achievement (Abt-Perkins & Gomez, 1998; Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; Banks, 1997; Banks & Banks, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Delpit, 1992, 2006; Garcia, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 1999; Wills et al., 2004; Wlodowski & Ginsberg, 1995). Culturally responsive teacher educational programs prepare teacher populations, which remain predominantly Caucasian, to address the learning needs of their students from increasingly diverse backgrounds.

Teacher and student demographics in United States classrooms have an immense impact on the necessity and urgency for implementation of multicultural education aligned practices. The Hispanic population is the fastest-growing diverse group in the United States and the population attaining the lowest academic achievement and realizing

the highest dropout rate (see Table 1). Student demographic information was gathered

from the United States Census Bureau web site (U.S. Census Bureau, 2002).

Table 1

Student Demographics for 2002

		Graduated from	
Ethnicity	Dropout Rate	High School	Enrolled in College
Caucasian	12.2%	82.0%	36.5%
African American	14.5%	77.5%	31.3%
Hispanic	30.1%	62.6%	19.9%
Asian and Pacific Islander	4.2%	91.8%	60.0%

According to the United States Census Bureau 2000 Equal Employment

Opportunity (EEO) data tool, Caucasian females continue to hold the majority of

teaching positions in elementary and middle schools (see Table 2).

Table 2

Elementary and Middle School Teacher Demographics for 2000

Ethnicity	Female	Male	Total Percentage
Caucasian	65.1%	17.2%	82.3%
African American	7.2%	1.8%	9.0%
Hispanic	4.3%	1.2%	5.5%
Asian and Pacific Islander	1.2%	0.3%	1.5%

It is clear that diverse elementary and middle school student populations in the United

States can find few teachers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds with whom

they can identify. Therefore, demographic statistics infer that the majority of teachers who are Caucasian middle-class females and speak Standard English must be provided with college preparation classes and professional growth programs that prepare them to appropriately assess and address learning needs of a rapidly increasing "culturally, ethnically, racially, and economically diverse" (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 230) student population.

In addition, political pressures continue to mount for all students to attain high academic scores and for graduation statistics to improve for diverse students. The benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy, specifically in the area of literacy instruction, are scholastically and socially advantageous for all students. Linda Darling-Hammond (2004) asserts:

> If the interaction between teachers and students is the most important aspect of effective schooling, then reducing inequality in learning has to rely to a large extent on policies that ensure equal access to competent, well-supported teachers. (p. 626)

Culturally responsive teacher preparation provides educators with tools they require to meet the diverse learning needs of students.

In conclusion, Banks (1997a) advocates in *Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society* that the United States must strive to effect a solution for a critical issue facing the populous. Students who fit into diverse cultural or low-income groups will grow up to become citizens. Only through "transforming and restructuring institutions and institutionalizing new goals and ideals within them" (p.11) can educators better

understand how to teach students from diverse backgrounds essential social and political

skills they need to effectively participate as responsible and contributory citizens.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Historical social events together with current political and diverse population issues in the United States implicate the necessity for multicultural education as a means of addressing learning needs of all students. Past and ongoing research confirm the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy for building self-esteem, confirming pride in students' cultures, and facilitating new knowledge acquisition for diverse students. However, a gap persists between the academic achievement of diverse and mainstream students. Recent newscasts, current school populations, and United States Census Bureau statistics substantiate the fact that the fastest-growing population in the United States is the Latino population (Artiles et al., 2004; Au, 1993; U.S. Census Bureau, 2000, 2004; Gamboa, 2008; Garcia, 2004; Tatum, 1997; Banks, 2005). Teachers are faced with addressing the learning needs of a student population that is becoming increasingly culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse. Scholars are focusing more on multicultural education as a means of addressing learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds. Just like their students, teachers bring to the classroom their personal cultural identities and their learned perceptions of other cultures, languages, dialects, traditions, ethnicities, religions, and abilities different from their own.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teacher perceptions and implementation of multicultural education and culturally responsive instructional practices as a means of addressing the literacy-learning needs of diverse and struggling students in two primary classrooms in an urban Southeastern elementary school. Two qualitative questions were explored through the observation of reading instruction:

1. What are teacher self-descriptive beliefs and attitudes of the multicultural education theory, and how do their perceptions of multicultural education differ from the culturally responsive instructional practices observed during literacy instruction?

2. How do teachers implement multicultural education to address learning needs of their diverse students, and how does their culturally responsive pedagogy align with multicultural education theories outlined by prominent researchers?

Selection of School and Subjects

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions maintained by two primary literacy teachers about multicultural education and to examine their implementation of the multicultural education theory and culturally responsive instructional practices as they address the diverse learning needs of their Hispanic students. In order to obtain teacher responses that were as unbiased as possible, it was important to establish trusting and professional relationships. It was also necessary to observe teachers who were teaching in a school district that had a comparatively high diverse student population.

School district web sites and the SchoolMatters (2008) web site were explored to gain student population statistics. The school district that was identified was one of two districts located in an urban area within the Western Kentucky region to which the researcher had no previous connection. The selected school district had greater population of students from diverse backgrounds (36%). According to the SchoolMatters (2008) web site, Hispanic students made up 8% of the diverse population. The school district also had a 54% population of students who were economically disadvantaged and, therefore considered *at-risk*. Furthermore, the English language learner (ELL) population

was 12%. Finally, a portion of the district's strategic improvement plan was in the area of culturally responsive instruction. For the sake of confidentiality, the school district, as well as the school, principal, teachers, and any students mentioned in the study will be referred to with the use of pseudonyms.

The selected school district and SchoolMatters (2008) web sites provided additional information concerning diverse student populations attending each of the five elementary schools within the selected school district. Three of the schools had relatively high diverse student populations. The school selected from those three had the highest percentage of students from diverse backgrounds (77%). Hispanic students comprised 31% of the student population. The school had a 100% at-risk student population and 42% were ELL students. The school improvement plan indicated high learning expectations for all students and the implementation of a supportive and culturally responsive environment that facilitates the acceptance and personal value of all students, including students from diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

Two teachers were identified by the state Reading Project director, the Reading First coach, a local university literacy professor, and Ms. Swan (the school principal) to be particularly suited for the study. The study was explained to the teachers in detail. Dates and times for the observations were established, and each teacher signed a consent form (Appendix A).

<div align="center">Study Design</div>

The two primary school teachers who were chosen to be subjects of this study were a first grade teacher (Robin) and a second grade teacher (Piper) teaching in a Western Kentucky school, Wesken School. The students in the classrooms were not study

subjects. However, responses provided by the students through teacher-student discourse during the literacy block instruction were critical to the observation. Twenty-four students were in Robin's first grade class. All of the children were economically disadvantaged. Of the twenty-four children, four were Caucasian, eight were Hispanic, six were African American, one was Liberian, and five were biracial. Ten of the twenty-four children were ELL students. Piper's classroom was comprised of twenty students. All of the students were economically disadvantaged. Three of the twenty children were Caucasian, one was Hispanic, four were Bosnian, one was Vietnamese, one was African, and ten were African American. All literacy instruction observations took place in the respective teachers' classrooms. Parental consent forms in English (Appendix B) and Spanish (Appendix C) were sent home with students and were to be returned to the teacher with the signature only if the parent or guardian did not wish their child's voice to be audio-recorded during the observations.

Observation of the teachers' culturally responsive literacy instruction took place between early January and the end of February. The types of literacy instruction that were observed consisted of whole group, small Tier I and II reading groups, small group, centers, and one-on-one instruction. During the literacy block instructional period, specific reading instruction such as phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary was observed. Although writing was also taught during this instructional period, the focus of this study was on reading instruction. Other qualitative tools that were used to gather data regarding perspectives and events (or activities) outside the scope of observation included a *Cultural Competence Self-Awareness* questionnaire (Lindsey et al., 2003, pp. 152-153), a formal initial interview (Appendix

D), a formal exit interview (Appendix E), and informal interviews conducted post-observation as needed.

Teacher Selection Criteria

Selection of the two primary teacher participants was based upon the following criteria: (1) a minimum of two years teaching experience; (2) completion of Kentucky Reading Project (KRP) training or completion of undergraduate or graduate literacy courses; and (3) known to demonstrate sensitivity consistently toward their diverse student populations by planning instruction to meet students' unique academic needs. Information concerning the teachers was gathered from informal conversations with a university literacy professor, the regional Kentucky Reading First Coach, and the university Kentucky Reading Project director. In addition, all of the aforementioned professionals supplied a rank-order list of four teachers who met the teacher selection criteria. Teacher names that repeated on each list were selected by the researcher in the same rank order that they appeared on the lists.

The school principal, Ms. Swan, viewed the list and eliminated one teacher because there was a strong possibility that she would transfer during the course of the study. The three remaining teachers on the list were observed briefly. Ms. Swan recommended two teachers from the list that she felt to be particularly suited for the study. Following the preliminary observation and with consideration to Ms. Swan's suggestion, two teachers were selected based upon the diverse student populations within their classrooms and the culturally responsive instruction that each teacher implemented during the preliminary observation.

Procedures

The observations were conducted from early January to the end of February. Observations of each teacher were conducted approximately two times per week per teacher. The total number of observations was ten per teacher (totaling twenty observations) over a five-week period. Each observation lasted approximately 105 minutes per visit. Both teachers taught various facets of reading instruction during the literacy block, which occurred between eight-thirty and ten-thirty every morning except on some Fridays. On occasional Fridays, the literacy block would start at nine o'clock following a school assembly.

The practice of triangulation was achieved by collecting qualitative data in the forms of maps of the learning environments, a preliminary *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment* questionnaire (Lindsey et al., 2003, pp. 152-153), an initial interview, post-observation questions, an exit interview, and observation field notes. Information gathered on the formal preliminary questionnaires, initial interview, and exit interview were in the teachers' own words. Preliminary questionnaires and initial interviews were administered before the first observations. Exit interviews were administered after the last observation. Participants' responses to informal post-observation interviews, conducted as needed to clarify observations throughout the study, were also in teachers' own words. All informal interview data was gathered from spontaneous questions and via email between teachers and researcher. No students were interviewed and no student work samples were collected, as students were not subjects of the study.

The researcher created a chart of culturally responsive teacher characteristics assembled from scholarly and research-based sources. The culturally responsive teacher

characteristics chart was used to maintain the researcher's focus during observations and for data analysis. Both teachers were given The *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment* (Lindsey et al., 2003, pp. 152-153), which is a formal information-gathering tool and was used as the preliminary teacher questionnaire. The questionnaire was a non-threatening method of research that provided the teachers with a means of reflecting upon and identifying their perceptions concerning diversity and cultural awareness in relationship to themselves, their coworkers, and the students' represented in their classrooms. The formal initial teacher interview consisted of 15 questions formulated with the purpose of gathering information regarding each teacher's beliefs and attitudes concerning reading instruction provision for struggling readers; determining each teacher's background and literacy instruction preparation; and ascertaining teachers' perceptions about the theory of multicultural education and culturally responsive instruction.

Field notes were collected including the time in five-minute increments and detailed notes regarding the learning environment, teacher-student discourse, learning activities, and teacher behaviors. Small group literacy instruction was audio-recorded occasionally for data collection accuracy. After the observations, the pertinent audio-recorded data were transcribed and then destroyed, assertions and questions were added to the field notes, and post-observation questions were emailed to the participants. All informal post-observation questions were posed as the need arose for observation clarification.

Every effort was made to establish a professional and trusting relationship with the teachers in order to gain accurate insight into their beliefs and attitudes concerning their students, multicultural education, equity pedagogy, and culturally responsive

literacy instruction practices. Classroom maps were drawn and labeled on a lap top computer over the course of several observation sessions to contribute to the learning environment data. Finally, the researcher formulated a structured exit interview consisting of 15 questions, for the purpose of addressing and clarifying culturally responsive literacy instruction beliefs and practices related to the observed literacy instructional, inquire about teacher perspectives concerning culturally responsive teacher preparation, gather information about literacy activities and events outside the scope of observation. The exit interview was administered after the last observation session.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis included theme and pattern identification in field notes and post-observation reflection of documented assertions and questions. The researcher developed a chart containing culturally responsive teacher characteristics collected from scholarly literature that was used in the analysis of observations, formal and informal interviews, teacher questionnaires, and classroom maps to identify culturally responsive literacy instruction practices demonstrated by the teachers. Preliminary questionnaires, initial interviews, and exit interviews were used to ascertain teachers' self-descriptive beliefs and attitudes of multicultural education and their culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as to gather information about literacy events and activities outside the scope of the researcher's observation. Using the chart of culturally responsive teacher characteristics, gathered self-descriptive responses provided by teachers and their observed culturally responsive teaching practices from these five qualitative data collection instruments could be compared to multicultural education theories conceived by Banks, Gay, and Ladson-Billings.

Summary

A qualitative case study was built from the examination of interviews, responses to the questionnaires, data collected from observations, and responses to post-observation questions provided by primary literacy teachers. The researcher elected to conduct observations from the perspective of a non-participant observer and sought to be as inconspicuous as possible thereby reducing observer effect. This qualitative study was conducted in a first grade classroom and a second grade classroom and the teachers were the study subjects. Students in the classroom were not study subjects, although it was necessary that the classrooms be populated by students from diverse backgrounds and languages. The primary qualitative data collection techniques included interviews, questionnaires, e-mail messages, classroom maps, and observations of primary teachers during literacy instruction blocks. Learning environments were described in detail, teacher and student discourse during large group, small group, and center instruction were transcribed word-for-word. Parentheses were used to insert teacher actions in the midst of discourse. Brackets were used to include non-spoken clarification of statements made by the subjects. An underscore line was placed in teacher dialogue to indicated pauses in the teachers' speech patterns. Data interpretation of the observations, classroom maps, interviews, and questionnaires, collectively contributed to an ethnographic case study of two primary school literacy teachers in which themes and patterns emerged from the teachers' responses, pedagogical practices, and behaviors regarding multicultural education and culturally responsive instruction.

Chapter 4

Results

Wesken Elementary School was selected as the study site due to the high population of students from diverse backgrounds. Although students were not study subjects, it was necessary to observe teachers during reading instruction with their diverse and struggling students.

Wesken Elementary School's Educational Setting

Located in Weskenton in Western Kentucky, Wesken Elementary School thrives. Originally, Wesken Elementary School began addressing learning needs of Weskenton's student population twenty years ago. In 2005, a new blond-bricked school building was built that currently welcomes 340 (SchoolMatters, 2008) students from diverse populations into its classrooms. The L-shaped single level preK-5 building contains approximately 24 classrooms. Wesken Elementary School sits on a street corner within a neighborhood of small neatly kept single-family homes.

Visitors to Wesken Elementary School enter through main doors located where the two main halls join. Upon entering, visitors find themselves in front of school administration offices and across from the library center. Seventeen K-5 classrooms and several specialty classrooms are to the right. Specialty classrooms are primarily used for Art, Music, ESL, and other special instructional services. Wesken Elementary School is clearly designed to facilitate whole school or multiple classroom gatherings.

Weskenton is 81% Caucasian (School Digger, 2008). However, it is becoming increasingly diverse, unlike smaller surrounding communities. Wesken Elementary School's student population is representative of the surrounding neighborhood

population. Ninety-nine percent of students are eligible for reduced or free lunches.

Diverse student populations attending Wesken Elementary School include: African

American, 39.1%; Caucasian, 23.5%; Hispanic, 30.9%; Asian/Pacific Islander 5.3%;

Native American, 0.3%; and other diverse populations including Bosnian, Albanian,

Cambodian, and Liberian, 0.9% (SchoolMatters, 2008). Wesken is a Title 1 elementary

school. Most students attending Wesken Elementary School are considered *at-risk*.

Factors contributing to students' *at risk* status include poverty, single-parent homes, and

English Language Learners (ELL).

According to the teachers who participated in this study, Wesken Elementary

School provides information for parents from diverse backgrounds in English, Spanish,

Bosnian, and other languages. Weekly school newsletters, permission slips, testing

information, school district policies, and school policies in English and Spanish were

observed in Wesken's school office. Staff members facilitate translations by accepting

assistance from bilingual parents, community members, and coworkers. Wesken

Elementary School maintains a multilingual web page that posts school newsletters in

English, Spanish, and Bosnian.

Wesken Elementary School's outward appearance suggests a learning environment

that is welcoming and respectful of diverse populations. The comprehensive school

improvement plan suggests awareness of the dynamics diversity presents and a

willingness to make changes necessary to facilitate academic successes for all students.

Multi-lingual communication suggests the teaching staff's desire to inform families from

diverse backgrounds concerning Wesken Elementary School's cultural expectations and

provide students with successful learning opportunities. Wesken Elementary School implements several culturally responsive strategies to address issues of diversity.

The Teachers

Teacher study participants were Robin and Piper. Both teachers were reputed by a local university literacy professor, regional Kentucky Reading First Coach, and university Kentucky Reading Project director to be exemplary literacy teachers. Observations of both teachers confirmed these recommendations. In addition, Robin and Piper demonstrated dedication to students' literacy-learning successes.

Ladson-Billings (1994) maintains that five elements are important in the facilitation of multicultural education: "teacher's beliefs and attitudes, curriculum content and materials, instructional approaches, educational settings, and teacher education" (p. 22). Banks (1997a) asserts that teachers are a significant variable in multicultural education implementation. Teachers are so significant, in fact, that they influence the four remaining items listed by Ladson-Billings.

Each teacher's self-perceptions concerning cultural awareness were analyzed and compared with self-descriptive perspectives concerning perceptions and implementation of multicultural education. Influences each teacher's perspectives made on curriculum and materials selections, instructional approaches, educational setting establishment, and teacher education choices and practices were analyzed. Finally, teacher perceptions and implementations of multicultural education were examined and compared with theories of multicultural education conceived by well-known scholars. During analysis, various recurring themes emerged concerning teachers' perceptions, implementation, and theoretical alignment of culturally responsive teaching practices. Emergent themes

included teachers' facilitation of an empowering environment, perceptions concerning multiculturalism and equal education opportunities, perceptions and actions concerning literacy instruction and multicultural education, perpetuation of cultural discontinuity, and dedication to students' successes.

Part One

Robin

At the time of this study, Robin was in her seventh year of teaching. She taught kindergarten for three years and was in her fourth year of teaching first grade. Robin graduated from a local university with an undergraduate degree in Elementary Education and received the degree of Master of Arts in Elementary Education in May 2007. Robin also completed Kentucky Reading Project (KRP) training. During interviews, Robin stated that personally and professionally she desires to interact with people from diverse backgrounds. She stated, "My best friend is Latino. My boyfriend is African American." Robin is a young Caucasian first grade teacher at Wesken Elementary School.

All of Robin's 24 diverse students received free or reduced lunch. Eight of her students were Latino from México, El Salvador, or Columbia; six students were African American; one student was Liberian; five students were biracial; and four students were Caucasian. Ten students had English Language Learner (ELL) plans, four students received speech services, and two students had Individual Education Plans (IEP). Additionally, several students had been diagnosed with autism, ADHD, or Aspergers.

According to the *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment* questionnaire (Lindsey et al., 2003, pp. 152-153), Robin considers herself culturally competent or culturally proficient. Her questionnaire indications were based on accumulated knowledge, life

experiences, perspectives, and values. Robin accurately described a perception of cultural competence from a mainstream vantage point. However, twenty-one *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment* questionnaire items were contradicted by her interview answers.

Analysis of interview and observation data demonstrate that Robin's mainstream perspectives align with images of social normalcy presented in most local, state, and national media as well as most curriculum selections. Implemented curriculum and assessments, perceived student learning deficiencies, and perceptions of learning needs demonstrated by at-risk students reveal Robin's beliefs and attitudes concerning learning abilities and citizenship roles of diverse and mainstream populations as well as her desire to preserve the status quo. Furthermore, analysis of questionnaire and interview responses indicates that Robin does not have complete understanding of equity pedagogy or the theory of multicultural education, which hinders her ability to provide an empowering learning environment for her diverse and struggling students.

Empowering Learning Environment.

The child's home is his or her first learning environment. When children come to school, they enter another learning environment. For mainstream students, school learning environments may present concepts, speech, and behaviors that are very similar to their home learning environments (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Delpit, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2004). "A culture has physical aspects [visual], such as buildings, clothing, and works of art, and [invisible] mental or behavioral aspects, such as beliefs about raising children or standards for politeness" (Au, 1993, pp.4-5). Students from diverse backgrounds often find that visible and invisible aspects of school learning culture,

especially concepts, speech, and behaviors, are very different, sometimes contradictory to their home learning environment. Cultural discontinuity occurs, resulting in misunderstandings between educators' expectations and students' comprehension of mainstream educational system and demands (Au, 1993). At the time of this study, Robin was in the process of trying to establish a classroom environment that was accepting and respectful of diverse cultures, ethnicities, races, languages, abilities, and learning styles.

Robin's classroom was large, organized, and well illuminated. Five learning centers were located around the room. All learning centers were clearly labeled in English: listening and comprehension, writing, word works (phonics), vocabulary, and computer. A bulletin board above the computer center exhibited the following items: daily schedule with clock cutouts indicating activity times, computer directions, vowel chart, and student work samples. Work samples consisted of one third of a page of writing and an illustration. A title above student work samples was entitled, "We Hit the Target (My Words Match the Illustrations. I Put Spaces Between my Words)."

The learning environment in Robin's classroom supports her self-reported belief that "every child should have the same educational opportunities." It was observed that all behavior and task expectations were equal for all students. Although a variety of activities were offered at learning centers, all children were required to do the same tasks in the same way. No instructional differentiation was observed during learning center activities. Robin describes expectations for students:

I expect all children to participate in the activities. We use CHAMPs in the classroom. The parents were given CHAMPs info at the beginning of the year. I

send assessment info home. I send a newsletter home weekly with the objectives.

I call parents and I conference with the parents.

According to Robin, CHAMPs is a classroom management and motivation system created by Sprick (1998). Schools or teachers use acronyms (C for conversation, H for help, A for activity, M for movement, and P for participation) to write specific procedures to be taught and practiced. Robin stated that Wesken Elementary School has "a team that wrote the school wide procedures." She felt confident that students and their parents understood behavioral and academic expectations.

Robin posted academic and behavioral expectations on her web page for parents and students. Additionally, Robin stated that she informed parents through newsletters, notes, phone calls, and conferences throughout the school year, employing a translator if necessary. She explained that she spends "a lot of time practicing the procedures throughout the year" with students. When asked how she explains expectations to non-English speaking students, Robin responded:

Repeating and saying things in various ways, ESL teacher, modeling by the teacher and other students, and translators. It is very important to become familiar with the child's cultural values and beliefs. I must communicate with the parents.

Robin asserted that students understood behavioral and learning expectations:

Yes [the students understand]. I believe that they understand the behavioral expectations. We spend a lot of time practicing the procedures throughout the year. We role-play, use examples and non-examples, etc. through the use of CHAMPs. There are posters for them to refer back to with pictures. I do a lot of

modeling to ensure that the children understand the learning expectations. I

provide them with guided reading practice also.

In addition to CHAMPs, Robin employs several motivation strategies:

Positive Praise.

A-Team: students are rewarded weekly for completing homework. They also eat

lunch in the classroom.

Classroom dollars: they [the students] get seven dollars a day. They can lose a

dollar for not following rules. On Friday, we shop in the class store.

Names in a Box (Treasure Box) – draw a name – reward if following the rules.

All systems mentioned by Robin are methods to elicit appropriate behavior from

students.

Appropriate behavior is an important aspect of citizenship. Robin asserted that

there is a correlation between good citizenship and education: "I believe that teaching our

children to be good citizens is a very important part of education." Robin's response

indicates a belief that citizenship is defined as behaving appropriately as deemed by

school or classroom expectations. Robin stated that behaving appropriately is a choice:

"Most students choose to follow the rules. However, some students prefer to entertain."

When students do not meet expectations, there are consequences, such as losing

classroom dollars for not following rules or contacting parents.

Robin's interview responses and established learning environment suggest that

she believes in equal educational opportunities and learning conditions for all students.

She seeks to provide a learning environment that welcomes students from diverse

cultures and ethnicities. However, Robin expects her diverse and struggling students to meet mainstream behavioral and academic expectations.

Multiculturalism and Equal Educational Opportunities

Several of Robins' interview responses indicated belief in multiculturalism and equal education opportunities for students. Both beliefs are necessary for multicultural education facilitation. However, neither defines multicultural education. Multiculturalism is simply a belief in community diversity (MSN Encarta, 2008). The basic concept of multicultural education is provision of equal learning opportunities for all students (Banks, 1997a). Robin stated personal and theoretical beliefs concerning multicultural education:

> I believe every child should have the same educational opportunities. I believe that every child should follow the rules that we have in the classroom. I believe that every child should have the opportunity to share their cultural beliefs and their celebrations that are celebrated in their culture.

Robin's *egalitarian* responses throughout informal and formal interviews, demonstrate a philosophy that "all individuals should have the same opportunities for social, political, and economic success, as well as for educational success" (Au, 1993, p. 11). Robin's use of the term *equal education* reveals a perception that multicultural education is provision of the same learning opportunities for all students, a belief that agrees with Banks' concept of multicultural education. In addition, Banks asserts that multicultural education is an educational reform movement and an ongoing process (1997a) with a focus on provision of an equitable pedagogy. Multiculturalism and provision of equal educational opportunities implemented alone suggest Robin maintains an opinion that students should

assimilate. Assimilation is the act of forsaking one's background, customs, and cultural expectations in favor of those maintained by mainstream society or school culture (Elam, 1972; Garcia, 2004; Gonzalez, 1990). Robin does not indicate personal focus on the implementation of equity pedagogy. Although, Robin's statement indicates a perception that students' home cultures and school culture are often different, she believes that school cultural rules are dominant over rules of home cultures. Nor does she allude to how students' cultural and ethnic differences influence pedagogy selections, curriculum and material implementation, learning environment establishment, or teacher education goals.

When asked how her personal culture and ethnicity affect instructional approach selections, Robin replied:

> I don't feel that my background culture or ethnicity has really helped me or affected me [in my instructional approach]. I am very sympathetic yet eager to help these students become high achievers and encourage them to be the best they can be.

Robin's view that her background has not influenced instructional approach selections aligns with Tatum's (1997) assertion that mainstream educators are often not aware that their background influences their instructional pedagogy selections or learning of their students from diverse backgrounds. Since mainstream teachers' backgrounds align with pictures from most media of dominant society and institutions, mainstream teachers often see themselves as the norm and believe that diverse groups share life and learning experiences similar to theirs: "The truth is that dominants do not really know what the experience of subordinates is" (Tatum, 1997, p. 24). Robin is aware that her life

experiences differ from those experienced by many students. However, her self-described perception indicates that she is not clear as to how significant those differences are. Contrary to questionnaire indications, Robin does not fully understand her students' life experiences, their cultures, and the impact her culture and ethnicity have on their new learning acquisition.

As a mainstream teacher, Robin does not perceive that cultural differences pose learning obstacles for diverse and struggling students. Her belief suggests an unintentional perpetuation of structural inequality patterns that supports mainstream perspectives. Although Robin does not intend to discriminate, she is repeating what she has been taught in mainstream society. She indicated a desire to help students from diverse backgrounds "be the best that they can be," or achieve mainstream expectations. Robin's expectation is for people from diverse backgrounds to adapt to the mainstream environment.

When asked about how students' diversity affects instructional approach selection, Robin stated:

> I am eager to learn more about their culture – Black Americans, African Americans, Caucasians in poverty, Latino, Bosnian, etc. I want to know how they celebrate and how life was in the country they came from or where they live [now].

Robin's statement confirms a questionnaire item in which she indicated that she wants to learn about cultures represented by students. Her statement also substantiates that she does not have much knowledge about cultures represented by diverse students. For

example, Robin states that she wants to learn more about "Caucasians in poverty," indicating that she, as a Caucasian woman, did not grow up in poverty.

Robin's word choice also suggests a perception that the term *diverse cultures* refers only to students born in countries other than the United States. In addition, Robin's comment, "I want to know how they celebrate, and how life was in the country they came from or where they live [now]," suggests that she assumes *culture* refers primarily to traditions and celebrations.

Interestingly, Robin's response did not describe how student diversity affects her instructional approach selections. Robin suggested again that she is aware that cultures, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, traditions, and current living situations of many students are unfamiliar to her. Yet, she still does not describe how her experiences significantly differ from those of many students. Miller (1986) maintains that people from mainstream backgrounds do not like to consider inequality because it disturbs established rationalizations that explain the status quo. Consequently, Robin understands that she has experienced social privileges that are often denied to others, but to ponder social inequalities any deeper would shake Robin's established perceptions of rationalizations and deficit theories intended to preserve hierarchies that maintain the status quo established by mainstream society. Robin believes two prerequisites of multicultural education: multiculturalism and equal educational opportunities. However, interview responses and observed behavior demonstrate a lack of knowledge concerning multicultural education theory.

Literacy Instruction and Multicultural Education

Robin's lack of knowledge concerning the breadth and scope of multicultural education affects selection and implementation of literacy curriculum and materials, facilitation of equity pedagogy, level of ethnic studies knowledge construction, incorporation of prejudice reduction instruction, and establishment of an empowering classroom culture and social structure. She was asked on three different occasions to describe or indicate her level of comfort with the term *multicultural education*. Robin did not respond on any occasion, suggesting either an awareness of her lack of knowledge or perhaps a level of discomfort concerning the topic of multicultural education. Interview responses demonstrate that Robin's application of multicultural education is limited to a belief in equal educational opportunities, provision of some instructional scaffolding, and minimal cultural contribution opportunities in the form of connections from students.

Content Integration and Curriculum. Interview and observational data indicate that almost all aspects of literacy instruction in Robin's classroom were preassembled elements of an instructional package prepared by Reading First. Reading First is a federal initiative within the No Child Left Behind Act dedicated to reading improvement of children in grades K-3. In particular, Reading First targets schools with students who fall into the following categories: low income, diverse racial and ethnic populations, ELL students, and special education students (USDE, 2008). Robin stated, and observations confirmed, that she uses a variety of materials such as anthologies, leveled readers, graphic organizers, and realia (objects, photographs, or activities used to connect new learning to real life) to address diverse literacy-learning needs of students. Robin expounded on Wesken Elementary School's Reading First grant:

The Reading First grant paid for the materials, but we [school] got to choose the

materials we wanted to use. We use the Houghton Mifflin series. We actually just

received money from them [Reading First], but of course, we have to use the

money as the grant is written. For example, it says we will assess the children

using GRADE and DIBELS, so that is what we use and have to send the

information to them [Reading First]. We use *Early Success*, *Soar to Success*,

Road to the Code, and many other materials for intervention. Those are all in our

grant. The length of our reading block [90 minutes] is specifically stated in our

grant. There are lots of suggestions for center activities, writing activities, games,

etc. Of course, we use some of them and we create our own. In the first grade we

work together to create center activities. Each first grade teacher creates a center

and Mrs. Peacock [special education teacher] and the ESL teacher create a center

activity. There are lots of think alouds in the anthologies as well.

According to the United States Department of Education (USDE, 2008), Reading First is

a research-based literacy instruction program that offers good teaching and learning

possibilities for at-risk students. However, differentiated literacy instruction was not

implemented through Reading First curriculum or related instructional practices. Gay

(1995) states, "Curriculum plays a key role in this process [educational equity and

excellence for all children]; it is a powerful avenue through which multiculturalism can

penetrate the core of *educational systems*" (p. 46). Robin detailed Reading First's

program and grant, and described some materials and strategies, but did not describe her

opinion concerning the program. Her perception that mainstream life experiences and

privileges are the social norm is confirmed, as she does not question the cultural

responsiveness of Reading First curriculum or practices. She does not question cultural and ethnic content, or level of knowledge construction facilitated within the curriculum. Diversity and significance of students' learning needs did not appear to be considered, suggesting that learning obstacles rest with students and that Robin's instruction is predominantly teacher-centered.

An important student-centered literacy instructional concern is a focus on meaning making during reading versus rote reading. When asked to describe her perspective concerning meaning making and rote reading, Robin stated:

> As a Reading First school, we place a lot of emphasis on making meaning. I believe as a child is beginning to read and learn words, we read a lot just for rote reading. As a child becomes a reader, we begin placing more emphasis on making meaning. Making meaning is why we read so that is definitely our goal.

Robin's answer indicates that she emphasizes rote reading in her reading instruction. Observed Reading First instructional focus, aligned with Reading First components (USDE, 2008), was on the following skills: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. In rote reading, students are not required to understand what they have read. Rote reading is a low-level passive reading process, in which students simply must call out words accurately. Meaning making is a high-level active reading process in which students interact with text and author while implementing strategies to construct meaning (DuBois, 1998). Each time students read in Robin's classroom, reading focus was on rote. On one occasion, Robin was observed working with a small reading group of Hispanic students:

> Robin looked at the book: *Chad and the Big Egg*. What does *hatching* mean?

Turn to p. 2 and put your magic finger on the word *Chad*. 1, 2, 3, let's read.

The group read in unison. Some students stumbled over some words.

Robin: We are going to start over.

They reread in unison. Some students stumble.

Robin: Let's read that again.

They read again.

Robin sometimes explained the rationale for skills instruction to students. During the first and eighth observations, reading instruction focus was on monitoring. The following is an excerpt of observation one:

> Robin: We are going to practice monitoring our reading. The reason we monitor and clarify our reading is to understand what we read. Because if we don't understand what we read, it won't make sense to us. What are some monitoring strategies that we do?

> Karl: Reread

> Ashley: Ask questions.

> Karl: Look at the pictures.

> Teddy: Preview the book with a picture walk.

Although occasional lessons focused on meaning making, literacy instruction in Robin's classroom focused on skills, accuracy, and rote reading, indicating a transmissive teaching process.

According to The Education Alliance (2006), culturally responsive curriculum consist of textbooks and other sources (to encourage research, interviewing, and offer diverse perspectives), facilitate activities that reflect diverse student backgrounds

(cooperative grouping and making choices), and "develop integrated units around universal themes" (p. 6). Robin was asked to describe thematic or unit instructional approaches. She stated, "We plan around our reading units. We try to integrate Science and Social Studies activities into our learning centers." Houghton Mifflin anthologies are divided into themes. Themes include fiction and nonfiction stories, fables, and poems from several countries and cultures. In addition, Robin was observed incorporating leveled books and self-selected stories to supplement themes, such as *The City Mouse and the Country Mouse*. Themes were followed in sequence, as outlined by Reading First.

First grade reading anthologies are divided into ten themes and teachers are encouraged to follow themes in order. To some extent, Houghton-Mifflin reading materials integrated content from diverse backgrounds into themes. Examples of diverse content provided in nonfiction, realistic fiction, and folktale genres include: *To Be a Kid* (nonfiction) by Maya Ajmera and John D. Ivanko (theme two), *Caribbean Dream* (realistic fiction) by Rachel Isadora (theme four), and *When I Am Old With You* (realistic fiction) by Angela Johnson (theme nine). Accompanying leveled books include *House and Homes* (nonfiction) by Ann Morris (theme 5) and *Cukoo/Cucu* (Mayan folktale) by Lois Ehlert (theme 8). Although, Houghton-Mifflin provided some content representative of diverse backgrounds, Robin did not incorporate self-selected materials to enhance ethnic studies during literacy block instruction.

According to Robin, Reading First selects reading curriculum, delineates amount of time spent on reading instruction, specifies assessments to be used, and decides order in which lessons are to be presented. Either the stories in the anthology were read to

students by Robin during whole group, or the entire class read stories aloud in unison. On one occasion, Robin's class read in unison *Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeney. Occasionally, Robin supported learning by providing self-selected materials to scaffold students' understanding. Robin stated:

> There are many things that you sometimes assume that children will know that many of our children [at Wesken Elementary School] do not know. We must be very explicit and systematic in our instruction. Sometimes it is very difficult to plan and think of everything we need. Monday night I was searching for stuffed animals to use to tell the story *The Mouse's House* [in the anthology]. I know I have to do this to give the children the best instruction and to help their vocabulary and comprehension. However, it is very tiring. [I access] Prior knowledge – a lot of questioning prior to teaching the lesson gives me a good idea of their prior knowledge. Then we can go from there. Sometimes I bring in pictures I find of something on the internet to help with their understanding after the lesson if they do not understand [the previously taught concept]. I had a little boy that didn't know what a marshmallow was when we had hot chocolate while reenacting the Polar Express. I would have never dreamed he didn't know what a marshmallow was. We enjoyed lots of marshmallows that morning.

Robin accessed prior knowledge to plan instruction in the previous lesson and used manipulatives in another lesson to scaffold understanding. During one observation, she implemented several nesting gift boxes to demonstrate smaller communities fitting into larger communities. The *Weskenton* box fit into a slightly larger *Kentucky* box, which fit into a slightly larger *United States* box, and so on. Robin's efforts confirm her self-

descriptive statement, "I am very sympathetic, yet eager, to help these students become high achievers and encourage them to be the best they can be." Reading instruction always addressed small or whole group learning needs. No materials, curriculum, or assessments specifically addressed learning needs of individual students.

Observed reading instruction addressed literacy skills, such as comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, story components (e.g., plot, setting, characters, beginning, middle, and end), map reading, following directions, cause and effect, summarizing, making inferences, imaging, connecting, questioning, predicting, concept development, and clarifying and monitoring. Phonics and phonemic awareness instruction was included in anthologies. Robin stated that she, fellow first grade teachers, Mrs. Peacock, and the ESL teacher developed learning center activities and materials that supported or reinforced small group phonics, small group reading, and whole group instruction. Often students were placed in cooperative groups of multi-ability pairs or trios, as suggested by Houghton-Mifflin's teacher edition, to work on learning center activities. Learning center activities were always paper and pencil tasks. No book clubs or literature circles were observed during literacy block instruction.

Literacy Assessment. Literacy assessments Robin implemented include running records, GRADE, DIBELs, weekly multiple choice assessments provided through Houghton Mifflin, and *Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State for English Language Learners* (ACCESS for ELLs). ACCESS assesses listening, speaking, reading, and writing comprehension of students learning English. ELL students are assessed using ACCESS annually to determine performance levels of English comprehension in four language domains: "Oral language, literacy, comprehension, and

overall" (Gottlieb, 2008, p. 8). Students receive an English language proficiency rating of "entering, beginning, developing, expanding, bridging, and reaching" (p. 20). According to Robin, Houghton-Mifflin weekly assessments assessed five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Robin described methods for selecting assessments:

> We are a Reading First school. The curriculum is selected for us. However, we alter it to meet the needs of our kids. We also have a district curriculum map. We use the DIBELS and GRADE assessments as a district. We analyze the data very closely. We give weekly multiple-choice tests on the weekly objectives for grade level literature.

Robin was asked specifically if students are tested in their own language. She replied:

> No. Sometimes we have a student that we suspect has a speech problem like stuttering and the special education teacher will test them in their language to see if it happens in their language too.

During observations, ESL students were not assessed in their own language, and students were not given choices concerning method of knowledge demonstration. Au (1993) maintains that students are assessed in their knowledge of Standard English. If they do not do well on tests, it is because they are not proficient in Standard English, not because they do not know content being assessed. ESL students who struggle to demonstrate knowledge on standardized tests are often placed in low or remedial reading groups. Allington (1991) maintains that those students' reading instruction is usually transmissive and is focused on oral reading, skill instruction, and repetitive activities, as was observed in Robin's classroom.

When asked how students' home cultures, languages, ethnicities, economic statuses, and prior knowledge influence assessment selection, Robin stated:

I give the children the same assessments [all students, regardless of home language, are administered the same tests written in English]. When we give the GRADE as a school, I think it is so unfair to our ELL students, because there is a lot of vocabulary that they can't understand. I must say they are doing very well. I make my Math assessments very visual, and give them opportunities to use visuals as needed.

Robin's statement confirms that she wants students to meet mainstream or school expectations. Lindsey et al. (2003) suggest that English-only policies are examples of cultural destructiveness level on the cultural proficiency continuum. Robin does not question Wesken Elementary School's standardized assessment practice affirming a belief in assimilation and a perception that students' home languages are deficits to mainstream academic success.

In a previous interview response, Robin stated that she "analyzes the data [from DIBELS and GRADE] very closely." A true measure of students' new knowledge acquisition can only be measured effectively by means that do not limit students' ability to demonstrate knowledge [i.e. presented in a language in which the student is not fluent]. Improved literacy in Standard English can be measured through running records, anecdotal observations, work samples, conversations with students, and assessments designed to assess English language comprehension proficiency (i.e. ACCESS). The requirement held by many educators that Standard English is the only acceptable form of verbal expression in many classrooms leads students from diverse cultural and linguistic

backgrounds to struggle with learning to read, write, and speak in school (Au, 1993).

Students for whom English is not their home language struggle to understand assessments

written in English as well as to provide responses in English. Robin believes that

Hispanic students, although they struggle with English, perform "quite well" on

standardized tests. Hence, assessing students' knowledge in their home language is not

significantly important to Robin. Her perspective indicates that any emotional or

demonstrative difficulties exhibited by students from diverse backgrounds when

completing assessments written in English lie with students, not with assessments,

assessment administrators, or school policy.

      Robin had ten ELL students. Standardized tests may not measure their knowledge

accurately. One student in Robin's classroom was a non-English speaker. According to

Robin, the student had arrived "from Mexico at the beginning of the school year." The

following was observed:

> *Students were discussing which objects are heavy or light in English. Ana*
>
> *struggled to understand. All students were working in partners. Ana was working*
>
> *with a bilingual partner. Ana seemed confused as she looked around at other*
>
> *people trying to understand.*
>
> Rosalinda [to Ana]: No es pesado (It is not heavy).
>
> *Rosalinda told Ana in Spanish to divide objects into heavy and light.*
>
> *Ana began to sort items rapidly.*

Ana could not complete the task with English directions. Given directions in Spanish, she

worked quickly. "Authentic discourse, however diverse, can be supportive of literacy

development" (Barnitz, 1998, p. 68). Appropriate and culturally responsive student

assessment is a necessary tool for lesson planning, strategy selection, and curriculum implementation when addressing unique learning needs of individual students.

Robin indicated that she uses assessment data to guide instruction in the following brief discussion:

Antonio: Why do we have to take spelling tests?

Robin: So I can see if you understand our objective in phonics for this week. So that I can see if you know how to write words that have a long o. So I can see if I need to teach long o again.

Robin's interview responses suggest DIBELs and GRADE scores were predominant determiners for group instruction planning and students' reading group placement.

Equity Pedagogy. Banks (1997a) maintains that multicultural education provides equal educational opportunities and equitable education. Robin implemented several culturally responsive strategies to scaffold students' learning. However, phrasing of her conception of multicultural education does not reflect a description of an equitable pedagogy:

Multicultural education provides every child with the same opportunity to learn. It is fair. It supports their culture and provides opportunities for them to express their cultural beliefs and share what happens in their culture.

Robin's statement confirms earlier egalitarian statements and that she believes in multiculturalism. Although Robin desires to provide equal educational opportunities for students, she does not realize that provision of equitable instruction is different from equal education. The term *equitable education* refers to differentiating instruction to meet individual learning needs of students so that students have equal opportunities for

academic success (Banks, 1997a). Robin repeatedly used the term *equal education* in interview responses. Her conception of multicultural education reiterates an egalitarian belief:

> I see the need to understand other cultures. I have always believed that everyone should have the opportunity to receive the same education, because I did know the importance of learning about culture.

Robin did not use the term *equitable education* in interview responses. Her responses indicate a lack of understanding concerning disconnections between students' home cultures and school and mainstream cultures. Advocates of multicultural education agree that cultural disconnections present students with learning obstacles. Equitable education is an additional component of multicultural education requiring differentiated instruction as a means of addressing students' learning needs. An equitable education provides scaffolding for students from diverse backgrounds through culturally responsive teaching strategies and learning environments (Banks, 1997a). Robin's lack of awareness concerning cultural disconnections experienced by her diverse and struggling students and her lack of knowledge regarding equity pedagogy prevent her from facilitating an empowering learning environment and from personally selecting culturally responsive teaching strategies to address students' literacy-learning needs.

Interview responses concerning curriculum implementation indicate that Robin is learning some excellent culturally responsive literacy teaching strategies, such as cooperative grouping. She implements skills and strategies that she has learned in teacher preparation classes, professional growth programs, KRP, and is told to implement by the school district, Reading First, and Houghton-Mifflin curriculum and materials.

An important scaffold is the strategy of making real world connections. Making real world connections was facilitated through anthology lessons, such as when reading *Me on the Map* by Joan Sweeney, *The Kite* by Alma Flor Ada, and *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* by Joy Cowley. Real world connections were facilitated during a lesson regarding opposite terminology.

> *Robin passed out plastic baggies filled with real world items (buttons, fabric swatches, coins, rocks, etc.) and asked students working in cooperative groups to sort items according to her directions.*
>
> Robin: What is the opposite of rough?
>
> Students in unison: Smooth.
>
> Robin: Find some things in your bag that are smooth.
>
> Erica raised her hand holding a marble: This is smooth.
>
> Robin: Excellent. Anyone else find another smooth object?
>
> *Rhonda held up a coin.*
>
> Robin: Rhonda has a coin.
>
> *Another student pointed out that it was smooth on top and bottom, but had rough edges.*
>
> Robin: Good observation! I want you to divide your objects in big and
>
> > small.
>
> *The lesson continued with students dividing objects into groups of long and short, heavy and light.*

On another occasion, students read *A Bird on the Bus* in Houghton-Mifflin's anthology. After reading, students discussed a real-life scenario concerning a bird on a bus:

Robin: What would be the only way a bird would be allowed to get on the bus?

Student: Its owner could take it on.

Robin: What do people usually keep their birds in?

Student: Cage.

Robin: So, if a person brought their bird on a bus and the bird was in a cage, do

you think the bus driver would let the bird on?

Students in unison: Yes.

Most scaffolding was provided to whole or small groups.

Several of Gardner's (1999) multiple intelligences were addressed through some learning activities. Logical-mathematical intelligence was addressed through various questioning strategies, which required students to problem-solve and reason deductively when asked higher level questions. Robin asked all students various types of questions: right there, think and search, question the author (QtA), and on my own questions. Higher-level open-ended questions were also employed. An example of a *right there* question posed by Robin during a picture walk before students read the story was, "What is happening in the pictures?" A *think and search* question asked by Robin was, "What kind of noises bothered the country mouse when she was in the city?" Robin asked some *QtA* questions such as this one: "What do you think they [authors] want us to look at on this map?" An example of an *on my own* question Robin posed was, "What would be the only way a bird would be allowed to get on a bus?" An example of an open-ended question asked by Robin was, "How are animals different [from each other]?"

Linguistic intelligence was addressed by Robin through writing and speaking practice offered during group instruction and center activities. On a few occasions, Robin

asked students to visualize and then recreate as a means of addressing Gardner's spatial intelligence. During an initial map-reading lesson, Robin asked, "Think about this little girl's bedroom. How is this little girl's room like your room?" Then Robin asked, "How is this room different from your room?" Finally, Robin asked, "How is the map of her house like a map of your house?" A learning center activity required students to draw a map of their rooms.

In the following example, Robin provided an opportunity for students to share personal writing:

> *Robin asked students to share things that they have written in the writing center.*
> *All students were on the carpet.*
>
> Natasha: The girl has a lazy dog that is nice.
>
> Adrian: The girl slept on the pig.
>
> Robin: Does anyone have anything that you would like to share from any of the centers? You can get it and bring it here to read to us.
>
> Adam went to his desk and returned: On a sunny day, we like to go to school.
>
> Robin laughed: That's great! Everything that has been shared so far are fours [referring to four point rubrics].
>
> Armand: When there is snow, I like to throw snowballs.
>
> Robin: That's a four too. Ok. I need you all to sit in your active listening positions.

Included in linguistic intelligence (Gardner, 1999) is the ability to learn languages.

In another implemented scaffolding strategy, students were permitted to speak their native languages when working in learning centers or during group instruction. On

one occasion, students were divided into cooperative groups. They discussed and sorted authentic items according to categories specified by Robin:

The students worked while Robin walked around the room.

Robin: Now divide your objects into heavy and light.

Robin went to Ana and Rosalinda (bilingual student). She tried to find a way to describe to Ana what 'heavy' and 'light' meant. They discussed which objects were heavy or light in English. Ana's facial expression suggested confusion.

Rosalinda (to Ana): No es pesado [It is not heavy].

Rosalinda told Ana in Spanish to divide things into heavy and light. Ana began to sort items rapidly. Robin held up the empty baggie again and asked if it was heavy or light.

Robin: No es pesado [It's not heavy].

Rosalinda: Light.

Ana repeated: Light

In the previous example, scaffolding was individualized. Following the activity, students read a story in unison. Then students went to small reading groups or to learning centers to continue reading skills instruction and practice.

Activities incorporating music observed during literacy instruction were phonics and vocabulary activities on computers. No bodily-kinesthetic intelligence activities were observed. Robin stated that CHAMPs, the behavior management and motivation system Wesken Elementary School implements, employs activity. In addition, Robin said that one strategy she uses to accommodate the variety of learning styles present in her

classroom is "lots of movement." The only movement that was observed during literacy instruction was during small group and learning center transitions.

Occasional translating for Ana was additional individualized scaffolding Robin provided. Robin tried to translate some words to scaffold Ana:

Robin stopped at Ana's desk and pointed down to the page.

Robin: Pagina [page], pagina.

Robin: Everyone, place your magic finger on the word DO. Let's read together.

Robin encouraged students to speak Spanish any time they wished. She supported English language acquisition with occasional Spanish translation.

Equity pedagogy facilitates learning that connects students' home cultures to new learning. In addition to Spanish translation and group scaffolding, Robin was often observed implementing cooperative grouping. Students worked in bilingual and multi-ability pairs or groups at learning centers. On one occasion, two students were working at the word works center:

Lazaro: No tengo un bunny. [I don't have a bunny.]

Gabriel: You're not going to have mine.

Lazaro: Necessito un bunny. [I need a bunny.]

Gabriel: OK. But, I'm not going to let you copy from me.

Both boys moved to the magnetic letters on the side of a filing cabinet near their learning center. They searched for letters to spell Lazaro's name. They could not find 'L.'

Gabriel: Aqui está. [Here it is.]

Both Hispanic boys at the center were learning English.

Cooperative grouping strategies encourage students to make choices. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) state that one of the "four conditions necessary for culturally responsive teaching" (p. 20) is to "encourage students to make choices in content and assessment methods based on their experiences, values, needs, and strengths" (p. 20). Robin's students made personal reading choices and kept selected books in a browsing bag at their seat:

> *Tony and Rosa were finished with their learning center game. They were instructed by a well-meaning visiting adult to go to the classroom library. Robin was working with a small reading group.*
>
> Robin: Stop, Tony and Rosa. What is the procedure when we've finished at the centers?
>
> Rosa: We get a book from our browsing bag. Then we take the browsing bag back to the center and read.

Students were also encouraged to make free-time learning activity selections, level of task completion decisions, computer phonics or vocabulary game choices, and decisions concerning behavioral expectations. Robin explained that students are not given choices about learning tasks, methods of task completion, or mode of assessment. She explained choices students have during free time:

> If given free time, the children chose to be on the computer, read books, or write on the board. Most students chose to follow the rules. However, some students prefer to entertain.

Robin's students were not usually permitted to make choices regarding individual or group task completion. Students were placed in various group configurations, but they were not permitted to choose group type or tasks to be completed. Robin stated:

> They do not choose the center. I have a chart next to the flag that they look at to see what center they are in. The center groupings are multi-ability. We explain the [activities provided at the] centers [to] everyone Monday morning. We model centers explicitly.

Denial of student choices presents missed opportunities for students to connect home learning to new learning, share responsibility for learning, or demonstrate knowledge in a culturally responsive manner.

Implementing computers solely for phonics and vocabulary practice, students were denied additional authentic reading opportunities, means of demonstrating knowledge, research opportunities, and access to activities that address multiple intelligences. Computer learning is a motivational learning tool that provides student-centered instruction and offers culturally mediated discovery and platforms for discussion through authentic web sites. In addition, implementation of computers as a means of communication would facilitate student choices for task completion, knowledge demonstration, research, and reading (Wood, 2004).

Observations demonstrated that she alters instruction to meet group needs not individual needs. Wesken Elementary School's primary grades employ a 3-Tier reading instruction model to address reading instruction needs of diverse and struggling readers. All students in grades K-3 receive Tier I instruction of 3-Tier model basic components: incorporation of systematic assessment three times per year to identify struggling readers

and inform reading instruction and at least 90 minutes of core-classroom reading instruction daily. Core-classroom reading instruction includes explicit and systematic reading skills instruction, ample practice, and immediate teacher feedback. Of all K-3 students, approximately 20 to 30% require Tier II instruction. Tier II students receive an additional 30 minutes of focused reading instruction daily and are assessed every two weeks. Five to ten percent of all K-3 students require Tier III reading instruction. Those students receive an additional 60 minutes of reading instruction to the basic 30 minutes provided in Tier I. Students in Tier III meet in much smaller groups outside of the classroom with a special education teacher to facilitate more individualized instruction (University of Texas System, 2005).

Robin's students were homogeneously grouped according to reading ability. According to the University of Texas (2005), students are ability grouped in the 3-Tier reading instruction model to facilitate at-risk identification and to provide more individualized reading instruction. Au (1993), Banks (1997a), Gay (1994), and Nieto (1999) agree that ability grouping, or tracking, based on standardized test scores or reading ability is damaging to students' literacy-learning. Students from diverse backgrounds struggling to learn English often cannot demonstrate knowledge accurately on standardized tests. Lindsey and colleagues (2003) maintain that a practice of cultural destructiveness in schools is tracking. One reason that ability grouping is dangerous is because teachers often assume that students' reading ability is set. Schools and teachers who maintain this assumption have "lower expectations for many students" (Au, 1993, p. 88). According to Lindsey et al. (2003); "The cultural destructiveness that these groups [students from diverse backgrounds] have experienced in schools is manifested in

markedly lower achievement, higher dropout rates, and lower social mobility" (p. 88). Therefore, ability grouping perpetuates structural inequality.

In Robin's classroom, placement in 3-Tier group is largely decided by scores students obtain on DIBELS and GRADE standardized tests, as required by Reading First. Robin stated that she uses multiple formal and informal assessment measures to guide instruction in addition to the GRADE and DIBELS. Robin also stated that she implements flexible grouping to facilitate more individualized instruction for literacy students:

> I change groupings quite often based upon the needs that Mrs. Peacock [special education teacher] and I see that they [students] have. We collaborate to make those decisions. The Tier II group that I work with needs to work on fluency, while Mrs. Peacock's group has a greater need in phonics before they can move on to fluency. We will have three groups beginning next week, because instead of giving my student teacher my group, I am going to take two children from Mrs. Peacock's group and two from mine and we will each have groups of four. The group she has will need phonics plus fluency.

Robin determines flexible grouping changes using additional forms of assessment including anecdotal observations, Houghton-Mifflin multiple-choice tests, and running records "similar to those that Marie Clay speaks of in one of her books," Robin explained. She looks "at fluency as well as patterns in reading mistakes." Robin's implementation of multiple assessments to determine flexible grouping of students is culturally responsive. However, she did not implement multiple assessments to determine

the necessity for differentiated instruction during observed literacy instruction. All observed instruction addressed groups.

Robin alluded to perceived deficit theories concerning students, parents, and diverse cultures. Emphasis on rote reading indicated that Robin perceives that at-risk students have a language or vocabulary deficit, which is supported by student scores obtained from standardized assessments that require use of Standard English to demonstrate knowledge. Robin believes four deficit theory myths described by Flores et al. (1998):

> Myth 1: At-risk children have a language problem. Their language and culture is deficient. They lack experiences. These deficits cause them to have learning problems. (p. 29)
>
> Myth 2: At-risk children need to be separated from the regular class and need a structured program based on hierarchal notions of language development. (p. 30)
>
> Myth 3: Standardized tests can accurately identify and categorize students who are at-risk for learning and language problems. (p. 30)
>
> Myth 4: At-risk children have problems because parents don't care, can't read, or don't work with them. (p. 31)

Robin's deficit theories perpetuate cultural discontinuity for students and her social hierarchal perspectives unintentionally perpetuate structural inequality. In addition, cultural discontinuity and structural inequality present teachers with instruction challenges that frustrate their sincere desire to address learning needs of their diverse students (Au, 1993).

Robin indicated feelings of frustration when addressing students' individual learning needs:

> I have to use all methods of teaching when teaching. I have such a diverse population and children with so many different behaviors, learning disabilities, languages, etc. I know I don't always do a good job and I get very frustrated with myself when I don't, but I have to give it my best the next day.

Robin expressed a desire to address unique learning needs of diverse and struggling students. Although Robin was observed implementing many culturally responsive instructional practices, observed teaching practices demonstrate little consideration for students' individual learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and languages when planning lessons, implementing curriculum, or making instructional pedagogy selections. Observations confirmed that Robin provided brief individual scaffolding, but no lessons were differentiated for individual students.

Knowledge Construction and Prejudice Reduction. Robin's ability to address learning needs of diverse and struggling students and to provide transactive and transformative citizenship education is hindered by unawareness concerning her personal background, her personal mainstream biases, cultures and ethnicities represented by students, and influences all have on students' new knowledge acquisition and personal mainstream biases (Willis, 2000). Robin's responses and absence of culturally mediated instruction suggest that she does not fully appreciate challenges and opportunities facilitated by diversity, contradicting several questionnaire responses. Culturally mediated instruction is instruction that facilitates opportunities for students to learn more about personal cultures and ethnicities, learn more about cultures and ethnicities different

from their own, view events and ideas from diverse perspectives, check personal biases, and express personal perspectives (The Education Alliance, 2006). According to Robin, students are making cultural connections, not her:

> They share when they make connections. We have a lot of classroom discussions. The children are encouraged to share their cultural experiences. Sometimes I encourage it, but at other times, the children speak about their culture on their own. They are always encouraged to share what happens in their culture.

On one occasion, Robin helped students make real life connections to maps:

> Robin: We are going to focus on making generalizations and summarizing. First, we're going to do a picture walk. Let's look at these two pages. What is this a picture of, Karl?
>
> Karl: The United States
>
> Robin: This is a map of the United States.
>
> *Lazaro pointed to Mexico and showed how he traveled from Mexico to Kentucky.*
>
> Robin: You traveled a long way to get to Kentucky, didn't you?
>
> *Lazaro nodded yes.*

The map lesson continued with instruction concerning how to read maps and was supported through a map-making activity at a learning center. Discussion concerning Lazaro's international relocation experience barely facilitated a connection to new learning. Instead, Lazaro and other small group members missed an opportunity to explore, comprehend, and develop positive attitudes about Lazaro's background and experiences. Robin's minimal acknowledgement of Lazaro's significant international moving experiences was the only observed time in which discussion referenced a

student's cultural background. In addition, the brief contribution was initiated by a student. For students, provisions of real world connections enhance personal meaning for learning content and link prior home learning with new learning.

Students initiation of the sharing of experiences and cultures indicate that they are proud of their culture, ethnicity, and experiences; are comfortable talking about personal lives; or desire that their background and experiences be affirmed. Robin did not initiate discussions concerning culture or facilitate culturally mediated activities and discussions for students to learn about cultural differences or to address students' personality or cultural conflicts, suggesting that either she does not recognize the importance of or is not comfortable talking about students' cultures or ethnicities, her own, or dynamics presented by diversity due to lack of knowledge in this area. Ladson-Billings (2004) states:

> In K-12 classrooms, teachers will have to work back and forth between identities, while at the same moment taking principled stands on behalf of students who, because of some perceived difference or sense of otherness, are left behind. (p. 63)

No instruction, class or group discussions, nor activities during literacy block instruction addressed classroom or school diversity issues.

Representations of diverse cultures and people in Houghton-Mifflin's first grade anthology were authentic. It is not known whether culturally mediated opportunities were provided through Houghton-Mifflin or Reading First curricula. However, Robin rarely facilitated culturally mediated instruction or activities implementing provided or self-selected curriculum or materials. On one occasion, small reading groups explored and

discussed perspectives of preferred living environments presented in *The City Mouse and the Country Mouse*:

> *Robin read aloud.*
>
> Robin: What kind of generalizations can I make about the city?
>
> Azure: The city is crowded.
>
> Robin: Right. Do you think that the country is safer?
>
> *Some students nod yes.*
>
> Robin: Right, because the city has lots of people and traffic.
>
> Robin: What kind of noises bothered the country mouse when she was in the city?
>
> Lazaro: Attempts to answer without being called upon.
>
> *Robin calls on Andres.*
>
> Andres: Honking of horns,
>
> Edward: Sirens.
>
> Robin: What kinds of noises bothered the city mouse when she was in the country?
>
> Edward: Crickets.
>
> Robin: Ok, I'm going to read the story again. This time when I read the story I want you to make the sounds that the crickets, cars, make when I talk about those things.
>
> *Children were quiet and listening. Robin read. The children made the sounds.*
>
> Robin generalized: The country is a much safer place to live.

This was the only time students were observed considering an alternative viewpoint of any kind. The story presented two viewpoints. The final expressed dominating viewpoint was Robin's, confirming a transmissive model of instruction.

In addition to real world connections and consideration of diverse perspectives, students need to connect to authentic representations of people from diverse backgrounds who have made contributions to humanity. Mainstream students read, listen, and write about people from their own ethnicity who have made positive contributions to the world. Unfortunately, in many classrooms the mention of contributions made by people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups is rare. Often, a selected day or month is the only opportunity taken to teach students about contributing individuals of diversity. This practice silently reinforces the incorrect belief that great contributors of benefits to humanity are Caucasian mainstream males (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Nieto, 1999). As mentioned when examining Robin's beliefs and attitudes, heroes and holidays celebrated in Robin's classroom were, "Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, [and] others."

Robin stated that her class creates a timeline when learning about heroes using books and computers to access United Streaming. United Streaming is a digital online teaching tool provided by Discovery Education that helps improve students' retention and test scores. The web site is a library of educational science and health videos that are aligned to state standards (Discovery Education, 2008). No celebrations of heroes or holidays were observed in Robin's classroom.

Interestingly, no images or cultural artifacts representative of people, places, or things reflecting cultures, ethnicities, or races (diverse or mainstream) were observed in

Robin's learning environment. Absence of pictures and artifacts representing all backgrounds denies students opportunities to identify with and foster pride in personal cultures; experience aspects of cultures different from their own; arouse curiosity, exploration, and discussions of different perspectives; and display diverse role models (Burnett, 2000; Bustamente, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner). Absence of pictures suggests that Robin does not acknowledge diverse differences or does not think cultural and ethnic differences influence students' learning significantly. Furthermore, absence of pictures or artifacts representative of any cultures is a possible indication that Robin avoids culturally mediated opportunities since cultural and ethnic representations encourage discussions, exploration, sharing, and connecting to personal and diverse cultures.

Robin's self-descriptive perceptions indicate awareness that there are differences between her cultural and ethnic experiences and those of her students. Interview statements and observed behaviors confirm that she is unaware of how significant those differences are. As a mainstream teacher, she perceives cultural and ethnic differences are minor. Therefore, Robin does not believe that her "background culture or ethnicity has really helped [her] or affected [her]" when making instructional approach selections for 24 diverse students in a school that has been identified as at-risk.

Robin's conception of multicultural education is limited to equal educational opportunities, provision of some learning supports, and occasional minimal opportunities to make cultural connections for students. Transactive (Gay, 1995), or culturally mediated (The Education Alliance, 2006), instruction is absent from Robin's conception. In addition, transformative (Gay, 1995) and prejudice reduction (Banks, 1997a)

discussions and activities are absent. Robin's transmissive (Gay, 1995) level of

multicultural education reflects traditional societal perspectives and behavior. Therefore,

traditional power issues are perpetuated in Robin's perspectives. Delpit (2006) states:

> These power issues include: the power of the teacher over the students; the power
>
> of the publishers of textbooks and of the developers of the curriculum to
>
> determine the view of the world presented; the power of the state in enforcing
>
> compulsory schooling; and the power of an individual or group to determine
>
> another's intelligence or "normalcy." Finally, if schooling prepares people for
>
> jobs, and the kind of job a person has determines her or his economic status and,
>
> therefore, power, then schooling is intimately related to that power. (pp. 24-25)

Power held by many sources influences learning and future successes of students.

Robin's self-described perceptions, curriculum and materials implementation, and

selected instructional pedagogies indicate level one, contributions approach, of Banks'

four levels of knowledge construction for curriculum reform. Banks (1997c) explains:

> The *Contributions Approach* to integration is one of the most frequently used
>
> [because it's the easiest]. This approach is characterized by the addition of ethnic
>
> heroes into the curriculum. This approach to curriculum reform is usually a Model
>
> A (Mainstream centric) type of curriculum change because the ethnic heroes and
>
> heroines added to the curriculum are not only viewed from a mainstream-centric
>
> perspective but are also usually selected for inclusion into the curriculum using
>
> mainstream criteria. Consequently, ethnic heroes and heroines viewed positively
>
> by the mainstream society, such as Booker T. Washington, Marian Anderson, and
>
> Sacajawea, are most often chosen for study rather than are ethnic Americans who

challenged the dominant class and social structure in society, such as W.E.B. Du

Bois, Geronimo, and Angela Davis. (p. 23)

The contributions approach does not change curriculum structure. Nieto (1999) suggests

that often teachers are happy to *celebrate* diversity because it does not challenge policies

and practices of mainstream status quo. Celebrating diversity agrees with Robin's

previous interpretation of the term *culture*. On the other hand, facilitating discussions in

which students question personal perceptions and actions and those of others is

dangerous. Nieto (1999) adds:

Encouraging these kinds of conversations is a message to students that the `

classrooms belong to them also because they are places where meaningful

dialogue can occur around issues that are central to students' lives. (pp. 120-121)

None of the data collected indicated integration of additive, transformation, or social

action approaches. Multicultural education (Banks, 1997a) implemented to its fullest

intention is incorporated throughout the school day and year, facilitating an empowering

learning environment. Robin's transmissive and teacher-centered instruction model did

not invite culturally mediated discussions or cultural and ethnic knowledge construction

activities beyond the contributions level.

Cultural Discontinuity

Robin's lack of awareness concerning affects her culture and ethnicity has on

students and their learning influence students' behavior and attitudes. Students from

diverse backgrounds who do not feel that they or their culture is valued, or who struggle

to meet mainstream behavioral and academic expectations, may demonstrate

inappropriate behaviors directed toward authority figures or even drop out of school

(Fordham and Ogbu, 1986). Robin stated that students present several behavior issues:

> There are many children [in my class] with a lot of anger issues. I think that anger
>
> is very difficult to deal with in young children. Often times, teachers just send
>
> those children to the office and that is where they spend most of the school year.
>
> As educators, we have to work with those children and figure out ways to help
>
> those children. That is a behavior problem that is never addressed [in teacher
>
> education programs] and it is detrimental to the child's education and life if we
>
> don't try to help them. Of course, teachers are also unprepared to deal with
>
> children with ADD, ADHD, and Autism. I think this is evident in all economic
>
> and social situations.

Robin's comment suggests a desire to help struggling students overcome inappropriate

behavior issues. She is frustrated regarding her lack of understanding as to causes of

students' anger and her lack of preparedness to deal with such prevalent issues. In the

following statement, Robin explained other types of negative behaviors presented by

students as well as how she addresses disagreements, conflicts, and social differences

present:

> Tattling – He hit me. (Most of the time it was an accident.)
>
> Sometimes a child gets his or her feelings hurt because another child doesn't
>
> want to play with him or her.
>
> There has also been some problems with students stealing. We discuss it and
>
> contact parents.

Robin does perceive that some conflicts or frustrations students are experiencing could be results of cultural discontinuity, a mismatch between school and home cultures (Au, 1993). Some inappropriate behaviors exhibited by students may be demonstrations of frustration as they struggle to meet mainstream behavioral, academic, linguistic, and cultural expectations. Robin does not demonstrate clear understanding of disconnections between students' home cultures and school or mainstream cultures. Her interview responses contradict her responses on the questionnaire that she perceives and helps others understand that some personality conflicts are actually cultural conflicts.

Robin stated that she communicated with students' parents when needed, even if a translator was required. Robin was able to translate small amount of Spanish when communicating with students and their parents and secured translating services for more in depth communication in Spanish or for translation in other languages:

I have a friend that translates for my Spanish-speaking parents when I have conferences. I also have her call some of my parents when I need her to. She goes to church with many of them. I have a lot of Spanish speaking children in my classroom [who have parents] that request me to be their child's teacher. Occasionally, I have her translate important information for me. The school translates some things. I can translate some myself. However, I usually have someone proofread it. Also, sometimes parents bring their older children to translate. Report cards are not translated for us in Spanish. I don't think most parents understand the report cards. We have asked the districts to translate them, but I don't think they see the need.

Robin explains Wesken Elementary School cultural expectations and classroom

expectations systematically to students and strives to make classroom and school

expectations clear to parents.

Robin stated that she considers parental involvement very important as a means of

reducing communication barriers and enhancing new learning acquisition for students.

Au (1993) wrote, "Teachers can strengthen the literacy-learning of students of diverse

backgrounds by enlisting the help of parents" (p. 153).

When asked to describe any education or training parents are provided as a means

of learning how to enhance their child's learning at home, Robin said:

> We provide opportunities for the parents to learn how to provide reading
>
> instruction to their children at home. One Family Ties was on vocabulary.
>
> Another was on fluency. There are also opportunities for the parents to come to
>
> school to learn English and to study to get their GED. Family ties: Not as many
>
> parents come as we would like. It seems like there are fewer parents coming this
>
> year.

Robin explained, "Last week we had a Family Ties activity on fluency. We feed the

families for free so that gets several there." Robin expressed dismay that not many

parents or families attend:

> We only had about ten first graders (out of 72) and their families.
>
> Sadly, we usually have the largest crowds [compared to the other grade levels in
>
> Wesken Elementary School]. In February, we are having a movie night. The
>
> movie will be free. I am not sure how successful this will be. Last year, I had a
>
> day when the parents could shadow their children during reading [instruction].

> That was a lot of fun, but once again, not many parents could come because they
>
> work.

Robin's answer demonstrates application of a deficit theory as a means of explaining

students' inability to succeed academically. Flores and colleagues (1998) assert:

> Blaming the children's parents, the culture, and their language for their lack of
>
> success in school has been a classic strategy used to subordinate and continue to
>
> fault the "victim." (p. 31)

Several studies (Trueba and Delgado-Gaitan, 1989; Heath, 1983) demonstrate that

parents from diverse backgrounds are extremely concerned about their children and

dedicated to their academic success. Robin's employment of a deficit theory contradicts

Robin's questionnaire indication that she anticipates how students and teachers at

Wesken Elementary School react with, conflict with, and enhance learning for each other.

Although Robin is not purposefully trying to discriminate, personal deficit theory

perpetuates cultural discontinuity.

Au (1993) maintains that during Family Ties nights, open houses, "or at other

times, teachers should try to familiarize parents with the ways that they might become

involved in the classroom" (p. 153). When asked if parents volunteer in the classroom or

school or are invited to participate in their child's education in some other way, Robin

stated,

> I have one parent [mom] of a child with Autism that tries [to come into the
>
> classroom to help], but when she comes into the classroom he [student] has a
>
> difficult time functioning. However, she helps out in other parts of the school when

she can. There is a parent [not of one of Robin's students] in the building that has

been taking pictures for me for the yearbook. She has been a huge help.

Robin added to her description of classroom and school volunteers, "We have a lot of

mentors for children. These mentors are from various organizations in the community."

During two of ten visits to Robin's classroom, a woman (community mentor) came into

the classroom and read with a couple of students.

Opportunities for students to learn from community participation provide

culturally mediated instructional avenues. Community involvement allows students to

learn about perspectives different from their own, see tasks completed in diverse ways,

experience and learn communication and interaction skills that facilitate future

citizenship abilities, and facilitate discussions concerning cultural differences and

prejudice reduction. Limited parental and community involvement in students' education

confirm that Robin is in the contributions approach of Banks' knowledge construction

dimension. Limiting interaction, activities, and discussions that facilitate learning content

from diverse cultural backgrounds prevents Robin from providing instruction at the

additive approach level.

Robin did not state that she sets *high* expectations for students, although it seems

that she implied as much: "I am very sympathetic, yet eager, to help these students

become high achievers and encourage them to be the best they can be." Robin indicated

that she wants to help students meet mainstream expectations. Setting high expectations

for all students requires educators to consider barriers (cultural or other) to learning

acquisition and methods of overcoming learning barriers unique to each student, thereby

differentiating instruction. No observed lessons, center activities, or learning environment

expectations were differentiated. Robin's requirement that students meet mainstream

expectations confirms a transmissive teaching model.

Dedication to Students' Successes

Robin's dedication to students' learning is demonstrated in pursuance of

additional personal learning. She has a Bachelors degree in Elementary Education and

recently earned a Master of Arts degree in Elementary Education. Robin received

Kentucky Reading Project training and currently attends school district professional

growth programs. Robin described professional development programs:

> They provide a lot. We are probably provided about 20 or more professional
>
> development hours in ELL strategies every school year. We have received
>
> professional development in reading strategies, literacy centers, SIOP [Sheltered
>
> Instruction Observation Protocol], and many others that I cannot think of.

SIOP (2005) provides training to educators to facilitate research-based ELL teaching

practices. Robin added:

> Because we keep hearing the same things over and over in the training that we
>
> receive, I believe that what we need now is to become fluent speakers of the
>
> Spanish language.

Robin's previous response confirms a desire to learn more about teaching strategies that

will increase students' academic successes. When asked to describe means of self-

improvement, Robin stated:

> I do a lot of reflecting. I think about what I could have done better to help the
>
> student understand and what I can change. I think about what other strategies I
>
> could use. I read a lot of professional books. I have a group of students right now

that understand the phonics rules and the vocabulary, but they are struggling with

fluency, so I am reading a book co-authored by Tim Risinski, whose work I really

like, about reading fluency.

Robin's comment confirms a rote reading instruction focus as well as a desire to explore

additional teaching methods to address literacy-learning needs of struggling students.

Robin suggested a college class or district professional growth program that

would provide her with beneficial teaching skills:

Behavior. I don't think new teachers are prepared to deal with the behavioral

issues. My student teachers tell me that that is the thing they are most concerned

about. My [recent] student teacher also told me that she had very little preparation

in teaching reading. That scares me. She [student teacher] said that she was very

unprepared and scared, because during her reading block, she only had the

opportunity to listen to 1 or 2 students read and that was all she did.

Robin emphasized a lack of teacher preparation or professional growth programs that

address needs of children demonstrating serious anger issues, ADD, ADHD, or Autism.

Robin did not mention skills training that would benefit her. However, in a previous

comment, Robin expressed frustration when dealing with "children with a lot of anger

issues."

Some of Robin's self-descriptive perceptions and observed behaviors concerning

multicultural education align with multicultural education theories outlined by prominent

researchers while others do not. Robin's egalitarian perception of multicultural education

agrees with James Banks' (1997a) concept of multicultural education. She did not define

or reference equitable pedagogy but implemented some culturally responsive and student-

centered instruction connecting students' early learning to new school learning. Culturally responsive teaching practices Robin implemented included cooperative grouping, flexible grouping, scaffolding, some multiple intelligences activities, guided reading strategies, encouraging Hispanic students to speak Spanish freely, allowing students to make personal reading choices, and providing a literacy-rich classroom with authentic representations from diverse cultures.

However, important culturally responsive teaching practices were missing. No differentiated reading instruction specific to individual learning needs was observed. Computers were used solely for phonics and vocabulary reinforcement games. Students were not given choices concerning task, task completion, assessment demonstration, or personal goal setting. Only students initiated rare connections to personal cultures and ethnicities. Reading instruction focus was predominantly on rote reading rather than reading to make meaning. Culturally mediated instruction was non-existent.

Observations of Robin confirm that she does not have complete understanding of provision of equity pedagogy or the breadth and scope of multicultural education. As confirmed by Gay's work (1995), Robin's instruction is transmissive, "Passing on to students the fund of knowledge, skills, and values that have accumulated over time" (p. 31). No opportunities were observed for students to engage in activities or discussions to express their culture, broaden their understanding of their culture or cultures different from their own, question personal beliefs and attitudes, eliminate or reduce prejudice, or explore events or concepts from other cultural perspectives. Therefore, Robin did not include transactive multicultural education. No activities or discussions were observed in which students were encouraged to take responsibility or take social action in some way

to transform unjust or discriminatory beliefs or practices, indicating that Robin did not incorporate transformative multicultural education (Gay, 1995).

Although Robin did not describe equitable pedagogy during interviews, she implemented some culturally responsive teaching practices during literacy instruction and in learning environment establishment. According to Banks' (1997a) five dimensions of multicultural education, Robin implemented curriculum and materials with some authentic cultural and ethnic content. However, no concepts, themes, or perspectives representing diverse backgrounds were introduced. Collected data indicate that Robin teaches on the contributions level of Banks' (1997a) knowledge construction dimension.

Robin's cultural competence level demonstrates both barriers to cultural proficiency acquisition: "unawareness of the need to adapt [and] presumption of entitlement" (Lindsey et al., 2003, p. 7). Robin perceives her cultural background to be similar to those of students. Therefore, she does not see the need to change her practices. Second, Robin's adherence to deficit theories suggest a belief that everyone living in the United States is given opportunity to succeed but some choose not to put forth the effort (Lindsey et al., 2003). Robin's presumption of entitlement is exemplified when she blames parents' weak Family Ties attendance for students' academic failure.

Deficit theories, belief in assimilation, and limited knowledge concerning provision of equity pedagogy and multicultural education hinder Robin's ability to address students' learning needs in a culturally responsive manner. Her lack of awareness concerning how significantly her personal cultural and ethnic background differs from students; how students' cultures, ethnicities and prior learning experiences differ from each other; and how her mainstream background affects pedagogy selections prevent

Robin from providing differentiated reading instruction tailored to individual students'

learning needs. Robin's mainstream perspectives perpetuate cultural discontinuity and

social inequality through implementation of classroom and school policies and practices.

Manifestation of cultural discontinuity is a practice representative of cultural blindness on

the cultural proficiency continuum according to Lindsey et al. (2003).

<div align="center">Part Two</div>

<div align="center">*Piper*</div>

At the time of the study, Piper was in her third year of teaching second grade at

Wesken Elementary school. Piper had earned an undergraduate degree in Elementary

Education and had recently completed a Master of Arts in Education degree with an

emphasis on Reading and Writing. In addition, Piper had completed KRP training. She

stated, "I learned a lot of knowledge that I will use for years to come." Piper teaches a

diverse group of children and is concerned about their future success. She asserted, "I

want my students to know how important a college education is. I also use a lot of what I

learned the best I can." Piper is a young African American second grade teacher at

Wesken Elementary School.

Piper's diverse student population consisted of 20 students who all received free

or reduced lunch. Ten of Piper's students were African American, three were Caucasian,

four were Bosnian, one was African, one was Vietnamese, and one was Mexican

American. Seven of Piper's students received ELL services. Several students have been

diagnosed with autism.

According to the *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment* questionnaire (Lindsey et

al., 2003, pp. 152-153), Piper considers herself to be culturally competent or culturally

proficient. Her questionnaire responses were based on accumulated knowledge, life experiences, and learned perspectives and values. Twenty *Cultural Competence Self-Assessment* questionnaire items contradicted her interview answers. Analysis of interview and observation data indicate that Piper's perspectives align with mainstream images of social normalcy presented in most local, state, and national media and curriculum. For example, she is aware of cultural and ethnic differences. However, Piper believes everyone is the same, as demonstrated in her statement: "We're all the same. We just look different." Her beliefs and experiences align with Delpit's (2006) early teaching experience, in which Delpit's instructional approaches and perspectives of students and parents reflected those of her mainstream colleagues. Delpit stated, "I was doing what I had learned, and it worked….I was doing the same thing for all my kids – what was the problem" (p. 13)? She wrote that she implemented the same teaching strategies and facilitated the same learning environment as her Caucasian colleagues based on mainstream perceptions.

Piper's implementation of curriculum and assessments, perceived student deficiencies, and perceptions of literacy-learning needs demonstrated by students from diverse backgrounds and living in poverty demonstrate perceptions regarding learning abilities and citizenship roles of diverse and mainstream populations as well as her desire to preserve the status quo. Furthermore, analysis of questionnaire and interview responses indicates that Piper does not have complete understanding of equity pedagogy or multicultural education.

Empowering Learning Environment

Piper was trying to establish a classroom environment that was accepting and respectful of diverse cultures, ethnicities, races, languages, abilities, and learning styles. However, her avoidance of culturally mediated instruction hinders provision of a truly empowering learning environment. Piper's classroom learning environment resembled learning environments in most traditional mainstream primary classrooms. Usually when mainstream students attend school, they find that mainstream learning environments simulate visible and invisible aspects of their home learning environments. Students from diverse backgrounds often experience cultural discontinuity and new knowledge acquisition is compromised (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Delpit, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 2004). Piper has been conditioned to accept mainstream educational philosophies and practices. Her diverse students encounter similar learning conditions as students in classrooms taught by mainstream teachers. Therefore, they experience cultural discontinuity and structural inequality (Au, 1993). Piper reported that her students from diverse cultures, especially African American males, struggle to meet behavioral and academic expectations. In addition, several students demonstrate anger and frustration.

Piper's classroom was spacious, organized, and well illuminated. Five learning centers were located around the room: vocabulary, listening and comprehension, computer, phonics, and journal. A *Focus Wall* over the computer center exhibited the following items: weekly *theme*, reading *strategy focus*, weekly *vocabulary* words, a sentence strip (using weekly spelling words), three or four digraphs under *Phonics Review*, and a laminated page describing a specific literary genre (i.e., "Non-fiction: Factual writing about real people, things, and events").

The learning environment established by Piper supports her belief in equal educational opportunities as all behavior and task expectations were the same for all students. All group and learning center activities were paper and pencil tasks and students were expected to complete them in the same manner. Piper explained her expectations:

> I have expectations for all of my students. I usually try to tell students what I expect before they are to do it. I practice procedures also. I send newsletters to parents and call if I have to.

Piper posted behavior and academic expectations for students at learning centers and on a bulletin board at the front of the classroom. She did not have a web site for parents and students to visit. However, Piper felt certain that students and their parents understood behavioral and academic expectations.

In addition to CHAMPs, a behavior management and motivation system employed by Wesken Elementary School, Piper implemented several personally instituted motivation strategies: "Class money, praise, [and] pay for good center work." Students were given money each week, and money was taken away for inappropriate behaviors. Students used remaining money to buy items from the treasure chest or tickets and treats on movie days.

Meeting established expectations is an aspect of good citizenship. Piper expressed her perception of the relationship between citizenship and education:

> I don't know if there is a connection. I would like to say that someone who is a good citizen has learned how from a good education. That really isn't the case sometimes.

Piper indicated concern regarding citizenship skills instruction and the reality that

citizenship skills are often not taught in schools. Her statements indicate that she teaches

students Wesken Elementary School's cultural expectations. According to Banks

(1997a), "how teachers respond to marginalized students in the classroom will to a great

extent determine whether they [students] will experience democracy or oppression in

classrooms and schools" (p. 99). Piper's statements demonstrate that she does not always

respect students' home cultural expectations. For example, she stated: "I've had to tell

several kids that 'I'm not your mama. And I'm not gonna do you the way she does and

keep telling you 55,000 times. When I tell you to do something, I want you to do it the

first time.'" Additionally, Piper's statements and observations suggest that her students

do not experience democracy in her transmissive classroom. For example, students are

not given choices concerning task completion or knowledge demonstration. Her

interview responses and established learning environment indicate that she believes in

equal educational opportunities and learning conditions for all students and that she

expects students to meet her expectations.

Multiculturalism and Equal Educational Opportunities

Many of Piper's interview responses suggested belief in multiculturalism

(coexistence of diverse cultures within communities) and equal education opportunities

for students. Although multiculturalism and equal education are basic aspects of

multicultural education, they do not define the theory. Piper described her personal and

theoretical perception of multicultural education:

I think it's [multicultural education] great. I love it. I mean, it can be a challenge.

Because I don't think I do everything for my ELLs, or my ESLs, the way that I

should, but I love the fact that I have kids in here that don't look anything alike.

They all look different. They all look different from each other. They are all pretty

much from the same socio-economic background. They're from the same one

[low socioeconomic] that I'm from. So, I know where they're coming from. The

biggest difference is that my mom was in that situation because it was a situation.

These kids, it's generational, which makes a big difference. My mom went to

college. She had a degree. That kinda gave her a[n] edge over some of these

parents. She was a teacher. So, she got us prepared for school. She got us ready.

She pushed. From the time I was six years old, I knew I was going to college. And

I knew I wasn't going to have to worry about pay[ing] for it. I knew I was going

to go. You gotta make good grades to go to college. And think that one difference

with these kids is that some of them __ it's always been that way in their family.

And the parents [don't] know any differently and don't know how to motivate

them [students]. But, I do understand how that [parents and students are in] some

of the situations that they're at.

Piper's response did not express knowledge of multicultural education. For example, she

suggested that multicultural education is only applicable for ESL students. Additionally,

she does not indicate knowledge of students' diverse backgrounds. Although, Piper

asserts that she is aware of students' experiences of living in poverty. On the other hand,

she distinguished her personal poverty experience from students' poverty situations

maintaining that her low socio-economic status resulted from unfortunate rather than

generational circumstances. She suggested that her mother demonstrated more concern

for Piper's academic and future successes than her students' parents exemplify. Piper

asserted a deficit theory of cultural deprivation in which parents are blamed for

perpetuation of generational poverty through poor parenting skills, demonstrated by lack

of interest in their child's education (Flores et al., 1998; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Finally,

Piper indicated a perception that students' home cultures and school cultures differ. She

asserts that home cultural expectations are lower than school or Piper's expectations.

Piper described how her personal background culture and ethnicity affect

instructional approach:

I think that [my personal background] affects me because I know. I've been there.

I've lived below the poverty line. Didn't know it! I had no clue that I was below

the poverty line because __ I just didn't know it. I just knew that some of [the

material] things we didn't have, the other kids had. But, I didn't really realize it.

That's just the way it was. She [Mom] didn't have a lot of money. We had so

many other rewards besides just money. Mom __ she was a teacher and so she

was home with us in the summer. We ate dinner together. We always ate around

the dinner table. It was always home-cooked food. Friday nights, up until I was

about twelve to thirteen years old, we had game night. I didn't know it was game

night, but we played games. We played her old 45 records. We really spent a lot

of time together. We watched TV together. We probably watched a little more TV

than we should, but we watched it together. We played outside. The only time that

I would come in the house was right after school. I would chill and watch TV.

Then, I went outside and I played until night. Then, sometimes we watched like

__ [the] Cosby Show. We'd all laugh together. That made a big difference. But, I

think that because of that, I understand. See, Mom was tired. And, TV was her

time to relax. And, I understand why sometimes these kids don't get their homework done. 'Cause, sometimes Mom is tired. And, I understand that, 'cause I grew up with that. I also, understand, that you can't use the way you're living like now to say what you're gonna be [accomplish] in the future. And, I tell them all the time, "Guys, I know where you're comin' from. That's where I was." I say, "But, I knew I wanted to go to college. And, I knew that I had to work hard to get there. But, you can get there. You can go to school for free. Even, if you can't go to school for free. If your parents don't make a lot of money, you can get grants to pay for school. You can get financial aid. There's a lot of things. So, don't ever think that you can't go, because you can because I went." And I also understand, being African American, that we __ statistically __ we've got some issues __ as a whole race. It hurts me a little bit more when I see my Black males aren't doing as good as my other kids. And, I just want to shake some of these parents and tell them [that] they [students] can't [guarantee that they will] play football [as a career]. Not everybody's gonna make it to the NFL. They've [students have] got to learn how to read. They have to be able to read. I tell the boys, "Ya, you wanna play football, but what job do you want to have? What do you want your career to be? Football can get you into college. Football can pay your way in there, but it's hard to get into the NFL or NBA. It's really hard." I really want them to understand. If they get in [to pro sports] and then find themselves right back out, then what do they have? Nothing. I really want them to understand that they can do big things. And, then you have the kids who come and say they want to work at Wendy's when they grow up 'cause Momma works at Wendy's. One boy

wanted to work at the mall. I tell them, "You know, when you go to college,

working in the mall is [a] really, really good job to have. But, what do you want to

be when you get out of college?" I'm not accepting working at the drive-thru,

working at Wendy's, or being a pizza delivery man either. One girl said, "Wal-

mart." I said, "Do want to just work the register or be a manager and be the boss

of the people that work the register?" I really want to push them to think beyond

what they're in right now.

Piper mentioned awareness of social issues affecting African Americans. She did not

describe specific issues, but referred to a perception of parents' and students'

inappropriate academic and career choices. Piper also expressed concern for Black male

students: "My Black males aren't doing as good as my other kids." Her remarks

concerning African American *issues* and academic successes confirm her belief in a

deficit theory in which victims are blamed via stereotypical biases. Deficit theories in

which victims are blamed for academic and behavioral struggles or failures in the

learning environment present educators with the danger of perpetuating unethical

conclusions that limit students from diverse backgrounds and poverty from accessing

education with high expectations (Purcell-Gates, 1995).

As she confirmed pride in her mother's perseverance and commitment to Piper's

education, she further substantiates adherence to a deficit theory of blaming students'

parents for lack of ambition and knowledge. Piper asserted that she was motivated by her

mother, a teacher, as well as being intrinsically motivated to attend college and pursue a

professional career. She stressed that her hopes and dreams are substantially different

from many students' dreams of future careers. Piper confirmed her deficit theory

asserting that people living in generational poverty lack motivation. Her deficit theory perpetuates cultural discontinuity, or cultural incompatibility between school and home cultures (Au, 1993).

Although Piper suggests that she identifies with students, she expresses frustration with students' behaviors, their home cultural expectations, and their struggles to meet school and classroom expectations. Piper's statements and deficit theories concerning students and parents affirm that she struggles to identify with diverse students and parents. Piper indicated that she must motivate students because their parents will not or do not know how. Despite her deficit theories, she asserted that she believes her students can accomplish much more than their parents have accomplished, confirming again that she blames parents for students' struggles. Although Piper expressed a sincere desire to help students, her alignment with mainstream stereotypical beliefs perpetuates cultural deprivation myths (Banks, 1997a; Delpit, 2006).

Piper asserted beliefs in multiculturalism and equal educational opportunities. When asked how students' diversity affects instructional approach selections, Piper stated:

> I don't know [how students' diversity has affected instructional approach selections]. I always wanted to have a diverse classroom. I always did. I don't know. I'm just me. I don't know if there's anything specifically __ I try to be respectful and I try to think about the different cultures, but I think me, being the kind of person that I am, I'm just automatically a little more empathetic towards the other cultures. 'Cause I don't want anyone disrespecting me. So, I'm not going to act like I'm better than anybody else. We're all the same. We just look

different. That's the kind of approach that I try to have. I don't treat them any differently because of their race. Just because Abena is African, doesn't mean that she is any worse, or whatever, than me because I'm African-American. She describes to me seeing Zebras or how it does get cold in Africa. And, I think that is so amazing. Danh told me about how when he flew here from Vietnam, how long the flight was. He said, "Ms. Piper, the plane had everything. They had Sprite. They had food. But, Ms. Piper, I was so glad to get off that airplane." I love hearing those kind[s] of things. I'm just naturally curious and interested. I just always have been. I like to hear about different places. And, I don't have to stretch so far to make it a conscious effort to do those things.

Piper stated that students' diversity affects her instructional approach selections such that she "tries to be respectful" of diverse cultures and that she does not "treat them any differently." She feels that being African American and having grown up in poverty contributes to her sensitivity to students from diverse cultures and those living in poverty. She confirmed previously stated perceptions that everyone is alike, aside from appearance. In addition, Piper's statements indicate that she considers the term *diverse cultures* to refer to students who have recently arrived from countries other than the United States. Additionally, she perceives that learning needs of students from diverse cultures do not differ and that all students receive equal instruction, "We are all the same. We just look different." She advocated an egalitarian belief, or equal educational approach. Piper did not acknowledge the significant impact that diversity represented by her students and herself have on new knowledge acquisition for students.

Piper mentioned an interest in the diverse cultural experiences of her students. She

asserted that she encourages students to contribute anecdotes of their personal

experiences. Students did not share cultural or ethnic experiences during observations of

Piper's literacy instruction. Although she expressed curiosity concerning students'

diverse cultures, several interview responses suggest a lack of appreciation for diverse

cultures and generational poverty. For example, she stated: "They didn't have enough

experience in their original culture or they don't know it's different. I don't really think

these kids see themselves as different. They know, but they don't care."

Interview responses provided by Piper suggest that she is aware that she has

experienced social privileges that are often denied others, such as benefits from her

mother's educational background. Although Piper believes in multiculturalism and equal

educational opportunities, several interview responses reveal that she does not fully

understand the multicultural education theory.

Literacy Instruction and Multicultural Education

Piper was asked on three different occasions to express her knowledge or comfort

level with the term *multicultural education*. She did not respond on any occasion,

suggesting either awareness of a lack of knowledge or some level of discomfort

concerning the topic of multicultural education theory. Interview statements demonstrate

that Piper's application of multicultural education is limited to occasional student

conversational contributions of cultural experiences, provision of some literacy

instruction scaffolding, and a belief of equal education opportunities. For example,

"We're all the same. We just look different. That's the kind of approach that I try to have.

I don't treat them any differently because of their race."

Content Integration and Curriculum. Interview and observational data indicate that almost all aspects of literacy instruction in Piper's classroom were components of the Reading First program. Reading First is a research-based literacy instruction pedagogy facilitating literacy instruction for low-income students, diverse racial and ethnic populations, ELL students, and special education students (USDE, 2008). Piper described her methods for selecting curricula, assessments, and classroom literature:

> I don't select curricula or classroom literature. I do add [additional] in literature based on the theme. The assessments are selected [by me] if they have a reading passage with questions and multiple choice [answers] when they work on passage comprehension.

Reading First recently awarded Wesken Elementary School a grant that provided most literacy instruction curriculum and materials. Piper's class utilized Houghton Mifflin second grade curriculum and corresponding basal materials. Interestingly, she did not offer her opinion of Reading First during interviews. Indoctrinated to mainstream educational perceptions, Piper perceives curriculum and pedagogy selections or decisions of the status quo to be "an unchanging truth that must be passed on unquestioningly" (Nieto, 1999, p. 77).

Piper implemented Reading First literacy curriculum and pedagogy as directed by the Reading First program and Weskenton's school district. Reading First claims to facilitate differentiated literacy instruction. However, opportunities to address students' literacy strengths and weaknesses through differentiated instruction utilizing students' learning styles, cultural backgrounds, and connections to home learning were missing

(Banks, 1997a). Teaching to small groups did not facilitate differentiated literacy instruction. Piper's instruction was predominantly teacher-centered.

Piper believes she is implementing Reading First curriculum selections and methods as a means of providing equitable literacy instruction for her diverse and struggling students, confirming her lack of knowledge concerning *equitable pedagogy*. According to Education Alliance (2006), culturally responsive curriculum consists of integrated units built around universal themes. Piper explained Houghton-Mifflin second grade reading curriculum:

> Well, being a Reading First school, we are highly advised to follow the curriculum in the order that it is taught in the reading book. The book is arranged by theme. We do a lot of center work and in our small groups, we base it on the needs of the students. We mainly use Houghton-Mifflin materials and sometimes we will bring in things we have learned at conferences.

Themes in Houghton-Mifflin's second grade anthology include fiction and nonfiction stories, fables, and poems representative primarily of mainstream culture and some diverse cultures. Piper followed the six themes in sequence, as outlined by Reading First. To some extent, Houghton-Mifflin reading materials integrate content from diverse backgrounds into themes. Examples of diverse content provided in nonfiction, realistic fiction, and folktale genres include Chinatown (realistic fiction) by William Low (theme three), Brothers and Sisters (nonfiction) by Ellen B. Senisi (theme five), and The Great Ball Game (Muskogee folktale) by Joseph Bruchac (theme four). Accompanying leveled books include Grandpa's Corner Store (realistic fiction) by Anne DiSalvo-Ryan (theme five) and Ananse's Feast (Ahanti folktale) by Tololwa Mollel (theme four).

Piper described other reading resources she implemented: "Well, we have *I Love Phonics* readers and our phonics library books." During observations, she did not incorporate self-selected reading materials for whole or small group instruction. Piper did not question the cultural responsiveness of Reading First teaching practices or Houghton-Mifflin second grade curriculum. She did not question cultural and ethnic content, or level of knowledge construction facilitated within the curriculum. Significance of diversity and learning differences were not considered during instruction, confirming her belief that learning obstacles rest with students and parents. Piper's implementation of curriculum and unconditional dedication to the Reading First program further suggest that her instruction is primarily teacher-centered.

Observed reading instruction addressed literacy skills, such as comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, story components (e.g., plot, setting, characters), cause and effect, summarizing, making connections, questioning, and predicting. Some phonics and phonemic awareness instruction was included in the anthologies. Students were placed in cooperative groups, as suggested by Houghton-Mifflin in the second grade teacher's edition, to work on activities. Students were divided into multi-ability pairs or trios to work on tasks at learning centers. The learning center activities were always paper and pencil tasks. No book clubs or literature circles were observed during literacy instruction.

Literacy Assessment. Reading First requires that students be assessed using GRADE and DIBELs assessments. A grant stipulation is that student scores must be submitted to Reading First. Au (1993), Banks (1997a), Gay (1994), and Nieto (1999) agree that ability grouping, or tracking, based on standardized test scores or reading

ability is damaging to students' literacy-learning. Placement in a 3-Tier group is largely

decided by scores obtained on DIBELS and GRADE tests. Piper explained assessment

selections:

> I use *Words Their Way* tests, GRADE tests, and weekly tests. I also score student
>
> center work and homework." In addition, "I do DIBELs every other Friday. I give
>
> them a reading test on Friday and I will sometimes do a phonics screener with
>
> them.

Piper added that she also implements weekly multiple-choice tests, center tasks, and

homework to gather assessment data. Piper's assertion that she implements multiple

assessments to guide instruction aligns with culturally responsive teaching strategies.

However, Piper was not observed implementing multiple assessments to address

individual learning needs.

Students from diverse backgrounds struggling to learn English often cannot

demonstrate acquired knowledge accurately on standardized tests. When asked if ELL

students are ever assessed in their home language, Piper responded, "They might. I'm not

quite sure. I think that some of the Spanish kids __ we might give them a speech test."

Piper's response indicates that she does not assess students in any language other than

English and that Spanish speaking students are assessed in Spanish by a special education

teacher to determine speech impediments.

Piper's reliance on standardized tests that require Standard English vocabulary

knowledge as essential for learning to read aligns with her belief in mainstream cultural

assimilation. Piper stated that her students, at the time of the study, "don't struggle with

speaking English, but some struggle with understanding it at times." Reliance on

standardized test scores as the dominant instruction guide for students from cultural, linguistic, and economically diverse backgrounds confirms Piper's employment of the transmissive teaching model (Au, 1993). Piper's instruction, for the most part, was guided by standardized assessments that seemingly confirm vocabulary deficits of students from diverse backgrounds.

　　　Equity Pedagogy. Piper believes in equal education. However, she did not demonstrate understanding of the term *equitable pedagogy*. Phrasing of her conception of multicultural education did not describe equitable pedagogy:

　　　What do I take it to mean? [Piper asked the researcher. Researcher nodded yes.]

　　　Just teaching kids that are from a lot of different backgrounds and a lot of

　　　different socioeconomic backgrounds, home life, just a lotta differences that

　　　makes them just different from other kids.

Piper's statement affirms her belief in multiculturalism and that she acknowledges students' cultural, ethnic, and economic differences. She does not recognize that the term *equitable education* refers to provision of differentiating instruction to address students' individual learning needs so that equal opportunities for learning success is facilitated (Banks, 1997a). Piper defines multicultural education:

　　　I just naturally try to teach you __ they tell you that different cultures do different

　　　kind of things. Like, the Hispanic cultures won't look you in the eye if they're in

　　　trouble. So, I don't try to make them, like Ernesto (oh, he hardly ever gets in

　　　trouble) __ but when I had my honey bunny, Miguel, last year __ I would try not

　　　to make __ Miguel wouldn't look me in the eye when he was doing something he

　　　wasn't supposed to do. But, by the end of the talk, I would be like, "Look at me,

Sweetie, you have really got to try to be a little bit better. You understand me?"

And things like that, to let them understand we expect you, around here, to look

us in the face. But at the same time I understand why you don't. I just try to treat

them the way that I want to be treated. And I think, "How would I want my kids

to be treated?" I had a really mean teacher when I was in third grade. And, if I feel

like I'm being like her to my kids, I always stop, and be like, "You can't treat

them like that." And, I always stop and I will apologize if I think that I said

something that I shouldn't have. I will apologize. I always go back and think

about what I'm going to say to make sure it's not going to be something offensive

or something that is going to hurt somebody's feelings because I know how that

feels to have your feelings hurt by a teacher. It stinks.

Piper's response indicates recognition of cultural differences, an expectation that students

assimilate to mainstream expectations, and a lack of understanding concerning

disconnections between students' home cultures and school and mainstream cultures.

Interview responses concerning curriculum implementation indicate that Piper is

learning some excellent culturally responsive literacy teaching practices and strategies,

such as cooperative grouping. She implements skills and strategies that she has learned in

teacher preparation classes, professional growth programs, KRP, and is directed to

employ by the school district, Reading First, and Houghton-Mifflin curriculum.

An important scaffold is the strategy of making real world connections. The

strategy of making real world connections was facilitated through lessons presented in the

anthology, such as when reading the stories *Ant* by Rebecca Stefoff, *Grandpa's Corner*

Store by Anne DiSalvo-Ryan, and *Brothers and Sisters* by Ellen B. Senisi. Before

reading *Grandpa's Corner Store*, Piper conducted the following mini lesson to access

prior knowledge and facilitate connection making:

> *All students gathered on the carpet. Piper and student helpers passed out basals.*

> Piper: All right. The first thing we're going to start off with today is counting
>
> > syllables. Neigh-bor-hood. How many syllables are in the word
> >
> > neighborhood?

> *Wait time. Some students held up three fingers. Some did not have hands up.*

> Piper: I see lots of threes. Good.

> Piper sounded out the word dividing it into syllables: Neigh-bor-hood.
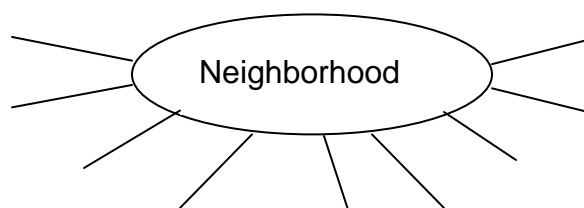
> *Figure 1*. Piper drew a spider graphic organizer.

> Piper: Tell me about some important places in your neighborhood.

> Students: Police station, Weskenton University, school, park, animal shelter,
>
> > houses, playground, church, baseball field.

Piper spent a lot of time practicing the reading skill of making connections with her

students and helping them understand what type of connection they were making.

Although students learned to identify various types of connections, as demonstrated in

the following excerpt of a small-group reading lesson, there was little authentic

discussion or active learning involving knowledge construction and new learning assimilation:

> *Piper sat down on the floor. She moved from one student to the other and listened to them read aloud from where they were.*
>
> Piper: Ok, what connection can you make?
>
> Mariah: I help my uncle wash his car.
>
> Piper: What kind of connection is that?
>
> Mariah: Connection to self.
>
> Piper nods: We gotta get you some specs, don't we?
>
> *Mariah nodded in agreement. Students continued reading to themselves.*
>
> Piper: All right, Enrique tell me a connection. Is there something in the story that reminds you of something you've read, or seen, or done, or heard?
>
> *Enrique described a similar story he read before.*
>
> Piper: So, you read that?
>
> *Enrique nodded yes.*
>
> Piper: What kind of connection is that?
>
> *Enrique looked up at the chart where the following were listed: text to self, text to text, text to world.*
>
> Enrique: Text to text connection.

Learning to make connections is an important skill that improves students' reading focus and comprehension. However, Piper's "making connections" lesson exemplified transmissive teaching. The instruction did not align with culturally responsive instructional practices due to missed opportunities to develop students' critical literacy

skills. Culturally responsive instruction facilitates opportunities for students to share personal and cultural experiences and explore differences.

Although learning activities were paper and pencil, some of Gardner's (1999) multiple intelligences were facilitated. Piper addressed logical-mathematical intelligence (Gardner, 1999) through implementation of various questioning strategies that required students to problem solve and reason deductively when asked higher-level questions. Piper asked all students various types of questions: right there, think and search, question the author (QtA), and on my own questions. Open-ended questions were also implemented. An example of a *right there* question posed by Piper during whole group instruction was, "What word do they [authors] use in the story [to mean fixing things up]?" A *think and search* question asked by Piper was, "What are some things Gloria can do that real dogs cannot do?" Piper asked *QtA* questions, "The story tells us that Daisy's tail is wagging, but it doesn't tell us why. Why do you think Daisy's tail is wagging?" An example of an *on my own* question Piper asked was posed while the class read *The Great Ball Game*. Piper modeled vain behavior to describe possums' actions in the story, "Would you want a friend that does that all the time?" An example of open-ended questions Piper asked was, "What do you already know about dinosaurs?"

Piper addressed linguistic intelligence through writing practice offered during group instruction and center activities. An example is a writing task in which students wrote about things they would see in a city:

Piper: Let's go over to the journal center.

All students went to the journal center with Piper.

Piper: We have just finished the theme in our book about neighborhoods. I

thought it would be nice if we could write about things that we see in a big city. What you're going to do is take the top two sheets and fold them together. Then complete the two sentences [on the first page of the student created booklets]: This is what I see in a city. I see _____. Think about things that you might see in a big city that you won't see in Weskenton.

Students: Skyscrapers, lots of streets, zoos

Piper read sentences on subsequent pages of student booklets: This is what I hear in a city. This is what I taste in a city. This is what I smell in a city. This is what I do in a city. This is what I _____ in a city.

Piper: Then draw a picture for each one.

Piper shared her story about her trip to Houston. Students were focused while she read her story about her trip. Whispers were heard among students. Many mentioned to each other that they had never been to a city before. Some students looked concerned. Piper explained the rubric for the assignment.

Piper: You need to fill in all the sentences and pictures. What [rubric score] are we aiming for guys?

Students: Three or four.

Piper: Questions?

Wait time. Silence.

Piper: Who can we ask for help?

Students: Partners and you.

There was very little discussion concerning differences between cities and smaller towns. As students transitioned from center to center during literacy instruction block, some

demonstrated difficulty with the *city* task. Some sought help from partners. Students

complained that they did not know what was in a city. No students approached Piper to

ask for assistance. Piper's transmissive instructional approach is exemplified with her

tendency to *tell* students information, maintain control, and focus on skills. Therefore,

students missed opportunities to make connections and personally construct meaning.

Students were not observed sharing writing samples.

Also included in the linguistic intelligence (Gardner, 1999) is the ability to learn

and speak more than one language. Students in Piper's class were only observed speaking

English, although some seem to "struggle understanding it at times." Piper stated that

students in the past years have spoken Spanish as needed. She did not mention other

languages that students have spoken in her classroom.

Other intelligences conceived by Gardner include musical and bodily kinesthetics.

The only activities involving music were phonics, vocabulary, and reading skills

computer games. Bodily-kinesthetic is Gardner's fourth intelligence. No bodily-

kinesthetic activities were observed in Piper's classroom, other than learning center and

small group transitions. Delpit (2006) asserts that provision of learning activities

involving movement and social interaction addresses learning styles of African American

boys.

Piper utilized cooperative grouping as a means of connecting students' home

cultures to new learning. Students worked at learning centers in multi-ability partnerships

or cooperative groups. Piper explained, "I group them by ability. I put lower students

with higher ones and those that work well together." Working in cooperative groups also

provides students with opportunities to make choices (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

Piper's students were encouraged to make personal reading selections from classroom and school libraries. Personal reading choices were kept in browsing bags at their desks. Piper redirected or instructed students to read their personal book selections when finished with their work or when waiting for classroom transitions. During one observation, the following was observed:

> *Piper was conducting the reward incentive. She provided time for students to take their class money to buy tickets to a movie in the afternoon. Students read quietly at their seats. They previously read books taken from classroom shelves or books from their browsing bag.*

The following was observed on another occasion:

> Piper to students: Ok, take your folders and go back to your seats.
>
> Piper: I like the way Abena and Danh got back to their seats and took out previously read books or something from their browsing bags to read. They did exactly what they were supposed to do.

Although students selected personal reading, they were permitted few additional opportunities for making choices. Piper described student choices:

> Some choose to complete their work and be polite and work hard, while others do the opposite. I just try to correct those who are making the wrong choice and help them make the right one.

Students could choose the level of task accomplishment according to four point rubrics posted at learning centers. However, students were not given choices concerning goal setting, tasks, method of task completion, or means of knowledge demonstration. All students were assigned the same tasks, expected to complete the tasks in the same way,

and take the same tests. Piper's limitation of student choices confirms her universal teaching approach in which diversity is not considered or valued (Lindsey et al., 2003). Denial of student choices presents missed opportunities for students to link home learning to school learning, share responsibility for learning, or demonstrate knowledge in a culturally responsive manner.

Additional missed opportunities for Piper's students to experience equity pedagogy include limited use of classroom computers. Students used computers to practice reading and phonics skills, as Piper described:

> They work on Lexia Phonics, which is from the reading company. They also have
> *Curious George Learns Phonics and Spelling*. On the internet, they get on [use]
> Starfall, which focuses on phonics and comprehension [instruction].

When asked if students use computers as a means of completing tasks, writing assignments, or assessments, Piper responded, "No. We mainly play educational games on them." According to Woods (2004), computers provide additional literacy-learning avenues for diverse and struggling students by "eras[ing] the boundaries between the haves and have nots" (p. 12).

Piper stated that she "bases [instructional approaches] on the needs of the students." However, observations demonstrated that she simply differentiates instruction and curriculum selections according to small group needs. Limited individualized guided reading instruction with students was observed. Wesken Elementary School's primary grades employ a 3-Tier reading instruction to address reading learning needs of students in grades K-3. Piper explained her implementation of 3-Tier pedagogy:

> They [students] have homogeneous guided reading groups and phonics groups. If
> they are strategic readers, they get Tier II intervention that focuses on their needs.
> If they are intensive, they get Tier II intervention and Tier III intervention [outside
> of the classroom]. I teach Tier II intervention group and a guided reading group
> that lets them read books on their level.

Reading curriculum and materials provided by Reading First include leveled books for small group instruction and for independent reading that correlate with the Houghton-Mifflin anthology. Students in grades K-3 receive Tier I instruction that includes incorporation of systematic assessment three times per year to identify struggling readers and inform reading instruction. All students in the 3-Tier program receive at least 90 minutes daily of classroom reading instruction: explicit and systematic reading skills instruction, ample practice, and immediate teacher feedback. Students receiving Tier II instruction access an additional 30 minutes of explicit reading instruction and are assessed every two weeks. Tier III students receive an additional 60 minutes of reading instruction to the basic thirty minutes provided in Tier I (University of Texas System, 2005).

Piper explained how students are placed in Tiers, "We [second grade teachers] look at all of the second grade students in one pile and group them by needs. Every month or so, we meet and regroup [students] if necessary." Piper did not explain specific criteria the second grade teachers use to determine student grouping. Students in Tier III meet in much smaller groups to facilitate more individualized instruction in which additional scaffolding and modifications are made for their reading instruction (University of Texas System, 2005). Piper described Tier III reading instruction, "Mrs.

Canary, a retired teacher, pulls six of my kids everyday in two separate groups at various times." Creators assert that a 3-Tier program is designed to address literacy-learning needs of diverse and struggling students in a more individualized manner. However, minimal differentiated instruction was observed.

Piper asserted that she provided guided reading instruction. Three guided reading sessions were observed during small group instruction. During observed guided reading instruction, students received approximately two minutes of reading instruction out of twenty observed hours. On two occasions, Piper sat next to individual students on the floor, listened to a child read, then prompted each student to make connections and identify the type of connection. During the third guided reading session, students were called one at a time to stand next to Piper and read sets of cards to improve fluency:

> *Piper told Jason to practice reading phrases on cards to improve his fluency.*
>
> *Piper gave Mariah another set of cards to practice for fluency. Piper asked Jason to stand next to her and read the phrases to her.*
>
> Piper: Good…
>
> *Jason continued to read the cards.*
>
> Piper: Very good. I'm very impressed.
>
> *Piper handed Jason another set of ring bound cards that had vocabulary words. He sat and read.*
>
> *Mariah stood next to Piper and read the phrases.*
>
> Piper: Good.
>
> *Mariah continued to read phrases.*
>
> Piper: Very good

> *Piper took out a red set of cards and asked Mariah to read the words to her.*
>
> *Mariah struggled with some words. Piper allowed wait time and Mariah sounded*
>
> *out the words independently.*

What Piper describes as guided reading instruction appears to be skill and drill to improve reading accuracy.

Piper focused on reading skills during literacy block and Mrs. Junco (a retired teacher who provided reading skills instruction in Piper's classroom) worked with groups providing phonics, vocabulary, and reading skills. Often reading skill instruction was rote and focused on reading speed and accuracy. In the following lesson excerpt, reading instruction focus was skill and drill:

> *Piper was reviewing fluency. She placed a small sentence strip in a pocket chart:*
>
> *I had*
>
> Piper: You don't read this as "I ___ had." You read it as, "I had." Here is another
> one: it was
>
> *Children repeated the phrase.*
>
> Piper: Remember you don't say these until I say it.
>
> Piper: At the
>
> *Students repeated.*
>
> Piper: With her
>
> *Students repeated.*
>
> Piper: by the
>
> *Students repeated.*
>
> Piper: in my

Students repeated.

Piper: in the

Students repeated.

Piper: on the

Students repeated.

Piper: I am

Students repeated.

Piper: They went

Students repeated.

Piper: He said

Students repeated.

Piper: she said

Students repeated.

Piper: I would

Students repeated.

Piper: I will

Students repeated.

Piper: I could

Students repeated.

Piper: I can

Students repeated.

Piper: With him

Students repeated.

Piper's statements and student repetitions were said two times. Few lessons focused on reading for comprehension, confirming that Reading First addresses literacy instruction for at-risk students utilizing a skills approach.

Another important student-centered literacy instructional concern is a focus on meaning making during reading versus rote reading. When asked what her perspectives were about meaning making and rote reading instructional approaches, Piper explained:

> Personally, I prefer meaning making. This tells me that even though a child may not be able to read a word, they are reading to understand what they are reading. Usually these students have pretty good comprehension skills. Rote is what we worry about. This means students are reading to just figure out the words, not to understand what they are reading.

Piper's statement infers a preference of reading for comprehension over rote reading. However, her interview responses asserted a strong focus on vocabulary and phonics instruction for all students. Additionally, observed reading instruction placed a strong emphasis on word recognition and accuracy:

> *Piper was working with two students who were reading aloud a story called 'Boats.' When they finished, Piper said she noticed that both students' reading fluency improved dramatically. According to Piper, both "gained [in accuracy] about 50 words."*
>
> Piper: Do you know what that means?
>
> *They looked at her silently.*
>
> Piper: It means that because you practiced you got better. The more you practice reading, the better you get. The more familiar you become with words and

the faster you can read and the better you understand.

Piper's statement equates familiarity with words with faster reading. Furthermore, she perceives faster reading equates improved reading comprehension. Observations confirmed that Piper equates reading text with a focus on word recognition accuracy improves reading comprehension:

Piper said to Mariah: You need to listen to yourself about what you've read.

What have I learned about antennae? Good readers always listen to what they read. They think about what they read to understand. Don't just read the words!

Knowing Piper was listening, her student was concerned about reading words correctly. Piper emphasized rote stating that Mariah needed to read the words correctly and understand the words.

Piper frequently failed to provide students with the rationale for skills they would be learning or reviewing at the time of instruction:

It does not make me very happy when you all are talking when one of your classmates is trying to answer a question. Everyone in here deserves respect. We [Piper and Mrs. Junco] do this to help you become better readers. *Better readers* means, not only being able to read the words, but to understand what you read. It is so that you can take a story and really understand it or take a non-fiction story and be able to understand how something is done and why. We are trying to be able to use our brains to understand what the author said and didn't say. I am asking questions to help you learn how to understand what you're reading.

Instead, you are not using your time wisely and you're being disrespectful to your

neighbors.

Piper stated a rationale during her chastisement of the students. On another occasion,

Piper discussed the meaning of *fluency* with students prior to an activity:

> *Piper continued to work on fluency. She asked students to define fluency. Students*
>
> *remained silent.*

> Piper: Fluency has to do with how fast you read and how you sound when you
>
> read it. This exercise will help you become a faster reader. I'm going to
>
> put these (referring to a stack of phrase cards) up, and you are going to
>
> repeat after me. We will practice reading them faster and faster.

No other instances were observed in which Piper provided students with rationale for

reading skill or strategy learning.

Piper believes that deficit theories concerning students, parents, and diverse

cultures provide rationale for learning struggles and failures experienced by diverse and

impoverished students. Piper's focus on rote reading instruction confirms her perception

that at-risk students have language and vocabulary deficits. Piper believes four deficit

myths described by Flores and colleagues (1998):

> Myth 1: At-risk children have a language problem. Their language and culture is
>
> deficient. They lack experiences. These deficits cause them to have
>
> learning problems. (p. 29)

> Myth 2: At-risk children need to be separated from the regular class and need a
>
> structured program based on hierarchal notions of language development.
>
> (p. 30)

Myth 3: Standardized tests can accurately identify and categorize students who

are at-risk for learning and language problems. (p. 30)

Myth 4: At-risk children have problems because parents don't care, can't read, or

don't work with them. (p. 31)

Cultural discontinuity and social inequality for students are perpetuated by Piper's deficit theories. Furthermore, her earnest desire to address learning needs of her diverse and struggling students is obstructed by selected literacy instructional approaches that deny them equitable learning opportunities.

Piper expressed frustrated sentiment and concern for new teachers when addressing learning needs of diverse student populations:

I see some students who are extremely hyper, disrespectful, and bad attitudes.

These problems will be in all schools where you have a lot of low-economic

status the problems are more. They [student teachers] need to be exposed to all

types of kids in order to sharpen their arsenal of what to do.

Piper expressed a desire to address the learning needs of her diverse and struggling students and utilized a few culturally responsive teaching practices. However, many, such as differentiated reading instruction, were absent. Additionally, as previously noted, several implemented teaching practices were not being utilized in a culturally responsive and efficacious manner.

Knowledge Construction and Prejudice Reduction. Piper maintained a perspective that everyone in her classroom was essentially the same, aside from differing appearances. All behavioral and academic expectations and goals were equal for all students. Piper perceives the mainstream lifestyle as the norm and that mainstream

expectations are universal. Piper is unaware of effects the following have on students'

acquisition of new knowledge: her personal background, personal deficit theories

concerning students and parents, and students' diverse cultures and ethnicities (Wilson,

2000; Lindsey et al. 2003). Piper's responses, observed literacy instructional pedagogies,

and omission of culturally mediated instruction indicate that Piper encourages students to

assimilate into the school culture.

Piper indicated knowledge of students' low socioeconomic status. However, she

did not mention knowledge concerning their ethnic backgrounds. Piper's belief in deficit

theories suggests that she has not explored her students' cultures and ethnicities. She was

asked if she made home visits to learn more about her students and their backgrounds.

Piper did not respond, most likely indicating that she has not. When asked how she learns

about her students' personal learning styles, Piper stated, "I just try to make sure that I

explain some of the vocabulary words and know that they need things reworded." Piper's

response does not explain a means of learning about students' learning styles. Her

statement suggests a one-size-fits-all teaching approach and confirms belief in a deficit

theory that students from diverse and low socioeconomic backgrounds have language and

vocabulary deficiencies, all of which confirm a transmissive teaching approach.

Although Piper referred to cultural connections students made in conversation

with her, no instances were observed in which students initiated cultural or ethnic

connections. In fact, few instances were observed in which Piper facilitated cultural or

ethnic connections. On one occasion, headings were written on the dry erase board: A

Food Tradition in my Family, A Party Tradition in my Family, and A Holiday Tradition

in my Family. Piper explained:

> This was a lesson we did for Social Studies. I tried to have students talk about
>
> their cultures that week, but they really don't see how they're different than
>
> anyone. They also do a lot of things that are like everyone else.

All cultural connections made by Piper or students are indicative of Banks' (1997a) contributions approach of knowledge construction. Furthermore, Piper's statement suggests a perception that students are not aware of cultural and ethnic differences.

Piper indicated reluctance to initiate cultural and ethnic connections because she perceives that students are unaware of differences. She did not describe activities, discussions, or practices implemented to facilitate learning about or celebrations concerning heroes and holidays. Unfortunately, in many classrooms, the mention of contributions made by people from diverse cultural and ethnic groups is rare. Often, a selected day or month is the only opportunity taken to teach students about diversity or individuals who have contributed to humanity. This practice reinforces the conception that great contributors of benefits to humanity are only Caucasian mainstream males (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997; Garcia, 2004; Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Nieto, 1999).

Piper's perception that students do not realize cultural and ethnic differences is at odds with Wesken Elementary School's attempts to facilitate opportunities for students to identify with their home cultures and make global connections. As Piper mentioned, the annual cultural fair held in May at Wesken Elementary School made its debut the year before:

> We'll have like a cultural fair at the end of the school year. I don't think it really
>
> let the kids be in charge of what they did. It was like the teachers pretty much did
>
> it. But, it was the first year and I don't think we had a lot of __ it was just like ok

here. I don't think a lot of kids don't realize that their culture is different. I think a

lot of them have been Americanized.

Piper confirms her perception that students are unaware of cultural and ethnic differences

and also confirms her belief in assimilation. Wesken Elementary School teachers and

staff assert that cultural and ethnic differences are valued through provision of the annual

cultural fair and Christmas around the World event. However, school and teacher

practices suggest that students are expected to assimilate, such as the suggestion that all

Wesken Elementary School students celebrate Christmas. According to Banks (1997a),

students need to learn more about personal cultures and ethnicities as well as those

different from their own in order to make global connections.

Piper did not add themes concepts, content, or perspectives representative of

diverse populations to conventional literacy instruction. She did not facilitate culturally

mediated discussions or activities to develop interpersonal and intrapersonal skills

(Gardner, 1999). Students did not participate in discussions or activities to solve cultural

conflicts; reduce prejudicial or stereotypical perceptions and behaviors; learn about ideas

and concepts from perspectives different from their own; or understand personal cultures

and ethnicities.

Piper's self-descriptive perceptions suggest that she is aware that there are

differences between her cultural and ethnic experiences and those of her students.

However, she believes that cultural and ethnic differences are insignificant. Piper's

statements indicate that she relates to students' socioeconomic status more than from the

perspective of diversity, "Guys, I know where you're comin' from. That's where I was

[living in poverty]." Piper does not consider diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds of

her students when making instructional approach selections, as the omission of differentiated instruction demonstrates.

Piper's conception of multicultural education is limited to students' entitlement to equal educational opportunities, provision of some learning supports, and minimal opportunities to make cultural connections for students. Transactive (Gay, 1995), or culturally mediated (Education Alliance, 2006), instruction was absent from Piper's conception. In addition, transformative (1995) and prejudice reduction (Banks, 1997a) discussions and activities were absent. Piper's transmissive (Gay, 1995) level of multicultural education reflects traditional societal perspectives and behavior. She equates the term *culture* with celebration. Therefore, traditional power issues are perpetuated through Piper's perspectives. Her self-described beliefs and attitudes, curriculum implementation, and selected pedagogies indicate level one, the contributions approach, of Banks' (1997a) four levels of the knowledge construction dimension.

Cultural Discontinuity

All cultures must be considered when formulating and adjusting school and classroom learning environment expectations. Piper's perspective reflects national hierarchy in which dominant culture prevails, "….But, by the end of the talk, I would be like, 'Look at me, Sweetie, you have really got to try to be a little bit better. You understand me?' And things like that, to let them understand we expect you around here to look us in the face, but at the same time, I understand why you don't…." Piper wanted her students to adopt the school culture and relinquish behaviors characteristic of their home culture while at school, as exemplified with Piper's demand that Miguel make eye contact when she was speaking to him.

Piper is unaware of the influence her culture and ethnicity have on students' behaviors and attitudes. For example, her direct *telling* method of instruction may present learning barriers for students from diverse backgrounds in which the processes of inquisition, social interaction, and exploration are essential components of knowledge construction. Denial of cooperative and active learning methods of instruction may feel alienated or frustrated. Students from diverse backgrounds who do not feel that they or their culture is valued, or who struggle to meet mainstream behavioral and academic expectations, may demonstrate inappropriate behaviors directed toward authority figures. They may even drop out of school (Fordham and Ogbu, 1986).

Deficit theories; inaccurate knowledge concerning students' cultures, ethnicities, learning styles, and needs; and unawareness of how her personal culture and ethnicity influence students' new knowledge acquisition encumber Piper's ability to establish an empowering learning environment for her diverse and struggling students. Piper's response confirms a deficit theory in which students are blamed for their experiences of cultural discontinuity. Piper does not acknowledge that some conflicts or demonstrations of frustration could be resulting from feelings of alienation, marginalization, or struggles to meet mainstream expectations.

Piper explained how she communicated with non-English speaking parents, "We have some people in our school who can translate from English to Spanish. We usually have them translate for us." Piper explained how she minimizes or eliminates communication barriers to ensure students understand expectations:

My thing is I constantly have kids do good examples, bad examples. Kind of __

praise when they do it correctly. Redirect when they do it incorrectly. All those

different kinds of things.

Piper expressed certainty that students understood expectations "because they show it.

Just __ you explain something to them. What they're supposed to do and then __ they

show it." Piper tries to teach Wesken Elementary School cultural expectations in that she

expects students to comply with behavioral and academic expectations fully. She strives

to make class and school expectations clear to students and parents.

Piper asserted that she considers parental involvement beneficial. However, Piper

expressed disappointment concerning the amount of parental participation or their interest

in students' learning. Piper hopes and believes students can succeed, although she feels

nearly all motivation comes from her:

I get very little parental involvement that I would want. They [parents] just don't

do what I would really like them to do. Yah, many of the parents help them with

their homework. Some do. Some do things, but as far as doing anything [else] __

they just really don't. I think a lot of it does have to do with that __ being that

poverty __ that generational poverty. They think of the school as being where the

kid is supposed to learn. You go to school to learn. That's where you [child] do

your learning. When you come home __ you're at home. I [parent] don't have to

teach. I get aggravated by that __ a lot! The parents that we have __ they want

their kids to be successful __ but, they don't know how to help them to be

successful. We try, and we tell them, and we have different things at school. But,

I'm just afraid that they [parents] don't help as much. It's not like I'm asking

them to take four hours and all night to sit down and help their kid. All I really want is [for the parents] to read a story with them. I tell them, "If you do nothing else, just sit down and listen to them read. You read to them. You read together every night for 20 minutes. Just take 20 minutes out of your evening and just sit down and read." Some of the kids really do those kinds of things with their parents, and some of them [parents] do take them [children] to the library, and they [children] get books at home, and they get books for Christmas and things like that. But, some of them don't. I just think that whatever I do has got to carry over. And, it's got to stick in a way because they're [children] not going to get it anywhere else. But, I mean, some of these parents really want to. They just don't know how. And, I think, they're just too embarrassed to really come and ask you. They're [parents] gonna think we're [teachers] gonna think that they're incompetent and that they can't do it. I wouldn't. I would love it if a parent [would] come and tell me [that they need help]. "Yes, I will show you exactly what you need, and I will give you some tips." It doesn't happen as often as I would like.

Piper's statement indicates that she does not believe her students can succeed because parents' attitudes and actions hold their children back. While her response contradicts earlier statements in which Piper declared to students that they can succeed and rise from poverty, she confirmed her declared perceptions that she has higher expectations for them than their parents. Piper has accepted stereotypical beliefs about people living in poverty, thereby placing the burden of students' new knowledge acquisition on students and their parents rather than on the mainstream educational system (Purcell-Gates, 1995).

When asked if parents or community members volunteer in her classroom, Piper stated, "We have [community] mentors who volunteer to work and spend time with kids. They hang out and play games with them [students]." Parents and community mentors were not observed assisting or interacting with students in Piper's classroom.

Although Piper did not state high expectations for her students, she stated that she has hopes for them, "….But, you can get there. You can go to school for free. Even if you can't go to school for free. If your parents don't make a lot of money, you can get grants to pay for school. You can get financial aid. There's a lot of things. So, don't ever think that you can't go, because you can because I went." Piper indicated that she wants to help her students meet mainstream expectations. However, Piper's mainstream conditioning puts her at odds with facilitation of her hopes for diverse students.

Piper considered her students to be "the same." Her deficit theories prevent her from believing students are capable and unique (Nieto, 1999). Her requirement that students meet mainstream behavioral and academic expectations, the lack of student choices, and the absence of differentiated instruction confirm a transmissive teaching model. Piper is an African American teacher in a mainstream educational institution and is influenced by mainstream practices, policies, and supporting rationale, such as use of standardized assessments guiding reading group placement and literacy instruction.

Dedication to Students' Successes

Piper seeks avenues of personal and professional improvement. She has a Bachelors degree in Elementary Education and a Master of Arts degree in Education with an emphasis in Reading. Piper received Kentucky Reading Project training and she

participates in district professional growth programs. Piper described professional growth

programs Weskenton's school district offers:

> Whooo! We [teachers in Wesken School District] have to do 80 hours a year.
> We've done book studies. We did *Bringing Words to Life* the year before last,
> which was my first year here. Last year we did an ESL book study and this year
> we did an ESL book study. Also, we have different professional developments
> throughout the district. Now this year, I don't think I've personally gone to an
> ESL training. Personally, I don't think I have. But, so, obviously, if it doesn't
> pertain to me, I don't really pay attention to it, but I'm sure that they have offered
> different things. They usually provide one or two. But, our big thing is since we
> have 50% of our population ESL here, we do have a book study. I actually have to
> go this afternoon.

Seven of Piper's 20 students, one third, are English language learners (ELLs), or English

as a second language (ESL) learners, and leave the classroom for ESL instruction. She

believed it was necessary to attend ESL professional growth programs when students

struggle with speaking English. Piper did not recognize that students' struggle with

English language comprehension is an obstacle of new knowledge acquisition for them.

Although she asserted that all of her students are vocabulary deficient, Piper did not

perceive the benefits ESL teaching strategies, provided through professional growth

program attendance, offer provide all students. She expressed a belief that valuable

professional growth programs and college courses should focus more on dealing with

behavior issues presented in classrooms populated by diverse and impoverished students.

Piper described means she personally employs to improve her teaching practices:

I talk to my colleagues. A lot of talking. If I'm confused or I'm stumped. Like in

that meeting we're having today, whenever we get done with what's on our

agenda, we'll sit down and talk [about areas of concern in our classroom]. You

know, I do that a lot. [I read] My professional books. But, really a lot of mine

[personal avenues of self-improvement] comes from seeing what somebody else

is doing and then tweaking it fit what I need to do.

Piper asserted that she seeks assistance from fellow teachers when confronted with

teaching concerns or obstacles. Seeking advice from teachers dedicated to principles of

cultural proficiency is beneficial for diverse and struggling students as teachers develop

and strengthen culturally responsive perspectives, skills, and strategies. However, seeking

advice from teachers who share similar deficit theories and lack of cultural awareness

perpetuates structural inequalities, cultural discontinuity, and prejudicial beliefs, attitudes,

and behaviors (Lindsey et al., 2003).

Piper suggested a college course or district professional growth program that

would provide her with teaching skills for diverse and struggling students:

I only have one [Hispanic student]. I had three, but then after fall break two of

them moved. So I only have one [Hispanic] ELL [student]. I always think back to

ones __ like last year, I had six or seven Spanish students. And, then before that I

had like three. One thing that would be nice it to have [is] someone who really has

some real experience working [teaching] in a classroom, not necessarily doing

pullout because that's different. Someone who has worked in a classroom who

could come and really show me what kind of things __ what little phrasing I could

do to help. I mean sometimes I wish I had someone who could tell me, "Why

don't you say this? Why don't you do this?" I need someone to do that. I need

someone to really guide me through a regular reading lesson that's supposed to be

for everybody. Give me some little tips, some little pointers that I can do that's

gonna make sure that I touch all my ESLs, whether they are Hispanic or

Vietnamese or Bosnian or African or whatever they are. Or if they're a child who

just doesn't have language.

Piper's previous two statements indicate a quick fix approach to learning teaching skills

and strategies needed to address literacy-learning needs for diverse and struggling

readers. Neither response suggested a desire to learn about individual students' home

cultures, learning styles, learning obstacles in the learning environment, nor instructional

practices that impede students' new knowledge acquisition. Piper did not indicate a desire

to identify cultural barriers that perpetuate cultural discontinuity and promote students'

feelings of frustration possibly leading to inappropriate behaviors or anger issues. Piper

did not mention seeking professional growth programs or college courses that provide her

with skills and strategies she needs to gain insight into her students' behavioral and

academic needs.

Some of Piper's self-descriptive perceptions and observed behaviors concerning

multicultural education align with multicultural education theories conceived by

prominent scholars while many do not. Piper believes in equal educational opportunities,

which aligns with Banks' (1997a) concept of multicultural education. She did not

implement or define the term equitable education. However, she incorporated some

culturally responsive and student-centered instructional strategies, such as cooperative

grouping, some scaffolding, occasional multiple intelligence activities, encouraging

students to make personal reading choice, and provision of a literacy-rich classroom including literature with authentic representations from diverse cultures.

Some instructional teaching practices Piper perceived to be culturally responsive teaching practices were not. Limited differentiated literacy instruction was observed. Guided reading instruction was observed on three 20-minute segments of the ten observations. During all three guided reading sessions, students were instructed to read to themselves. Piper sat beside individual students and listened to them read from where they were. Two of the sessions focused on making connections. The third session focused on repetition reading of short phrases on cards to develop reading accuracy and fluency. Additionally, what Piper deemed as flexible grouping was not observed. Students remained in the same groups for the duration of the ten week observations.

Important culturally responsive teaching practices were missing altogether. Computers were used solely for repetitive vocabulary and phonics reinforcement games. Students were not given choices concerning tasks, means of task completion, method of assessment demonstration, or personal goal setting. Piper mentioned that students shared some cultural contributions and evidence of a Social Studies lesson designed to prompt students to share cultural traditions, foods, and celebrations was observed on the classroom dry erase board. However, neither students nor Piper shared cultural or ethnic background information during any observations. Reading instruction focus was primarily on reading skills, accuracy, and rote literacy instruction. Instructional focus of reading for comprehension was absent. Culturally mediated instruction was not incorporated into the literacy instruction block.

Additionally, several instructional practices and policies were in place that do not value diversity or consider learning differences, but suggest an expectation that students assimilate: homogeneous reading groups and standardized assessments (Nieto, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 2007). Both instructional practices allege mainstream superiority; ignore or exclude diverse cultures, ethnicities, and linguistics; and perpetuate cultural discontinuity, social inequality, and discriminatory practices.

Observations of Piper confirmed that she does not have complete understanding of provision of educational equity pedagogy or the breadth and scope of multicultural education. Piper's predominantly teacher-centered instructional approach in which she tells students what to think coupled with the absence of culturally mediated instruction places Piper in the transmission position of Gay's (1995) conception of multicultural education. No opportunities were observed for students to engage in activities or discussions to share their culture, broaden understanding of their culture or cultures different from their own, question personal beliefs and attitudes, eliminate or reduce prejudice, or explore events or concepts from other cultural perspectives. Therefore, Piper did not include transactive multicultural education. No activities or discussions were observed in which students were encouraged to take responsibility or take social action in some way to transform unjust or discriminatory beliefs or practices, indicating that Piper did not incorporate transformative multicultural education (Gay, 1995).

Piper implemented curriculum and materials with some authentic cultural and ethnic content. However, no concepts, themes, or perspectives representing diverse backgrounds were introduced. No instruction or activities were provided for prejudice reduction. Some culturally responsive strategies were implemented, such as cooperative

grouping. Piper mentioned conversations in which students contributed cultural connections and that she attempted an opportunity for students to share personal cultures and ethnicities in a Social Studies lesson, as evidenced by the following heading written on the dry erase board: A Food Tradition in my Family, A Party Tradition in my Family, and A Holiday Tradition in my Family. Therefore, study data indicate that Piper provides knowledge construction at Banks' (1997a) contributions level.

Piper's ability to address students' learning needs in a culturally responsive manner are hindered by belief in deficit theories and assimilation, limited knowledge concerning the terms *equity pedagogy* and *multicultural education*, and unawareness of the impact students' and her cultural and ethnic backgrounds have on students' new knowledge acquisition. Piper is unaware that her personal cultural and ethnic background and mainstream indoctrination affect her pedagogy selections and motivation to differentiate instruction for diverse and struggling students. Overall, Piper asserts a belief that everyone is the same, as confirmed through observed instructional approach selections. Piper's teaching practice represents the cultural blindness stage on Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell's (2003) cultural proficiency continuum.

Conclusion

Teachers and students come to school with personal backgrounds, languages, and attitudes about others, which have been formed by members of their family and mainstream society. Piper and Robin are excellent literacy teachers who care about their students and desire to provide successful learning experiences. Observed literacy block instruction, establishment of classroom learning environments, and implemented reading instruction pedagogies were almost identical in both classrooms. Observed similarities

confirm that both teachers are implementing the state Reading First program as directed and most implemented teaching strategies, practices, and policies are not their personal selections. However, neither teacher voiced opinions suggesting opposition to any policies or practices instituted by Wesken Elementary School or Weskenton School District, suggesting that they completely support all literacy instruction pedagogies and curriculum.

Although Robin and Piper implemented some culturally responsive literacy-teaching practices, many important culturally responsive teaching practices were missing. Both teachers asserted implementation of flexible grouping, However, no observed teacher behaviors indicated flexible grouping employment. Neither Robin nor Piper provided any culturally mediated instruction or activities designed to facilitate learning of students' cultures, or cultures different from their own, to reduce prejudice. In fact, both teachers maintained that their students did not experience cultural or ethnic conflicts. They believed all student conflicts to be personality related or typical of childhood.

Piper and Robin did not demonstrate knowledge concerning multicultural education or equity pedagogy. Both teachers perceived that multiculturalism and equal education opportunities define multicultural education. Additionally, Robin and Piper consider the terms *equal education* and *equitable education* to share the same meaning. Both teachers believed the term *diverse cultures* to refer only to people new to the United States. In addition, Robin and Piper consider the term *culture* to mean traditions and celebrations.

While Piper and Robin expressed desire to provide the best literacy instruction possible for their diverse and struggling students, several belief systems pose teaching

barriers and learning obstacles for students. Although both teachers are aware that cultural and ethnic differences exist, Piper and Robin maintain beliefs regarding assimilation, deficits pertaining to students and parents, and a perception that differences are unimportant. Overall, both teachers exemplify cultural blindness in the cultural proficiency continuum.

Piper and Robin demonstrate transmissive (Gay, 1995) teaching positions, omitting transactive and transformative ethnic studies. Neither teacher provided culturally mediated instruction to facilitate opportunities for students to learn more about personal cultures, share their cultures, or learn more about cultures different from their own. Therefore, no instruction was provided for prejudice reduction. Some authentic ethnic content was provided in Houghton-Mifflin series, but none was incorporated by either teacher. Both teachers delivered ethnic studies at the contributions level of Banks' knowledge construction dimension. Absence of culturally mediated instruction facilitated through district curriculum or teacher selected materials, absence of prejudice reduction instruction or activities, and minimal ethnic content in literacy curriculum combined with teachers' minimal knowledge of equity pedagogy and multicultural education prevents Piper and Robin from providing an empowering learning environment.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to analyze teacher self-descriptive beliefs and attitudes concerning multicultural education and to examine how teacher perceptions differ from the culturally responsive instructional practices observed during literacy instruction. An additional purpose of the study was to examine how teachers' implementations of culturally responsive pedagogy align with multicultural education theories outlined by prominent scholars. The intention of the study was to establish an analytical framework to explain how provision or omission of culturally responsive teaching practices affected new knowledge acquisition of students based upon qualitative data gathered from questionnaires, interviews, and literacy instruction observations of two primary school teachers as they address literacy-learning needs of their diverse and struggling students. As teacher responses to the questionnaire and interviews were compared with observation data, various instructional issues were illuminated. The issues are discussed as they relate to research in the field of multicultural education using Ladson-Billings (1994) five elements of multicultural education implementation and as implications for teacher education programs.

Teachers and Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction

Raising scholastic achievement of diverse and struggling students, thereby narrowing the academic achievement gap between students from diverse backgrounds and mainstream students is dependent on educators' personal knowledge, perspectives, and definitions regarding the terms *multicultural education* and *equity pedagogy*. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs and attitudes concerning students affect their awareness of

the need to provide an equitable pedagogy or their motivation to incorporate multicultural education. While medical research has investigated the long-term and devastating effects poverty can have on a child's ability to learn, such as the possible health issues that result from the lack of funds for healthy diets, doctor visits, and medications (Korenman, Miller, and Sjaastad, 1995), not enough focus has been placed on the accompanying pervasive problems that hinder acquisition of new knowledge for many diverse students: cultural discontinuity and educational inequalities. Studies demonstrate that limitation of an equitable education often denies many impoverished children and students from diverse backgrounds with opportunities to seek improved living conditions in adulthood (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Gay, 1995; Nieto, 1999).

Statistics confirm that national and student population demographics are becoming more diverse. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing group and the group attaining the lowest academic achievement and realizing the highest drop out rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Furthermore, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2005,* compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau (2006, p. 13), reports that Hispanics comprise 22 percent of the U.S. population living in poverty. On the other hand, statistics show that the majority of teachers in the United States are mainstream, Caucasian, middle-class females (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) who are increasingly confronted with unfamiliar cultural and linguistic learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2005; Nieto, 1999). Given current population statistics, educators seek teaching skills and strategies that will effectively address the learning needs of diverse and struggling students, narrow the persistent achievement gap,

and provide students with skills necessary for democratic citizenship and improved living conditions and career choices in adulthood.

These findings suggest that educators' academic goals are often at odds with instructional policies and practices, demonstrated by ongoing struggles and failures of students from diverse backgrounds to meet mainstream expectations as well as the persistent academic achievement gap. Devastatingly, many students feel that the struggles and failures are their fault. They may feel inadequate and marginalized. As a result, many students from diverse backgrounds give up, drop out, abandon opportunities for citizenship participation and responsibility, or surrender to jobs that are less than what they dreamed. Tragically, the majority of learning struggles and failures are unnecessary and avoidable. The fact that cultural discontinuity continues is particularly disturbing when one considers that culturally responsive instruction has the potential to minimize learning barriers that are limiting students' academic, citizenship, and career opportunities and successes. Multicultural education is an educational system reform movement based on the theoretical premise that all children can learn and all students deserve equal educational opportunities facilitated through equitable pedagogy that provides students with knowledge and skills necessary for multicultural interaction and citizenship opportunities in adulthood (Banks, 1997a).

Teaching is personal and political in that teachers' perceptions and behaviors are influenced by others who determine the "*who* and *what* and *how* we teach, and also in *whose interest* we teach" (Nieto, 1999, p. 131). Therefore, the educational crisis is a national concern. Study findings and teacher education recommendations are not intended to be condemning toward school districts, schools, college education programs,

or teachers. The study findings merely shed light upon a pervasive educational dilemma while teacher education recommendations offer opportunities for instructional improvement. Piper and Robin, the teacher participants in this study, are excellent teachers who are dedicated to their students' learning successes.

Five Elements of Multicultural Education

Teachers' Beliefs and Attitudes

Like many of their colleagues, Piper and Robin believe in equal educational opportunities and multiculturalism, both of which are necessary for multicultural education implementation. Their egalitarian perceptions and beliefs in multiculturalism, minus the incorporation of multicultural education, impose academic and citizenship requirements and limitations, such as the expectation of assimilation, on students from diverse backgrounds (Banks, 1997a). Robin (a mainstream Caucasian teacher) and Piper (an African American teacher) have benefited from mainstream society, as exemplified by their professional career choices and education degrees. Additionally, both teachers have been indoctrinated by mainstream society. For example, both demonstrated convictions concerning assimilation and several deficit theories concerning students, parents, diverse cultures, and poverty. Additionally, Piper and Robin vocalized self-perceptions of cultural competence or proficiency and mirrored behaviors exemplified by mainstream institutionalized policies and practices of their school district, such as use of homogeneous grouping and skill-based reading instruction.

Although professionals from diverse backgrounds are participating in leadership roles in Wesken Elementary School, the school continues to implement mainstream policies and practices that limit academic and behavioral successes of students from

diverse backgrounds, such as standardized assessment in English only (Lindsey et al., 2003). Neither teacher's interview responses nor their behaviors indicated awareness of personal or institutional needs to change perceptions of cultural competence or implemented instructional practices and policies used to address the learning needs of their diverse student population.

All teachers and students come to school with personal backgrounds, languages, and attitudes regarding personal identities and others. Their perceptions are formed by members of their family, prior experiences, and mainstream society. Piper and Robin, like many teachers, do not realize that personal and institutionalized perceptions, expectations, pedagogies, learning environments, curriculum and materials, grouping strategies, and assessment methods are at odds with learning needs of numerous students from socially and ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Curriculum Content and Materials

Although some authentic ethnic and cultural content representative of diverse backgrounds was introduced through Reading First and Houghton-Mifflin reading curriculum and materials, Piper and Robin did not initiate culturally mediated instruction. They did not personally select or integrate authentic diverse ethnic or cultural content. No discussions or activities intended to broaden students' understanding of personal cultures or cultures different from their own were observed. Teachers and students shared cultures on a contributory level. Observations and interview responses indicate that Piper and Robin are unaware of their own cultures and students' cultures. In addition, they demonstrate minimal knowledge concerning multicultural education and equity pedagogy.

School systems often employ standardized tests in English only to assess student knowledge acquisition, teacher performance, and school accountability, as is the practice at Wesken Elementary School. With a student population that is becoming more and more diverse culturally and linguistically, these assessments cannot deliver accurate measurements of student knowledge or educator accountability. Outstanding teachers, like Robin and Piper, use multiple measures of assessment. However, school districts, teachers, and other instructional support systems (many of which tout themselves as programs that target learning needs of diverse and struggling students) mandate that English only standardized tests be the governing tools that guide instruction or decide students' placement, as exemplified by Reading First (USDE, 2008).

Instructional Approaches

Educationally and culturally destructive teaching practices employed in Piper and Robin's classrooms include tracking as well as the absence of differentiated instruction, culturally mediated instruction, and student choices (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Gay, 1995). In addition, misuse or deficient implementations of flexible and cooperative grouping strategies prevent well-intentioned teachers from delivering the culturally responsive literacy instruction struggling students need in order to receive an equitable education. Consequently, educators sincerely desiring to be effective teachers unknowingly perpetuate discriminatory and limiting social hierarchal beliefs and conditions because they lack knowledge concerning multicultural education and equity pedagogy. They do not recognize or appreciate cultural or language differences that are causing diverse students to struggle or fail (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997; Garcia, 2004; Lindsey et al., 2003; Nieto, 1999).

Absence or limited applications of multicultural education components, such as integration of content representative of diverse backgrounds, culturally mediated instruction, prejudice reduction discussions and activities, knowledge construction instruction, and equity pedagogy, such as various grouping strategies, student choices, differentiated instruction along with implementation of standardized assessment to guide instruction suggest that Piper and Robin support district instructional policies and practices. Neither teacher mentioned opposition to aforementioned practices during observations or interviews.

Educational Setting

Empowering learning environments offer students opportunities to make choices regarding task selection, task completion, and knowledge demonstration; facilitate cultural-sharing opportunities for students and teachers; provide equity pedagogy in which instruction is differentiated to meet individual student-learning needs; include authentic and ample ethnic content integrated into curriculum and materials; and facilitate culturally mediated instruction in the forms of discussions and activities (Banks, 1997a). Absence of those criteria perpetuate cultural discontinuity and limit students' scholastic successes and future social, civic, and career opportunities (Au, 1993).

Piper and Robin exemplify the theory-research-practice gap in multicultural education (Gay, 1995). Both teachers have heard of the theory, are acquainted with some of the research, and implement a few culturally responsive teaching practices. However, interview responses and observational data suggest that neither teacher makes a connection between multicultural education theory, research, and relevance to their

teaching practices. Perspectives and instructional approaches represented by Robin and Piper appear to be similar to those of many teachers in the United States.

Teacher Education

National statistics, scholarly studies, and data collected from this study suggest that multicultural education is not understood, valued, or considered a high instructional goal in education programs. Unfortunately, these perceptions exist despite urgent learning needs demonstrated by a student population that is becoming more diverse, the persistent academic achievement gap between mainstream and diverse students, and federal expectations that low academic achievement scores of students from diverse backgrounds be raised. Multicultural education, facilitated through an equitable pedagogy, may be the solution many diverse and struggling students require to achieve basic literacy skills, academic excellence, and work habits (self-discipline) (NCES, 2005) that many educators deem as the most important student academic goals.

Piper and Robin demonstrated a desire to address students' literacy-learning needs to the best of their abilities, such as in their application of Reading First literacy instruction processes. Both teachers expressed a desire and commitment to the pursuance of additional learning to provide students with the best education possible. For example, they earned masters degrees, attended professional development courses, and mentioned several self-efficacy methods, such as reading scholarly literature, consulting with colleagues, and reflection. Interview responses and observations indicate that Piper and Robin are outstanding teachers who are willing to learn new skills and strategies to help their diverse and struggling students acquire literacy skills.

Examined interview responses and observation data are not suggestive of an aversion to goals, concepts, or implementation of multicultural education. However, study data suggest a lack of knowledge concerning the breadth and scope of multicultural education as well as a lack of cultural awareness. Piper and Robin's learned beliefs of assimilation and deficit theories place them in the cultural blindness stage of cultural awareness, which prevents them from comprehending the importance of learning more about their personal cultures, cultures and ethnicities of students, and realizing the impact culture has on new knowledge acquisition for their students (Lindsey et al., 2003). Therefore, Piper and Robin apply few components of multicultural education. Their limited culturally responsive instruction keeps them in the contributions level of Banks' (1997a) knowledge construction dimension. Piper and Robin's transmissive and teacher-centered instructional approaches (Au, 1993; Gay, 1995) hinder their ability to connect the significance and benefits of culturally responsive instruction to their personal teaching experiences and practices. Robin and Piper exemplify perceptions and instructional practices characteristic of many educators in the United States (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Gay, 1995; Nieto, 1999). Most teachers and school districts aspire to facilitate academic successes for all students and continuously seek knowledge to do so. However, advocates of multicultural education agree that most traditional means of instruction are at odds with the learning needs of diverse and struggling students.

To facilitate school and instruction reform to meet the academic and citizenship learning needs of every student, James Banks (1995, 1997a) encapsulated multicultural education into "five dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture" (p. 4). Within the

knowledge construction dimension, Banks developed a four-level framework for

curriculum reform: contributions, additive, transformation, and social action approaches.

Culturally responsive education is transformative as it is ongoing and persistent

throughout the school day and year. It encompasses all aspects of the school and includes

faculty (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997; Nieto, 1999). Likewise, the process of personal identity

discovery, exploration of diverse cultures, and examination of personal biases is a

lifelong journey. The journey is viewed as necessary by educators who realize that

differentiating instruction is an essential element in the provision of an equitable

education and who sincerely want to help all students achieve academic successes and

develop skills necessary for future citizenship participation and greater career

opportunities

Implications for Teacher Education Programs

It is important that preservice teacher education, continuing teacher education,

and professional development programs teach that multicultural education is an infused

process or way of teaching all subjects. It is an instructional process that facilitates equal

educational opportunities through provision of equitable education; provides students

with interaction skills and strategies necessary for participation in diverse local, national,

and global societies; and offers culturally mediated and prejudice reduction instruction,

discussions, and activities to enable students to broaden cultural awareness (Banks, 1995,

1997a). Multicultural education considers students' differences and connects home

learning to new school learning. Specifically important in preservice teacher preparation,

continuing teacher education, and professional development programs is that novice and

in-service teachers be afforded opportunities to explore personal identities, cultures and

ethnicities different from their own, and any prejudicial or stereotypical perspectives. This is important because, as demonstrated by Robin and Piper, many mainstream teachers and those indoctrinated to mainstream perspectives may not be aware that personal biases and perspectives often limit students' knowledge acquisition and prevent establishment of an empowering learning environment. Banks (1997a) asserts that multicultural education is a movement intended to reform how educational systems and educators address diverse learning needs of students in the United States and prepare them for future citizenship participation and responsibility.

Preservice Teacher Education Programs

While Piper and Robin have been acquainted with multicultural education through teacher education programs, both indicated that they felt unprepared by educational programs to manage classroom diversity. Additionally, they mentioned concerns that student teachers with whom they are acquainted are not prepared. Banks (1997a) asserts that preservice teachers "attain most of their knowledge [presented from a mainstream perspective] without analyzing its assumptions and values or engaging in the process of constructing knowledge themselves" (p. 103). As a result, upon completing teacher preparation programs, many teachers enter the profession with a belief that *not* all children can learn or become contributing members of society. Limited cultural awareness may prevent many educators from realizing the need for culturally responsive educational reform.

Cultural Awareness. Lack of consideration regarding *how* students learn (including learning difficulties, learning styles, and cultural differences) as well as teaching skills and strategies best suited to address students' individual learning needs

prevents teachers' establishment of empowering learning environments and perpetuates cultural discontinuity (Au, 1993). At the root of cultural discontinuity and deficit theories is a perception of a social hierarchy, or structural inequality, in which some cultures, ethnicities, and races are more valuable than others are (Au, 1993). Many teachers enter classrooms, as demonstrated by Robin and Piper, with learned biases that unintentionally obstruct new knowledge acquisition for diverse and struggling students (Banks, 1997a; Nieto, 1999; Purcell-Gates, 1995). Teachers' lack of cultural awareness prevents them from recognizing several negative personal perceptions and biases. Consequently, they implement self-selected, district, and school policies and practices completely unaware of unintentional learning obstructions, academic success limitations, and developing frustrations experienced by students.

Preservice teachers need opportunities to consider and develop cultural awareness regarding personal cultures. They need time and guidance as they evaluate personal perceptions and biases concerning cultures different from their own. As previously noted, Piper and Robin maintained beliefs regarding assimilation; deficits pertaining to students, parents, and poverty; and a perception that cultural differences play an insignificant role in students' learning. Both teachers demonstrated a lack of knowledge concerning students, their families, home cultures, and neighborhood. Furthermore, Piper and Robin expressed a perception that the terms *culture* refers to traditions and celebrations and *diverse cultures* refers only to people new to the United States. Therefore, preservice teachers, informed with effective means of learning about students, families, cultures, neighborhood, and communities, can be better prepared to address learning needs of diverse and struggling students.

Preservice programs that present prospective teachers with means to gain an appreciation for diversity and regard diversity as a learning enhancement rather than a deficit will prepare novice teachers to realize the impact culture has on new knowledge acquisition in the classroom. Teacher education programs infused with multicultural education throughout all courses present new teachers with knowledge and experience concerning methods of learning about students, families, neighborhoods, cultures, and languages. Furthermore, knowledge of multicultural education and equity pedagogy can empower novice teachers with abilities needed to evaluate institutionalized teaching policies and practices and discern their cultural responsiveness.

Appreciation of Multicultural Education. Novice teachers develop an appreciation for rationale and benefits of multicultural education implementation by learning the history, research, principles, scholarly perspectives, and components of multicultural education by reading scholarly literature and through instruction provided by culturally aware and responsive teacher educators. Robin and Piper, like many teachers, perceived that multiculturalism and equal education opportunities define multicultural education. Both indicated a perception that the terms *equal education* and *equitable education* share the same meaning. Preservice teacher education programs infused with multicultural education throughout can model, teach, and provide experiences for beginning teachers to emerge from teacher education with an understanding of the theory, research, and practice of multicultural education.

Equity Pedagogy. Preservice programs that present prospective teachers with means to regard diversity as a learning enhancement rather than a deficit will prepare novice teachers to address students' diverse learning needs. Teacher education programs

infused with multicultural education theory throughout all courses, present preservice teachers with culturally responsive constructivist instructional skills and strategies. For example, teachers trained in ESL teaching strategies are more prepared to address cultural and linguistic learning needs using culturally responsive instructional practices and assessment procedures (Zeichner, 1993). Equity pedagogy, in part, is the use of scaffolding and modifications to ensure students receive equal educational opportunities.

Equity pedagogy also includes fostering positive perspectives concerning students, families, and cultures; connecting home cultures to school learning; implementing student-centered instructional approaches; incorporating culturally mediated instruction; selecting content representative of diverse backgrounds; and facilitating an empowering learning environment. Critical to implementation of equity pedagogy is knowledge construction as opposed to transmission of information. Students share responsibility for learning by working cooperatively, discussing, questioning, experimenting, and considering several possible solutions from diverse perspectives (Banks, 1997a; Burnett, 2000; Bustamante, 2006; Richards et al., 2005; Willis, 2000; Zeichner, 1993).

Constructive and interactive participation in multicultural educational and equity pedagogy practices in preservice teacher education programs, such as cooperative learning, provide opportunities to build knowledge and experience bases of preservice teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Zeichner, 1993). Ethnographic studies and student teaching experiences in schools and communities with diverse populations are beneficial. These experiences provided preservice teachers with opportunities to observe

implementation of equity pedagogy, observe the benefits, practice instructional skills and strategies, as well as understand the dynamics diversity brings to learning environments.

Culturally responsive instruction is not about perpetuation of deficit theories. It is about selecting the strategies that best address the diverse learning needs and styles of individual students. Banks (1997a) states: "Teachers' values and perspectives mediate and interact with what they teach and influence the way that their messages are communicated to and perceived by their students" (p. 107). While Piper and Robin, both excellent and well-meaning literacy teachers, implemented few culturally responsive literacy-teaching practices (e.g., cooperative grouping), many culturally responsive teaching practices were absent, such as differentiated instruction. Both teachers in this study were under the impression that they implemented equity pedagogies. Piper and Robin stated that they employed flexible grouping. Yet, inaccurate applications of flexible grouping were observed in both classrooms as students were observed to remain in the same groups for weeks during literacy block observations. While both teachers addressed learning needs of small and large groups of students, neither teacher considered individual or cultural differences of students. Equity pedagogy is facilitated when instruction is differentiated and diversity is viewed as an asset to learning.

Content Integration. With effective pedagogical skills, teachers can make culturally responsive curriculum and assessment selections and implementations. Preservice teacher preparation programs, infused with multicultural education throughout, teach new teachers that equity pedagogy is student-centered and equip them with knowledge necessary to integrate personally selected ethnic and cultural content that facilitates transformative and social-action knowledge construction opportunities for

students. Selecting transformative curricula representative of diverse cultures enables educators to provide equitable, knowledge construction, and prejudice reduction multicultural instructional opportunities.

Preservice multicultural education preparation provides teachers with knowledge concerning the importance of culturally responsive assessment selection and administration to guide differentiated instruction. New teachers enter the profession knowledgeable of negative implications concerning standardized and standard English only assessments as well as the positive implications of portfolio and student-selected means of knowledge demonstration. Novice teachers also learn about the benefits of ongoing and ample feedback as students progress (Banks, 1997a).

Prejudice Reduction and Knowledge Construction. Preservice teachers may benefit personally and professionally from instruction, discussion, and activities concerning personal cultures and cultures different from their own, personality and cultural conflicts, prejudice and racism, as well as oppression and social inequality. In order to facilitate culturally mediated instruction and high levels of knowledge construction, teachers need to be substantially culturally aware as well as have teaching skills and strategies needed to address conflict resolution, prejudice reduction discussions and activities, and provide high levels of knowledge construction in their classrooms.

Interview responses and observations of Robin and Piper indicated that their knowledge construction level of instruction was contributory. The contributions approach is the lowest level of knowledge construction and the easiest to implement. Teachers and schools do not need to change existing curriculum or pedagogies to integrate a lesson occasionally regarding a "hero, holiday, and discrete cultural element" (Banks, 1995, p.

15). On the other hand, knowledge construction taught at the transformative level broadens students' understanding of personal cultures and those different from their own, "helps students learn how knowledge is constructed, [and] the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes" (p. 15) from diverse perspectives. Furthermore, at the social action level, students also learn decision-making and positive solutions for social issues (Banks, 1995). Teachers need significant preservice preparation to address effectively academic and behavioral challenges presented in diversely populated classrooms (Banks, 1997a; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Zeichner, 1993).

Empowering Learning Environment. Preservice teachers learn through preparation programs that multicultural education infused throughout the school day and subject areas and the provision of equity pedagogy facilitate an empowering learning environment. It is only through the implementation of the other four dimensions of multicultural education that an empowering learning environment can exist. They will also learn that their journey in culturally responsive development is continuous, just as it is for their students. Their job, as the teacher, is to continue learning and facilitate students' development as they interact and cooperate within a diverse community of learners.

Inservice Teacher Education

Piper and Robin demonstrated a desire to continue learning to address the learning needs of their diverse student populations effectively. Both teachers have Master of Arts degrees in Education. Continued learning in the field of education is critical to professional self-improvement intended to benefit students. Continued learning regarding

culturally responsive instruction is vitally important for millions of students "because many teachers will remain in the classroom as their student population changes racially, ethnically, culturally, and in social-class status" (Banks, 1997a, p. 102), as Piper and Robin have experienced. First, it is important that multicultural education be infused throughout inservice teacher education because teachers may not have been presented with the theory, research, implementation, and benefits of multicultural education in preservice educational programs.

Second, as inservice teachers practice their profession, they "are likely to develop negative attitudes and lower expectations as the characteristics of their students change" (p. 102), as demonstrated by the deficit theories maintained by Piper and Robin. For example, both teachers were aware that home and school cultures often differ and they blamed home cultural expectations for many students' behavioral and academic struggles. Piper and Robin expressed frustration with students' inappropriate behaviors and failures to meet classroom and school expectations. Therefore, frustration experienced by students is shared by their teachers. Without adequate preparation concerning skills and strategies needed to adapt to and manage diversity as well as address the learning needs of diverse students, teacher frustration may lead to teacher burnout.

Third, some teachers enter the teaching profession with deficit theories while some acquire them from colleagues and inaccurate perceptions emanating from non-culturally responsive teaching practices. For teachers who are just beginning to explore cultural awareness and for those who have been on the road to self-discovery already, it is

an ongoing process that requires new and continuous reflection, learning, and transformation.

Teachers attend professional development sessions and often have standardized curricula, assessments, and practices forced upon them by their school districts. Therefore, they need information concerning recent multicultural education research, culturally responsive criteria, multicultural education components, and critical pedagogy to make appropriate decisions concerning curriculum reform as well as content and instructional supplementation and adaptations needed to ensure provision of equitable pedagogy and empowering environment for their students. It is very important that inservice teachers receive theory, research, background, principles, and components of multicultural education as well as cultural awareness guidance, just as is suggested for preservice teacher education.

Professional Development Programs

The business of teaching is personal because it is influenced tremendously by teacher-student relationships (Nieto, 1999). Therefore, teacher perceptions of students, cultures, and the knowledge being imparted, makes teachers and learning environments critical ingredients affecting students' new knowledge acquisition (Banks, 1993a; Nieto, 1999). Often teachers' desires for student successes are at odds with their perceptions of students, parents, and cultures as well as selected instructional practices.

School districts provide professional development for teachers to benefit the learning of students. Therefore, school districts share responsibility for provision of opportunities in which teachers explore and learn more concerning cultures and the impact culture has on new learning for students. Teachers need guidance and support as

they check personal perceptions and biases regarding personal culture and cultures different from their own. It is important that multicultural education reform is infused and active throughout school district policies, practices, and professional development. Without teacher education programs and professional development, teachers may not realize the impact culture has on student learning and the need for personal and professional cultural awareness.

Frequently, professional development programs are conducted within schools or districts to train teachers about curricula, policies, and procedures of "standardized curricula" (Purcell-Gates, 2006, p. 196) and pedagogies, such as Reading First or 3-Tier reading instruction. Although they limit provision of differentiated instruction, Reading First and 3-Tier reading instruction are used to address learning needs of all students. Teachers are provided rationale for these programs and expected to implement them as directed. However, teachers often express feelings of frustration as they observe students from diverse backgrounds struggle to meet one-size-fits-all learning expectations (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a). Furthermore, students' learning frustrations may spur inappropriate behavior, as expressed by Robin and Piper. Robin stated, "Often times teachers just send those children to the office and that is where they spend most of the school year." Victoria Purcell-Gates (1995) wrote:

> Proactive teachers do not simply wring their hands when confronted with failure
> to learn. They do not simply shake their heads and refer unsuccessful children out
> to "specialists." They do not simply blame the children, themselves, for failure.
> Nor do they simply blame the children's parents or cultures. Acknowledging

complexity, proactive teachers *do* something for each child; they take action

based on their knowledge of culture, cognition, and schooling. (p. 194)

For teachers who realize that existing teaching practices and policies are not effectively

addressing the learning needs of their diverse and struggling students, the instructional

demands and limitations can pose additional frustrations. Nieto (1999) asserts, "Given

their relative lack of power in the school setting, teachers are often reluctant to challenge

school policies and practices" (p. 107).

Professional development programs have provided teachers with opportunities to

learn a multitude of teaching skills and strategies. Many teachers perceive that they are

implementing multicultural education and equity pedagogy because they incorporate

cooperative grouping and entertain intermittent and brief contributions of cultural

sharing, as exemplified by Robin and Piper. Interview responses and observations of both

teachers suggest that professional development training in those strategies is not provided

"within a broader sociopolitical framework" (Nieto, 1999, p. 107) of multicultural

education, as evidenced by Robin and Piper's lack of knowledge concerning the breadth

and scope of multicultural education and equity pedagogy. Nieto (1999) states,

"Although cooperative education in and of itself is a positive step that can bring about

other important changes in classrooms, it will not necessarily lead to developing a critical

multicultural perspective" (p. 107). Although educators' implementation of cooperative

grouping does not require changes to curriculum, classroom expectations, or instructional

perspectives, their perspectives of students and diverse cultures often remain biased and

practically all other aspects of instruction continue unchanged (Nieto, 1999).

Piper and Robin did not indicate significant awareness or appreciation of students' diverse linguistic or cultural backgrounds. Piper described her perception of beneficial professional development: "I need someone to really guide me through a regular reading lesson that's supposed to be for everybody." She seeks a group strategy, not a means of differentiating instruction. Additionally, Piper asserted that ESL training is helpful but did not benefit her ESL students (at the time of the study) because they spoke English sufficiently, "but some struggle[d] with understanding it at times." She believed that ESL instruction is implemented for students who do not speak English well.

Robin described her perception of beneficial professional growth programs: "I believe that what we need now is to become fluent speakers of the Spanish language." Robin's suggestion concerning learning Spanish is culturally responsive. By learning a second language, aside from the added ability of teaching in another language, teachers can demonstrate to students a commitment to learning, appreciation for their language, and appreciation for their accomplishment in learning English. Both teachers mentioned learning center implementation and activities, book studies, and reading skills instruction strategies in professional development sessions. However, observations and interview responses indicate that both teachers focus time in district professional development on reading skills instruction.

Piper and Robin's use of pedagogies (e.g., homogeneous reading groups), standardized assessments used to determine reading group placement, and skills-based reading instruction suggest that professional development in Weskenton School District focuses on group and skills-based reading instruction instead of differentiated instruction or reading for comprehension. Often, school district and school policies and practices

seemingly, though erroneously, confirm teachers' negative stereotypical perceptions of students, parents, and diverse cultures. All deficit theories lead many educators to employ discriminatory teaching policies and practices and maintain low expectations for students, which perpetuate underachievement of students from diverse backgrounds, cultural discontinuity, and the academic achievement gap.

As student demographics become more diverse, culturally responsive educators and school districts seek and develop effective teaching practices that meet the learning needs of their diverse students. Just as college and university programs provide teachers with multicultural education infused throughout courses, school districts can benefit teachers and students by infusing and actively implementing multicultural education theory and research in policies, practices, and professional development programs. It is important that teachers listen to students and school districts listen to teachers as they voice concerns regarding students learning difficulties and differences in order to develop culturally responsive instruction and insure provision of equitable education pedagogy for all students.

Self-Efficacy

Classroom teachers share responsibility for developing their cultural awareness and acquiring knowledge concerning multicultural education. They are on the front lines bonding with students and families, observing and assessing student-learning needs, planning and preparing lessons, interacting and instructing students, striving to provide an effective and empowering learning environment, as well as implementing administrative decisions and instructional selections. Frequently, district and school administrators make decisions that guide fund allocation, pedagogy selection,

instructional perspectives, and curriculum selections for schools and individual students based on standardized assessment scores, such as the *Commonwealth Accountability Testing System* (CATS). However, due to teacher-student bonding and assessing students' learning strengths and weaknesses, many culturally responsive teachers conclude that some district and administrative selections and decisions are not effectively addressing learning needs of numerous students. Therefore, responsibility for developing cultural awareness and pursuing professional self-improvement also rests with teachers.

Studies assert that standardized curriculum, assessments, and pedagogies do not address the learning needs of all students (Au, 1993; Banks, 1997a; Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995). As previously mentioned, employment of standardized *one-size-fits-all* selections perpetuates cultural discontinuity in the learning environment for many students and frequently produces learning experiences laden with frustration for teachers and students. Teachers employ various forms of self-efficacy, such as reflection, consulting with colleagues, and reading self-selected scholarly literature, as they search for instructional strategies that will connect students' home learning to new learning and compensate for teaching methods not provided by administration or teacher education programs.

However, many teachers do not seek means of personal and professional self-efficacy that include gaining knowledge regarding cultural awareness or multicultural theory, research, and instructional practices, possibly because they do not recognize the importance of understanding personal culture, students' cultures, and the impact culture has on new knowledge acquisition for students. For example, both teachers mentioned reading professional literature as a means of self-efficacy. Robin stated that she reflects,

reads professional books, and considers alternative strategies that will help students understand reading skills instruction. Neither teacher indicated reading professional literature concerning differentiating instruction, addressing students' learning differences, cultural awareness, multicultural education, provision of equity pedagogy, and adapting to and managing diversity.

Another reason educators may not seek means of personal and professional self-efficacy that include gaining knowledge regarding cultural awareness or multicultural theory, research, and instructional practices may be that many teachers are not aware that perceptions, policies, and practices maintained by the school, district, or themselves need to change to address the learning needs of all students effectively. For example, both teacher participants in this study taught from egalitarian perspectives and expected students to assimilate to meet school, classroom, and standardized curricula and pedagogy expectations. Piper and Robin attributed students' learning struggles to deficit theories concerning students, parents, culture, and poverty. Neither teacher considered cultural differences significant and did not adjust the majority of literacy instruction to address students' learning needs individually. Interview responses and literacy instruction observations of Piper and Robin did not suggest awareness that personal and institutional perceptions concerning students, families, and cultures as well as educational policies and practices needed reformation to address the literacy-learning needs of diverse and struggling students.

For educators to be activists for social and educational reform, they must begin by developing a strong awareness of personal culture and ethnicity. According to Nieto (1999), the first step in personal transformation is learning more about and coming to

terms with personal identity. Nieto (1999) adds, "Teachers…need to understand and accept their *own* diversity and delve into their *own* identities before they can learn about and from their students" (p. 133). An excellent avenue for teachers to begin journeys of cultural awareness includes reading scholarly literature, such as *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* by Lindsey, Robins, and Terrell (2003). Reflecting and evaluating personal perspectives concerning personal cultures and ethnicities prepares educators to analyze beliefs and attitudes regarding cultures and ethnicities different from their own.

The next step in the process of self-efficacy in the area of multicultural education reform is learning about students, their cultures and ethnicities, families, neighborhood, and traditions. Piper and Robin expressed desire to learn about their students' cultures but did not describe many attempts to do so. Neither teacher facilitated a student-centered learning environment in which students constructed knowledge or made choices regarding task completion, knowledge demonstration, or goal setting. Piper suggested a contributory desire to learn about students' cultural experiences, "I love hearing those kind of things. I'm just naturally curious and interested. I just always have been. I like to hear about different places." Robin identifies with Caucasian students. However, all of her students live in poverty and she struggles to understand "Caucasians in poverty." Piper and Robin do not empathize with their students. Neither teacher demonstrated knowledge regarding their students, their cultures, or their neighborhood. Piper and Robin demonstrated transmissive teaching models and culturally blind perspectives. According to Banks (1997a); Lindsey and colleagues (2003), and Nieto (1999); teachers who are aware of their personal culture and ethnicity as well as cultures and ethnicities

different from their own are more prepared to facilitate student-centered, culturally mediated, and prejudice reduction instruction as well as provide transformative and social action levels of knowledge construction and empowering learning environments for students. For example, on a few brief occasions, Robin spoke Spanish to her Hispanic students. She stated, "I believe that what we need now is to become fluent speakers of the Spanish language." Robin's assertion is an excellent way to learn from students, learn with students, and identify with students.

According to Nieto (1999), "identifying with students" (p. 152) is the next step in personal multicultural education transformation. Piper and Robin struggled to identify with their students. While Robin expressed a need to learn more about her students, she did not indicate attempts to do so. Piper repeatedly identified with students from the standpoint of growing up in poverty. However, she separated herself from them in that she had grown up in situational poverty, unlike her students who were living in generational poverty. Interview responses and observations suggested that Piper and Robin did not recognize many entitlements and privileges they enjoy. Nor did they indicate awareness of possible students' feelings of alienation. Both teachers indicated a perception that cultural experiences of diverse students are similar to mainstream experiences. Therefore, both teachers indicated difficulty identifying with their students and demonstrated perpetuation of cultural discontinuity for many of their students. Inability of students to identify with their teachers and school denies them an empowering learning environment (Lindsey et al., 2003; Nieto, 1999).

Both teachers mentioned consulting with colleagues to learn instructional and behavior management strategies. This is an excellent means of self-improvement in most

cases. A caveat, however, is that when seeking advice for self-improvement in the field of multicultural education, one must select individuals who share a vision of academic successes, empowerment for all students through provision of an equitable education, and a desire to provide all students with interaction and citizenship skills necessary to access career and citizenship opportunities (Banks, 1997a). Piper and Robin did not demonstrate significant appreciation of diversity. Piper is bicultural (African American and mainstream) and Robin is monocultural (mainstream). They struggle to adapt and manage diversity in the classroom, like many teachers in the United States. Piper and Robin are not fully aware of their personal cultures, their students' cultures, and the impact culture has on learning. Therefore, an excellent avenue of self-efficacy is to seek colleagues who desire to understand the dynamics of diversity and implement effective skills and strategies of adaptation and management. An additional means of self-efficacy is to lean on those who employ multicultural education that aligns with the conceptions of well-known scholars in the field, such as James Banks, Geneva Gay, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Sonia Nieto, and Lisa Delpit.

<div align="center">A Final Note</div>

Demographics indicate that the predominantly Caucasian middle-class teaching population requires high levels of cultural awareness and extensive knowledge concerning multicultural education, equity pedagogy, and cultural awareness to address the learning needs of the increasingly diverse student population effectively. Addressing students' cultural differences through equity pedagogy will minimize or eliminate many learning barriers experienced by students from diverse backgrounds. Integrating content representative of diverse cultures, providing equity pedagogy, incorporating discussions

and activities to reduce prejudice, and facilitating high levels of knowledge construction yields an empowering learning environment and connects students' home learning to new knowledge acquisition. Therefore, continuous learning and active implementation of the multicultural education components in teacher education programs, professional development programs, and through self-efficacy fosters learning successes as well as future career and citizenship opportunities for all students.

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Appendix A

Teacher Consent Form

Date

Dear Teacher,

You have been asked to participate in a literacy thesis project conducted through Western Kentucky University. Western Kentucky University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The researcher will visit your classroom approximately two times per week for five weeks to observe reading instruction. The observation sessions may be audio recorded in order to guarantee accuracy in data collection. Please ask the researcher to discuss or answer any questions you may have.

Any information the researcher uses about you, the school, your students, or the school program will not include any names or other identifying attributes to the extent permitted by law. All audio tape recordings will be destroyed. All data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet to protect participants. However, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The University Human Subjects Review Board may inspect any of the data. If any portion of the work is published, it will be done without using your name.

If you decide to participate in the project, please sign this form below. A copy of this form will be sent back for you to keep. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue at any time without penalty. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from Western Kentucky University.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

Appendix B

Parent Consent Form (English)

Date

Dear Parent,

    Your child's teacher is taking part in a thesis study carried out through _____University. This letter is to let you know about the study. The graduate student doing the study will visit your child's classroom two times per week for five weeks to observe the teacher when he/she is teaching reading. During the observation, the researcher may audio tape the teacher to collect information. Your child's voice may be taped during the observations. The graduate student wants to focus on what the teacher says. The graduate student will write down the information on the audio tape. Then the tapes will be destroyed. Please ask the graduate student to answer any questions you may have.

    Any information the graduate student uses in the study about the school, your child, the teacher, or the school program will not include any names. Nor will it contain any other ways of identifying anyone or anything to the extent permitted by law. If any part of the work is published, it will be done without using your child's name. All of the information collected by the graduate student will be kept in a locked filing cabinet to provide more protection for everyone.

    If you would prefer that your child **not** be audio taped, please sign and return this form to your child's teacher. The graduate student will make every effort not to audio tape your child speaking. The decision to take part in this study is up to you and your child. Your child may stop at any time and nothing will happen to your child. The decision not to take part in this study will have no effect on any future services you or your child may be entitled to from _____ University or your child's school.

☐   I do **not** want my child to be audio taped during the thesis study.

_____
Student's Name

_____   _____
Signature of Participant's Parent or Guardian   Date

Appendix C

Parent Consent Form (Spanish)

Date

Estimados Padres,

La profesora de su niño está participando en un estudio de tesis realizado por
_____ University . El objetivo de esta carta es para informar a usted
sobre el estudio. La estudiante de la universidad que hace el estudio visitará el aula de su
niño(a) dos veces por semana durante cinco semanas para observar a la maestra cuando
ella está enseñando la lectura. Durante la observación, la estudiante de la universidad
puede hacer una cinta de audio de la maestra enseñando para ayudar con la colección de
la información. La voz de su niño podría ser registrada en la cinta durante las
observaciones. La estudiante de universidad sólo está interesada en lo que la maestra
dice. La estudiante anotará la información de la cinta de audio y después las cintas serán
destruidas. Por favor pida a la estudiante de la universidad para contestar cualquier
pregunta que usted pueda tener.

Cualquier información la estudiante de la universidad usará en el estudio sobre la
escuela, su niño, la maestra, o el programa escolar no incluirá ningún nombre. Tampoco
esto contendrá cualquier otro modo de identificar a alguien o algo al grado permitido
según la ley. Si alguna parte del estudio es publicada, será hecho sin usar el nombre de su
niño. Toda la información coleccionada por el estudiante de la universidad será guardada
en un archivador cerrado con llave para proveer más protección para todos.

Si usted prefiere que la voz de su niño **no** sea registrada en cinta, por favor firme y
devuelva esta forma a la maestra de su niño. La estudiante de la universidad hará todo lo
posible que el discurso de su niño no será registrada en cinta durante las observaciones.
La decisión de participar en este estudio pertenece a usted y su niño. Su niño puede
pararse en cualquier momento y nada sucederá a su niño. La decisión de no participar en
este estudio no tendrá ningún efecto en cualquier futuro servicio al que usted o su niño
puedan tener derecho de _____ University o la escuela de su niño.

☐   No quiero que el discurso de mi niño sea registrada en cinta durante las
      observaciones.

_____
Nombre de su hijo(a)

_____   _____
Firma del padre o guarda del estudiante   Fecha

Appendix D

Initial Interview Questions

1. What is your educational, cultural, and familial background? How have your personal experiences influenced your teaching beliefs and practices?
   A. Educational   B. Cultural   C. Familial

2. Have you received Kentucky Reading Project training or completed literacy course work at a university? Do you think the (KRP training or literacy course work) has benefited you in your current teaching practice? If so, how? If not, why not?

3. Describe your students' cultural, familial, and economic backgrounds. How do these student attributes affect how you address their individual reading needs?

4. What type(s) of reading group of instruction do you provide struggling readers within the classroom? Describe your role during reading instruction.

5. Describe your expectations for student learning. How do you communicate behavioral and learning expectations to your students and their families?

6. How do you address the literacy-learning needs of struggling readers?

7. What strategies or techniques do you use to accommodate the variety of learning styles present in your classroom?

8. Describe your methods for selecting curricula, assessments, and classroom literature.

9. Describe motivation strategies that you implement to engage your students.

10. Which heroes and holidays are celebrated in you classroom? Describe the activities, materials, and lessons you use to celebrate them.

11. Do you use a thematic or unit instructional approach? Describe the activities, projects, materials, and lessons.

12. How do you view the connection between education and good citizenship?

13. Describe choices that students make in your classroom.

14. Describe the forms of assessment you use. In what ways do students express their knowledge?

15. When social issues (real-world or school) occur, such as disagreements, conflicts, or differences, how are they addressed in the classroom?

Appendix E

Exit Interview Questions

1. Do you feel that your Latino students know and understand your behavioral and learning expectations? Explain.

2. What type of possible barriers in communication styles exist between you and your students?

3. What can be done to minimize or eliminate these communication barriers?

4. How do you modify your teaching practices and the classroom environment to facilitate the literacy-learning of your diverse and struggling students?

5. How do you conceptualize *multicultural education*?

6. What are your personal and theoretical beliefs about *multicultural education*?

7. To what extent do you apply multicultural teaching practices during literacy instruction?

8. What type of professional development has the district provided for teachers to prepare them for teaching students from different backgrounds?

9. In thinking about the learning needs of your Hispanic students, what type of professional growth training and/or experiences would be beneficial to help you meet their literacy-learning needs better?

10. Before a student is referred to ELL or to special education, *what* means are provided for a student to demonstrate knowledge?

11. What avenues and opportunities are students given to express their culture?

12. What means do you employ personally to improve your teaching practices?

13. If you could shape a class at the university or a school district professional growth program, how would it look? What type of skills would the training provide you?

14. How do you think the following affect your approach to provide instruction that builds upon the diverse backgrounds of your struggling students? (a. Your personal background culture and ethnicity, b. the diversity of your students, c. your perception of the definition of multicultural education)

15. Describe any education and/or training parents are provided as a means of learning ways to enhance their child's learning at home?

Appendix F

Human Subjects Review Board Letter of Approval

Human Subjects Review Board
Office of Sponsored Programs
Office: 270-745-4652
Fax: 270-745-4211
sean.rubino@wku.edu

WESTERN
KENTUCKY
UNIVERSITY

The Spirit Makes the Master

Western Kentucky University
1906 College Heights Blvd. #11026
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1026

In future correspondence please refer to HS08-029, December 6, 2007

Miriam Stroder
5641 Woodcrest Lane
Owensboro, KY 42303

Dear Miriam:

Your revision to your research project, "The Effects of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices on the Literacy Learning of Latino Students," was reviewed by the HSRB and it has been determined that risks to subjects are: (1) minimized and reasonable; and that (2) research procedures are consistent with a sound research design and do not expose the subjects to unnecessary risk. Reviewers determined that: (1) benefits to subjects are considered along with the importance of the topic and that outcomes are reasonable; (2) selection of subjects is equitable; and (3) the purposes of the research and the research setting is amenable to subjects' welfare and producing desired outcomes; that indications of coercion or prejudice are absent, and that participation is clearly voluntary.

1. In addition, the IRB found that you need to orient participants as follows: (1) signed informed consent is required; (2) Provision is made for collecting, using and storing data in a manner that protects the safety and privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data. (3) Appropriate safeguards are included to protect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

This project is therefore approved at the Full Board Review Level until May 31, 2008.

2. Please note that the institution is not responsible for any actions regarding this protocol before approval. If you expand the project at a later date to use other instruments please re-apply. Copies of your request for human subjects review, your application, and this approval, are maintained in the Office of Sponsored Programs at the above address. Please report any changes to this approved protocol to this office. Also, please use the stamped Informed Consent documents that are included with this letter. A Continuing Review protocol will be sent to you in the future to determine the status of the project.

Sincerely,

Sean Rubino, M.P.A.
Compliance Manager
Office of Sponsored Programs
Western Kentucky University

cc: HS file number Stroder HS08-029

Kentucky
UNBRIDLED SPIRIT

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