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CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH THE WORD: DEVELOPING CRITICAL  
CONSCIOUSNESS THROUGH MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S  
LITERATURE WITH CRITICAL LITERACY IN  
AN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

by

HyeKyoung Lee

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education

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Logan, Utah

2017

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## ABSTRACT

Changing the World through the Word: Developing Critical Consciousness  
Through Multicultural Children's Literature with Critical  
Literacy in an Elementary Classroom

by

HyeKyoung Lee, Doctor of Philosophy

Utah State University, 2017

Major Professor: Steven P. Camicia, Ph.D.  
Department: School of Teacher Education and Leadership

In this study, I explored how fifth-grade students develop critical consciousness of their sociocultural realities through a critical literacy framework using multicultural children's literature in the classroom. Despite its significance, there is very little research on critical literacy implementation to help students enhance critical consciousness in elementary classrooms. In this qualitative case study, I implemented Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys' four dimensions of critical literacy including (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice as a theoretical framework to guide this study.

I used two types of texts for the study. I used multicultural children's literature that represents different sociocultural groups' inequitable experiences and various social realities as a springboard to scaffold critical thinking. I also used students' everyday

experiences as real life texts. I used a qualitative case study design to frame and conduct this study in order to collect data and examine students' cultural patterns including values, beliefs, behaviors, and language that they enacted in the critical literacy practices. I collected data through classroom observations, semistructured student and teacher interviews, informal conversation, researcher's reflective journal entries and field notes, and student-made artifacts. I used constant comparative analysis method for inductive data analysis.

Findings show that the students were more aware of their own sociopolitical positions in the school, home and society, as well as how their lives were shaped by the sociocultural and political forces. The students were able to link their critical understanding of their own lives to larger sociopolitical issues associated with power and privilege, and this understanding encouraged them to engage in action for social justice. They were eager to take action such as writing a petition for a gender fairness agenda to create a positive school climate. This study is important for educators who hope to encourage students to become critical thinkers, as it shows how children critically engage in reading, discussion, and action regarding social justice issues through multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approaches.

(293 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

Changing the World through the Word: Developing Critical Consciousness  
Through Multicultural Children's Literature with Critical  
Literacy in an Elementary Classroom

HyeKyoung Lee

The purpose of this study was to explore how fifth graders develop critical consciousness regarding the self and the world through critical literacy approaches using multicultural children's literature. I employed Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys' four dimensions of critical literacy. I used a qualitative case study to design, frame and conduct this study in order to collect data and examine students' cultural patterns including values, beliefs, behaviors, and language that they enacted in the critical literacy practices. I collected data through classroom observations, semi-structured students and teacher interviews, informal conversation, researcher's reflective journal entries and field notes, and student-made artifacts. Findings show that the students were more aware of their own sociopolitical positions in the school, home and society, as well as how their lives were shaped by the sociocultural and political forces. The students were able to link their critical understanding of their own lives to larger sociopolitical issues associated with power and privilege, and this understanding encouraged them to engage in action for social justice. They were eager to take action such as writing a petition for a gender fairness agenda to create a positive school climate. This study is important for educators who hope to encourage students to become critical thinkers, as it shows how children

critically engage in reading, discussion, and action regarding social justice issues through multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approaches.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank to my advisor, Dr. Steven Camicia, for his constant support and guidance throughout this process. Without his trust and encouragement, this dissertation and my whole Ph.D. journey would have not been possible. I am truly grateful to him as a mentor. I would also like to acknowledge my committee members, Drs. Sylvia Read, Amy Wilson-Lopez, Scott Hunsaker, and María Luisa Spicer-Escalante, for their participation and deep commitment to this study. I greatly appreciate the enormous support and feedback that I have received from them.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Sue Kasun for her caring and scholarly insights that guided my intellectual inspirations and pursuits. I have always appreciated her guidance with this research and mentorship throughout my academic journey at USU. I also thank Dr. Spencer Clark for his critical advice and meaningful suggestions for this study.

If not for the efforts of the fifth-grade teacher who let me observe her classroom, this study would not have been possible. I appreciate her willingness to share her teaching practices with me and patience throughout the whole research process. I admire her enthusiasm and passion for the classroom.

To the TEAL family, my many thanks to you for your beautiful friendships and sharing in and out of the classroom.

From my deepest heart, I am truly thankful for my family. My mother, Seok JungJa, and my sister, Lee HyeEn, they have been my greatest friends and supporters of my academic journey. I would also like to convey my gratitude to my parents-in-law, John Israelsen and Angela Israelsen, and all the Israelsen family, for their support and



positive encouragement. Last, but not least, I wish to extend my deepest respect and love to my husband Justin Israelsen. Your unwavering encouragement and love gave me energy to continue on at the times I needed it most. I could not have weathered all these processes without your love and support—thank you. I will carry all these beautiful experiences and memories from my doctoral studies in my heart.

HyeKyoung Lee

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Introduction**

“I have another name, Nimuel [a pseudonym].”

“Nimuel?”

“Yes. My Filipino name.”

I was surprised to hear those words from Min-Su (a pseudonym), a 10-year-old Filipino-Korean boy in the book club discussion I taught at an elementary school in South Korea. He had never spoken in the discussions. Every Thursday morning my students had book club discussions based on the week’s reading. As I moved from group to group, I was able to see them nodding, pointing to pages in the books, defending their opinions, and sharing their favorite parts. Although he always had kept silent in the discussions, Min-Su was serious about expressing his bicultural identity when the class talked about an empowering story of an immigrant girl from Philippine. The story illustrated how she came to be proud of her cultural heritage and internalized the value of cultural diversity and acceptance as she challenged prejudices that came as a result of the color of her skin. His peers asked him questions about his different experiences in the Philippines and South Korea, and the cultural differences between the two countries. Students could hear the perspectives of immigrants and gained insight into some of the complexities of immigrant children’s lives in South Korea.

As their teacher I witnessed the potential influence of multicultural children’s



literature that described social justice issues as a result of an unequal power relationship within existing systems. Such literature helped my students not only to understand the experiences and perspectives of others, but also to identify what was fair or unfair in the way that a society treats people. In storylines, the characters experienced marginalization when they were overpowered by others and the existing system. The social justice issues in the stories were not resolved simply, but there was space for students to think about what could be done differently.

After I started my doctoral studies in the U.S., this teaching experience led me to seek opportunities to teach students by using multicultural children's literature. I served as a volunteer reading tutor for English language learners (ELLs) in several local elementary schools. My job was to read books aloud to increase student comprehension. When stories described situations that were similar or identical to what they had experienced, these children were very excited to tell me about their stories at home that reflected their cultures. What caused these children to interact with the text actively? How had the multicultural stories helped them to deepen their understanding of the texts and their lives, and made connections? How can I encourage students to think critically about their experiences and the world around them through multicultural children's literature?

My research interest began with these experiences and questions. Specifically, I wanted to explore how the use of multicultural children's literature about social justice issues can help children to make meaningful connections from texts to themselves and the world around them, and how children expand these connections to address inequality

and unfair social practices in their lives to advocate social justice.

From a broader perspective, eliminating social inequality is beyond the reach of teachers and schools. The education system cannot solve these problems by itself. It must rely upon a variety of actions by individuals and institutions that transcend the school walls (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2006). Nevertheless, each classroom is still a place of hope to move toward social justice by consistently dealing with issues of power, privilege, and social equality. A social studies classroom is the best venue to address social justice issues and teach students how to question truths, sources, and evidence so that they become socially responsible citizens in a multicultural democratic society (Wineburg & Martin, 2004).

Dewey (1916) suggests that students need to have multiple opportunities to learn how to live a democratic way of life and take lead roles in constructing knowledge. Democratic approaches in learning create a space for critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration for the twenty-first century classroom (Cramer, 2007). Beane and Apple (1995) highlight that a “democratic curriculum invites young people to shed the passive role of knowledge consumers and assume the active role of meaning makers” (p. 16). Despite the call for more democratic and student-centered approaches, much of instruction relies on a predetermined and test-driven curriculum focused on the acquisition of low-level skills through teacher-centered learning (Kozol, 2005; Lipman, 2004).

This raised the question: How can teachers provide democratic and student-centered learning experiences for students to develop their critical consciousness of the

self and the world around them in order to become active and responsible citizens? The term critical consciousness, conscientization, or conscientização (in Portuguese), is developed by Brazilian pedagogue and educational theorist Paulo Freire. Freire (2000, 2014) proposes that one of the primary goals of education is to help students develop their critical consciousness of the world such that they gain a critical understanding of their own reality and engage in transformative action. Therefore, critical consciousness means individuals' ability to take "action and reflection...upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p. 79).

Freire (1992, 2000, 2014) explains critical consciousness as an educational vehicle that encourages students to analyze the sociopolitical structures that exist in society at large and empower them to question authority and speak out against social injustice for a democratic society. Teachers can help students develop critical consciousness by addressing social justice issues that are relevant to them and modeling the democratic process through equal participation in the questioning and reflection process (Denzin, 2007; Freire, 1998). In this way, students can become critical thinkers and active citizens that are able to realize their social responsibility in working toward a more democratic and equitable society.

In order to prepare students to be aware of their social responsibility as members of society, teachers need to provide an opportunity for them to address social justice issues and challenge the status quo by asking critical questions of their reality. Teachers must foster students' critical consciousness with the goal of supporting them in becoming responsible citizens of the world who can and will stand up for social justice. In this

sense, new standards and curriculum for social studies need to be student centered and promote students' critical thinking toward the world and its issues.

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History, as new social studies state standards, focus on developing students' ability to recognize public problems, deliberate issues with others, consider possible solutions and consequences, and act on what they learn (National Council for Social Studies [NCSS], 2013). Thus, current social studies practices need to be extended beyond the traditional definition of social studies, that is, textbook-based and teacher-centered instruction with a focus on memorization of factual information in disciplines such as history, economics, geography, and civics (Ross, 2000). Both the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013) and the educational program asserted by Freire (2000, 2014) emphasize the significance of critical understanding of social justice issues and taking action to create a democratic society.

In the classroom, Freire (1992, 2000, 2014) focuses on developing students' critical consciousness based on understanding their own social conditions through dialogue with peers. He states that critical understanding of social conditions begins when students engage in dialogue and decode their conditions in a systematic way (Freire, 1992). In the process of decoding, students question why they have suffered and how they can change those conditions for a better world. Similarly, the C3 Framework places inquiry at the heart of social studies instruction and encourages teachers to take deliberate steps to help their students become ready for college, career, and civic life

(NCSS, 2013). In the area of civic readiness, the C3 Framework focuses on developing students' ability to construct compelling and supporting questions that initiate and sustain inquiry (NCSS, 2013). Once students are clear about the questions that they will explore, they must have opportunities to work individually and collaboratively and take informed action. Literacy is woven into lessons and assessments of social studies instruction.

Based on the recommendation of Freire (1992, 2000, 2014) and the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2013), one way to develop students' critical consciousness is to have teachers and students engage in student-centered inquiry and actions related to social justice issues. The topics of inquiry and action should be relevant to students' lives and the world around them. Through this inquiry as a collective and critical social process, students can understand critically their own reality and recognize the social structures of society at large that shape their lives.

For facilitating students' inquiry into social justice issues, multicultural children's literature can be used as a springboard to build awareness and examine complex social justice issues in texts as well as in everyday life. Multicultural children's literature can provide students vivid pictures of current and historical social justice issues such as racism and discrimination (Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Cai, 2003). The use of multicultural children's literature can be beneficial for students because it creates a collaborative space for open dialogue on social justice issues that relate to power and privilege embedded in students' own lives and the lives of others (Bishop, 2007; Cai, 2003; Gopalakrishnan, 2010; Mendoza & Reese, 2001).

However, it is not enough to read and discuss multicultural children's literature

with social justice issues. Students must learn how to take social action in response to these issues. Teachers need to create a more equitable and democratic classroom environment and encourage students to take a more active role in promoting fairness and social justice by scaffolding students' ability to analyze texts to examine stereotypes and issues of power, privilege, and perspectives (Botelho, 2004; Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Stover, 2012). Similarly, the C3 Framework recommends that teachers provide specific guidance and support in students' questioning for inquiry (NCSS, 2013). In this way, students actively engage in critical inquiry into the root causes of unequal or marginalized situations that maintain the status quo, as well as raise their critical consciousness of their social realities. Developing critical consciousness is the key to fostering students' participation in a democracy, which in turn advocates for social justice.

### **Problem Statement**

Developing critical consciousness is one of the most important learning outcomes for students. Critical consciousness is based on critical thinking related to the world around them (Freire, 1992, 2000, 2014). In the context of this study, critical thinking means "an analysis of inequitable power relations" (Camicia, 2016, p. 65) in order to further social justice. Development of critical thinking can be achieved when students are able to question and analyze historical, cultural, and political contexts in texts and make connections to their own lives and the lives of others (Hargood, 2008).

Despite its importance, there is a lack of curricular emphasis on developing

critical consciousness in elementary classrooms following the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. The goal of NCLB is to close the achievement gap between students and increase the accountability of teachers and schools. NCLB mandates each state use a unified accountability model. NCLB also requires states to administer high-stakes testing in language arts and mathematics that is aligned with state standards for measuring the academic performance of specific groups of students (Au, 2007; Milner, 2013). To do so, a district or school provides the accountability information of students using racial, ethnic and demographic data.

Many researchers show that current high stakes testing controls the scope of the curriculum and promotes the standardization of instruction through a scripted curriculum (Au, 2007; Milner 2013; Valli & Buese, 2007). Au argues that high-stakes testing has led to a “narrowing of curriculum, or curricular contraction to tested subjects” (p. 262). Moreover, Valli and Buese (2007) find that state teachers spend most of their faculty meetings aligning curriculum to the high-stakes tests to reach AYP. The teachers are encouraged by administrators to write curriculum using the state standards, which causes a narrowing of the curriculum.

In this environment, social studies has been devalued and marginalized in elementary schools (Bailey, Shaw, & Hollifield, 2006; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Heafner, Lipscomb, & Rock, 2006). The implementation of NCLB has exacerbated the problem (Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Serriere, & Stewart, 2008; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Tanner 2008; VanFossen, 2005; von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). For example, VanFossen’s study demonstrates the devaluation of social studies education after NCLB.

The majority of teachers in a survey of over 500 elementary teachers in Indiana ranked social studies as the least important of core subjects among reading and English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science, and social studies. More recently, VanFossen and McGrew (2008) find that 1.2% of K-3 teachers and less than 1% of fourth and fifth grade teachers in Indiana ranked social studies as the most important subject. A study by Heafner and Fitchett (2012) reveals that social studies instruction time was reduced by 60 minutes per week for the years 1993-2008. Boyle-Baise et al. (2008) find that social studies curriculums have become much broader and have been blended into other subjects, but social studies content is deemphasized by focusing on practicing literacy skills. This study was an interactive qualitative analysis on the effects of high-stakes testing on social studies curriculum, and thirteen teachers in six elementary schools in the Midwest participated.

### **A Narrowed Curriculum Focus**

Administrators and teachers frequently have narrowed the elementary curriculum to a focus on reading and mathematics per NCLB requirements (Boyle-Baise et al. 2008; Burroughs, Groce, & Webeck; 2005; Rock et al., 2006). The curriculum has focused on the standardization of instruction through mandated, scripted programs in reading and mathematics. These two subjects have dominated instructional time, resources, and support in elementary schools while other subject areas like social studies have become more minor (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Burroughs et al., 2005; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012). The curriculum becomes a set of correct answers determined by the teacher or the



program for raising test scores. Such predetermined curriculum overemphasizes skill-based instruction and limits opportunities for students to engage in deeper learning through student-centered pedagogies (Au, 2007).

This highly scripted approach pressures teachers to narrow their curriculums and instruction to focus on low-level skills and test preparation (Hamilton et al., 2007; Kozol, 2005; Lipman, 2004). Allington and Cunningham (2007) grieve that “for many years, literacy instruction in elementary schools has focused on skills and largely ignored knowledge, particularly deep knowledge of topics” (p. 53). They further argue, “The knowledge part of the curriculum, usually found in the subjects of science and social studies, are almost ignored in the primary grades of these schools” (p. 53).

In addition, test-driven instruction leaves little space for critical thinking and rich discussion of texts. Cadiero-Kaplan (2002) points out that “such instruction does not encourage students to challenge texts or ideas” (p. 374). Rather than promoting the construction of meaning through active learning, the scripted curriculum treats students as passive vessels waiting to be filled with the teacher’s knowledge. This passive approach does not provide proper opportunities for critical thinking or the exploration of sociopolitical issues (Comber & Nixon, 2011). In such a context, students are treated as empty vessels with limited ownership of knowledge (Freire, 2000). The teacher or the program predetermine the curriculum as a set of correct answers. This approach hinders students’ capacities to think critically. This educational practice is what Freire (2000) called a “banking method type of education” (p. 72). It positions the teacher as the holder of knowledge and limits students’ ability to think critically or develop a sense of agency

and responsibility (Freire, 2000, 2014).

Not surprisingly, teachers hardly have taught social studies and have reduced instruction time in that subject significantly (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Burroughs et al., 2005; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012; Knighton, 2003). In addition, social studies have been taught in the reading instruction (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008; Heafner & Fitchett, 2012). A study by Boyle-Baise et al. shows many teachers prefer to integrate social studies with literacy, but the integration can trivialize social studies content. Without careful consideration of social studies content, the integrated instruction becomes just another practice for literacy skills, not for teaching important social studies concepts and ideas in depth. To become more aware of one's own surroundings and reject the banking method, instruction needs to be more student-centered and take a more problem-based approach. In this context, there is a strong need for an alternative approach to the current practice in social studies curriculums.

### **Need for a Student-Centered Curriculum**

Preparing students to become active and engaged citizens is an ultimate goal of social studies education in a multicultural democratic society. Students need to be able to identify and analyze social justice issues, deliberate with others about how to address those issues, take constructive and collaborative action, and reflect on their actions. The student-centered curriculum engages students in opportunities to examine current and historical social justice issues in meaningful ways through critical reading and collaborative discussions that are relevant to their lives and the lives of others, both in

and out of classroom. Research indicates that when students actively participates in the learning process, they can develop deeper understanding and enhance their abilities to work together. Social interaction apparently plays a far more important role in learning, it is important that students have opportunities to discuss and collaborate with their peers (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). In order to examine the texts meaningfully and foster deep comprehension, a critical lens must be developed (Stover, 2012). The student-centered approach that supports critical interaction with text can increase students' critical consciousness of social justice issues while developing their abilities to read and write in meaningful ways.

Moreover, the student-centered approach meets the demands of preparing students as critical thinkers as well as active and responsible citizens who can effectively participate in college, career, and civic life. For active civic engagement, it is important to provide student-centered learning experiences beyond a preset list of questions and answers. More recently, the C3 Framework has responded to the need for providing student-centered learning experiences (NCSS, 2013). NCSS states that “engagement in civic life requires knowledge and experience; children learn to be citizens by working individually and together as citizens. An essential element of social studies education, therefore, is experiential—practicing the arts and habits of civic life” (p. 6). The C3 Framework puts inquiry at the center of a social studies curriculum. Inquiry can provide meaningful, student-centered learning experiences through developing students' “capacity to know, analyze, explain, and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in our social world” (NCSS, 2013, p. 6). Doing inquiry with peers helps students to develop a

sense of agency, which is crucial for preparing for the many facets of their adult lives.

In order to avoid devaluing social studies and increase the quality and quantity of social studies education, teachers need to integrate literacy into the social studies curriculum (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008). However, to avoid the trivialization of social studies instruction, the integration should address important social studies goals, objectives, and concepts; it must not just emphasize the comprehension of phonics and vocabulary (Cuthrell & Yates, 2007; McGuire, 2007). For an authentic integration of social studies and ELA, teachers can use reading materials that deal with social studies content. Multicultural children's literature provides an excellent secondary source in social studies that connects students to real-world issues such as discrimination and equality because it deals with various events in history and offers an inside view of a particular event. Although the literature does not provide direct or firsthand evidence about an event like a primary source, it offers "rich opportunities for students to analyze literature from multiple perspectives" (Bennett, 2006, p. 1). For example, asking the question "Whose voices have been left out of the text and who benefits?" helps students examine the text beyond the surface level. Students can clarify and challenge the connection between power and privilege (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Freire & Macedo, 1987).

### **A Critical Literacy Perspective for Social Studies**

Over the past 20 years, the field of research on critical literacy in the K-12 classroom has been increasingly instrumental in developing students' critical

consciousness and their way of viewing the world through purposeful reading and writing (Comber & Nixon, 2011; Fain, 2008; Hargood, 2008; Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Rogers & Mosley, 2006; Souto-Manning, 2009; Vasquez, 2004, 2010). The term “critical literacy” refers to pedagogical approaches that focus on examining the sociocultural, political, historical, and economic forces that shape students’ lives (Lewison et al., 2002; Soares & Wood, 2010). It is “strongly connected with topics and texts that have political and social significance for students and their communities” (Comber & Nixon, 2011, p. 168).

For example, a study by Leland, Harste, and Huber (2005) shows that critical literacy instruction helps primary students to develop the ability to question the root causes of social justice issues and build critical awareness of those issues. In the study, a first grade teacher read children’s books that depict social and historical issues, such as homelessness or Japanese internment camps during World War II. The researchers noticed that critical literacy increases students’ awareness of social justice issues. Students began to ask questions about why these people were homeless or imprisoned in the first place, and were able to make connections between their own lives and the text. By engaging in a process of critiquing and analyzing the text, students learned “to ‘read between the lines’ and generate alternative explanations regarding the author’s intent” (Leland, Harste, & Huber, 2005, p. 259).

In addition, a study by Lewison et al. (2002) reports that a critical literacy framework allows students to make connections to the sociopolitical forces that shape their lives and their world by examining issues of power relations within the text. In this

study, thirteen teachers implemented critical literacy in their classrooms. As a result, the students were able to problematize their everyday life by interrogating and examining the lives of homeless people in comparison to the mainstream life of American children, such as living with their parents or watching television. Students engaged in discussions about fairness at a deeper level. Across the studies, critical literacy helped students to bring their own life experiences into discussions and engage in student-centered learning. It also allowed students to be able to recognize how systems of power affect people's lives and how taking action can create positive change.

While there has been an increase of research in the area of critical literacy, little research has been conducted in social studies at the elementary level (Bolgatz, 2005; Soares & Wood, 2010; Yokota & Kolar, 2008). For instance, a study by Soares and Wood shows how teachers implemented critical literacy in social studies classrooms using children's literature about current and historical events such as women's rights and the civil rights movement. Specifically, students were encouraged to ask interrogative questions that help them consider multiple perspectives on social justice issues, such as "What does the author want you to know from reading?" (Soares & Wood, p. 489); or make connections to their emotions and their lives, such as "What words or actions have ever been directed at you because of negative assumptions or stereotypes? How did the experience make you feel? How do you think you should have been treated in that situation?" (p. 490). By exploring and discussing social justice issues with peers, students increased their critical consciousness about social justice issues. Students learned to examine multiple points of view, identify the issue of social justice associated with power

and privilege, and take action to build a better world.

Critical literacy can provide the necessary guidance for students in social studies classrooms, allowing them to become active and responsible citizens by examining current and historical social justice issues through a critical lens. Accordingly, the goal of critical literacy is to prompt students to develop critical consciousness by asking and analyzing why and for what purpose things have happened and who profits the most, and then to take action to make their world a better place (Beck, 2005; Comber & Nixon, 2011; Lewison et al., 2002). The critical examination of texts allows students to have historical understanding, which can lead them to grasp how events in the past may affect their current lives, and to build contextualized understanding of different interpretations of complex social realities.

Critical literacy approaches for social studies instruction can be implemented through collaborative discussion with teacher and students, when multiple interpretations of the text are examined. When students read with a critical stance, they can understand that the worldview represented in the texts is never neutral, and it can be challenged and actively resisted (Bean & Moni, 2003; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2015). Questioning the author's intention helps students understand how their lives can be influenced by sociopolitical forces. They can realize their roles in society and the need for their active participation to resolve social justice issues and correct social injustice. Subsequently, students will value the practices of thinking, questioning, and discussing, and learning becomes a collaborative process (McCall, 2010; Soares & Wood, 2010). In doing so, students are enabled to construct meaning and knowledge within a social studies context

and this understanding and knowledge help them become critical readers and critical citizens. Furthermore, critical literacy approaches allow students to cultivate dispositions to think as social scientists, develop abilities to explore content from different points of view, and increase their capacity to transfer social studies concepts, principles, and skills into their own lives (Soares & Wood, 2010).

Through incorporating critical literacy approaches as a vital part of social studies instruction, teachers help students better understand social studies content and open their eyes to the power that active and engaged people can have to change the world as productive members of society. Furthermore, critical literacy approaches using children's literature as a springboard can help students develop their critical consciousness for their own lives, the lives of others, and the world around them (Lewison et al., 2002, 2015). Students begin to uncover layers of power relations and inequalities, and examine how this can affect their own lives and the lives of others.

Therefore, it is important to provide time and space for students to think about and analyze the root causes of social inequalities and confront them, explore diverse viewpoints, and take action for social justice (Freire, 2000). Without these opportunities, students may not only have a limited view of the world, but also contribute to maintaining the status quo. Social studies instruction with critical literacy approaches will be a place of possibility where students can actively engage in their learning and develop critical consciousness and social skills to make them responsible citizens in a democratic multicultural society.



### **Connections to Curriculum Standards for Civics**

The C3 Framework focuses on enhancing students' ability to identify and analyze social justice issues with others and take collaborative action to solve problems (NCSS, 2013). By recognizing and examining social problems, students can engage in civic life. Developing the capacity to be able to question is very important both for student-centered social studies instruction and for increasing students' critical consciousness. Civic engagement requires knowledge of the history, principles, and foundations of democracy, and the ability to participate in civic and democratic processes (NCSS, 2013). Critical consciousness of the self and the world is a fundamental basis of civic engagement because people demonstrate their civic engagement when they address social justice issues individually and collaboratively. As critical reflection on social reality and taking action are key components of critical consciousness, developing critical consciousness at a young age helps children to grow into responsible citizens in a democratic society.

The Standards of Civics in the C3 Framework encourage students to understand civic principles such as equality, freedom, and respect for individual rights and virtues including mutual respect, cooperation, and open-mindedness to multiple perspectives (NCSS, 2013). The Framework then leads students to apply and reflect on these principles and virtues through civic engagement of their own and the civic engagement of others from the past and present.

In this study, I addressed the C3 Framework's challenge that "By the end of fifth grade individually and with others, students become able to explain how a democracy relies on people's responsible participation, and draw implications for how individuals

should participate” (NCSS, 2013, p. 32) and “apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school settings” (NCSS, 2013, p. 33). Students should also identify “core civic virtues and democratic principles that guide government, society, and communities” as well as “the beliefs, experiences, perspectives, and values that underlie their own and others’ points of view about civic issues” (NCSS, 2013, p. 33). This civic engagement leads students to have a better understanding of how multiple perspectives play into their own lives and others’ lives in the past and present. This is an important way that students can use civic principles and virtues to learn about democracy and differences in opinion regarding social justice issues.

At the state level, Utah State Core Standards for Social Studies focus on the U.S. in the fifth grade. Students explore important eras in the U.S. history, including exploration and colonization of the U.S., the beginnings of self-government, the Constitution and Bill of Rights, the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, World War I and II, and recent U.S. history, such as the civil rights movements or women’s movement (Utah State Office of Education [USOE], 2010). Based on their studies of the U.S., fifth graders are able to explore their rights and responsibilities as responsible citizens, guiding them to make better decisions that influence their lives.

In this study, I addressed the Utah State Core Standards for Social Studies for fifth grade, in particular standard III, “Students will understand the rights and responsibilities guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights” (USOE, 2010, p. 15) and standard V, “Students will address the causes, consequences and implications of the emergence of the U.S. as a world power” (p. 18). These social studies standards serve

as the most relevant guide to teach and promote critical consciousness regarding the self and the world through multicultural children's literature that focuses on social justice issues.

More specifically, standard III describes the requirement that students identify how the rights of different groups such as women have changed and how the Constitution reflects those changes. It also indicates that students need to know how to analyze the impact of the Constitution on their lives today. Standard V encourages students to understand and analyze how the U.S. was involved in World War II and its impact on the U.S. Students also need to be able to identify important social movements of the twentieth century, such as the women's movement and the civil rights movement, and understand their sociopolitical impact on people's lives in the past and present. In this study, I encouraged students to enhance critical awareness of themselves and others as they learn about the U.S. through the disciplines of civics and history.

Aspects of learning through reading and discussing literature are found in many of the ELA and literacy standards. However, I addressed civic standards to connect to fifth grade reading standards, such as "compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact)" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA & CCSSO], 2010, p. 12), and "analyze multiple accounts of the same event or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent" (p. 14). I also addressed writing standards, such as "write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and

information” (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p. 20). With respect to the ELA and literacy standards, students become more aware of multiple perspectives through exposure to a variety of genres and themes related to social justice issues.

In this study, students responded to a series of inquiry questions that asked them to compare and contrast different points of views and events in the text and their lives. They also examined how their lives were influenced by their surroundings. In this way, students were enabled to learn how to participate effectively in a multicultural society and develop a sense of personal and social responsibility. For example, questions like “Why were Japanese Americans sent to internment camps during World War II?” will help students understand the many dimensions of the war and the notion of citizenship as they form their own conclusions about the reasons and meanings associated with the event. Students can take into consideration the multiple points of view presented in the text for drawing their own conclusions. Students’ questioning their own realities means they are beginning to see their world through different lenses and are becoming able to challenge the status quo (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

### **Purpose of the Study**

I wanted to understand how the use of multicultural literature can help students develop their critical consciousness of their social realities and develop a sense of social justice. Throughout this study, I examined an alternative approach that can provide opportunities to develop a critical perspective and sense of social justice. Specifically, I investigated a way to provide a student-centered curriculum by incorporating

multicultural children's literature through critical literacy approaches with fifth graders. During this study, the students read multicultural children's literature related to the social justice theme and discussed a variety of social justice issues present in the text, in their lives, and in the world around them. I documented what happens when fifth graders engaged in multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approaches that interrogated power relationships in society at large and questioned received social norms.

Furthermore, I extended the analysis of critical literacy to explore how students used multicultural literature to reconstruct their view of the world and advocate for social justice. I described how students were able to make connections to the social justice theme in the literature and their everyday lives at school, at home, and in the world around them, and work together to change their social practices in a more just way. Most of the instruction was enacted in social studies and language arts classes, into which I incorporated social studies content, including U.S. history. Literacy content involved contemporary fiction and nonfiction, biography, autobiography, and poetry that focused on social justice issues associated with inequality.

### **Research Questions**

Through this study, I documented features of an alternative approach to promoting students' critical consciousness regarding social justice issues. Moreover, the use of multicultural children's literature encouraged students to be more aware of their different social practices and unexplored privileges, as well as participate in action for change. The overarching research question that guided this study was: "How did the fifth

graders develop critical consciousness of their lives and the world around them while engaging in multicultural children's literature through critical literacy approaches?"

This study was guided by the following two subquestions.

1. In what ways does the teacher incorporate critical literacy approaches in her classroom?

2. What were the learning outcomes when the fifth graders engaged in social justice issues present in multicultural children's literature?

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided the basis for this study in terms of the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions. I introduced how my research interests are based on my teaching and learning experiences with diverse children in South Korea and the U.S. I also discussed the importance and advantages of using multicultural children's literature in an elementary classroom to provide rich social studies learning experiences that are student centered. Additionally, I mentioned the importance of developing critical consciousness as a stepping-stone to advocate for social justice. The predetermined nature of current instruction limits students' opportunities for meaningful interaction with a text and deeper learning. I addressed the need for an alternative approach to the student-centered curriculum, which used multicultural children's literature with a critical literacy framework. In chapter II, I will explain the theoretical framework of this study and present a review of the literature in relation to critical literacy, critical pedagogy, and critical awareness development.

## **Definition of Terms**

The following section is developed to help readers understand the terms used in this study. The definition of each term below indicates the way the word is used throughout the context of this study.

### **Banking Methods of Education**

The banking method of education is a term used by Paulo Freire to explain and criticize the traditional education system. This method is where teachers merely deposit knowledge in students and students are treated as empty receptacles without ownership of knowledge (Freire, 2000). This approach is often associated with scripted curriculums because such an agenda narrows the curriculum. In relation with critical thinking, Freire (2002) emphasizes the power of critical thinking as critical reflection. He states, “the pedagogy of the oppressed must be forged with, not for, the oppressed in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity” (Freire, 2000, p. 48). He points out that it is common to be initially blinded by the dominant ideologies and beliefs of society, but individuals can overcome this through critical reflection.

### **Critical Consciousness**

Critical consciousness is a way of knowing what happens in one’s own reality and the realities of others and being able to challenge injustice in the world through conscious reflection (Freire, 2000). Moreover, it is the ability to analyze social constructs and demand changes. Critical consciousness enables students to take a critical stance toward one’s social realities and encourages them to act for change in the world (Darder,

Baltodano, & Torres, 2003; Freire, 1998). In this study, I addressed social justice issues to help students develop critical consciousness as they read and respond to multicultural children's literature in the social studies curriculum. The students questioned and analyzed social justice issues while they read and discussed their experiences and the experiences of others. Students are able not only to understand the content in the literature but also to respond to the text at a deeper level by making connections between the social justice theme in the text and their own lives, other texts, and the world around them.

### **Critical Literacy**

Lewison et al. (2002) identify four dimensions of critical literacy. Critical literacy is (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice. All these dimensions are interrelated. By disrupting the commonplace, students see their everyday events and experiences through a new lens. They problematize the texts and things they take for granted. Through interrogating multiple points of view of the text, students can consider how the story would be different if told from an alternative perspective in which social inequality is present in the text. By focusing on sociopolitical issues, students are analyzing inequitable power relations. They examine the text beyond the surface level to challenge issues of power and privilege and question whose voices have been heard as well as who benefits in the text and in their lives.

In addition, students begin to engage in action by confronting social justice issues within the text. This transformation creates change inside and outside of the classroom



and has the potential to promote social justice in society at large. In this study, fifth graders engaged in the process of critical literacy by exploring issues such as discrimination, unequal treatment based on gender, and fairness in the literature they read and in relation to their own lives and the world around them. By peeling away the layers that they felt comfortable with and lived in, critical literacy helped them to develop a critical awareness and interrogate the text and their lives.

### **Curriculum Integration**

Curriculum integration intentionally draws knowledge, perspectives, and inquiry skills from various subject areas in order to develop a more powerful understanding of an issue, person, event, or big idea (Parker, 2014). Wade (2002) suggests that we need to design the curriculum based on themes, and the themes can run through the entire curriculum and throughout the school year. This thematic approach helped to overcome the current limitation of the “expanding horizons” model in social studies curriculums (Wade, 2002). Teachers are also able to connect various subject areas with themes that create a more cohesive and inclusive curriculum and increase students’ understanding of themselves and society (Camicia, 2016). In this study, I designed a social studies curriculum to integrate civics, geography, and history with ELA. Students read and wrote about social studies content related to social justice, such as the Civil War or the Civil Rights Movement. They were required to synthesize and integrate information from their reading to complete their social studies learning projects.

## **Critical Thinking**

Critical thinking is often synonymous with concepts such as finding the main idea, making inferences, and sequencing details. This conventional notion of critical thinking is thinking that focuses on logic and comprehension to solve problems. It uses a variety of intellectual resources, such as “background knowledge, knowledge of critical thinking standards, possession of critical concepts, knowledge of strategies or heuristics useful in thinking critically, and certain habits of mind” (Bailin, Case, Coombs, & Daniels, 1999, p. 286). Students use these concepts, criteria, strategies, and procedures appropriately to make good decisions.

Another view of critical thinking refers to thinking about “an analysis of inequitable power relations” (Camicia, 2016, p. 65). This view states that critical thinking is analyzing and questioning social injustice and the status quo of society. In this study, I took the latter meaning of critical thinking. Development of critical thinking can be achieved when students are able to critically question and analyze historical, cultural, and political contexts in the text and make connections to their own lives and the lives of others (Hargood, 2008).

## **Multicultural Children’s Literature**

Multicultural children’s literature is defined as books which present the “diverse life experiences, traditions, histories, values, worldviews, and perspectives of the diverse cultural groups that make up a society” (Mestre & Scott, 1997, p. 185) and which also are written at a children’s reading level. Cai (1995) argues that multicultural literature must be culturally accurate in regard to different cultural groups. He also points out how

insider authors can sometimes present inaccurate cultural information. Therefore, I did not limit the scope of the multicultural children's literature in this study to only those written and illustrated by an insider of the group presented, but I also required that they authentically depict and validate the histories and experiences of different cultural groups in society. Furthermore, in order to address social justice, I focused on selecting literature that authentically presented traditionally marginalized groups' experiences in terms of social inequality and explored multiple perspectives. The literature used in the classroom met the students' instructional reading levels. The selection of books included those written and published in the U.S. as well as in countries other than the U.S. that were then translated into English if originally in another language.

### **Social Justice**

Social justice is the view that all individuals “are born free and equal in dignity and rights” (United Nations, 2015, p. 4). In a democratic society, social justice is about assuring the protection of equal economic, political, and sociocultural rights and opportunities for everyone regardless of race, class, gender, and other differences so that all can live fulfilling lives as citizens. The two principles of social justice are liberty and equality. The liberty principle means that everyone has an equal right to basic freedoms. The equality principle refers to a fair opportunity for all regardless of individuals' social backgrounds or physical traits. Equality is the most important component of social justice. Equality means a fair distribution of opportunities for everyone to become “fully cooperating members of society over a complete life” (Rawls, 2003, p. 18). In this study, social justice plays an important role as an instruction theme to promote indispensable

human rights by challenging social inequalities. The value of social justice helps students to enhance their critical understanding of the self and the world and to advocate for reducing the level of inequalities in their lives and the world around them.

### **Social Justice Issues**

Social justice issues are important topics on which conflicting views are held by a group of people in society or society as a whole. Examples of social justice issues would be Poverty and Economic Injustice or unequal treatments of a person or group on the basis of their personal characteristics that may include age, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic identity or physical identity. Such issues have evolved over time as conditions and values in society have changed. In this study, social justice issues focus on a process or outcome in society that was determined by some conditions that caused suffering and hindered members of society from achieving their full potential (Eitzen, Zinn, & Smith, 2014). There are conditions in society such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and ageism that cause physical or psychological suffering. A few example of social justice issues in this study included racial discrimination, school segregation, and unequal treatment based on gender. It violates individuals' fundamental rights to equitable treatment and a fair allocation of community resources (Rawls, 2003). Such issues are not consistent with social justice.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **Overview**

This study advocates for an alternative curriculum approach to raise students' critical consciousness on social justice issues. In this chapter, I will examine how fifth-grade students engage in multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approaches. This chapter contains four subsections. First, I will explain how critical literacy as a theoretical framework was used to guide this study, focusing on critical literacy stemming from Freire's (2000, 2014) critical pedagogy. I will also discuss a critical literacy framework for implementing critical literacy in the classroom. I will review previous research on implementing critical literacy in elementary classrooms. Second, I will review how multicultural children's literature can be utilized to jump start students' critical learning of social issues that advocate for social justice. I will provide a definition of and criteria for selecting high quality multicultural children's literature. Third, I will examine the impact of critical literacy instruction that uses multicultural children's literature to develop students' critical consciousness. I will conclude with a review of the literature on social studies curriculum integration.

#### **Theoretical Framework: Critical Literacy**

I used critical literacy as a theoretical framework for this study. Critical literacy is rooted in the work of Brazilian critical theorist and educator Paulo Freire. Freire's (2000)

significant work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, discussed the inequalities of the oppressed people in Brazil and the importance of critical pedagogy as a tool to liberate and humanize. Freire and his colleagues formulated a dialogical adult literacy campaign that incorporated critical pedagogy in the early 1960s for the rural sugarcane workers in the northeast of Brazil. He sought out the voices of the marginalized peasants and interrogated the unequal power relationships embedded in social structures. His critical pedagogy envisioned a positive role for education and schools to play in examining social justice issues.

Freire (2000) believes in education as a “practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination” (p. 81). However, education can be oppressive if enacted through the banking method of education as a traditional model of education that maintains the status quo of society. Students are treated as empty receptacles for knowledge. As Freire points out, when students “more completely accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them” (p. 54). This approach limits students’ capacity to think critically and to develop a sense of agency. The banking method of education is often associated with a standardized curriculum that is prescribed and that focuses on finding one correct, predetermined answer without questioning (McLaren, 1997). This one-size-fits-all approach is somewhat oppressive. It forces students to think in a certain way. Students are neither constructors nor arbitrators of knowledge in the institutionalized mechanism of domination. Therefore, transformative learning only occurs within a democratic and dialogical relationship between students and teachers

(Freire, 2000). Teachers are no longer gatekeepers of knowledge but they facilitate critical and authentic dialogue with students by questioning unexamined knowledge.

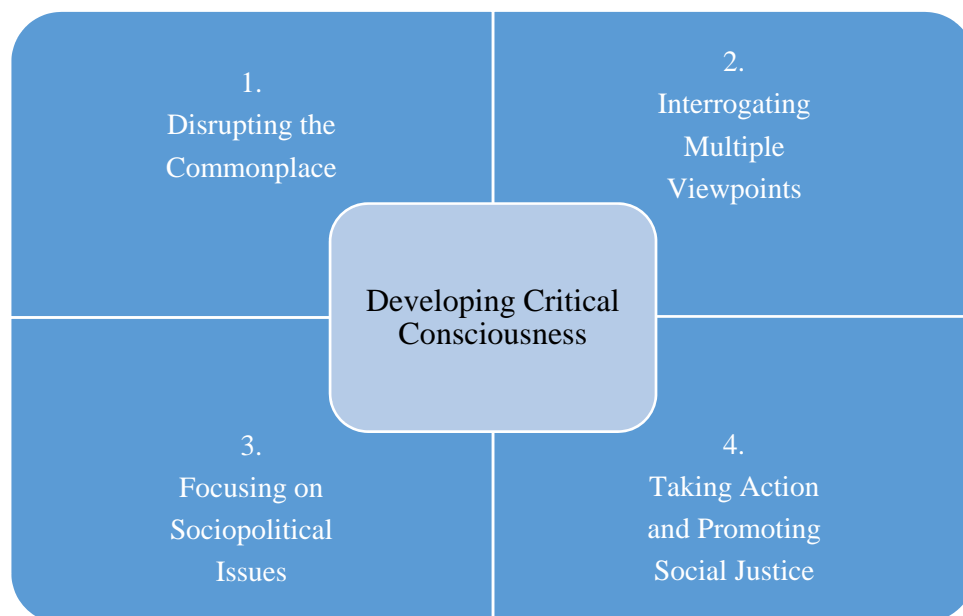
One major tenet of critical literacy is that texts are never neutral (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2010). All texts are created from a particular perspective and position the reader to believe certain truths by communicating both explicit and implicit messages that promote ideologies (Stover, 2012). Therefore, it is important for students to examine texts with a critical stance that questions issues of power and challenges the acceptance of social conformity and the status quo. In order to have a critical stance, Freire (2000) argues that educators must help students to develop critical consciousness of self and the world through constant reflection and action. He views schools as able to educate students to create a counter-knowledge against hegemonic forms of existing knowledge that maintains the status quo. Students and teachers question what they know and problematize knowledge previously taken for granted and curriculum practices in relation to power. Students increase awareness of their social realities in terms such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and language through dialogue. They realize that existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created. Through this problem-posing approach, students become active learning participants who have the capacity to make a better choice for the common good.

### **Critical Literacy Framework for the Study**

Lewison et al. (2002) organize critical literacy research into four dimensions: (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice. These four

themes are interrelated—none is sufficient to stand alone, and they are woven throughout the students’ discussions in the study. I employed this critical literacy framework as a lens to examine how fifth graders read and respond to social justice issues in multicultural children’s literature through critical literacy approaches to develop students’ critical consciousness (see Figure 1).

**Disrupting the commonplace.** First, the use of a critical literacy framework provides a new lens to disrupt the commonplace by seeing everyday events and experiences differently. Students problematize the content of the text to examine how language shapes identity, ideology, and a view of the world. This perspective of critical literacy encourages students to question how a particular text is trying to position them. It encourages students to problematize the texts from their own point of view. Specifically, when examining pop culture and the media as a part of the curriculum, students are



*Figure 1.* Critical literacy framework for the study.



encouraged to analyze the purposes of those cultural products and what messages they convey (Marsh, 2000; Vasquez, 2000; Vasquez & Felderman, 2013). This tenet teaches students to understand how language shapes identity, construct cultural discourses, and supports or disrupts the existing reality (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1990).

**Interrogating multiple viewpoints.** Second, critical literacy helps students explore multiple perspectives by asking whose voice is missed and whose is silenced. This dimension of interrogating multiple viewpoints demonstrates the value of acknowledging alternative points of view on issues addressed in the text. According to Jones (2006);

The more perspectives we are able to see and understand, the more likely we will resist age-old stereotypes used to judge people, and the more likely we will recognize when we, as readers of texts, are being influenced to take on perspectives that do not align with our goals of social justice. (p. 80)

Along with this assertion, Camicia (2007) highlights the importance of bringing multiple viewpoints into curriculum practice. He states, “when multiple perspectives are valued, the universe of options available in the democratic decision making process is enlarged” (p. 97). Further, he empathizes exploring multiple viewpoints helps students increase students’ understanding of global problems and enhance their global citizenship.

When students examine the voices heard and omitted from the text, they develop an awareness of the power the author holds by determining who or what gets included and excluded from the text. For example, students ask questions such as “Whose voices are represented in the text? Whose voices are silenced or marginalized by the text?” This dimension encourages students to consider how social practices may be changed based on different perspectives. By comparing and contrasting different points of views, and

combining one perspective with others, students enhance their views of various topics and form balanced conclusions (Parker, 2014). In addition, students develop a sense of empathy and a deeper understanding of others by examining different viewpoints.

**Focusing on sociopolitical issues.** Third, critical literacy takes place in a process of questioning how the sociopolitical systems and power relationships that students belong to shape their perceptions, responses, and actions. McLaughlin and DeVogd (2004) argue:

Critical literacy helps us to move beyond...passive acceptance and take an active role in the reader-author relationship by questioning such issues as who wrote the text, what the author wanted us to believe, and what information the author chose to include or exclude from the text. (p. 6)

This principle enables students to examine sociopolitical issues, which are related to maintaining the status quo. Students can begin to ask whose interests are being served and what role positioning, power, and privilege play in both the construction and the context of the text. Students can become more aware of power relationships in their lives and the world around them by examining power relationships in literature. In other words, students can be more empowered when they examine unequal power in sociopolitical systems and how it relates to them personally. This helps them develop agency to confront those inequities and gain political awareness for social change (Comber, 1998; Freire & Macedo, 1987).

**Taking action and promoting social justice.** Fourth, another aspect of enacting critical literacy is taking action and promoting social justice. This dimension is often perceived as the definition of critical literacy. However, this dimension cannot be achieved without expanded awareness and standpoints gained from the other three

dimensions. Students are encouraged not only to analyze how language is used to legitimate domination (Janks, 2000) but also to learn how language helps them to question practices of privilege and injustice (Comber, Thompson & Wells, 2001). In other words, enacting critical social practices in the classroom means that students critically use language in order to reflect and act in ways that lead to greater equity and justice.

This is exemplified by Freire's (2000) call for engaging in "praxis" (p. 33). He defines praxis as an ongoing "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 33). Praxis is theory in action. Action without a critical understanding of their own position and social practice is just activism (Freire, 2000). Action should come from recognizing the problem as grounded in one's own life, analyzing it, and struggling to find solutions. This awareness encourages students to become actors in the world rather than spectators. This sense of agency is reinforced when students engage in various reading and writing activities. For example, they can read books with social justice themes by their own choice or create their own narratives, counter-narratives, letters, poems, posters, and scripts to address fairness and equality for transformation. They can participate in discussions that focus on issues of fairness, equality, and social change.

### **Critical Literacy in the Classroom**

Critical literacy has a narrow and a broad meaning in the classroom. Critical literacy in the narrow sense means reading texts with a critical stance. In broader sense, critical literacy has a connection with the political nature of education from critical pedagogy that identifies varied dimensions of societal problems. Critical literacy not only focuses on critical reading but also aims to raise critical consciousness toward social

issues and encourage critical action to make the world a more just place (Comber, Thompson, & Wells, 2001; Freire, 2014). More specifically, I borrowed a broader view of critical literacy. The term critical literacy in this study refers to a pedagogical approach to read and process texts in terms of their political, sociocultural, historical, and economic dimensions.

Critical literacy becomes transformational when students become co-investigators of knowledge and problem posers (Freire, 2000). Critical literacy encourages students to critically examine their positioning within their world and analyze their realities. Teachers and students learn alongside each other. In line with this perspective, Comber (1998) emphasizes that critical literacy makes students critical thinkers and activists because it involves discussing with students how texts work and how they work in the world. Furthermore, critical literacy encourages students to bring their own lived experiences into classroom discussions and actively question everyday social practice, uncovering underlying messages and assumptions behind social practices, and taking action toward social justice (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lewison et al., 2015).

In the classroom, teachers must teach students to use language for critique.

According to Egawa and Harste (2001);

The ability to sound out words and make meaning from texts makes children good consumers rather than good citizens. To be truly literate, children need to understand how texts work and that they as literate beings have options in terms of how they are going to respond to a particular text in a given setting. (p. 2)

Therefore, teachers need to support students in raising questions related to students' experiences, not from a prescribed curriculum. In order to become responsible citizens, students need to take a critical stance by recognizing the problem as grounded in their

own lives, analyzing it, and struggling to find solutions. In particular, reflection and action on a given social reality are a central tenet of critical literacy that in turn becomes crucial to taking a critical stance. In short, critical literacy leads students to develop their critical consciousness, which promotes social justice and equality. Next, I will review previous research on the practices of implementing critical literacy in elementary classrooms.

### **Research on Critical Literacy in Elementary Classrooms**

Over the last 20 years, an enormous number of critical literacy studies have been conducted to examine how critical literacy is implemented in K-12 classrooms. Despite the significance of developing a critical perspective in early years, there is very little research on implementing critical literacy to help elementary students take a critical stance in the classroom. There are many reasons that teachers are reluctant to enact critical literacy in the classroom. According to Wollman-Bonilla (1998), some teachers might feel uncomfortable exposing children to controversial topics such as social justice and inequality that might be harmful to children's innocence. Or some teachers think that a colorblind approach provides a safe space for innocent children because children cannot fully understand the meaning and context in which it is examined (Swindler Boutte, Lopez-Robertson, & Powers-Costello, 2011; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Some teachers had a limited understanding of critical literacy to implement in the classroom (McNair, 2002). Another reason was related to a fear of backlash from administrators or parents. The fear made teachers hesitant to combine critical literacy in their classroom routines (Bargiel et

al., 1997). Furthermore, some teachers preferred to accept the existing social order and did not want to challenge the status quo (McDaniel, 2004).

Beyond the barriers of enacting critical literacy, some teachers dare to incorporate critical literacy in their classrooms. Lewison et al. (2002) introduced how two teachers—Nancy was a fifth grade teacher and Kevin was a primary multiage classroom teacher—negotiated their critical literacy practice in the classrooms. One of these was a newcomer and the other a novice to teaching critical literacy. They used social justice oriented books, which dealt with the topics of school bullying, homelessness, poverty, or immigration experiences. Each teacher and their students questioned common beliefs and assumptions related to the texts, such as “Whose voices are included or missing?” They engaged in critical conversation that asked them why mainstream American experiences (e.g., living with parents or most students speaking only English) were considered as common sense.

In particular, in Kevin’s classroom, one student told her immigration story from Eastern Europe to the U.S. She shared her struggle to learn English and how she navigated a new life in the U.S. in and out of school. This case extends students’ conversation in a sociopolitical realm in which they can understand power relationships and how language impacts access to living the American life. The students were able to position themselves in a larger social context by making connections between their lives and the texts.

Although using critical literacy with children’s literature opens up space for students to examine social issues, Lewison et al. (2002) point out that both teachers

mostly addressed two tenets of critical literacy—disrupting the commonplace and interrogating multiple perspectives—due to the teacher’s lack of knowledge on the types of books to use and critical questions to ask. Along with this phenomenon, they found that the students often kept the discussion at a relatively surface level by discussing their emotions about the texts instead of examining the larger social contexts which were associated with the inequalities of the texts. This study shows that the ability to implement critical literacy in the classroom is very important. Lewison et al. suggest that attending professional development and conferences will help teachers to use critical literacy in the classroom. Using critical literacy allows students to analyze their social reality in depth and to internalize information based on their own critical filtering. Students, in turn, become good citizens instead of good consumers.

Vasquez (2010) brings various examples of how teachers implement critical literacy in their classrooms in her book *Getting Beyond “I like the book” : Creating Space for Critical Literacy in K-6 Classrooms*. The teachers used critical literacy with social-issue-oriented children’s books as a vehicle for discussing issues of power and control. The books that the teachers used were texts with social issues (Leland, Harste, Ociepka, Lewison, & Vasquez, 1999)—such as texts that deal with topics of race, class, or gender. Specifically, one teacher used the process of drama and books which addressed racism, power, and control as a way to examine social inequalities in the school where she worked with third graders.

The students read the picture book *Whitewash* (Shange, 1997), which depicts a young African-American girl, Helene-Angel, who is traumatized when a gang attacks her

and her brother on their way home from school. The gang members spray a white paint on her face and tell her they were doing this to teach her how to be white. Her students were outraged at this story and the teacher decided to use their emotional reaction to construct a class play. The students were very uncomfortable with their own sense of powerlessness and were at a loss when faced with such examples in the book. The books provided opportunities for critical conversation about the problems of racism and violence. The discussion provided insights into how they were negotiating issues of social justice.

Furthermore, they examined their direct experiences related to inequalities that they experienced. They found similar incidents in their negative interactions during recess on the playground which required teachers' interventions to resolve. However, students often felt that teachers' interventions were unfair and ineffective. They observed their fellow students' behaviors on the playground and had a critical discussion about the problem. They wrote a letter to the principal and initiated a letter-writing campaign to solve the playground problem. In this way, students were able to engage in a way of constructing meaning and dissecting texts. They could address issues regarding social justice and equity in their respective context and find their voices.

Similarly, in a study by Leland, Harste, and Huber (2005), they examined how a first grade teacher and her students enacted critical literacy in the classroom. In the beginning, the teacher worried that her students could not make personal connections to stories that addressed social justice issues such as homelessness, racism, and war, topics her rural children are not well acquainted with. However, she discovered that the children



made stronger connections to these types of books than to traditional happy-ending books and she decided to keep reading these books aloud at story time. She encouraged her students to think critically with questions such as “Whose voice is heard and whose voice is silenced? And why?” She also examined the social issues in books through writing assignments and arts. In particular, art integration such as drawing pictures helped students to linger and internalize the meaning of the texts.

The critical literacy practice allowed the students to question the common assumptions that are the driving force behind what goes on in their classroom, schools, and community. For example, the students read *The Lady in the Box* (McGovern, 1997) that describes a lady who lives outside during winter in a box over a warm air vent in the city. They discussed how people are positioned by homelessness and stereotypes regarding the homeless. Her school had been collecting items for the local food pantry and after the discussion her students brought almost ten times the normal amount of items. Before reading the book and their discussion, the students usually held a contest based on the numbers of items that they brought. However, after the discussion no one made a comment about winning. The students began to talk about how the food would help people who did not have enough to eat.

The review of literature shows that there is an urgent need for further research in critical literacy with elementary students. All four of the aforementioned research points demonstrated that when a teacher makes critical literacy available to the students, they are able to participate in more powerful and alternative discourses which address social justice and equity. Critical literacy repositions students to engage in sociopolitical spaces

beyond the surface level of understanding the texts, and to read between the lines.

### **Multicultural Children's Literature**

I used multicultural children's literature related to current and historical social justice issues as a social studies curriculum resource for critical literacy instruction. The critical literacy instruction with multicultural literature presented in this study was not about teaching multicultural books per se but about what was done using such books in different ways.

#### **Defining Multicultural Children's Literature**

The development of multicultural literature has been heavily influenced by multiculturalism and the multicultural education movement, which is "one of the most hopeful developments in children's literature" (Bishop, 2007, p. xiv). Cai and Bishop (1994) note that the advent of contemporary multicultural literature is a byproduct of the multicultural education movement of the 1960s. Cai (1998) mentioned:

Multiculturalism is about diversity and inclusion, but what is more important, it is also about power structures and struggle. Its goal is not just to understand, accept, and appreciate cultural differences but also to ultimately transform the existing social order to ensure greater voice and authority to the marginalized cultures, and to achieve social equality and justice. (p. 313)

This means that the primary goal of multicultural children's literature is not only to provide various life experiences of sociocultural diverse groups to readers but also advocate for social justice.

As an example of this sociopolitical perspective on multicultural children's

literature, Nieto's (1992) interpretation of multiculturalism appears to qualify this definition of multicultural literature, which reflects various dimensions of diversity to be found in society, by focusing on the reality of various cultures. In her research on Puerto Rican children's literature, she argues that the most authentic form of literature is "more balanced, complete, accurate, and realistic literature that asks even young readers to grapple with sometimes wrenching issues" (Nieto, 1992, p. 188). Therefore, the quality of multicultural children's literature needs to present both sociopolitical and literary definitions.

In this sense, multicultural children's literature refers to literature that represented a variety of cultural and social groups' experiences and their perspectives. These books introduce the uniqueness of certain groups' cultural experiences in an authentic voice, most often from an insider's perspective (Gopalakrishnan, 2010). Multicultural children's literature deals with certain cultural groups' inequitable sociocultural conflicts between the marginalized and the dominant mainstream. Such books attempt to ensure equitable treatment for the marginalized. Such books help readers take on critical points of view in order to question larger power relations (Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Gopalakrishnan, 2010) and ultimately develop a social conscience—an awareness of social justice (Bishop, 1982).

As the set of books deals with specific social and cultural groups who are considered outsiders of the white mainstream culture, the cultural authenticity of the portrayals became an important matter. Many scholars commonly argue that the most accurate and authentic portrayal of a culture come from writing about an author's own

culture and experiences (Bishop, 1992; Harris, 1992; Nieto, 1992; Yokota, 1993).

However, there are some exceptions about authentic portrayals. Higgins (2002) states that the following authors are eligible to write about other cultures; (a) authors who live all or most of their lives within the culture they were writing about (Barrera, Liguori & Salas, 1993); (b) those who write based on their experience and their awareness of other cultures (Nieto, 1992); and (c) authors who provide an accurate representation about the culture they portray (Hillard, 1995; Yokota, 1993). On this category, multicultural children's literature is seen as literature that is:

- Featuring “people of color, the elderly, gays, and lesbians, religious minorities, language minorities, people with disabilities, gender issues, and concerns about class.” (Harris, 1994, p. 117)
- Socially conscious and culturally conscious books (Bishop, 1982).
- Dealing with “previously underrepresented groups’ sociocultural experiences, including those occurring because of differences in language, race, gender, class, ethnicity, identity, and sexual orientation.” (Gopalakrishnan, 2010, p. 5)
- Describing many contexts of racial or ethnic minority groups that may be outside the mainstream students’ experiences. (Norton, 2005)
- Including “gender, class, sexual orientation, ableism, age, religion and geographical location.” (Botelho, 2004, p. 52)
- Multiethnic literature because “a focus on ethnicity-related issues in literature allows us to consider the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural issues shared by ethnic groups that lie outside the mainstream.” (Yokota, 2001, p. xiv)
- Representing perspectives and lives of the minorities, issues of inequality, discrimination, oppression and exploitation. (Cai, 1998)

All definitions above commonly point out that multicultural literature challenges the mainstream canon by including literature from diverse cultural and social minority groups. Multicultural children's literature used in this study that focused on traditionally

underrepresented groups' inequitable social experiences in terms of race, class, gender, religions or faiths, ableness, sexual orientation, age, language, and other differences. This multicultural children's literature has critical pedagogical characteristic in that it pays attention to the marginalized voices and attempts to find an alternative way of being (Short & Fox, 1998).

### **Selecting Multicultural Children's Literature**

Selecting authentic multicultural children's literature is very important in order to create a critical space for students to engage in a critical conversation regarding social justice issues. Cultural authenticity includes the accuracy and validity of the literature as well as of the illustrations (Bishop, 1991; Cai, 1998; Gopalakrishnan, 2010). I have developed an evaluation checklist for critical literacy instruction in fifth grade social studies classroom based on the works of Bishop (1992), Gopalakrishnan (2010), Higgins (2002), Botelho and Rudman (2010), and Vasquez (2004). The selection criteria of multicultural children's literature should meet students' instructional reading levels, validate and describe diverse groups' experiences, and include a variety of viewpoints that promote appreciation and respect for diversity. The author and/or illustrator do not need to come from the insider of the group that they describe. However, they must write based on their experience and their awareness of other cultures (Nieto, 1992) to ensure cultural authenticity (Cai, 2003; Gopalakrishnan, 2010). The checklist is as follows.

1. Author's and illustrator's perspective—The literature should be historically accurate, culturally responsive, and socially responsible (Gopalakrishnan, 2010). The author and/or illustrator should depict characters and the story line from an insider's perspective. People of specific race, ethnic, gender, age,

sexual orientation, or religious groups are portrayed accurately within their culture. Sometimes I used literature that might have controversial ideas because of its historical accuracy. For example, *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (Hopkinson, 1993) introduces the idea that African American slaves may have used a quilt code to navigate the Underground Railroad. Although the idea of the quilt code is compelling, it is a good starting point for introducing the topic of slavery and freedom related to reading and social studies content areas.

2. Characters—The characters are recognizable and multidimensional as being from a particular cultural group. The characters from the marginalized group solve their problems by themselves and do not rely on only the white character's help. White characters are not depicted as a savior of the non-white characters and do not exercise power while the marginalized play a supporting or subservient role. The lifestyles of the characters are genuine and complex, not oversimplified or generalized (Higgins, 2002). The characters from the marginalized group are not silenced and speak out.
3. Stereotypes—There are no negative or inaccurate stereotypes of the sociocultural group being portrayed. The use of language does not carry negative or stereotypical connotations about certain sociocultural group used to describe the characters and culture, such as lazy or backward (Higgins, 2002).
4. Author's and illustrator's perspective—The literature should be historically accurate, culturally responsive, and socially responsible (Gopalakrishnan, 2010).
5. Stereotypes—Illustrations—The text and illustrations should be harmonized and the illustrations of characters are depicted as genuine individuals from an insider's perspective. Characters present a variety of authentic and accurate physical attributes.

### **Impact of Critical Literacy with Multicultural Children's Literature for Developing Critical Consciousness**

Children's literature has been popular as a curriculum resource in elementary school classrooms for years. Rochman (1993) described the strength of multicultural literature as:

A good book can help to break down [barriers between differences]. Books can make a difference in dispelling prejudice and building community: not with role models and literal recipes, not with noble messages about the human family, but with enthralling stories that make us imagine the lives of others. A good story lets you know people as individuals in all their particularity and conflict; and once you see someone as a person—flawed, complex, striving—then you’ve reached beyond stereotype. Stories, writing them, telling them, sharing them, transforming them, enrich us and connect us and help us know each other. (p. 19)

As such, using multicultural children’s literature in the social studies curriculum provides opportunities for students and teachers to engage in such literature in various ways. However, the question remains: How does children’s literature contribute to promoting students’ critical consciousness in enacting critical literacy curriculum and instruction? Development of students’ critical consciousness lies within a deeper understanding of one’s own sociopolitical conditions and the world. Critical action is possible after achieving this critical understanding of one’s own context. Multicultural children’s literature has great potential to help students’ critical consciousness development by (a) engaging in a critical dialogue with action; (b) exploring multiple perspectives; and (c) cultivating empathy toward others.

### **Engaging in a Critical Dialogue with Action**

As students engage in and examine multicultural children’s literature, this enables them to talk about the different social positioning and perspectives. Multicultural children’s literature shows how sociocultural and political issues are related to diversity and/or social justice by representing certain groups’ inequitable experiences (Vasquez, 2010). In addition, fictional multicultural children’s literature can provide a safe space for students and teachers to open critical dialogue. For instance, in the case that the class has

not yet been comfortable enough to share their personal experiences, multicultural children's literature can be a vehicle to begin the conversation on students' real life. The dialogue is more authentic and more responsive when they can share their personal stories. Such literature is fictional. Therefore, teachers and students may feel less pressure to challenge their own intersections of privilege and oppression that affect their personal lives.

Moreover, critical literacy instruction with multicultural literature can promote social action among students. For instance, a study by Souto-Manning (2009) shows that her first graders problematize and challenge the racially and socioeconomically segregated nature of pull-out programs such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), gifted, and the resource (special education) programs. Souto-Manning's approach was to work with the everyday issues in the classroom that were often seen as disruptive. Students interrogated things that mattered to them and engaged in a continuously generative process of disrupting schooling practices taken for granted. Souto-Manning designed a critical literacy curriculum around students' issues, interests, and questions. She took students' questions about social justice at the forefront of the curriculum. This study showed students becoming critical questioners instead of passive recipients of information in traditional learning environments.

After becoming aware of the issue, they decided to study all together in the same class and tried to find a solution. They wrote letters to teachers, parents, and a principal and did presentations about their ideas to gain support in order to make sure their solution worked. The next school year, all the first graders could learn together in the same class



again. Using multicultural literature as starting points, the first graders challenged the school's segregation and sorting structure. They also endeavored to find an alternative way of being together.

In short, critical literacy instruction with such multicultural children's literature can encourage students to make meaningful connections between the text, the self, and society intellectually and emotionally. Furthermore, it enables students to link themselves to the larger sociopolitical issues associated with power (Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Cai, 2003). Critical understanding of their own positions in society becomes a cornerstone to awaken students' critical perspective. This is what Freire (2014) called critical consciousness. In this study, I used multicultural literature as a springboard to make this critical scaffolding possible.

### **Exploring Multiple Perspectives with Critical Reflection**

Multicultural children's literature can show students how their peers' life experiences can differ from their own. As I mentioned in previous sections, critical literacy approaches invite and value students' experiences and make them central to critical literacy practice. Some sociopolitical issues are directly related to students' experiences but some are not. Multicultural children's literature can provide a series of options for teachers to begin critical conversations about sociopolitical issues. When teachers find it difficult to locate incidents related to critical social issues in their schools or neighborhoods, multicultural children's literature can provide them a curriculum resource. Such literature can make differences visible, give voice to those traditionally

silenced, explore dominant systems of meaning in society, question why certain groups are positioned as “others,” and show how people can begin to take action on important issues (Harste et al., 2000).

Through comparing and contrasting different experiences and perspectives from books and their lives, students can understand different sociocultural discourses. Gee (1996) states that a critique of a particular Discourse (hereafter I will use Discourse as “discourse”) can be possible for one who had meta-knowledge about both discourses, and this meta-knowledge could be developed through learning. According to him, discourse is the “way of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gesture, glances, body positions, and clothes” (Gee, 1996, p. 127).

To use one discourse to critique others, students should learn about the members of a particular sociocultural group as it is the foundation of resistance to oppression and inequality (Delpit, 1995). Old assumptions and socially constructed knowledge regarding others are deconstructed and transform students’ views of them. Students are able to encode and decode texts and their real lives. Students can achieve this new transformative knowledge which has the potential to educate them in having a critical but more inclusive perspective. It is a great starting point to read words and the world in the “decode and literally comprehend sense” (Dickinson & Neuman, 2006; as cited in Gee, 2010).

Similarly, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) pinpoint that it is important to examine multiple discourses about social inequalities and to foster an individual’s critical stance as a social being. Because “an individual who has gained such a critical stance understands

how and why his or her political opinions, socio-economic class, role, religious beliefs, gender role, and racial self-image are shaped by dominant perspectives” (p. 23).

Exploring multiple discourses related to various people’s lives allows students to realize the possibility to challenge dominant discourse and to create new discourses which can empower them.

Rogers and Mosely’s (2006) study also illustrates how white second graders talk about race, racism, and antiracism within their literacy curriculum. They selected literature that presented issues from multiple viewpoints and time periods, especially books that were written and illustrated by African Americans. Discussion that interrogated their whiteness and privilege made them open their eyes about their unawareness of being and living as white in society and how this whiteness has been implicated in institutionalizing racism and unearned white privilege. Such literature provided an opportunity for white young children to access multiple points of view.

By regularly reading and examining multicultural literature critically, students can view everyday issues through different angles. Asking new questions, seeing everyday issues through new lenses, revisiting commonsensical views of the world, and visualizing how things might be different become common classroom experiences (Giroux, 2011). In this way, students can create a habit of examining their experiences in a critical manner. This is an aim of critical literacy instruction. It is a possible and effective way to educate students as critical citizens.

### **Cultivating Empathy Toward Others**

The power of multicultural children’s literature is that it provokes empathy for

others. Cai and Bishop (1994) state that multicultural literature “opens the group’s heart to the reading public, showing their joy and grief, love and hatred, hope and despair, expectations and frustrations, and perhaps most importantly, the effect of living in a racist society” (p. 68). Furthermore, Bishop (2007) stresses that multicultural literature engenders “empathy and sympathy...to promote tolerance for racial desegregation or integration” (p. 61). Students can better understand others’ perspectives, feelings, and experiences through multicultural children’s literature.

Although a good portion of multicultural literature is fictional, it can shape students’ perceptions in real life in more inclusive ways. This understanding may be very contextual. It helps students empathize with others and therefore change their perceptions about them. For instance, in Lewison et al.’s (2002) multiple case study, multicultural literature helps students to understand others’ perspectives and social practices. The students could relate to the characters who were immigrants and struggled in the U.S. as a new world to live in. Students could link their experiences about having similar difficulties with having to move and make new friends. The students were more empathetic and sympathetic toward immigrants.

Freire (2000) emphasizes that great humanity initiates from love and this love is an indispensable vehicle for human liberation. He states that to become fully human and achieve societal change, individuals need to cultivate true solidarity and it is found only in the act of love—as praxis (Freire, 2000). He also argues that conscious individuals who have a critical stance can initiate love as they are dared to reject any attempts to keep them in dehumanizing conditions, are against violent power that might dominate and

restrain their potential, and are willing to fight to exercise their rights (Freire, 2000). He calls this “armed love” (Freire, 2005, p. 74). It is hard for students to place themselves in others’ shoes. However, by teaching such literature in the curriculum, teachers can encourage students to see and feel the world through different eyes and build sympathetic love toward others as living beings together on the earth.

Teaching multicultural literature through a critical literacy approach increases the possibility of students’ engaging in critical self-reflection. With love toward others, students can more actively participate in a dialogue that poses questions about their own position of privilege. In this way, critically reflecting and taking action for social justice can be a part of them and their daily lives. In fact, multicultural children’s literature can provide an excellent venue for students to make “connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 28). Even one book can change one’s perspective and life in its entirety. Critical literacy instruction through multicultural children’s literature can be an effective model for transformative pedagogical praxis.

### **Curriculum Integration**

Curriculum integration is often called interdisciplinary education or integrated education. It is a curriculum approach that intentionally draws knowledge, perspectives, and inquiry skills from various subject areas in order to develop a more powerful understanding of an issue, person, event, or big idea (Parker, 2014). Shoemaker (1989) describes curriculum integration as:

...education that is organized in such a way that it cuts across subject-matter lines,

bringing together various aspects of the curriculum into meaningful association to focus upon broad areas of study. It views learning and teaching in a holistic way and reflects the real world, which is interactive. (p. 5)

Dressel's (1958) definition of curriculum integration goes beyond the concept's connected nature. He proposed the potential of curriculum integration as that of creating new perspectives for understanding the world. He argued that curriculum-integration experiences allow teachers not only to teach an inclusive view of knowledge but also to cultivate students' sense of agency to perceive new synthesized relationships between content areas and knowledge (Dressel, 1958).

In the existing social studies curriculum, the "expanding horizons" model has prevailed in state curriculum standards and textbooks (Clarke, Sears, & Smyth, 1990). In this model, students gradually learn about self, family, community, state, and nation. For example, first and second graders learn about self, family, school, and their neighborhood; second graders learn about self, family, school, and community; third graders learn about their community; fourth graders learn about their state; fifth graders learn about the U.S. and its neighboring countries; and sixth graders learn about the world. However, this model is insufficient for today's students who are able to access the most up-to-date information via Internet or mobile technology as the expanding horizons framework only provides limited experience and knowledge and it cannot provide students substantive experiences outside of the curriculum scope and sequence (Akenson, 1987). The curriculum also does not fully include themes of civic engagement and social justice. It also needs to foster critical thinking within the context of social studies (Parker, 2014).

Along with this critique on the existing social studies curriculum, Camicia and Saavedra (2009) also point out that the expanding horizons model is problematic for promoting the value of social justice and does not go far enough to prepare students as responsive global citizens. Because the existing curriculum: (a) presents Eurocentric, androcentric, and U.S.-centric notions of citizenship and experiences; (b) reflects Western notions of child development that limit students' participation in the curriculum—particularly, non-white, poor, and transnational students; and (c) does not reflect student-centered, multiple, multicultural, global, and democratic perspectives. They suggest an alternative curriculum that presents multicultural and transnational experiences of students in the curriculum. In this way, students' voices can be valued. Both national and transnational students benefit by expanding their horizons locally and globally.

Wade (2002) suggested a thematic approach to overcome the limitation of the expanding horizons model. This thematic model provides a broader view of the social studies curriculum. In her model, the major themes for each grade are: kindergarten—people; first grade—environment; second grade—exploration; third grade—conflict; fourth grade—democracy; fifth grade—human rights; and six grade—interdependence (Wade, 2002, pp. 122-23). In this study, I borrowed Wade's thematic approach to integrated fifth-grade reading, writing, literature, and arts instruction focused on social studies, particularly the social justice theme. This thematic approach allows students to gain a comprehensive understanding of knowledge, enhance their critical thinking and socio-emotional engagement, and improve their literacy by developing knowledge, skill,

and attitude across the subject areas.

For instance, Parker (2014) proposes that reading and composing historical figures' biographies is one way to combine social studies and language arts based on the theme. Fifth graders read books about historical figures who made great contributions to American society, and then they wrote a biography of the figure. Teachers can encourage students to read about historical figures who came from underrepresented groups such as women or people of color. In doing so, students can develop historical reasoning skills, interpret sources, and compete with various interpretations of the historical figure. Students also realize that individuals actually can shape history. In sum, students can develop inquiry and scientific learning skills because students learn history by doing it like historians do (Parker, 2014). This thematic approach makes the social curriculum integration more significant and feasible.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I provided a theoretical framework to guide this study. Critical literacy is rooted in the work of Freire (2000, 2014) as he suggested that literacy should give people the tools of emancipation by developing critical consciousness. I also provided an instructional model of critical literacy for classroom research. This model consists of four dimensions: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice. My review of previous research on critical literacy in elementary classrooms reveals that critical literacy encourages students to read critically and examine deeper



layers of meaning in text. I also introduced various definitions of multicultural children's literature and provided a working definition of multicultural children's literature for this study. I have sought to lay the groundwork for the importance of providing critical reading experiences for students using multicultural children's literature in order to help them grow and develop as socially conscious citizens. Finally, I suggested an alternative approach to teaching the social studies curriculum by integrating curriculum content based on the common themes. In the chapter that follows I will explain the rationale behind and the appropriateness of the research design I used.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Overview**

This chapter includes descriptions of the research design employed, role of the researcher, research context, data collection method and procedures, data analysis, and limitations of the qualitative methodology of this study. The goal of qualitative research is to delineate some of the essential features of a case within a real-life contemporary setting (Yin, 2014). Qualitative research provides a holistic, in-depth analysis and description of data beyond testing hypotheses in quantitative data (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative research design offers a way to explore and address “the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). Thus, the intent is to understand factors surrounding a case in a more detailed way and show multiple perspectives that participants hold (Creswell, 2013).

I employed a qualitative case study research design for this study to understand how one class of fifth graders engaged in social justice-oriented multicultural children’s literature with critical literacy instruction. Using a qualitative research methodology allowed me to examine complex data about the thoughts, emotions, conversations, discussions, and actions of fifth graders’ engagement in the multicultural children’s literature instruction. To understand this case, I sought answers to the following questions.

1. In what ways does the teacher incorporate critical literacy approaches in her classroom?

2. What were the learning outcomes when the fifth graders engaged in social justice issues present in multicultural children's literature?

Qualitative research uses a natural setting “where participants experience the issue or problem under study” as the source of data (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). This method was suitable for this study because the purpose of this study was to understand and describe experiences of fifth graders while they engaged in multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approaches. I collected data in a fifth grade classroom—an example of a natural setting—to explore discussions of multicultural children's literature, conversations, and actions about issues of social justice (Creswell, 2013).

In this study, I used a case study design to explore how a fifth grade class engaged in a variety of social justice issues present in text, their lives, and the world around them. I used multiple sources of data, including observations, interviews, field notes, reflective journal entries, and student-made artifacts, to build an in-depth understanding of the students' engagement in critical literacy practices. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I will discuss rationale for the research design, role of the researcher, description of research context, methods of data collection, data analysis process, trustworthiness, and limitations of the study. I will conclude this chapter with a brief summary of the research methodology used in this study.

### **Rationale of Case Study Design**

The use of a case study design offers an in-depth description of a case in a natural setting to obtain a deeper understanding of the case. The case study approach seeks a holistic understanding of an event or a situation to illustrate detailed, thick descriptions of

a case (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 2005). The case study approach involves a detailed analysis using a variety of forms of data through examining a case within a real-life context (Yin, 2014). The case study approach allowed me to interpret the fifth grade classroom's events from an insider's point of view. According to Stake, the key to identifying a case to ensure that the case study is bound by time and activity. The case being studied here is bounded by the multicultural children's literature instruction with critical literacy approaches that spans 13 weeks. This study took place thirteen weeks in one fifth grade classroom from mid-February to the end of May in 2015 in a small intermountain city in Utah. There were 18 participants in this study: one female mid-age classroom teacher and the seventeen students in her classroom ranging in age from ten to eleven years old. Of the 17 students, 10 were girls and 7 were boys.

According to Stake (2005), there are three types of case studies: (a) intrinsic, (b) instrumental, and (c) collective. The intrinsic case study provides information and description about a specific case. It is often exploratory in nature, and the interest of the researcher guides the case. The instrumental case study uses the case to understand a separate case, and the case itself becomes secondary. Collective case studies examine multiple cases to provide broad generalizations across cases. For this study, I used a single intrinsic case study design because I examined a single and specific case of a fifth grade class. I focused on a case of fifth graders' discussions, conversations, and actions related to issues of social justice present in text, their lives, and the world around them.

Dyson and Genishi (2005) explain that a case study is "a concrete instantiation of a theorized phenomenon. By understanding the particulars of its social enactment...the

case can be compared to the particulars of other situations. In this way, ‘truths’ or assumptions can be extended, modified, or complicated” (p. 116). The social situation involves a meaning-making process of the case. Thus, meaning evolves from the social practices of the classroom. In this study, meaning developed from the social interaction of the fifth grade teacher and her students in through multicultural children’s literature instruction.

The case study approach allowed me to understand and identify meaning in the students’ discussions, conversations, and actions related to social justice issues. By employing the case study approach, I was able to illustrate the complex nature of students’ engagement in multicultural children’s literature.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, a researcher serves as a primary investigator and a key instrument to collect data (Creswell, 2013). Before I selected a research site for this study, I volunteered as a teaching assistant at several local elementary schools to find a teacher and a classroom for this study. I was able to get in contact with Diana (all names are pseudonyms) through her former colleague who did several projects related to multicultural children’s literature with me. Diana taught fifth grade for the 2014-2015 school year at White Pine Elementary School in Utah. Diana was interested in incorporating multicultural children’s literature through critical literacy in her classroom.

I began to join Diana’s classroom as a volunteer in fall 2014. I developed a partnership with Diana by spending an extensive amount of time in the classroom and

established close rapport with her students. We had biweekly meetings to discuss ideas and thoughts about the use of multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approaches in the classroom. The discussion topics ranged from the selection and the use of multicultural children's literature to the way to implement critical literacy approaches in her curriculum. We drew a curriculum map and decided to integrate social studies and ELA curriculum to incorporate literature with social justice themes.

In this study, I understood my life and educational experiences were not the same as the experiences of Diana and her students in the U.S. Therefore, I positioned myself as an "external-insider" (Banks, 1998, p. 8) when I conducted this study. Banks defines the external-insider as an individual that endorses the studied community and adopts insider's perspectives because of his or her intensive experiences in the community, while the individual is socialized within another culture. I was socialized within Korean culture and had internalized its knowledge, beliefs, values, and attitudes as a Korean woman. However, my extensive and in-depth experiences as a doctoral student, university course instructor, volunteer teacher, and elementary practicum supervisor in U.S. schools allowed me to consider myself as an external-insider.

I was able to share common ground with Diana and her students as an insider of the community. My insider position helped me avoid the limitations that detached researchers encounter when they have insufficient background information about research sites (Creswell, 2013), and it paved the way for truthful engagements with the students. I was able to develop a deeper understanding of the classroom community.

Creswell (2013) suggests that there are four levels of researcher's participation in

the participant-observer continuum: a complete observer, an observer as participant, a participant as observer, and a complete participant. The levels of researcher participation range from mostly participant on one end to mostly observer on the other end. The role of the researcher on the continuum depends on the nature of the research questions, the research context, and the qualities of the group of participants. For this study, I chose my role as a “participant as observer” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166). My role as a participant observer changed depending on the nature of the research study. At the beginning of the study, I sat in the back of the classroom and took detailed notes on what I observed. I described classroom experiences based on an ongoing dialogue with my participants. Rather than remaining just an observer, I took on a much more active role in the classroom. I lead activities and large group discussions of the literature with themes of social justice. As participant observer, I had a great opportunity to learn firsthand what happened in the classroom.

My stance as a participant observer had the possibility of impeding my ability to remain an outsider, and I had a risk of losing my eye of objectivity. However, I was able to gain greater insights by being a part of classroom interaction rather than just an observer (Creswell, 2013). However, my status as an outsider was still apparent because I was raised in a different culture. I was born in South Korea and educated in its public schools. While my schooling was heavily influenced by the American educational system, I was more familiar with Korean society than U.S. society.

Throughout the data collection period, the different levels of the emic-insider and etic-outsider positions created tension. An emic account comes from a person within the

culture and describes a case from insider's perspective (Friedman & Schustack, 2012).

An etic account keeps an outsider's eye and attempts to be culturally neutral in order to avoid any cultural bias by the observer (Kottak, 2006). While the nature of emic and etic approaches are inherently contradictory when combined, the combination also creates an opportunity for a richer account of the research. When both are used, the case can be understood and described more fully. Therefore, I needed to negotiate my position as the researcher between two approaches during this study and the writing stages. By taking both approaches, I was able to understand how fifth graders engaged in multicultural children's literature through critical literacy from different angles and then describe it more accurately than I would have otherwise.

I recorded my initial thoughts, impressions, and insights I gained. I used reflective journal entries as an additional source of triangulation to help me address my research questions. It was important to take note of how these initial experiences affected my research process because the researcher's personal and professional experiences influence the way to view the case and analyze the interaction of participants (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). By doing so, I was more aware of my position and perspective as a researcher. Thus, through my observation, I was able to glean substantial and viable meanings from the participants' interactions with one another. It allowed me to recognize my own preconceptions that might lead me to biased interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). It is important as a qualitative researcher to engage in the reflective process of doing research and navigating the paths of data collection and analysis in order to reach a deeper level of understanding of the participants' stories



(Merriam, 1998). This examination on my position as a researcher became a foundation to design and conduct this study and to interpret the data that I collected.

## **Research Context**

### **The School Setting**

I purposefully selected my research site in order to get quality information to address research questions and the purpose of this study. I used a criterion-based selection strategy (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012) to select my research site. Criterion-based selection required inclusion criteria to be used in selecting research sites. My inclusion criteria of the school included the following.

1. The school allows teachers to use a variety of inquiry-based teaching methods to encourage students' active participation in learning.
2. The school commits to creating a safe and dynamic school environment that reflects the world outside of the school.
3. The school supports university-based research.
4. The school is within a one-hour drive from the researcher's location in order to have more time to establish trustful rapport with participants and collect data.

White Pine Elementary School (a pseudonym) was chosen based on the four inclusion criteria. White Pine Elementary School is a public charter school. The mission of the school is to foster a diverse, interactive, and inviting school environment. The school community was aware of changing educational and social issues. The school administration encouraged teachers to use different and innovative teaching methods. Thus, they had more flexibility and diversity in their curriculum than other schools. This open and transformative school environment was suitable to conduct this study because it

allowed me to incorporate multicultural children's literature instruction in the school curriculum.

This school was located in a small intermountain city in the U.S. The school neighborhood was in a lower to middle class, dominantly White community. The city demographics were predominantly White at 86%, Latina/o at 13.9%, Asian at 4.1%, American Indian and Alaska Native at 1.5%, and African American at 1.4% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This school served kindergarten through fifth grade. The estimated overall enrollment was 300 for the 2014-2015 school year. The school demographics were mostly White, and 17% of students classified as ethnic minorities. A total of 33 % of students were from low-income families, and 3 % of students were ELLs.

### **Participant Selection**

I intentionally selected participants to deepen my understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). In the initial stage of the participant recruitment, I used a criterion-based selection strategy (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). This purposeful sampling strategy provided rich insight into the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2002). The inclusion criteria for the teacher participant selection were the following.

1. A teacher who is interested in incorporating multicultural children's literature through critical literacy approaches in the classroom.
2. A teacher who is willing to work with the researcher and be innovative when he or she opens up their classrooms to the university-based researcher.

I also used a snowball sampling strategy (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2012). I asked principals of local elementary schools, university professors, and teachers that I

knew to recommend a potential teacher participant based on the inclusion criteria. After receiving a few key names, I contacted these teachers via e-mail to explain my research purpose and overall research plan. I gained entry because of my previous volunteer work at the school during the 2013-2014 school year. Dr. Sylvia Read, a member of my dissertation committee, first introduced to me a teacher who worked at the White Pine Elementary School. The teacher invited me to her school and introduced me to Diana, a member of a professional development learning group she was involved with as well as the teacher participant of this study. Diana invited me to her classroom a few times and showed generous hospitality to the research.

Through several classroom visits, I had the opportunity to work with Diana's fifth grade class to study and learn about the use of multicultural children's literature in the classroom before beginning data collection. I developed relationships with Diana and the school staff. During my time spent at the school, I discussed my purpose of this research and implementation procedures with the Diana. Through this process, I was able to gain the principal's permission to conduct the study. During fall of 2014, I visited her class twice a week to learn more about the classroom atmosphere and her students. I was able to increase Diana's comfort with the research process. I developed my status as an insider through ongoing conversations with the students and my presence in the classroom. Since the teacher and the students already knew me, they felt more comfortable during observations and interviews. They opened up more when sharing their thoughts and stories.

Diana had taught sixteen years in elementary schools. After ten years of teaching,

she earned a master's degree in Elementary Education, a Gifted and Talented Endorsement, and a Math Endorsement. She served on several Utah State Board of Education curriculum organizational committees that worked to improve educational improvement in Utah. She was deeply concerned that the literacy curriculum that has dominated current school system has perpetuated the tenets of the banking models of teaching and learning. She pointed out that the lack of student engagement and the lack of critical consciousness and the importance that the scripted literacy curriculum has reinforced the idea of a one-size-fits-all. She believed this classroom environment promoted a contextual environment of sameness that made students fail to engage in the process of reading words and the world through critical thinking.

In addition, Diana's life experiences heavily influenced her to be more aware of the importance of cultural diversity. Her father had served in the military and as a child, she lived in many different states in the U.S. Her husband possesses a sense of pride in his Greek heritage and those experiences provided interesting influences to Diana's perspectives on teaching multicultural children's literature.

Of the seventeen students participating in this study, ten were girls and seven were boys. Twelve students were White, three were Latina/o, and two were Asian. One student was an ELL. All participants, including the teacher and the students, were given pseudonyms to protect their identities.

After approval from the International Review Board (IRB), I sent consent letters to parents in February 2015 along with assent forms to provide information about the research study, including the purpose of the study and the overall research process.

Parents were asked provide permission for their children to participate in the study and sign a paper providing proof of their informed consent. If any participants declined to participate in the study, they would not be part of the data collection procedures, including classroom observations, interviews, field notes, a reflective journal, and artifacts. I received the parental consent from 17 students out of 24 students.

### **Data Collection Methods and Procedure**

This study took place over 13 weeks in Diana's fifth-grade classroom during mid-February to May in 2015. I used a variety of methods for data collection along with a qualitative study methodology (Creswell, 2013). These methods included a combination of observations, interviews, field notes, reflective journal entries, and collection of student-made artifacts, such as students' writing samples. Observations were an essential part of data collection in this study. I observed both small and large group discussions and student interactions. Observations allowed me to capture the nuances of the students' social interactions. It enabled me to examine what happens when fifth graders discuss social issues found in their reading and how it relates to their lives at home, school, and the world around them.

I also conducted semistructured interviews with the teacher and students to gain deeper insight into students' feelings, attitudes, and experiences from their engagement in multicultural children's literature. The use of interview methods helped me go beyond understanding the participants' experiences solely on observation. Interviews and classroom discussions were audio-recorded digitally. All digital data that I collected were

stored on a password-protected computer. I also gathered artifacts from the teacher and students related to the critical discussions of the literature with themes of social justice. I collected students' writing that advocated for social justice.

Throughout the data collection period, I wrote daily field notes, including a description of the classroom setting and details of students' interactions, to refer to during the transcription process. Additionally, I kept journal entries to record my reflections and reactions in order to better understand and interpret my data. The use of multiple forms of data provided thick and rich description of the critical discussions of the literature and increased the trustworthiness of my data analysis. The use of multiple data collection methods contributed to data triangulation. The data triangulation reduced the chance of validity threats and decreased the deficiencies and biases that come from any single method (Creswell, 2013).

I began data collection from mid-February to May in 2015 for thirteen weeks. The study occurred in three research phases: before, during, and after the implementation of the multicultural children's literature instruction (see Appendix A). Phase I occurred before the implementation of the study. It involved the planning of the research timeline and the instructional framework of multicultural children's literature. I collected most of the data during the actual implementation of the study during phase II and at the conclusion of the study in phase III.

### **Phase I: Planning**

Phase I of the study occurred in September through December 2014. I met Diana several times to explain the purpose of the study and discuss the implementation

procedures of the literature instruction. Prior to implementing the multicultural children's literature with critical literacy in the fifth-grade class, Diana and I set a research timeline for multicultural children literature instruction for social justice. As a part of the democratic research process, the teacher and I selected multicultural children's literature that was used for the instruction. I provided a list of multicultural children's literature with themes of social justice, and we selected multicultural children's literature for the study together based on the selection criteria of multicultural children's literature with social justice themes (see Appendix B). The selection criteria were that the literature met the students' instructional reading levels, validated and described diverse groups' experiences in terms of social inequality, and contained a variety of viewpoints that promoted appreciation and respect for diversity (Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Cai, 2003; Gopalakrishnan, 2010; Wooldridge, 2001). The literature needed to be historically accurate and reflect an insider's point of view to ensure cultural authenticity (Cai, 2003; Gopalakrishnan, 2010). I tried to use multicultural literature about diverse groups such as Latinos, Muslims, and other marginalized groups but found there to be a lack of resources for these groups.

I initially developed an instructional model for multicultural children literature focused on social justice, which consisted of reading, dialogue, and action. Then I revised it with the Utah Core Standards for fifth-grade social studies and ELA in mind, based on Diana's recommendation for a more effective implementation in the classroom (see Appendix C). Diana had room to reconstruct her curriculum based on the research plan. Table 1 shows Diana's curriculum map for social studies, reading, and writing.

Table 1

*Diana's Curriculum Map for Social Studies, Reading, Writing, and Language*

| Month    | Social Studies   | Reader's workshop  | Writer's workshop   |
|----------|--|--|---|
| February | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Famous American</li> <li>• Slavery</li> <li>• Civil War</li> </ul>  | Read Aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Informational text, Historical/Realistic Fiction, Biography/ Autobiography</li> <li>• Active prior knowledge and predicting</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Word choice</li> <li>• Informative writing</li> <li>• Research project: Civil War</li> </ul>                     |
| March    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presidents</li> <li>• Reconstruction Era</li> <li>• Westward Expansion</li> <li>• Civil Rights Movements</li> </ul> | Read Aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Traditional Literature, Biography/ Autobiography</li> <li>• Gathering and integration information</li> <li>• Re-tell</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Fluency</li> <li>• Informative writing</li> <li>• Opinion writing</li> <li>• Biography/ Autobiography</li> </ul> |
| April    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War II</li> <li>• Wax Museum</li> </ul>   | Read Aloud: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Poetry, Historical/Realistic Fiction, Informational text, Biography/ Autobiography</li> <li>• Visualization</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Voice</li> <li>• Poetry</li> <li>• Research project: Wax Museum</li> </ul>                                       |
| May      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rights and Responsibilities</li> <li>• Immigration</li> </ul>   | Read Aloud <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Poetry, Historical/Realistic Fiction</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Voice</li> <li>• Poetry</li> </ul>   |

The multicultural children's literature instruction framework involved three stages: reading, discussion, and action. This instruction framework was an application of the critical literacy components in this study. It included a list of questions the teacher could use to engage students in critical reading and discussion of texts. The action stage included possible action options according to four learning centers: research, writing, reading, and art centers. Each stage did not necessarily follow any particular order. Sometimes discussion occurred first to increase students' understanding of social justice



issues, such as marginalization of some students in the cafeteria during lunch time. Diana introduced an author's biographical information and showed pictures related to the selected multicultural children's literature. The students often made predictions about the text. The teacher read aloud the assigned text, or students read it independently.

After the read-aloud or independent reading, the teacher led the students in the think-pair-share activity where students worked together to answer questions about the text. The teacher began by asking specific questions about the text based on the critical literacy prompts (see Appendix C) that targeted key contents and concepts of the text. The questions that the teacher developed were based on Lewison et al.'s (2002) four dimensions of critical literacy: (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice. Students took time to individually think about what they knew or learned about the text. Each student was paired with another student and shared their thought or impressions with their partner. The teacher expanded the think-pair-share activity to both small and large group discussions. After the whole class discussion, the action component usually followed.

In the action stage, students chose an action option from writing, reading, art, and research centers, and they worked individually or in small groups. This instructional framework provided an overview of how to get students engaged in critical reading, discussion, and action to advocate for social justice. In addition, each social studies content standard was paired with a possible ELA standard. Appendix D, as an example, showed how multicultural children's literature instruction was interwoven with Utah

Core Standards for social studies and ELA.

### **Phase II: Data Collection**

Phase II began after IRB approval. I observed and participated in the implementation of the multicultural children's literature instruction for social justice during phase II. Appendix E shows detailed information of every week concerning themes, activities, and data sources in the classroom. During this phase, I used a variety of data collection methods to gain in-depth understanding in order to respond to my original research questions and explore their meaning from multiple perspectives. I conducted observations and interviews, took field notes, wrote reflective journal entries, and collected classroom artifacts during the study. The data collection methods that I used in this phase are the following:

**Observations.** Marshall and Rossman (2011) define observation as “the systemic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social settings” (p. 139). Classroom observations allowed me to become familiar with the participants and the classroom context (Creswell, 2013) and to have contextualized understandings of student interactions. During the data collection period, and upon coordination with the teacher, I observed students' small and large group discussions using multicultural children's literature in the social studies and language arts curriculum. During all observations, I kept field notes to produce a rich and thick description of what I observed. The observation protocol that I used is in Appendix F. It included my observation descriptions, comments, drawings, reflections, and questions. The observation consisted of two stages: (a) direct observation and (b) participant observation.

**Direct classroom observations.** First, I conducted direct observations of Diana's class for 2 weeks. During the first week of observations, I sat in the back of the classroom and recorded as accurately as possible what was going on in the classroom. I did not interfere in the students' routine activities, which was advantageous in reducing the effects of my presence on the students' normal interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). To take a stance similar to Creswell's (2013) "observer as participant" (p. 166), as a first priority, I observed the teacher and recorded what the teacher did and said. Then I described and recorded what other students did and said in their interaction with the multicultural literature. This was a second priority. I shifted to a new participant as my priority person approximately every 5 minutes. If some uncommon event or teacher's intervention occurred during the observation period that seemed significant to this study, I focused on capturing the event for the record. Direct observations allowed me to produce an extensive record of my participants' routines in a naturalistic form to reduce analytic complications (Creswell, 2013). This was the reason I conducted the direct observation first.

**Participant classroom observations.** After finishing direct classroom observations, I conducted participant observations in order to become immersed in the classroom and experience the classroom setting (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Participant observation is "the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting" (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999, p. 91). I took a nonjudgmental attitude and was open to objectively observing the unexpected (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). This attitude enhanced the

reflectivity of this study. I actively looked at the participants' interaction occurring in the setting, including who talked to whom, whose opinions were respected, and how decisions were made (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011).

I observed where participants stood or sat, especially who tended to dominate the conversation. I wrote detailed descriptions in my field notes. I circulated throughout the class to interact with students. I often facilitated small and large group discussions. Through the active participation, I built rapport with the participants. By doing so, I gained a better understanding of the participants' interactions and the credibility of my interpretations concerning the observations from an insider's perspective (Creswell, 2013).

**Semistructured interviews.** In addition to the observations, I collected data through interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teacher and her students. The use of the semi-structured interview method was ideal for this study. The semi-structured interview was in an open format, which helped maximize the flexibility during the interview process. Moreover, using this format allowed me to obtain more in-depth clarification through the participants' responses (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998). I used an interview protocol for the teacher's pedagogy interview (see Appendix G) and lesson reflection interviews (see Appendix H). I used the interview protocols as a guidepost, but created some questions during the interviews. The flexibility of the interview allowed me to probe for details or to discuss issues that arose during the interview (Verma & Mallick, 1999).

The teacher interviews consisted of two types: (a) pedagogy interviews and (b)

lesson reflection interviews. At the beginning of my research, I conducted the pedagogy interview, which was approximately an hour long. I focused on the teacher's personal experience, perception, and pedagogy related to teaching multicultural children's literature with themes of social justice. I used a teacher resource room for the interview. The room was quiet, and the audio recording was effective without loud background noise or any distractions. I was able to capture more details by recording the interviews. I transcribed and shared the interview transcripts with the teacher. Second, I conducted the lesson reflection interviews, which were approximately 15 minutes long. I conducted interviews during our weekly meetings to debrief the previous lesson and discuss the next week's lesson.

The lesson reflection interview consisted of three parts: (a) one or two lead-off questions that introduced a topic domain that I asked the teacher to address based on the classroom observation in terms of students' engagement in social justice issues, (b) covert categories for asking the follow-up questions, and (c) possible follow-up questions depending on if I had more questions about the teacher's response. These interviews allowed me to compare what the teacher said to what I observed in the classroom. I digitally audio recorded all interviews and transcribed them. After completing transcripts, I did member checking where I shared the interview transcripts with the participants to verify the accuracy of the information obtained (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1998).

I interviewed the students individually at the end the study. Interview questions covered a broad range of information related to the social justice issues, which came from the multicultural literature instruction, students' own lives, or situations in school, home,

and the world around them. Interviews provided better understanding of each participant's perceptions of the critical reading and discussion of multicultural children's literature with themes of social justice. This also included their perspectives on actions for social justice. It increased credibility of the study by clarifying ambiguities and filling in information gaps. Furthermore, the interviews enabled me to co-construct meaning with the teacher and the students through hearing the comprehensive information from each participant's own voice (Mishler, 1986).

**Field notes.** As a participant as observer (Creswell, 2013), it was important to consciously observe and take field notes pertaining to the participants and events that occurred in the classroom. Field notes were the primary way to gather the data from the research observations (Merriam, 1998). Field notes involve description of setting, context, participants, and documentation of interactions (Yin, 2014). I took extensive field notes during classroom observations, interviews, and informal conversations with the students and the teacher. I also described small and large group discussions and classroom activities. The field notes were useful to obtain more in-depth information and produce accurate descriptions of what I observed. The field notes provided a method for capturing important information from details of participants' interactions and reactions (Yin, 2014). I wrote my reactions to the events in the classroom in the margins of the field notes and used them to do my initial analysis.

**Reflective journals.** I wrote reflective journal entries at the end of each day, which included my personal reactions, insights, and any new discoveries based on field notes (Spradley, 1980). Research journals helped me to examine my own assumptions,

biases, and beliefs during the research process (Merriam, 1998). Reflective journal entries enabled me to separate the interpretations and analysis of the data collected from my preconceptions and compare them accordingly.

**Artifacts.** In order to obtain more in-depth information of the students' engagement in multicultural literature critical literacy practices, I gathered textual and visual evidence from the teacher and the students related to critical reading and discussions of the literature. I photocopied or took pictures of teacher-generated artifacts, such as lesson plans and work sheets, and student-generated artifacts, such as writing samples. I ensured that participants got their work back undamaged. Students often leave their work on places other than their assignments, such as on recycled papers or the whiteboard. I kept track of these data by photocopying them. I made a folder file to store the teacher and student artifacts accordingly. These provided me with a broader perspective concerning the classroom practices that I could not capture with other data sources.

### **Phase III: Follow-up**

After finishing the multicultural children's literature instruction, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teacher and students using the post questions on the semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendices I and J). In the teacher interview, I examined the self-reflection of the teacher regarding her experiences with teaching multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approach. I also asked about additional information that I did not capture during the previous interviews and observations. Follow-up interviews offered deeper insight and information into what

happened when students used multicultural children's literature for critical reading and discussions about social issues. The interviews were digitally audio recorded and transcribed. After completing transcripts, I did member checks to ensure trustworthiness. The use of multiple data sources and data triangulation contributed to obtaining an in-depth understanding of the case being studied.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is an essential part of the research process in order to present findings pertinent to the research questions and the purpose of the study. In this process, I did coding and categorizing (Creswell, 2013). I used qualitative data analysis methods to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways does the teacher incorporate critical literacy approaches in her classroom?
2. What were the learning outcomes when the fifth graders engaged in social justice issues present in multicultural children's literature?

Using these research questions as guidelines, I began the analysis by examining the initial data collected. I employed seven stages of qualitative data analysis method (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), which I have outlined in Table 2. I used thematic analysis method involving coding and organizing data using codes for further analysis. Forming codes or categories is the heart of qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2013). In order to do so, I classified, categorized, and interpreted the data. Table 2 shows the data analysis process of this study.

The first stage involved organizing data. I organized data by constructing logs of the types of data according to dates, names, and places where, when, and with whom they



Table 2

*Data Analysis Process*

| Stages   | Analysis purpose  | Data sources  | Theoretical connections with critical literacy framework   |
|--|---|---|--|
| 1. Organizing data   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the data on students' engagement with multicultural children's literature with themes of social justice</li> </ul>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Field notes from direct &amp; participant observation</li> <li>Student work samples</li> <li>Transcript from audio recording (teacher and student interviews, small and large group discussion, and conversations)</li> <li>Reflective journals</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disrupting the commonplace</li> <li>Interrogating multiple viewpoints</li> <li>Focusing on sociopolitical issues</li> <li>Taking action and promoting social justice</li> </ul> |
| 2. Immersion in data   |   |   |  |
| 3. Generating categories and themes                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Search themes &amp; data coding</li> </ul>   |   |  |
| 4. Coding data (Open coding, Axial coding, & Focused coding) |   |   |  |
| 5. Offering interpretations                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interpret and explain the students' engagement with multicultural children's literature with themes of social justice</li> </ul> |   |  |
| 6. Searching for alternative understandings                  |   |   |  |
| 7. Writing the report  |   |   |  |

were generated. The second stage involved immersion in data. Analysis of the data began with initial meaning reconstruction by reading and rereading the primary data record. I immersed myself in the data in order to get a detailed sense of the whole meaning. For this study, I examined the collection of qualitative data sources in order to describe the students' learning outcomes from multicultural children's literature instruction through critical approaches.

The third stage involved generating initial themes. I developed themes from the data based on the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

After reading through the primary record, I selected key transcripts, important artifacts, and several segments from field notes and reflective journal entries that displayed evidence of students' engagement in multicultural children's literature related to social justice issues. The data corresponded with the research questions in order to generate possible meanings. In this phase, I generated four large themes related to students' engagement through critical literacy in social justice issues in the texts, in their lives, and in the world around them.

For example, when the teacher and students discussed economic inequality depending upon race, students showed apparent awareness regarding sociopolitical and economic systems of the larger society and self-awareness of their own socioeconomic practice. I included both these codes in the thematic category "focusing on sociopolitical issues." The four themes were the following:

- *Disrupting the commonplace*—the way to problematize everyday events in the classroom, interrogate author's intentions in the texts and illustrations, and focus on the use of words in the texts related to social justice issues;
- *Interrogating multiple viewpoints*—the way to examine various perspectives through critical questions and make differences visible from the texts and students' experiences related to social justice issues;
- *Focusing on sociopolitical issues*— the way to understand the sociopolitical systems in which the students belong and challenge the unquestioned legitimacy of the power relationship;
- *Taking action and promoting social justice*—the way to engage in praxis— reflection and action upon their own lives and the world around them in order to bring a positive change.

I identified recurring routines, important issues, or notable activities in order to choose appropriate segments of the primary record for initial meaning reconstruction that became themes to highlight. This collective process created an organizational framework

for the data.

The fourth stage involved coding data. Based on the reconstructed meanings of data, I generated the initial codes through open coding (Saldaña, 2012). The initial codes were based on the preset codes such as noticing social inequality, examining multiple accounts, challenging the status quo, and taking action for social justice. I developed the pre-set codes based on the research questions and the theoretical framework of this study. The pre-set codes served as the basis for data analysis and the development of new codes. I identified key transcripts and segments of field notes for each aspect of the code. The initial codes were collated into broad themes. Utilizing focused coding (Saldaña, 2012) helped search most repeated or significant codes to develop the themes. Axial coding (Saldaña, 2012) also allowed me to identify the dominant codes from the data. These various methods of analysis helped me tease out key issues and areas that required further exploration in the following phase. This coding process helped me collect and analyze data more holistically to construct a more complete picture of the case. I illustrate all the codes by theme in Table 3.

The fifth stage involved offering interpretations. After coding, I wrote analytic memos to organize my initial interpretations and key findings (Yin, 2014). I organized themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I connected my interpretation to the critical literacy framework. The sixth stage involved constantly searching for alternative understandings of the findings (Glaser, 1978) while interpreting the data. The final stage involved writing the report. I finalized emergent understandings based on analyzed data. From the third stage to the final stage

Table 3

*Themes, Codes, and Definitions of Data Related to Social Justice Issues*

| Theme                                      | Code  | Description emphasis  |
|--|---|---|
| Disrupting the commonplace                 | Curriculum integration                        | Teacher integrates social studies and ELA curriculum.   |
|  | Safe space for students                       | Teacher creates a risk-free space where students are encouraged to engage in discussions, conversations, and actions for promoting social justice.  |
|  | Examining author's intentions                 | Students examine the texts and illustrations to identify author's intentions.   |
|  | Student-centered learning                     | Students become a center of the instruction. The instruction addresses needs, interests, and experiences of individual students.  |
| Interrogating multiple viewpoints          | Multiple perspectives                         | Teacher encourages students to consider other perspectives and expose them to different accounts of the same event.   |
|  | Fairness                                      | Students compare and contrast fair and unfair treatment or behaviors in the texts, their lives, and the world around them, and identify their own definition of fairness.   |
|  | Inclusiveness                                 | Students take steps to make a more inclusive classroom where every voice is accounted for and valued.   |
|  | Critical thinking                             | Students question the texts and their experiences in terms of social inequalities, and analyze social practices.  |
| Focusing on sociopolitical issues          | Teaching current events                       | Teacher brings two different news articles related to current events on issues of race into the classroom. Students compare how different news sources have handled the same subject differently.   |
|  | Increasing students' sociopolitical awareness | Students understand how both social and political factors influence people's decisions and lives. Students also realize their lives are influenced by an existing sociopolitical order and try to equip a critical lens to see the world around them. |
|  | Unequal power relationships                   | Students identify the deep root of social inequalities by examining power structure in the texts, their lives, and society. Students identify how different racial groups are able to interact with and control other groups.                         |
| Taking action and promoting social justice | Engaging in praxis                            | Teacher and students constantly reflect their thinking and actions to make a positive change and transform their social practices for social justice.   |
|  | Developing academic skills                    | Students improve their academic skills in reading comprehension, writing, and searching for information through student-centered learning experiences.  |
|  | A variety of meaningful writings              | Students engage in various writing projects, including autobiographies, letters, opinion writing, historical narratives, poems, etc.  |
|  | Recognizing social responsibility             | Students understand their rights and responsibilities as members of a classroom community, recognize problems, and attempt to solve the problems independently and collectively.  |
|  | Equal treatment at school                     | Fifth grade boys and girls are treated equally in every place at the school.  |
|  | Critical consciousness development            | Students enhance their awareness of social issues and take action for promoting social justice.   |

of analysis, I investigated the data through the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). It enabled me to generate cohesive interpretations of the case being studied.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the study (Creswell, 2013). I identified three potential limitations of this study. First, the construction of students' critical consciousness on issues of social justice is a life-long developmental process. The ongoing developmental process could not be accomplished by this study alone. This study provided only a developmental snapshot of the students' critical consciousness development on social justice issues. Future research may explore the long-term implications of using multicultural children's literature through critical literacy. This appears to be a promising way to acquire rich data about the vast range of students' critical consciousness development experiences.

The second limitation is the issue of the researcher's language. I interacted with the teacher and students in English with English as my second language. Despite this limitation, I was able to communicate effectively with the teacher and the students in English. As a doctoral student, I successfully completed my program of study in English. Also, as a former elementary school teacher in South Korea, I had three years of English teaching experiences with native English teachers. However, one event might have multiple interpretations due to my external-insider positionality (Banks, 1998).

The final limitation of the study is that transferability of the study results is

impossible because the findings of the case study are unique and contextualized (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). The case study will be difficult to repeat within the same setting, and the results of the study cannot be universal. However, this case study provides a holistic examination of the particular studied case on the use of multicultural children's literature about social justice and students' critical consciousness development. The results from this case might be applicable to other cases.

### **Trustworthiness**

Since qualitative research is highly dependent on the researcher (Creswell, 2013), I needed to be credible. There was a need for consistency in the data collection process and the validation of my interpretations of the data. Trustworthiness refers to the credibility and dependability of the research (Creswell, 2013). To ensure trustworthiness in this study, I took the following validity strategies: (a) triangulation, (b) member checking and thick-rich description, (c) prolonged engagement, (d) peer review, and (e) clarifying researcher bias (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Janesick, 1994). First, I used data triangulation (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014), and data methodological triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), and interdisciplinary triangulation (Janesick, 1994).

For the data triangulation, I used multiple data sources of information, including transcripts of interviews, classroom discussions, informal conversations, artifacts, observation field notes, and reflective journal entries. I compared what I saw and heard in the classroom with artifacts and transcripts of the interviews. In so doing, my

observations were congruent with the information from other data sources.

For the data mythological triangulation, I also employed multiple data collection methods, including direct observations, participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and gathering artifacts. Although this study was guided by critical literacy, I analyzed and interpreted the data from the perspectives of several different disciplines originating from critical theory perspectives, including critical pedagogy and poststructuralism. By using an interdisciplinary triangulation strategy, I ensured the depth and richness of this study as well as simultaneously enhancing the validity of this study.

Second, I conducted member checking to establish the validity of data interpretation and reflect on the accuracy of the account (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks ensured and validated the accuracy of the data information and my interpretations. I conducted member checks by sharing the transcripts of interviews and discussions of multicultural children's literature with the participants. I also verified my classroom observations by having informal conversations with the participants.

Throughout the data collection process, I compiled detailed observation field notes for a thick description. I described my observations, including participants' routines and unusual events. Additionally, I recorded interesting interactions in the classroom by using strong action verbs and quotes to carry the participants' voices into this study (Creswell, 2013). These processes enabled me to go back to my participants with my observational accounts and interpretations in order to validate my findings.

Third, prolonged engagement enabled me to strengthen my understanding of what

happens in a classroom. I spent a significant amount of time in the classroom, teacher's lounge, cafeteria, and playground where I could have conversations with the participants. I visited in the classroom every day and actively engaged with participants in order to understand them better and learn their daily lives in the school. This allowed me to write a thick description and track students' critical consciousness development. By actively engaging in the routines of the classroom, I was able to develop trusting relationships and build rapport with my participants. This allowed me to learn the classroom culture and check misinformation between the participants and myself. Extended time in the research site strengthened my understanding of what happens in a classroom. It helped increase the reliability and credibility of the study (Merriam, 1998).

Fourth, I requested a peer review from my colleagues and my committee members who are familiar with the qualitative research throughout the study. Finally, I constantly reflected and self-checked my thoughts and position within the research process to know how my sociocultural background, biases, or assumptions could potentially influence the study. The use of personal reflexivity (Patton, 2002) is critical to ensure trustworthiness of the research. I wrote reflective journal entries throughout the study to avoid my personal bias. I used the reflective journal entries to increase awareness of my own perspectives as it pertained to this study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I outlined and provided rationalization for the research methods and procedures used to conduct this study. I discussed my role as the researcher and my



sampling procedures regarding the research site and participants. I used a case study design to examine how fifth graders develop critical consciousness of social justice issues with multicultural children's literature as a springboard. I took the stance of participant as observer in this study. I conducted the study from mid-February through May in 2015. This case study included nineteen participants, including one teacher and eighteen students. Of the 18 students, eleven were girls and seven were boys. Eleven students were White, four were Hispanic, and three were Asian. One of the students was an ELL. Students ranged in age from 10 to 11 years old. I used multiple sources of data, including observations, interviews, field notes, reflective journal entries, and classroom artifacts. The study occurred in three phases: before, during, and after the implementation of the multicultural children's literature instruction. Phase I occurred before the implementation of the literature instruction, and it involved planning the research timeline and the instructional framework. I collected most of the data during the actual implementation of the literature instruction during phase II and at the conclusion of the study in phase III. I used thematic analysis method and outlined the seven data analysis phases of the data interpretation. The following chapter discusses the findings of this study.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIRST SET OF FINDINGS: ENACTING CRITICAL LITERACY IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM

#### Overview

In this study, I examined how multicultural children's literature instruction that included social justice themes helped fifth graders develop their critical consciousness about a variety of social issues present in the text, in their lives, and in the world around them. Furthermore, I investigated how fifth graders engaged in and acted towards advocating for social justice. I created the multicultural children's literature-based social justice instruction with critical literacy approaches. I integrated social studies and ELA curriculum for the multicultural children's literature instruction according to the Utah Core Standards for fifth grade. The literature used in the study also met the Utah Core Standards for fifth grade social studies, including subjects such as the Civil War, the women's rights movement, and civil rights movements. Reading and writing activities about multicultural children's literature instruction also fulfilled the instructional requirements for the Utah Core Standards for ELA/Literacy. The multicultural children's literature used for this study was associated with social justice themes such as racism, discrimination, fairness, and equality.

In this chapter and the next chapter, I will report the findings of this study that emerged from the data associated with the guiding research questions. The questions were as follows.

1. In what ways does the teacher incorporate critical literacy approaches in her classroom?
2. What were the learning outcomes when the fifth graders engaged in social justice issues present in multicultural children's literature?

The fifth-graders' engagement with the multicultural children's literature about social justice issues was complex because personal aesthetic judgments and differing sociocultural backgrounds of students influenced students' discussions and actions. In this chapter, I identify and describe the study's main findings according to the following four dimensions of critical literacy outlined by Lewison et al. (2002): (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice.

In this chapter, I will present the findings that emerged from the data to answer the first research question: In what ways did the teacher incorporate critical literacy approaches in her classroom? The ways in which the teacher incorporated multicultural children's literature through critical literacy in the classroom positively influenced the students' critical consciousness development in several ways; four themes were identified, following the four dimensions of critical literacy outlined by Lewison et al. (2002). Each theme has findings from my data, as can be seen in Figure 2.

The teacher, Diana, influenced students in a variety of ways, helping the students critically examine the literature and their social practices in terms of disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice.

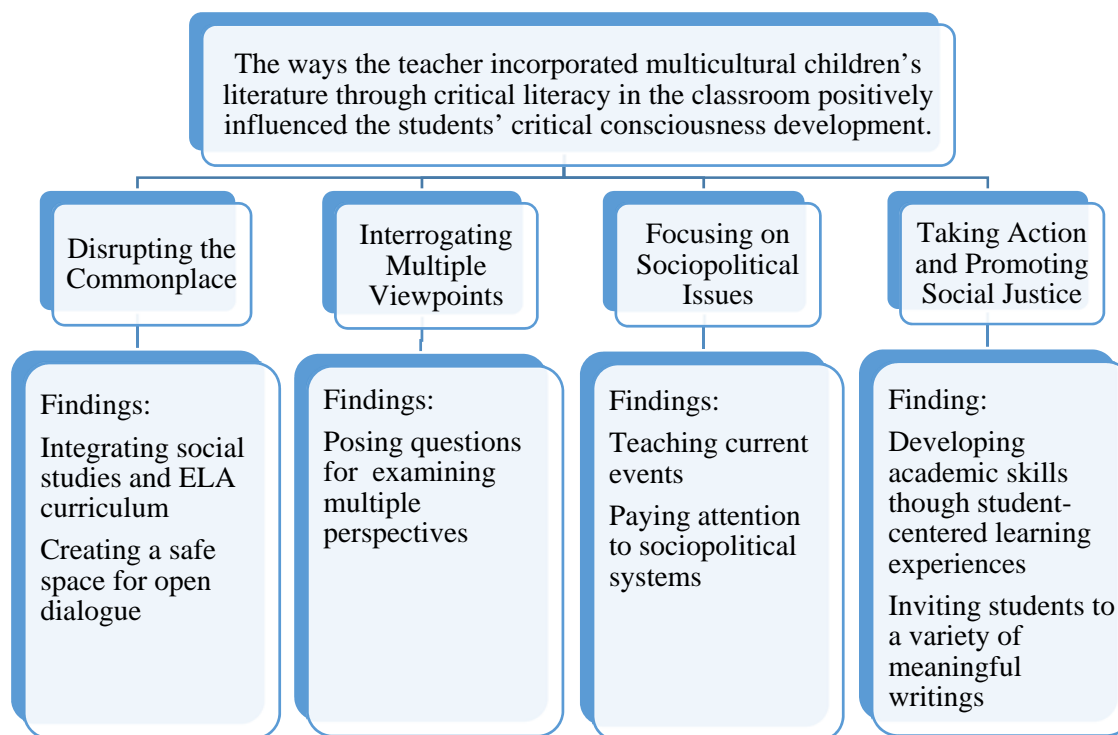


Figure 2. Findings of the Research Questions 1.

### **Disrupting the Commonplace**

As a facilitator of students' learning, Diana established safe classroom environment to enact critical literacy.

#### **Integrating Social Studies and English Language Arts Curriculum**

As mentioned in Chapter II, social studies education has been neglected in elementary schools because it has generally not been assessed on the state standardized tests that elementary students take. Diana was one of the teachers who was concerned with this situation. She thought that schools were fragmenting the ELA curriculum in order to teach the necessary skills for students to pass state standardized tests. In the

pedagogy interview, she expressed her concern about the current social studies instruction practice in the classroom.

There is not enough time to teach social studies. I spend almost two-thirds of time teaching language arts. Social studies is being marginalized after the NCLB began mandating tests in only math and reading. Every year I feel more pressure to raise the scores. However, social studies is so important for kids. They will be the ones to carry on the democratic traditions to the next generation. If we won't teach about democracy, how will they know about it? Democracy just doesn't happen. Kids need to know citizenship guarantees fundamental civil rights, but along with those rights come responsibilities. We cannot afford to leave it out.

Her concern about the social studies instruction practices and her strong conviction for the importance of social studies education helped her move forward in reconstructing curriculum for social studies.

Diana integrated social studies aligned with Utah Core Standards into literacy routines in her classroom. Before the school year began, Diana planned her yearlong curriculum. She called this a "curriculum map." Through this mapping, she understood the whole curriculum and was able to plan ahead to identify which social studies topics would be integrated into her literacy routines. Table 4 shows Diana's curriculum map for social studies and ELA for 2014-2015 school year.

When I first met Diana and introduced her to my study, she was very pleased about my idea of incorporating multicultural children's literature related to social justice issues into the ELA curriculum. She believed that the integration of social studies and ELA would be beneficial for her students. She was already combining social studies and language arts with children's books in her classroom. The way she integrated the two subject areas was very similar to my research plan, and it helped her decide to participate in my study.

Table 4

*Diana's Curriculum Map for Social Studies ELA 2014-2015*

| Month     | Social Studies   | Reader's workshop  | Writer's workshop   | Language   |
|-----------|--|--|---|--|
| September | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration</li> <li>• Mapping</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Realistic Fiction</li> <li>• Point of view</li> <li>• Text structures (thinking maps)</li> <li>• Story structure</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Narratives/Text structures</li> <li>• Google Docs intro</li> <li>• Writer's license</li> <li>• Animal reports</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nouns, Verbs, Adjectives, Adverbs</li> </ul>                    |
| October   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colonization</li> <li>• Lewis and Clark</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Mystery</li> <li>• Inferring</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Conventions</li> <li>• Halloween Poetry</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Punctuation, Commas, Quotation Marks</li> </ul>                 |
| November  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colonial America</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Historical Fiction</li> <li>• Questioning asking/answering</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Ideas</li> <li>• Opinion writing</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conjunctions, prepositions, Interjections</li> </ul>            |
| December  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revolutionary War</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Fantasy</li> <li>• Monitor</li> <li>• Clarify</li> <li>• Fix-up</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Organization</li> <li>• Opinion writing</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek and Latin Roots</li> <li>• Figurative language</li> </ul> |
| January   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution and Bill of Rights</li> <li>• American Revolution</li> <li>• Trip to state capital</li> </ul>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Informational text, Historical/ Realistic Fiction</li> <li>• Quote accurately from a text</li> <li>• Summarize</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Sentence fluency</li> <li>• Opinion writing</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek and Latin Roots</li> </ul>                                |
| February  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Famous American</li> <li>• Slavery</li> <li>• Civil War</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Informational text, Historical/Realistic Fiction, Biography/ Autobiography</li> <li>• Active prior knowledge and predicting</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Word choice</li> <li>• Informative writing</li> <li>• Research Project: Civil War</li> </ul>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek and Latin Roots</li> </ul>                                |
| March     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presidents</li> <li>• Reconstruction Era</li> <li>• Westward Expansion</li> <li>• Civil Rights Movements</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Traditional Literature,</li> <li>• Gathering and integration information</li> <li>• Re-tell</li> </ul>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Fluency</li> <li>• Informative writing</li> <li>• Opinion writing</li> <li>• Biography/ Autobiography</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral Reports</li> </ul>   |
| April     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War II</li> <li>• Wax Museum</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Poetry, Historical/Realistic Fiction, Informational text, Biography/ Autobiography</li> <li>• Visualization</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Voice</li> <li>• Poetry</li> <li>• Research Project: Wax Museum</li> </ul>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figurative Language</li> </ul>                                  |
| May       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Immigration</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genre: Poetry, Historical/Realistic Fiction</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six Traits: Voice</li> <li>• Poetry</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figurative Language</li> </ul>                                  |

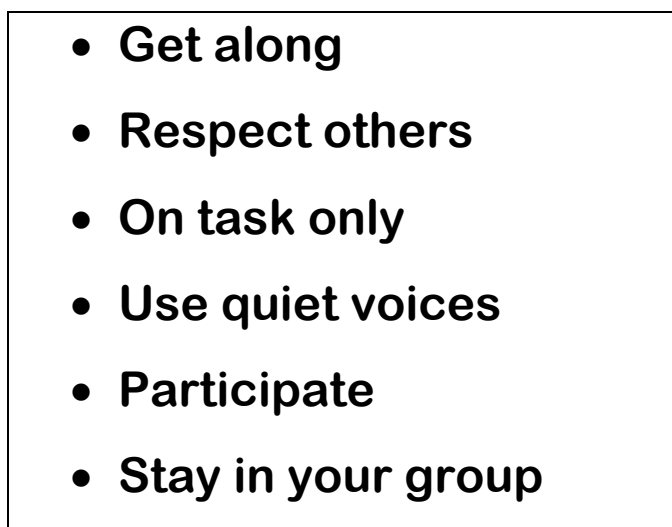
I really like your idea. That's exactly how I incorporate children's books in my curriculum. I have my own library with over one hundred books. It will be nice that we have yours. Luckily, this school gives more freedom to teachers to build their own curriculum. So, I can plan mine with some emphasis that I think is important for kids. I don't use textbooks for social studies. I like to integrate social studies into literacy routines. The language arts is pretty useful to teach social studies content. The integration helps kids to understand and apply general concepts. Actually, it's pretty helpful to prepare for the test. They learn reading strategies through both fiction and non-fiction readings. I don't want to make them drill for the test all the time.

Integrating social studies content into literacy routines was one of her favorite ways of teaching social studies content knowledge. Before integrating two subject areas, Diana referred to the fifth grade Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects and the Utah State Core Standards for Social Studies. Diana used the U.S. timeline as an organizing principle and then incorporated U.S. history, basic economics, civics concepts, and geography. For each time period in U.S. history, certain economic and civics concepts were taught, as they fitted naturally in that era.

### **Creating a Safe Space to Open Dialogue**

Upon entering Diana's classroom, her energetic and welcoming atmosphere captivated me. Her classroom was full of pastel tones of color, and I felt very comfortable. She used mostly soft yellow, light green and blue as a base color of the bulletin boards but accentuated the things she wanted to emphasize. She used the classroom space to build a community as a collective whole. She respected students' perspectives and created a space that supported free thinking and sharing. Her class was lively and full of fun to fulfill students' natural curiosity.

For instance, she raised a garter snake, which was named “Mr. Silver,” in a glass container. I was surprised that the snake was in the classroom, but her students seemed used to it. They had strict rules on how to take care of him. Before touching him, the students cleaned their hands and the teacher let them interact with him, but students were not allowed to hold him for long periods of time. The students really seemed to enjoy his presence and were proud that he was a part of their classroom. The classroom contained teacher-made activities and materials. It equipped with a basic white board and two big bulletin boards in the front of the room. Diana always displayed students’ work in order for the students to demonstrate their knowledge and progress about any subject matter. The boards were full of students’ posters related to the Bill of Rights. Next to the boards, a 65-inch television was hung. Diana used the television to effectively support her multicultural children’s literature instruction. Students often watched videos or movies related to the literature. In addition, there was a poster on the left side of the board with the catchphrase “GROUP” that emphasized teamwork and collaboration (see Figure 3).

- 
- **Get along**
  - **Respect others**
  - **On task only**
  - **Use quiet voices**
  - **Participate**
  - **Stay in your group**

*Figure 3.* Classroom poster to emphasize teamwork.



Her class had an extensive library of children's literature for students. Three bookshelves were full of books, and she made a special section for the multicultural children's literature. Next to the bookshelves, four computers were set up to use. This functioned as a research center. Students used these computers when they needed to search any information related to their assignments or they could not use school laptops within the assigned time.

The desk arrangement was a herringbone style, where all students had a clear view of the front of the room and could openly discuss any topic while viewing their peers and the teacher. This arrangement style made it easy for students to work in pairs or move their desks into groups for collaborative work. It was useful for both small and large group discussions.

In the left front side of the classroom, the carpet was a light purple color. One rocker and one comfortable couch were placed in this area. This area was the heart of Diana's classroom learning, especially for multicultural children's literature instruction. Students gathered in this open space to read aloud, participate in morning meetings, and engage in other classroom activities. Sitting in her rocker, Diana regularly read aloud the multicultural children's books to her students. After reading aloud, she transitioned, asking students to move to their individual seats for a small group discussion or individual activities. The couch was filled with cushions where students sat or laid down to enjoy some of their favorite books during recess or their lunch break. Students had freedom to navigate all areas of the classroom openly.

**Facilitating a democratic learning environment.** Diana created a democratic

space that fostered free expression and participation. She emphasized the importance of providing the democratic and safe space for learning. In her pedagogy interview, she said:

Children are sensitive to my words, tone, atmosphere, and attitude towards them so they'll do what they know how to do. So, I try to my best to make them feel safe and comfortable so no one feels their viewpoint is invaluable. I think meaningful conversations and interactions are able to happen in this environment. I like to work with them and to be a partner with them, even if it is hard. It's very challenging and sometimes the last thing I want to do.... However, I know it will eventually save my time and energy.

During the first day of a large group discussion of the book, *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (Hopkinson, 1993), students proved to be capable of thoughtful and critical discussion. Students were familiar with leading much of the discussion in both small and large group settings, and they actively participated in collaborative conversations with classmates (see Figure 4).

Diana reinforced positive behavior by rewarding students with classroom credit for a free activity or classroom party. The class reward system had two aspects: the class

The student and teacher relationship was close to a partnership, not top-down style. She treated her students as a co-creator of the knowledge and rejected a homogenizing pedagogic order, such as the one-way transmission of skills and knowledge. Her students were used to having opportunities to express their thinking in a way they felt comfortable. Students were able to actively listen to their peers' comments and were aware that when they wanted to speak, they must wait until their peers finished their sentences.

In classroom management, her style is quite democratic. If someone was being difficult, she tried to redirect him or her with positive praise. She never raised her voice or scolded her students for misbehaving. If that didn't work, she gave them a verbal warning with specific details regarding what behavior needed to be changed and how to change it. If they continued to give her problems, she reminded them that they would stay in from recess. She always noted her expectations and let students know what consequences of their behavior were. Diana was a role model by showing how she respects each student's voice, beliefs, and values. Simultaneously, her students respect one another's ideas and values.

Figure 4. Reflective journal: 1-27-2015.

rewards and individual rewards. “The rewards help students remember the classroom rules and their respectful manners” Diana told me. “I use them for behavior modification and want the class to help each other as a collective whole.” For the individual rewards, she gave a green reward ticket to students when they demonstrated respectful behaviors or academic accomplishments. For the class reward, when students actively participated in the large group discussions with respectful manner, she rewarded them. She avoided negative verbal and non-verbal feedback and focused on positive behaviors of students. For instance, when many students began talking at the same time or too loud, she praised one or two students who showed good listening manners and gave them a reward ticket. This elicited positive feedback and naturally helped students to modify their behaviors in the democratic learning environment.

**Engaging in history every day.** Diana used the calendar, news, or sharing time to discuss the day in history. She printed out a list of interesting and important events in history by month and shared them with the class during calendar report time. With a little planning ahead, she checked out related books from her media center and followed up with a multicultural children’s literature read-aloud. For convenience, she put a “Today in History” widget application on her iPad dashboard and had the day’s facts at her fingertips. This made it easy to integrate social studies and the multicultural children’s literature related to the historical event, such as The Greensboro Sit-In. This event happened on February 1, 1960. In Greensboro, North Carolina, four African American college students sat down and ordered coffee at a lunch counter inside a Woolworth’s store. They were refused service but did not leave. Instead, they waited all day. The scene

was repeated over the next few days. This event was a nonviolent protest to challenge the racial segregation in the Southern states for civil rights. After sharing the historical event, Diana read aloud from a book *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (Weatherford, 2005) and discussed racism and civil rights.

Diana also pulled a handful of key vocabulary words from the multicultural children's book and put them on the board to discuss with students before and after reading. She allowed students to give input on the topic or theme of the literature. She had a request form on the top of the bookshelves in her classroom for students to suggest topics they would like her to read to them about. Popular requests included slavery, various wars, and famous women, as well as books about stories of immigrant children from specific countries where the students were from or had relatives living.

Diana displayed a timeline from 1800 to the present on the classroom wall for students to add to throughout the year. As students read about different historical events in all subjects, including the multicultural children's literature reading, shared readings, and science, they composed a brief sentence to go on the appropriate timeline and had a student illustrate it. This method helped students to understand how various events related to one another (i.e., The Civil Rights Movement was in the 1950s and 1960s because it was after slavery). The students took about 5 minutes during a lesson to add to the timeline, and this left a lasting reference that could be used for more teaching points throughout the year.

**Expressing clear instructional expectations.** Diana also expressed expectations clearly as she told the class what would happen during the multicultural children's

literature instruction. She communicated verbally and non-verbally to students that they were capable of performing assigned tasks. She praised and gave appreciation to students regardless of individual ability. She avoided comments which indicated she was permitting a students' history, image, or behavior to pre-set what she thought students could accomplish. She emphasized the process and the effort made, rather than the results. Diana provided a space where students could collaborate with their peers and teacher, and each student was aware of her expectations and daily classroom procedures during the democratic learning process.

Furthermore, the students presented a sense of agency to actively engage in discussions without waiting to be called on by the teacher for permission to respond. They were very familiar with the discussion and group work rules, as the teacher always emphasized building a respectful community. Students were active members of the classroom community and engaged in learning in an environment that supported free democratic expression.

### **Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints**

Diana posed open-ended critical questions for the students to examine the texts from multiple perspectives. During the reading and discussion, Diana asked a variety of questions for the students to use when interrogating the texts aesthetically and critically. She positioned her students in a way to think critically at a deeper level. Diana asked a broad range of critical questions to foster higher-order thinking skills and critical consciousness. She began with the knowledge and comprehension levels of questions

from Bloom's Taxonomy for the students to demonstrate basic understanding of facts and ideas about the literature. Then she asked higher levels of questions related to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the text.

Furthermore, Diana posed critical questions for the students to explore multiple viewpoints such as: How do you think the main character is feeling at this point? What other perspective could be considered? How might this story be different if it had been written by someone of the opposite gender, a different ethnic group, or class? She attempted to pose critical questions that challenged the conventional notions of critical thinking that are often used synonymously in finding the main idea or making inferences based on the text. Diana believed so-called facts came from one's perspective and the facts were purposefully chosen for the reader's interest. She fostered her students' skills in figuring out what point of view is presented in the text and challenging it. Her students brought up their own perspectives when discussing the text, their lives, and the world around them.

### **Posing Questions for Examining Multiple Perspectives**

Diana purposefully posed critical literacy questions regarding multicultural children's literature related to social justice issues in order to facilitate reading and discussing with her students. Table 5 shows a critical literacy prompts that Diana asked. Diana provided an opportunity for the students to examine social inequality through the literature. For example, *White Socks Only* (Coleman, 1996), *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001), *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001), *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995), and

Table 5

*Critical Literacy Prompts*

| Critical literacy                          | Example questions  |
|--|--|
| Disrupting the commonplace                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is this story about? How do we know?</li> <li>• What does the author want you to believe? What is the author's intention for writing this story? What part of the text gave you clues?</li> <li>• Do you think the facts are true in the text? How can you check whether the facts are accurate?</li> <li>• What questions would you like to ask the author?</li> <li>• How is this text similar or different to things occurring in your life at school, at home, in the community, as well as in the world?</li> <li>• Any surprises?</li> </ul> |
| Interrogating multiple viewpoints          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you think the main character is feeling at this point?</li> <li>• What other perspective could be considered?</li> <li>• How might this story be different if it had been written by someone of the opposite gender, a different ethnic group, or class?</li> </ul>  |
| Focusing on sociopolitical issues          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do some parts of the text make you really uncomfortable?</li> <li>• Given the way the author has written this text, who benefits from this text? Who does not benefit?</li> <li>• Whose voices are included/missing?</li> <li>• Who has power in this story? How do you know?</li> <li>• How you can deal with unfair actions?</li> </ul>   |
| Taking action and promoting social justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What was happening in this story? How would the characters solve a problem? If you were the character, how would you solve the problem?</li> <li>• Could this story happen today? Why or why not?</li> <li>• How can we talk about the story differently? What would happen if we change how we talk about it?</li> <li>• What can we do that would call attention to this issue in school and out of school?</li> <li>• How can the reader use this information to promote fairness and justice?</li> </ul>  |

several poems from *Love to Langston* (Medina, 2002) described the racial segregation in all manner of daily activities through children's eyes, such as schooling, housing, and the use of public facilities. These books helped the students realized how inhuman and

irrational it was to judge and treat others by their appearances.

In addition, books such as *So Far from the Sea* (Bunting, 1998), *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993), and *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011) questioned the meaning of being American. After the Japanese bombed U.S. warships at Pearl Harbor, all people of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast of the U.S. had to relocate to internment camps. Many of those interned were American citizens. They were painfully forced out of their homes. Those books provided opportunities for students to rethink typically glamorous views of American history.

Diana fostered student understanding of the text and encouraged students to interrogate the text and the historical events presented in the literature by posing critical questions that examine multiple perspectives. These questions helped scaffold students in the discussion as active co-constructors of knowledge in the discussion of *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011).

Diana: Let's reread the part in page 21 again, but this time think about any surprises or any assumptions that you can find from the text. "Aki and her family suddenly had the face of the enemy. They were loyal Americans, but many people assumed that anyone of Japanese ancestry would support Japan rather than the U.S. in the war...library...everyone with Japanese ancestors—even people who had only a single great-great-great grandparent who was Japanese—had to register with the Civil Control Station for evacuation. 'What is evacuation?' Aki asked her mother. 'It means leaving, moving someplace else.' 'Where?' 'I don't know.' Her mother's voice sounded flat and tired." Do you have any surprises?

Olivia: I am shocked that Aki's family was forced to leave their home. I can't understand why they had to be evacuated.

Andrew: Because they had Japanese ancestry.

Karla: Other people didn't like them.



- Diana: Who are “others”?
- Karla: We, Americans. [She shrugged her shoulders.]
- Diana: I wonder what that means, “We, American.”
- Karla: Other Americans. But her family was...
- Miranda: They were Americans too.
- Andrew: No, they weren't. They had Japanese ancestors. They were Japanese.
- Diana: Well. My great grandmother was from Scotland. That means am I not American?
- Andrew: ...
- Miranda: You're American!
- Diana: I wonder if someone who was born in the U.S. but has ancestors from other countries is American or not. Even America is their country now.
- Jessica: That person is American for sure. Because that person was born here and lives here.
- Miranda: Then that person is American. All family and friends are here, like you.
- Jason: Of course, my dad is from China, but I was born in America and I'm American. Someone who has ancestors from a foreign country doesn't mean that person is not American.
- Diana: I think we need to think more about this. Let's go back to the story. Aki's family had Japanese ancestry, but they were American, U.S. citizens. Why do you think they had to go to the internment camp?
- Jack: Because other Americans didn't like them. Aki's neighbors turned against her family. People refused to shop in Japanese-owned stores or hire Japanese Americans.
- Andrew: Yes, other people couldn't trust them. People were worried that they would help Japan.
- Savannah: Umm. People didn't think Japanese Americans were loyal. People suspected they would serve Japan, even if they were Americans.
- Jason: Maybe they looked different than other Americans. They were Asian-

looking. So, people thought they were not real Americans.

Olivia: Real Americans?

Diana: I wonder what real American means.

Jason: I mean...They looked different than other Americans, Whites. I know this. Sometimes people ask me where I'm from. Probably they think I'm not American. It's funny though.

Savannah: I don't know why people ask things like that.

Jason: That's alright. My dad heard that all the time.

Olivia: That's not nice. Everyone is different. If we look the same, that's more weird. How boring it will be.

Mark: Yeah. We all look different and Jason and I look different but it doesn't mean he's something wrong or isn't American.

Miranda: I think there were not many Asians in the past. So, Asians stood out more. I can't see as many as Asians in town comparing as White. In this class, most of us are Whites. Mr. Whitaker's class too. At that time, it might be harder to understand and accept someone who looked different.

Diana encouraged students to challenge the notion of citizenship and rethink the meaning of being American. The examination of the meaning of being American continued during the reading and discussion of the rest of *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011).

Diana: Who do you think looks like a "real American?"

Olivia: Maybe someone has white skin? But it's not really white. My skin looks like pale pink.

Whitney: Me too. How skin can be really white? It's not a paper.

Jessica: White, black, brown, whatever color people have, they are Americans. All people have different colors.

Savannah: The physical difference made people more upset and not want to trust Japanese Americans.

Diana: I wonder how the Japanese Americans felt in the camps.

Miranda: They were very angry and frustrated. Why not! If I were them I would be so mad. I have to go there because I just look different? Even if I didn't do anything? That's horrible.

Andrew: That is not nice.

Whitney: If I had to live in a barrack, I would feel really uncomfortable. I'll miss home.

Jason: If I were them, I will refuse to go. Why do I have to leave?

Olivia: You have to! The soldiers will take you, just like Aki's family.

Jason: No way.

Savannah: This is racism. If someone mean to someone because of skin color or other differences, that is discrimination. Other Americans discriminated Japanese.

[Some students nodded their head to agree with Savannah.]

Tony: Yeah, the Japanese were treated unfairly after the Pearl Harbor bombing. They had to leave home and lost everything.

Jessica: The camp seemed like a prison. Soldiers always oversaw you and lived in the barracks behind a barbed wire fence. Maybe it was worse than the prison.

Karla: My grandma is from Mexico. I'll be so mad if I have to go to the camp just because I have a Mexican grandma. This is totally racial discrimination.

Olivia: It is so shameful the government did that to Japanese Americans. It's awful.

Diana: You guys make a great connection with racism and the text. How do you think the government should treat citizens?

Savannah: The government must be fair to everybody. No one deserves that terrible discrimination. The government should protect the rights of its citizens.

Jason: Well if the government didn't protect their people that is not the right government for us. That is not right.

Jessica: Citizens have both individual rights and responsibilities. The government too.

The excerpts of the large group discussion transcript illustrated that while the students did not exactly articulate the eligibility for citizenship well, they still understood the meaning of citizenship and the role of the government. Students vividly realized racism is when people are treated differently because of their race, ethnicity, or other differences. They stated that they would not accept any racism and discrimination in the future. Diana engaged students in the process of interrogating the texts and challenging the commonsensical ideas by asking a range of questions such as: Let's think about any surprises or any assumptions that you can find from the text; who are "others"? I wonder what it means by "we American"? I wonder what real American means? How do you think the government treats their citizens? These questions fostered students' critical consciousness of the racial discrimination when the Japanese Americans were relocated to internment camps during World War II. The use of such questions increased student critical response and analysis of the texts and the world event.

### **Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues**

Diana encouraged students to engage in critical reading, discussion, and ongoing actions for social justice advocacy. Her approach increased an awareness of each student's active role in learning. She believed that students, as active learning participants, had a capacity to make different choices and to transform their practices. She, as a teacher, was no longer a gatekeeper of knowledge but instead facilitated critical and authentic dialogue among students by questioning unexamined knowledge. By

recognizing that knowledge was not deposited from teachers to students, Diana and her students could build a reciprocal and democratic relationship. Moreover, this trustful relationship enabled the students and teacher to learn from each other. Students' knowledge and voices were valued. Through critically engaging in dialogues, students increased their capacity and agency to question events in the text, their lives, and the world around them.

### **Teaching Current Events**

When the students studied the Civil Rights Movement, Diana asked them, "Do you think this [racial discrimination] can happen today?" One student answered, "There is no racism in America. Everyone is equal." Most students nodded their heads with the signal of agreement. I noticed that most of her students thought of racism as a thing of the past or an ancient artifact. I often heard the phrases, "back in slavery times," "before the Civil Rights Movement," or "in the 60s." The students were familiar with Martin Luther King Jr., and many of them credited him with ending racism. It was clear to me that the students believed that racism was over and racial justice was achieved. I had found the gap between students' perception about racism and reality. I wanted to provide the class with a moment to revisit this thought about modern day racism.

At the time we started the multicultural children's literature instruction, the students had been inundated over the course of a few weeks with news on the events related to the racial tension in Ferguson, Black Lives Matter protests, and other events that were racially charged. Even when they were not directly looking for information about these events, some students often talked about news related to racism when they

had small group discussions of books about the Civil Rights Movement, such as *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson, 2005), *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks* (Ringgold, 1999), and *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (Weatherford, 2005).

I thought it was good opportunity to deal with such current events in the large group discussion. I suggested to Diana that we have a current events discussion. Before we planned to teach current events related to the current racial tensions, I asked her about any concerns related to parents or administrators about teaching on the issue of race. It was possible she might be reluctant to teach controversial issues in her classroom because of fear of backlash from parents or administrators. Due to this reason, many teachers I contacted before Diana were interested in my study, but they hesitated to participate in the study.

The researcher: Aren't you worried that parents might be upset about it?

Diana: Well... Why not? However, if I as a teacher don't take the risk, the kids run the risk of perpetuating stereotypes and inequalities because they accept things for the face value without questioning the power relationships or hidden message. It is important to talk about the real-life issues. The racial conflict is not just a today thing. If we won't talk about this at school, then where is the right place for it? I hope they can advocate for social justice issues in their own lives.

She was confident exposing her students to the controversial topics related to racism and discrimination. She said, "I expect kids to come in with a lot of questions, and I want to use their questions to drive discussion and action."

Diana simply asked what they heard or knew about the racial tension in Ferguson or other events related to the race issue and what they wanted to know about it. She brought in news articles about Ferguson from two different media sources: Cable News

Network (CNN) and Fox News Channel. She worked with them on understanding how and why there were different angles to how the story was being covered. Diana helped the students compare the portrayal of the Ferguson protests in the news articles and how the students themselves might read and interpret them versus how African Americans might interpret them. Thomas' (2014) news article from Fox News Channel included the following passage.

No matter whose side you are on in the upheaval following the killing of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri, everyone should agree on the profound sadness of it all: sadness that an 18-year-old boy-man walked a path that led to his destruction; sadness that a police officer felt the need to defend himself by shooting another human being; sadness over the rioting and looting that followed a grand jury's decision not to indict Officer Wilson; and for some, sadness that Wilson was not indicted. Much of the sadness was encapsulated in a sound bite I saw on one TV network. An African American business owner, surveying the destruction of his store, plaintively asked, "How am I going to feed my kids?" I have an answer and it is one that should be applied to anyone convicted of riotous behavior, destruction of property and looting. It's called restitution.

Botelho's (2014) news article from CNN said the following.

The shooting of Brown spurred animosity among Ferguson residents toward their police force. The fact that Brown was black while the man who shot him, officer Darren Wilson, is white added fuel to the tension... While some activists criticized authorities for using armored vehicles and tear gas in one instance, on the other side store owners ripped police for not stepping in and arresting those responsible. In Fuentes' opinion, authorities had "no choice" but to institute and enforce a curfew. A full week in, the situation has not gotten much better—as the unrest overnight Friday shows.

Many students were shocked that a police officer shot an unarmed civilian. "That is totally violating civil rights," one student exclaimed. They were stunned that there were more similar events in which unarmed African Americans had been shot by White police officers. They were also surprised by the many on-going protests and racial

tensions that existed because of racial injustice. “It was not fair to shoot an unarmed man!” they insisted. They criticized the White police officer who shot Michael Brown. However, not all students agreed about the unfairness of the outcome. Some students pointed out that “the police officer had to defend himself.” One of the students said, “[The police officer] has the same right to use a gun in defending himself as he would in any other situation if he were in danger.” Diana acknowledged divergent opinions and followed the comparison of both articles in terms of the use of language. She asked students to think about what was different in the language used in both articles.

Diana: How did the media cover Ferguson? What examples of coverage you consider problematic did you see in term of choices of words, images, headlines, interviews, or anything else?

Mark: The word choice. Fox News uses a “riot.” Times and CNN use an “unrest.”

Olivia: Not all of them. CNN uses “riot” too.

Savannah: I think sometimes Fox News uses “unrest”.

Mark: But Fox News uses “riot” more often.

Diana: What do you think we use “riot” in the story? How do you think that may have affected perception of the events and their meaning?

Olivia: It doesn’t make a big difference, but riot sounds more like the protesters had committed a crime. That doesn’t sound good.

Jessica: Well. They burned down buildings and attacked police offices. It is not a protest.

Savannah: Riot sounds like something wrong and bad.

Diana: What does riot mean?

Tony: Commotion?

Diana: What is a connotation of the word?



- Mark: Angry, violent actions by many people.
- Savannah: The image is an angry mob that broke everything. Like the illustration of *The Story of Ruby Bridges*.
- Tony: That is different than this. The mob was angry but didn't burn or break into the school.
- Diana: Let's check the meaning in the dictionary. It says, a riot means a noisy, violent public disorder caused by a group or crowd of persons, as by a crowd protesting against another group, a government policy, etc., in the streets. What do you think if we use "unrest" instead of "riot"? Do you think it changed the meaning?
- Olivia: I don't know, but it sounds less violent?
- Mark: Dissatisfied with what is going on in Ferguson?
- Amber: People were upset that the police were mean to African Americans, so they want to protest to say they want equal treatments.
- Tony: I like to use unrest.
- Amber: Me too.
- Olivia: What does it say in the dictionary?
- Diana: Disturbance or turmoil. These are big words. Let's think about bias or the stereotyping the two words carry. You can search the meaning of the words from the dictionary app. You can put "riot" first, then read again and think about the meaning. Then the next time, put "unrest" and read, and think about how it makes the story different.

Students had 10 minutes of small group discussion about the choice of words, and then the large group discussion continued.

- Diana: What do you think about the meaning differences depending on the word choice?
- Mark: Umm. When I put in riot and read again, I feel the story is more violent and the newspaper blamed the protesters or African Americans.
- Savannah: Yeah, riot doesn't sound good. Unrest sounds better, but I don't know.

Olivia: I think the news using unrest gives more balanced information about Ferguson.

Diana: Right. No text is neutral. The words we use make a big difference. Every text, like books, newspapers, magazines, and commercials, all these things had some intention behind it. It is better to think about how they are positioned and what someone wants us to believe.

The students were ready to take a critical stance in terms of challenging the injustice that was done to the African Americans.

To get them to look at different perspectives regarding race issues, she asked them to reflect on why the race was such an important matter in the events of Ferguson or any other current events in which it was involved. One student said, “Race matters because racial discrimination matters. I’m not sure that if Michael Brown was White, then the police officer would have still shot him.” The other students agreed with him and said, “I would be so mad if I’m African American and cops would be mean to me because my skin color. It’s just color difference.” At this point, Diana challenged the students’ thoughts on the race issue and if it’s merely a matter of the skin color. She pushed her students to think about how stereotyping and prejudice toward African Americans plays out in the events that unfolded in Ferguson.

Diana: Does anyone want to remind us what “stereotype” is?

Jack: People believe specific things represent all people in the group.

Diana: Very good. Anyone else?

Amber: Some believe, but that is not true or unfair to someone. Boys like cars and robots, and girls like babies, cute little things.

Elene: Yeah, my sister likes blue but Daddy painted her room pink. She hates it.

Diana: That is a great example. Good job! Stereotype is when we assume

certain things about a group or specific culture or race.

Greg: That is unfair!

Diana: Yes, it is. However, we all have stereotypes toward something or someone. Like Elene's father thought her sister liked pink because girls like pink. But she didn't. This is an example of stereotype. Now, let's think about what role stereotyping played in the events in Ferguson. What kind of stereotypes do we have about African Americans?

Jason: Good at sports? NBA and NFL most players are African American.

Miranda: Not in figure skating. I can't see any African Americans in figure skating. All players and coaches are all Whites.

Andrew: African Americans are strong.

Jack: They are good rappers.

Mark: They were described as either victims or criminals in the books or movies. The bad guys.

Olivia: Most of them are poorer than the average whites. My neighbors are all white. I never see any African American in my neighborhood.

Jack: Because you live up on "the hill." No blacks up the hill.

Diana: What do you mean by "the hill"?

Jack: The hill, over the island. Doctors, lawyers, and rich peoples live there.

[Many students signaled the teacher to agree with his comment.]

Savannah: Many African Americans are poor so they have a chance to be involved in crime more than Whites. Not all of them but many of them.

Diana: How would you say the police officer's point of view about his response to Michael Brown related to the stereotypes of African Americans?

Mark: The cop might have assumed the guy [Michael Brown] had a problem and felt threatened. He might think he needed to protect himself. I'm not defending him, but maybe his response is from that. He shouldn't do that, though.

These conversations demonstrated students' deeper level of understanding on the issues of race and the underlying cause of the racial injustice. The students understood stereotyping played an important role in the events in Ferguson. In particular, Mark was aware of how African Americans are represented in the media and understood how the representation played into issues of race. It was clear that the students identified how the stereotypes of African Americans were formed and how it could affect people's unfair and biased perceptions and responses to African Americans. Furthermore, the students recognized the wealth gap between different races. Jack illustrated the gap via the words "the hill." The hill was the area near a local cliff, and it had very nice views and better air because it was higher elevation than other areas in the valley that most residents lived in. The housing price in that area was high and locals called the area "the hill" as a symbol of wealth and middle class. The students recognized the main residents of the hill were rich, and it represented their social status. They identified economic inequality as one of the causes and consequences of racial problems.

### **Paying Attention to Sociopolitical Systems**

Diana wanted to provide more information to analyze the underlying cause of the racial tension associated with poverty. She showed several charts that indicated the wealth gap between Blacks and Whites. One was a pie chart to show an income gap between Blacks and Whites. Another one was a bar chart to show homeownership rates by the race and ethnicity of each household. One student said, "All of these things combined to push many African Americans into poverty." When Diana provided an unemployment rate and an income gap by race, one student did the math and said, "More

than one fourth of Blacks live in poverty and one tenth of Whites do.” “African Americans have lower incomes than Whites.”

The students analyzed the chart information. The students pointed out that one underlying cause of the racial tension was the large financial gap between Blacks and Whites. They identified that a large part of the poverty of African Americans was shown in lower home ownership among African Americans compared to other races and ethnicities. The students kept saying, “If I don’t have a job and I can’t get money, how can I buy food, a car, and the things my family needs?” “If I don’t have money and I can’t do things that I want, I’ll be so frustrated.” They also questioned, “Why do African Americans earn less than other races?” They attempted to understand the relationship between economic inequality and racism toward African Americans. It meant that they could begin to articulate the ways that racism impacts society today and start to look for ways to address it.

By analyzing and synthesizing the charts, the students realized poverty, unemployment, and low income are pervasive among African Americans, and many of them have to face it every day. Through discussing the current events in Ferguson, the students were able to know the economic situation in Ferguson mirrored the national picture. Moreover, the teacher helped them focus on complexity. Complexity allowed them to examine not just one narrative about an issue but many stories and explanations. Students recognized that there were many stories behind the racial issues. They identified that economic inequality between different races was the most compelling cause of the racial issues in addition to recognizing that the stereotyping problem was interwoven as

the one of main sources of the racial tension.

After the intensive discussions on current events regarding racial issues, the teacher and her students seemed to be comfortable talking about race and racism. Later, in the teacher interview, Diana said, “Even though some conversations made me nervous, I tried hard to signal to them that it’s okay to talk about race and racism in the classroom.” She smiled and added, “I think they understand why race matters. The data analysis about the wealth gap showed them the root cause of the racial problem.” We thought that it was important to teach the students how to make connections between events in Ferguson and similar cases that had emerged in recent history. Along with the current events in Ferguson, Diana introduced other cases, such as the Eric Garner case, the Los Angeles unrest of 1992, and the Cincinnati unrest of 2001 that involved similarities to the events surrounding Ferguson. After introducing these cases, Diana asked students what connections there were across these cases. In doing so, the teacher helped the students understand how historical events in the past connect to current events and how the past impacts the present.

### **Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice**

Diana helped her students engage in writing, reading, researching, and making artwork regarding social justice theme issues after participating in critical discussion of literature. Students were motivated and passionate about their work from the initial brainstorming stages through presentation for larger audiences, including their peers, other classroom teachers and students, parents, and school staff. As a result of their

interest in their topics, students sought to move beyond merely doing classroom activities and make a difference in their causes by taking action.

### **Developing Academic Skills Through Student-Centered Learning Experiences**

In Diana's classroom, it was common routine for students to examine social justice issues through multicultural children's literature. By implementing the multicultural children's literature instruction focused on the theme of social justice, the students developed academic skills in reading comprehension, writing, searching for information, using social studies technical vocabulary and methods, and using computers and other electronic media. Multicultural children's literature with social justice themes used for this study were selected along with this discipline. Through the multicultural children's literature instruction, the teacher aimed at helping students acquire social studies knowledge and skills through more interesting and relevant resources about the world in which they lived.

In addition, the students strengthened their basic literacy skills by reading a range of genres, including expository texts, memoirs, biography and autobiography, realistic fiction, historical fiction, and poetry, as well as by writing personal, persuasive, and informative essays related to social justice issues. For example, the students used multicultural children's literature as a springboard to enhance their understanding of American history and historical figures as well as to learn about the biography and autobiography genre. The students were able to connect to historical figures through a series of multicultural children's literature, such as *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad*

*in the Sky* (Ringgold, 2009), *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad* (Levine, 2009), *Abe Lincoln Remembers* (Turner, 2001), *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995), *Through My Eyes* (Bridges, 2009), *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks* (Ringgold, 1999), *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote* (Stone, 2008), *I Could Do That: Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote* (White, 2005), and *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011). The various content of these books made the students understand the historical figures from various points of view related to the topic of social justice. After the students read a biography of a historical figure, they found information about the figure that they chose for writing an autobiography.

As part of the biography unit, Diana connected writing an autobiography of their chosen historical figure to a living wax museum project, where they chose to portray their respective historic Americans. Students wrote an autobiography from the perspective of the historical figure that they chose as if the historical figure had written it about their own life. In the living wax museum, students became wax statues and presented the life of their chosen historical figure. Visitors walked around the wax statues in the museum and pushed a button to activate the statues. Each student dressed up and posed as the historical figure they had researched and written the autobiography, and they presented the life of their historical figure. The students chose famous Americans who made significant contributions to shape American society.

To prepare for the project, students wrote a 20-30 second autobiography of their figure and memorized it for the museum visitors. In the exhibition, the students presented famous male historical figures, such as Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, and



George Washington, and women figures, such as Rachel Louise Carson, Hellen Keller, Betsy Ross, Sacagawea, and Clara Barton. Diana was very surprised that the students paid more attention to the women figures, and several boys chose the women figures for their presentations. She added that “Kids weren’t used to choosing women characters. Harriet Tubman, Sylvia Mendez, Esther Morris, they were never chosen before”. Diana’s students invited students of other grades, teachers, school staff, and parents to the exhibition at their classroom. Figures 5-7 are students’ posters of women historical figures that the students presented at the wax museum exhibition.

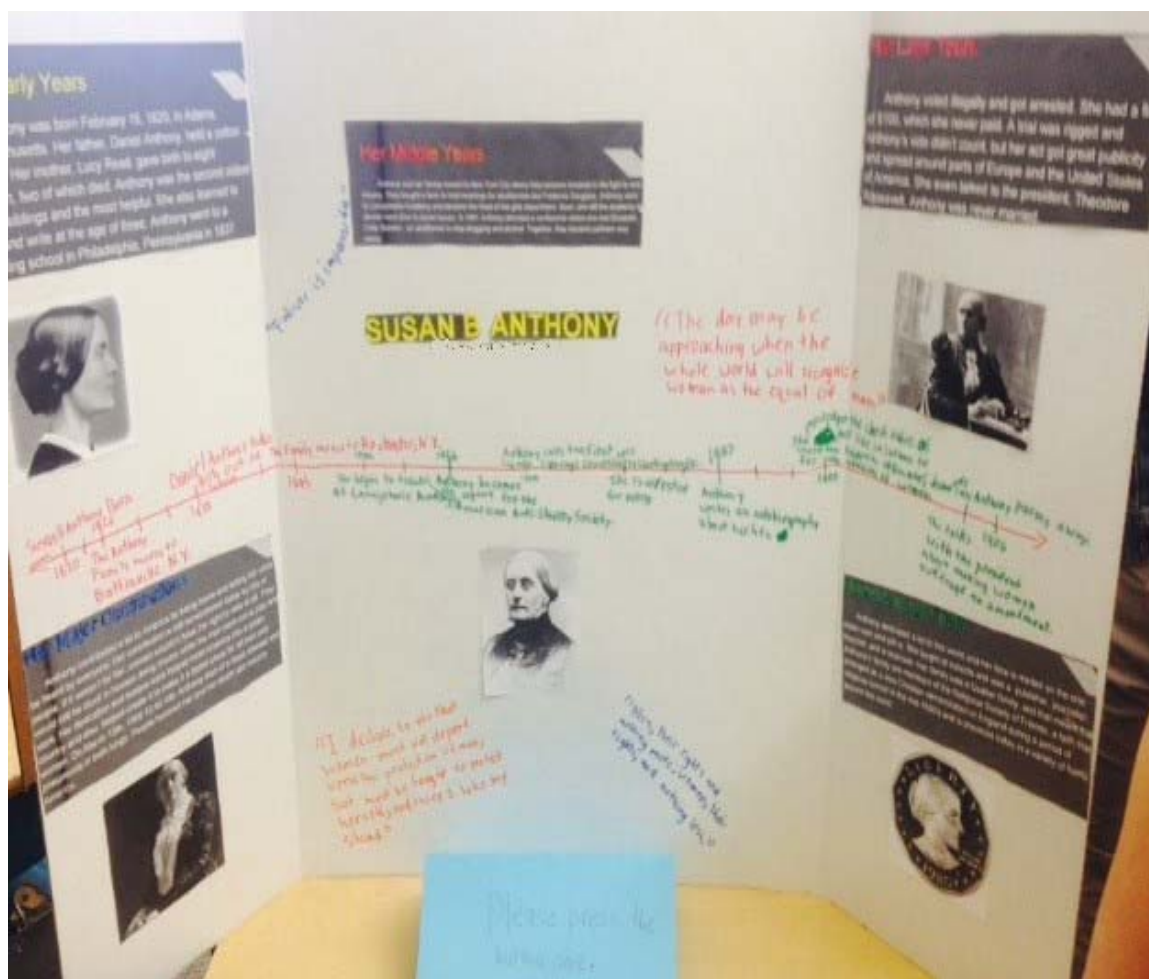


Figure 5. Amber’s autobiography poster about Susan B. Anthony.



Figure 6. Tony's autobiography poster about Rosa Parks.

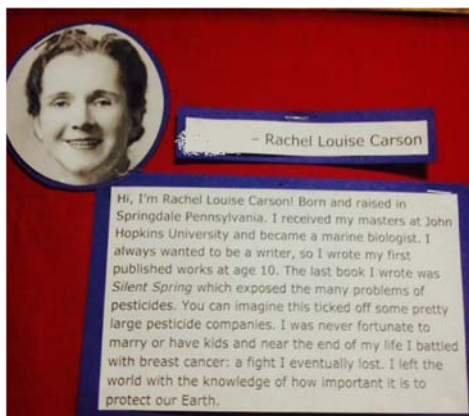
This project was a great opportunity for students to highlight many significant contributions of women to American history and the improvement of American society. Figures 8-10 are students' autobiographies of American historical figures that the students prepared for the wax museum presentation. Diana exhibited students' autobiographies with each historical figure's picture on the bulletin board in the hallway wall.



Figure 7. Heidy's autobiography poster about Georgia O'Keeffe.



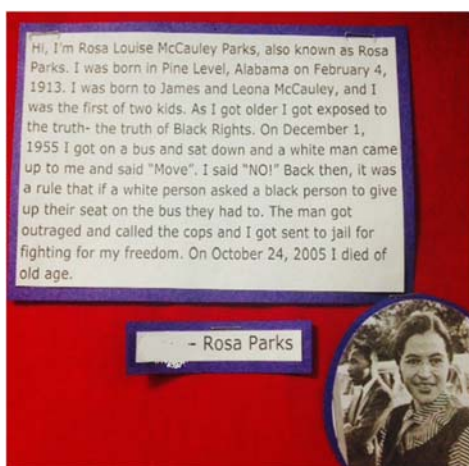
Figure 8. Diana's students' autobiographies collections.



Rachel Louise Carson

Hi, I'm Rachel Louise Carson! Born and raised in Springdale Pennsylvania. I received my masters at John Hopkins University and became a marine biologist. I always wanted to be a writer, so I wrote my first published works at age 10. The last book I wrote was *Salient Spring* which exposed the many problem of pesticide companies. You can imagine this ticked off some pretty large pesticide companies. I was never fortunate to marry or have kids and near the end of my life I battled with breast cancer: a fight I eventually lost. I left the world with the knowledge of how important it is to protect our Earth.

Figure 9. Miranda's autobiography about Rachel Louise Carson.



Rosa Parks

Hi, I'm Rosa Louise McCauley Parks, also known as Rosa Parks. I was born in Pine Level, Alabama on February 4, 1913. I was born to James and Leona McCauley, and I was the first of two kids. As I got older I got exposed to the truth- the truth of Black Rights. On December 1, 1955 I got on a bus and sat down and a white man came up to me and said "Move". I said "NO!" Back then, it was a rule that if a white person asked a black person to give up their seat on the bus they had to. The man got outraged and called the cops and I got sent to jail for fighting for my freedom. On October 24, 2005 I died of old age.

Figure 10. Tony's autobiography about Rosa Parks.

Engaging in multicultural children's literature accelerated students' ability to make decisions, think critically and creatively, and synthesize knowledge beyond the subject areas. According to Diana:

Those books help them to identify and transfer significant information needed for solving real-world problems in their lives. I like the discussion part a lot. It will help cooperative learning. They can put themselves in other's shoes. I think kids must have a better attitude toward oneself as an active learner and as a member of the classroom community. I always emphasize to the kids that they are a

“community.” They’re used to discussing things that they think are important. I can read the books in the morning, read aloud, or reading block. I need to change some of the routines, but that’s alright. We’ll be fine.

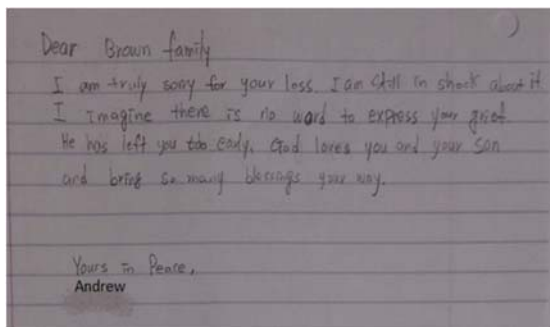
Diana read aloud multicultural children’s literature two or three times per week during the study. She also had non-fiction read-alouds several times per week in place of her fiction read-alouds. The students loved to read literature that presented social issues because it was different than traditional happy-ending types of stories that they are used to reading. They were rooting for the main characters’ efforts and challenges against social inequalities and injustices, such as racial and gender discrimination. Through multicultural children’s literature instruction, students acquired social studies knowledge about the world they lived in through more interesting and relevant resources.

### **Inviting Students to a Variety of Meaningful Writings**

Diana provided opportunities for students to choose their writing assignments from a variety genres and contexts. When students chose their own topics, they became more engaged and motivated to write. She established a supportive environment in her classroom by encouraging students to collaborate throughout the writing process by brainstorming ideas about a topic, responding to drafts, or helping peers revise their writings.

**Letter to Ferguson.** The discussion of race and racism invited students to understand the impact of racism and made racial discrimination visible to them, as well as further allowing them to address it through social action. Diana suggested to the students that they should write letters to people who were involved in the event in

Ferguson. They wrote to police officers, the families of Michael Brown, and people who lived in Ferguson. She asked them to frame the letters differently based on the person they were writing to. During this activity, students developed their writing skills but also learned how to put themselves in other's shoes. Writing these letters was about healing and moving forward. It developed their empathetic social intelligence. Students' letters to police officers, the families of Michael Brown, and Ferguson residents (see Figures 11-13) illustrated how students approached writing from different point of views while they conveyed their emotion and referenced texts as result of reading and discussing the books and news articles related to the race and racism.

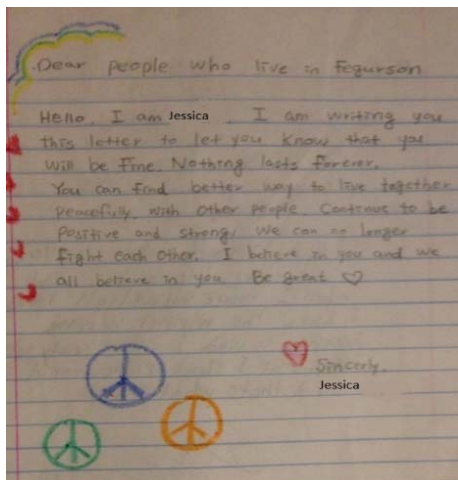


Dear Brown Family

I am truly sorry for your loss. I am still in shock about it. I imagine there is no word to express your grief. He has left you too early. God loves you and your son and bring so many blessings your way.

Yours in Peace,  
Andrew

Figure 11. Andrew's letter to Michael Brown's family.



Dear people who live in Ferguson

Hello. I am Jessica. I am writing you this letter to let you know that you will be fine. Nothing lasts forever. You can find a better way to live together peacefully with other people. Continue to be positive and strong. We can no longer fight each other. I believe in you and we all believe in you. Be great.

Sincerely,  
Jessica

Figure 12. Jessica's letter to Ferguson residents.

Dear Police officers

I am writing to you to send my regret for the Ferguson shooting. Why do policemen keep shooting unarmed black people? I don't know all the story behind the shooting but it is not right to shoot to unarmed citizens. It is wrong to judge one race for the poor actions of some people in the group. I know you are mostly good people. I understand how tough it must be to have people attack you for the events. But it is worth it to think why many people blame the policemen. It is time to make a change, difference. Take a step back and look at it from the blacks, the victim family's point of view. Then see how you feel about the situation. May be after that you will regret what you did.

Best,  
Jason

Dear police officers

I am writing to you to send my regret for the Ferguson shooting. Why do policemen keep shooting unarmed black people? I don't know all the story behind the shooting but it is not right to shoot to unarmed citizens. It is wrong to judge one race for the poor actions of some people in the group. I know you are mostly good people. I understand how tough it must be to have people attack you for the events. But it is worth it to think why many people blame the policemen. It is time to make a change, difference. Take a step back and look at it from the blacks, the victim family's point of view. Then see how you feel about the situation. May be after that you will regret what you did.

Best,  
Jason

Figure 13. Jason's letter to the police officers.

Through this writing project, students examined how language was used in the two different news articles. It helped them become adept at identifying political agendas in texts that had been framed as neutral. Moreover, the discussions of race and racism encouraged them to focus on the complexity of the racial conflict. This supported the process of understanding multiple dimensions of the root causes of racial problems. Writing letters from multiple perspectives enabled students to decide what kind of stories they wanted to tell. All these activities enabled students to not only develop their sociopolitical and socioeconomic awareness of racial issues but also enhance their higher-order and critical thinking skills. The teacher provided a safe space for students to make connections, make inferences, synthesize, and evaluate information. Most importantly, they developed skills related to emotional awareness, empathy, and other skills necessary to promote critical consciousness as engaged citizens.

**Using poetry for bridging students with the world.** Poetry was an important genre that the fifth graders needed to study in their reading and writing workshops. Diana

encouraged students to read, write, and familiarize themselves with different types of poetry, such as Haiku and verse novels. She used several examples of poetry related to the themes of slavery, racial segregation, and immigration. For example, the picture book *Never Forgotten* (McKissack, 2011) is a story about a family that had been split apart in West Africa due to the slave trade. This book combined tales of Mende blacksmiths and Caribbean legends of hurricanes with lyrical poems. It contains tales such as when a young black boy was kidnapped and sold into slavery and the father who was left behind to grieve the loss of his son.

This book sought to answer a question: When Africans were kidnapped by the slave traders and sent across the sea, how did the people left behind feel? The story resonated among students, connecting it to the experience of losing a family member or a family pet. Karla shared her experience about the loss of her grandmother and how she felt. She said, "I cried all day. I just loved her so much," and added, "I felt there was a wall between me and the world." Jill shared the memory of the loss of her dog. She said, "He was my little brother. He was only 5 years old when he left us. We would play together, and I couldn't even believe he wasn't here anymore. He wasn't just a dog... of course he was a dog...but to me he was so much more. My mom said that it was okay to cry, but I couldn't even cry because I was so sad."

Moreover, students empathized with the father who lost his son and discussed the fact that the slave trade caused parents and families in Africa to live in fear of their children being kidnapped, never to be seen again. For instance, Miranda commented, "I can't imagine how they must have felt when they saw the slave traders," and she began to



read from a scene that described the heinous acts slave traders committed across the ocean:

The drums speak  
 A single message—a warning:  
 Beware  
 Of pale men riding in large seabirds  
 With great white wings.  
 Beware  
 Of men with the blue of the sky in their eyes,  
 Who steal upriver  
 Through the Great Forest mists  
 And into the Savannah Lands in search of slaves—  
 Us.  
 Beware!  
 Hear the moans and groans of their captives—  
 Hundreds, thousands stolen.

She added that the saddest part to her was “We rarely speak of the Taken.” She stated that the kidnapping of Africans kids was a “brutal ferocity” by “the White.” Miranda reading aloud helped other students to consider that the issues of slavery were not an ancient thing of the past and to understand slavery from the viewpoint of families whose members were kidnapped African children. Amber said, “My feelings about slavery are so entirely awful. I can’t even begin to imagine them.” Jill continued, “It’s horrible. To cause people to be separated from their families and sell them. I wish it never happened.” Other students continued to comment on the subject of slavery. Kale was emotional and said that “The slave traders and slave owners had to be experienced and know how hard it must be to live as a slave. I want to make them work in a strange place with no pay. From sun rise until it becomes dark.” Heidi disagreed with his argument and said, “I think doing the same thing to them isn’t a very good idea. To get even with them for the pain of the past is not the solution to the slavery problem.” These comments

demonstrated students' understanding of the theme of the book. Students stated that slavery was "the thing should not be repeated in history" and suggested that the author wanted to teach the reader about the injustice of slavery. Students understood the lesson in the book, empathized, and made connections to their own lives.

Understanding racial discrimination and segregation through poetry continued through the reading and discussion of the book *Love to Langston* (Medina, 2002). Fourteen original poems were key in introducing students to the story and the life of Langston Hughes, one of the leaders and the most famous poet of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. These poems also highlighted major events in history related to racial discrimination. The poems in the book touched students' hearts. Students were able to learn about Harlem, slavery, and Jim Crow laws through the life of Langston Hughes. Students especially liked two poems titled "First Grade" and "Jim Crow Row." In "First Grade," students learned some of Langston's feelings about racial segregation as a young boy in school. Susan shared that she was moved by the following verse:

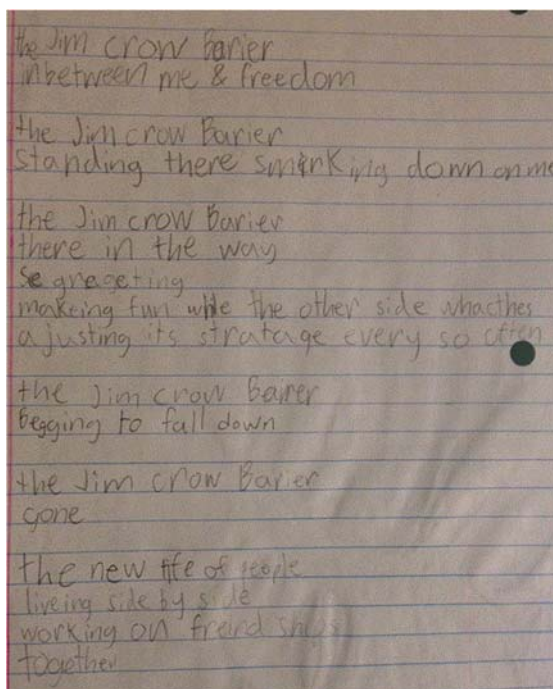
She tells one kid  
not to eat licorice  
or he'll turn black  
like me

She said that licorice was her favorite treat and "it's so mean to treat children and to teach them to say that." The other poem that caught students' attention was how the Jim Crow Laws made Langston and other African American students feel. He said:

Jim Crow is a law  
that separates white and black  
making white feel better  
and black feel left back

This poem depicts when a seventh grader named Langston Hughes protested his teacher's segregation and confinement of black students to one row in the classroom. After reading the poem, Jason commented that "when I heard it (the poem) I was stunned. He uses just a few words but I can really understand how he felt about being discriminated as a Black." This book helped the students to think differently about racism. Kale also wrote a poem about the Jim Crow laws inspired by this poem (see Figure 14) and stated, "Even when he was excluded, Langston fought for what he knew was right. The teacher had to put kids together in the classroom." While he was lacking in other areas of writing, writing poetry on the theme of segregation motivated him to express his strong voice for desegregation and fairness, despite his limited vocabulary. Poetry provided a platform for students who were reluctant to engage in other aspects of writing because poems could be easily scaffolded, and poems helped them meet the challenge of creative engagement in writing. According to Diana, "Some kids can't even finish the first sentence when writing, but poetry isn't quite as intimidating for them. They are not stressed out thinking that they have to write a huge amount." Reading and writing poetry opened venues for students to speak and listen to their own and others' authentic voices.

Diana also used poetry to teach the history and theme of immigration while helping the students understanding cultural differences. She taught students how to understand the character's emotions through the reading and discussing of the verse novel *Inside Out & Back Again* (Lai, 2011). The book is a story of a Vietnamese refugee girl named Hà and her family that are forced to move to the U.S. because of the Vietnam War



The Jim Crow Barrier

In between me and freedom  
The Jim Crow Barrier  
Standing there smirking down on me

The Jim Crow Barrier  
There in the way  
Segregating  
Making fun while the other side watches  
Adjusting its strategy every so often

The Jim Crow Barrier  
Begging to fall down

The Jim Crow Barrier  
Gone

The new life of people  
Living side by side  
Working on friendships  
Together

Figure 14. Kale's poem about Jim Crow laws.

and her struggles with learning English and confronting bullies. Diana read aloud several poems from the book and asked students to interpret and describe the character's emotions. She provided a character trait worksheet that illustrated character traits, such as being humility, bravery, humor, or sadness, to help students interpret the character traits in the poems. Identifying character traits in literature was an important skill that students could improve as part of reading comprehension and developing their emotional awareness. Understanding the character's actions, motivations, and thoughts assisted the students to better understand and appreciate the story. As students improved their inferencing skills, this in turn helped them to understand how to apply and use their own experiences in developing their writing.

Diana read aloud from five poems titled "English Above All," "American

Chicken,” “Unpack and Repack,” “Black and White and Yellow and Red,” and “War and Peace.” Students liked “War and Peace” the most, and they discussed the part where Hà said,

No one would believe me  
but at times  
I would choose  
Wartime in Saigon  
over  
Peacetime in Alabama.

In the following excerpt of small group discussion, students demonstrated that they became more familiar with poetry, found the objective of the poem, and thought about the emotion of the character. The plot, character, and mood of the poem inspired them to enthusiastically participate in the discussion.

Jessica: I can't understand why she missed Saigon so much. There was a war and she could die.

Andrew: Yeah, I understand why she complained, but America saved her and gave her a new home. She seemed like she wanted to go back to Vietnam. No matter how much nicer and safer America was than her country.

Heidy: Hey, everyone misses their home and it's a natural thing. I miss Nepal a lot. I *want* to go back again someday. It's kind of a metaphor because she was isolated. Think about it. She just came to America and everything was very strange to her. American food, English, school, and a new house, everything. Even the kids made fun of her. If you were her, would you like America that quick? She wasn't happy to stay here because she needed time to be here and know about American life.

Jill: But that's ok. Everyone needs time to be familiar with new things. When I learned Spanish the first time, I was so confused, but it's okay now.

Whitney: Yeah, it's okay to be lost and confused. Even when I went to summer camp for a week, I missed home. I can understand her.

The students' conversation indicated that students were able to consciously

articulate information about the character's emotion and infer a cause of the character's emotional state. Students were able to make similar connections to their own lives by discussing the character's emotional state. Other poems that Diana read aloud also described the Vietnamese girl Hà's new experiences in Alabama. These emotionally laden stories fostered the students' ability to be more engaged in the struggles of an immigrant girl named Hà. The poetry lesson related to the themes of immigration helped students not only interpret the character emotions for literature comprehension, but also to understand the difficulties and obstacles in settlement from refugee children's perspectives.

In their writer's workshop, Diana asked students to write a Haiku about racism. They liked that the haiku was short and they could write about any subject in a variety of contexts. Using a graphic organizer, students brainstormed a list of words about racism. Students then jotted down the number of syllables next to each of the brainstormed words. This helped students to play with words and phrases and find different combinations that they liked with five and seven syllables. Each student shared their Haiku with their peers. Figures 15-20 are students' Haikus about racism. Writing a Haiku about racism was an excellent opportunity for students to express and synthesize information they had learned through reading and discussing other books about racism, discrimination, and inequality.

|  |
|--|
| Beaten and enslaved<br>Blacks hearts crumbled, souls destroyed<br>for the pale faces |
|--|

*Figure 15.* Whitney's Haiku on racism and discrimination.

The world is for whites?  
 Black, yellow, brown, red, and white  
 The world is for all

*Figure 16.* Andrew's Haiku on racism and discrimination.

I am brown  
 My friends are black, yellow, white  
 I like everyone

*Figure 17.* Karla's Haiku on racism and discrimination.

It does not matter  
 If you're black or white  
 You are important

*Figure 18.* James's Haiku on racism and discrimination.

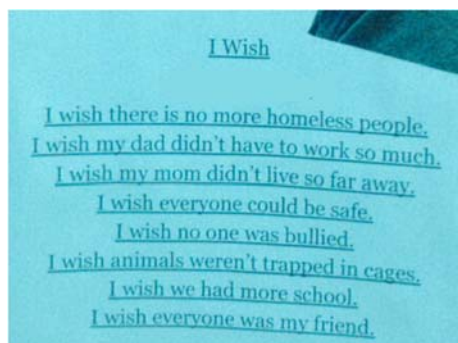
We should remember  
 Lilies bloom from black soils  
 All colors special!

*Figure 19.* Amber's Haiku on racism and discrimination.

Why are you silent  
 Why are you just looking at  
 You are a coward

*Figure 20.* George's Haiku on racism and discrimination.

Diana also encouraged students to write "I Wish" poems about fairness. On the bulletin board in the hallway, she displayed the poems with pictures that depicted every student blowing a dandelion. Before writing the poem, students shared their own definition of fairness to have an idea for their writing subject. Figure 21 is Karla's "I Wish" poem on fairness.



### I wish

I wish there is no more homeless people.  
 I wish my dad didn't have to work so much.  
 I wish my mom didn't live so far away.  
 I wish everyone could be safe.  
 I wish no one was bullied.  
 I wish animals weren't trapped in cages.  
 I wish we had more school.  
 I wish everyone was my friend.

*Figure 21.* Karla's "I Wish" poem on fairness.

Poetry broadened students' reading choices. It enabled students to access difficult themes such as racism, discrimination, or inequality in different ways. Reading and writing poetry was an opportunity for students to articulate their feelings regarding social justice issues and share them with their peers.

## Summary

The preceding findings of this chapter reveal how the fifth-grade teacher implemented critical literacy approaches in the classroom using multicultural children's literature. The teacher positively influenced the students' critical consciousness development. Four major themes emerged from the data in this study: (a) the teacher disrupted the common curriculum practices by integrating social studies and ELA and created a safe space to open students' dialogue; (b) the teacher interrogated multiple viewpoints by posing various open-ended questions to consider different accounts from the texts and students' daily experiences; (c) the teacher focused on sociopolitical issues by teaching current events and encouraging students to pay attention to sociopolitical



systems of the larger society; and (d) the teacher fostered students' actions for social justice by developing academic skills through student-centered learning experiences and assigned a variety of meaningful writing projects. In the next chapter, I will discuss the second set of findings of this study.

**CHAPTER V**  
**SECOND SET OF FINDINGS: STUDENTS ENGAGEMENT IN**  
**MEANINGFUL SOCIAL JUSTICE LEARNING**

**Overview**

In Chapter IV, I described how the teacher enacted multicultural children's literature instruction with social justice issues through critical literacy approaches and how the instruction influenced the students' critical consciousness development. In this chapter, I will illustrate the students' learning outcomes related to multicultural children's literature instruction and issues of social justice. First, I will explain how the students examined their position as readers by analyzing events of the literature and analyzing the author's and illustrator's intentions. Second, I will describe how the students explored multiple perspectives by examining multiple accounts of the same historical event and making connections with their own experiences. Third, I will illustrate how the students paid attention to the sociopolitical issues by examining power relations with social justice issues, such as racism and discrimination. Lastly, I will report how the students took actions to promote social justice by writing a petition and participating in a round table discussion with teachers. Figure 22 presents the findings of this study associated with the second research question.

**Disrupting the Commonplace**

As critical readers, students examined the intention of authors and illustrators by

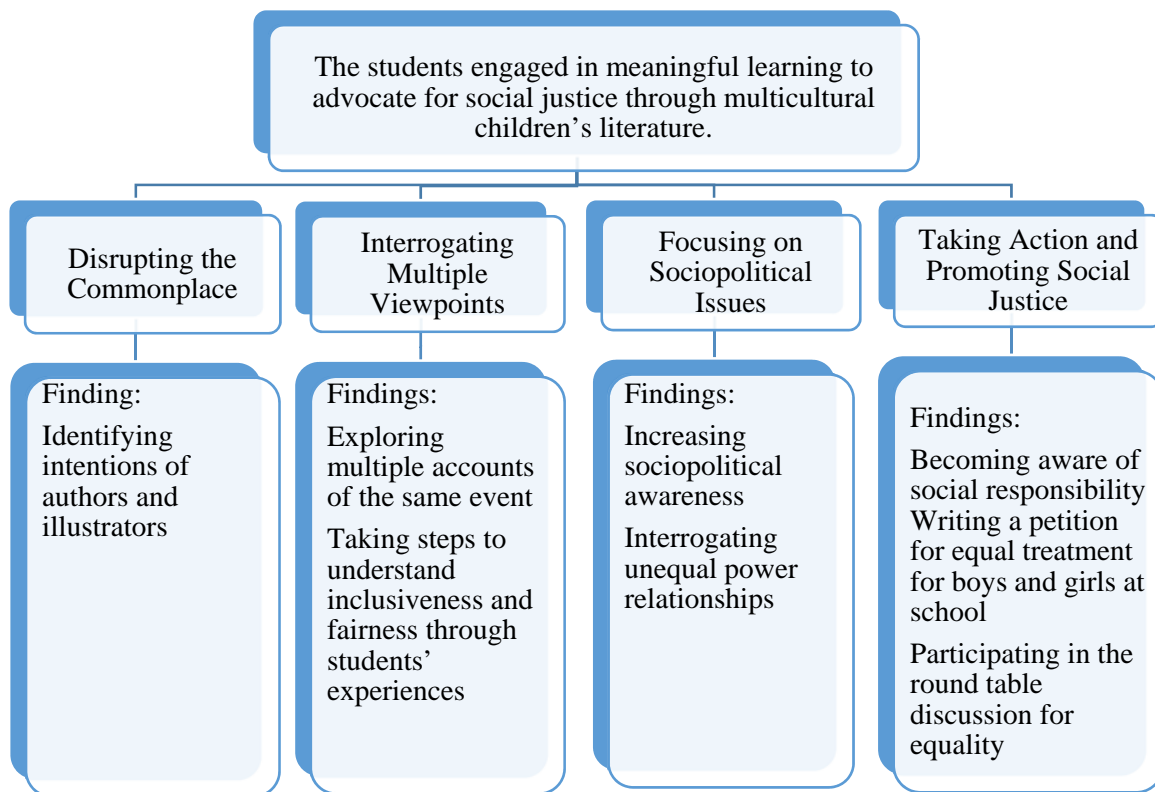


Figure 22. Findings of the research questions 2.

discussing the relation between the text and the illustrations.

### **Identifying Intentions of Authors and Illustrators**

By answering a range of questions about illustrations, students engaged in critical literacy practice. Figure 23 shows the questions that helped students examine the book illustrations.

These questions increased students' critical thinking and helped them identify the author's intention to position students as discerning readers that understood the ideology

|  |
|--|
| Who do you see in this picture? What is their clothing like?   |
| What action do you see between the people in the picture? Are they showing any kind of emotion? Is there a freedom that is being taken away? |
| What relationships do you see in the picture between the individuals or the objects?   |
| Are characters presented differently in illustrations according to their race, gender, or any other differences?                             |
| Do the illustrations change the meaning of the text?   |
| Do any characters carry negative or stereotypical connotations?  |
| Why do you think the illustrator did that?   |

*Figure 23.* Sample critical literacy questions of interrogating illustrations.

behind the author's intention. This interrogation allowed students to construct meaning and knowledge within a sociocultural and political context. Diana asked the students to examine the illustrations of the literature and to hypothesize about what the illustrator wanted them to believe. When students read and discussed the book *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001) under a theme of racism and segregation, students concluded that the illustrator wanted to show the similarities of main characters, regardless of their race. In the following transcript of an entire group discussion, Diana explicitly wondered about the illustrator's intention to develop the main characters, Joe (a White boy) and John Henry (a Black boy).

- Diana: Look at the illustrations. In most of the illustrations, Joe and John Henry were together. Do you notice any differences in their clothing and the use of color?
- Tony: They looked a lot alike. They were playing together and going to swim together. They both wore T-shirts and shorts and it didn't look different.

[Heidy agreed with sign language and a hand signal.]

Miranda: Yeah, when they shot marbles, they wore almost the same types of clothes. Only their color is different.

Andrew: They wore nothing when they swam. Just skin.

Diana: I wonder why the illustrator did that.

Jack: Maybe the author wanted to show us they were friends and equal even if they were a different race.

Heidy: I think so. The illustrator wanted to equally represent Whites and Blacks. She wanted to portray that the Black and the White wore the same kind, so we know they were equal.

Jessica: They liked shooting marbles and swimming. They both wanted to be firemen too. They were not very different.

Elene: By describing them in the similar way, the author might want to tell us all people are the same and should respect each other. Not depending on the skin color. Even if they were the Black and the White, they were good friends. The racial difference is nothing.

George: I don't know that the racial differences are nothing.... Because even the new law was passed that banned segregation, but they still couldn't go into the pool.

Diana: In the South in 1964, Joe was White and John was Black, which means John wasn't allowed to do everything Joe was. Then the law was passed that forbade segregation and opened many public places like the town pool to everyone. This book followed the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Diana: After the pool was filled with tar, I wonder how that made them feel about it. Are they showing any kind of emotion in the illustration? Yes, Savannah.

Savannah: The tone of the picture becomes darker. More grayish and brownish.

[Jill tilted her head and looked questioningly at Savannah.]

Jill: I don't think so. Still looks like the same tone.

Mark: They looked very disappointed. Especially John Henry.

- Diana: I wonder how that made John Henry feel about himself.
- Olivia: John's face looked like pointless and sad. And very upset. He didn't say that, but his face told me, "This is unfair!"
- Diana: That's a great observation. Go ahead, Mark.
- Mark: I like this picture. [He pointed out the illustration that portrays John Henry's face with complex emotions of anger, sadness, frustration, etc.] This tells me many things.
- Diana: What kind of things? For example?
- Mark: Well...first, how the Blacks felt at that time when they couldn't go the same place that the Whites could go. Schools, parks, buses, restaurants, libraries, movie theaters... so many places. I couldn't understand why this happened. This's ridiculous!
- Diana: While the law passed, it becomes clear to the boys that attitudes and ideas about race will take longer to evolve.
- Tony: Everything takes time.
- Elene: The book has a kind of a happy ending, though. John was able to enter the store after the law to buy ice pops that was previously for Whites only.

Students' responses demonstrated their understanding of the emotions that could come about as a result of being discriminated against the character's will, as was the case for the African American boy, John Henry, in the book *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001).

The following day while discussing the book *The Other Side* (Miller, 1998), Mark independently noticed a correspondence in the texts and the illustration. This book described the unlikely friendship that developed between two young girls despite a fence, which was a symbol of segregation that divided a little town. These two young girls, Clover, a Black girl, and Annie, a White girl, became friends across the fence. Mark identified the power balance between the main characters.

- Diana: What relationships can you see in the picture between Clover and

Annie? Are they presented differently?

Mark: In the beginning of the book, Clover seemed like she felt powerless and lonely because her mom told her never to climb over to the other side. She seemed like passive when she just stared over at the other side. But the White girl also seemed like very lonely because she was outside even if it was raining. After Clover decided to talk to the White girl, she looked strong and powerful. She looked very confident in the picture. She reached out first to the White girl. Clover always did something first. Even Clover was so cool when her friends didn't want to be with the White girl. She was a shy girl.

Diana: That's a very good observation. Did you notice other things? How's their clothing and the setting?

Mark: Clover lived in a nice big house. She had her own room and many books and dolls. The two girls were wearing very similar clothing when they sat on the fence together and met in town.

Diana: Why do you think the illustrator did that?

Mark: It is kind of the same as *Freedom Summer*. The illustrator wanted to show how similar they were and the difference of skin color shouldn't be a barrier.

Diana: A barrier?

Mark: Yes. The town segregated into the White side and the Black side. The different skin color became a barrier to all. Like the fence across the town. The Blacks couldn't go to the same school and restaurants. I would feel so bad if William [Mark's African American friend] and I couldn't go to the same place together. It isn't fair. All people should be able to go wherever they want go.

Mark's comments demonstrated his awareness of the fact that he would not accept any discrimination as a result of the racial difference.

Diana's students continued to examine illustrations in the book *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995).

Diana: Who did you see in the illustrations? What was their clothing like?

Jill: Ruby Bridges dressed up. Looked very formal.

- Susan: I really like these illustrations. She looked very confident despite whatever the mob did to her.
- Jessica: I think Ruby wanted to look nice and clean because the White mob were watching her every day. She was a kind of representative of Black folks and she knew that.
- Savannah: Blacks and Whites wore the same types of clothing. Women wore dresses and some hats. Men had suits. At the court, church, and school, people wore the same thing.
- Mark: I don't know if it was on purpose, but the illustrator colored both the White and the Black almost the same color. The White skin color was slightly lighter than the Black.
- Jill: Oh, yeah. They looked almost brown.
- Tony: Mrs. Henry too. When she was with Ruby she looked White, but when she was alone, I'm not sure she was White.
- Jason: Yes. These pictures aren't like other books. This is more realistic.
- Diana: Why do you think the illustrator did that? George.
- George: Maybe the artist wanted to show Whites and Blacks are equal. Every person can do whatever they want, regardless of their race.
- Whitney: The illustrator wanted to tell us Ruby was capable to study like other White kids. Look! [Whitney showed photographs about Ruby Bridges from *Scholastic News* magazine for her peers. She pointed out and compared White children's and Black children's' clothing.] They wore the same kind. Both looked nice.
- Diana: Thanks for showing the pictures. Are the White and the Black characters presented differently in illustrations in comparing the photos?
- Olivia: No. They are presented the same.
- George: Yeah. Same.
- Diana: Do you think the illustrations match the text?
- Jill: Yes. The book talks about how brave Ruby Bridges was in challenging racism and she looks strong and confident in the illustrations.



Whitney: The illustrations support the text. She was the first African American child to go to the White only school. She broke rules! In the picture, she looked very strong. She wasn't even upset by the angry mob. She even prayed for them.

Mark: Maybe the illustrator admired her courage, so he painted Ruby Bridges to stand out in the illustrations.

By encouraging the students' interrogation of the illustrations, the students highlighted how authors and illustrators wanted the readers to see the text in a specific way. Moreover, the critical questions to examine the illustrations helped students learn how to utilize the textual and visual information for understanding the meaning of the story.

### **Interrogating Multiple Viewpoints**

In the fifth-grade Utah Core Standards, for both social studies and ELA, students are required to put themselves in someone else's shoes. Students should know to look at the same event from the viewpoint of different people involved in the event. They also need to strive to understand how someone's perspectives could affect how they react in a situation. Along with these Core Standards, the students examined multiple accounts of the same event and understood them in connection with their own experiences.

### **Examining Multiple Accounts of the Same Event**

In fostering students to explore multiple perspectives, the teacher used multicultural children's books that were written from a variety of first person perspective, such as a Confederate soldier and a Union soldier fighting in the Civil War. In the interview, the teacher emphasized the rationale of teaching multiple perspectives using

historical events related to critical literacy.

The Civil War is a difficult period of history to teach. However, there are so many resources for the North and Union States to use but not for the Confederate States. Children struggle to understand the idea that the country was divided. Understanding a slave owner's perspective is also complex, and children are easily confused and can become upset. Using a first person's narrative from people who were there helps them to have open and honest conversations about the topic. I want to develop their understanding of how to use various accounts, critical reading, and thinking skills. It helps them not to think of it in terms of "right" or "wrong" but actually start to understand why the Southern states thought their rights and values were so important and formed their own country. Moreover, understanding multiple perspectives helps them to have a better understanding of things that have happened in the past and how they shaped the present and the future.

In order to explore different accounts of the Civil War, the students read various genres of books related to the Civil War. First, the students read the book *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994). This book was about a true story from Polacco's own family history during the Civil War. Two 15-year-old Union soldiers, Pink, an African American, and Say, a White, were protagonists of this book. During the Civil War, Pink saved the badly injured Say and took him home where Pink and his family were slaves. Pink and his mother nursed Say back to health. Pink taught Say how to read. Pink wanted to go back and fight against slavery, but Say was afraid to return to his unit. When the two boys attempted to return to their units, they were captured and taken to Andersonville, where Pink was hanged and Say was released months later.

Say did not forget their friendship, and his family told this story to their descendants to remember Pink. When the teacher ended up reading the book aloud, some students were in tears by the end of this story. This book was a useful teaching tool to help the students increase their understanding of the historical event because it allowed

them to truly put themselves in two protagonists' shoes. In addition, the students read Lincoln's biography related to the topic of slavery through the book *Abe Lincoln Remembers* (Turner, 2001). The book describes Lincoln's perspective of his own commitment to end slavery, his ethics, and his anguish at the destruction and death caused by the Civil War.

Both books depicted a story associated with slavery and the Civil War in first person's narrative. The students were able to easily understand the protagonists' motivation and actions because they were given the experience of being inside the protagonist's mind. The students felt all the emotions in that moment as the protagonist felt them, as the emotions were not filtered through the more distant third person voice. By reading and discussing the books with a first person's narrative, the students were able to develop their own character for writing a historical narrative. This helped the students see how the character would think and experience the world around them.

In addition, I found that repeated readings allowed students to become familiar and comfortable with the text. While understanding someone else's perspectives was a difficult task for the students, by reading the same text multiple times and each time trying to engage in a different perspective, they were able to have a comprehensive understanding of a particular event in history and dive deeply into the experiences of that person's perspective. For example, when they read aloud *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994), the teacher read the text as the character Say, then as the character Pink, and a third time as the character of Pink's mother. After modeling this and having students do it on their own, students discussed how they felt as that character during the reading of the text.

The students also used *The Split History of the Civil War* (Fitzgerald, 2013) to compare and contrast two different perspectives of the Civil War. The book described major events, people, and ideologies during the Civil War from both the Union and the Confederate sides' position. One half of the book represented the Union side's view of a major historical event during the Civil War. The other half recounted the Confederate side's position. This approach engaged critical thinking skills by encouraging students to look at issues from a variety of viewpoints. It helped students understand how the U.S. was at a crossroads in 1861. They grasped how people in the Southern states believed that Northerners were trying to change their way of life as well as how people in the North were upset that Southerners wanted to govern themselves and the associated issue of slavery. As the events of the Civil War unfolded, the students were able to understand how each side started to fight and how they fought for what they believed in.

In the large group discussion of the book, the students focused on understanding the Civil War from five different accounts, including perspectives of a Confederate soldier, a Union soldier, a slave, a slave owner, and President Abraham Lincoln. The students discussed how events in the U.S. would made a person think and feel and how it affected their actions. At the beginning of the unit, the students tended to criticize and even condemn the Confederate states as a primary cause of the war and the troubles that existed in the country. However, by questioning the information presented in the text and developing their own point of view and stance in each situation, students began to stop and think of it from the different perspectives. This enabled them to stop automatically assuming that whatever the Confederacy did was wrong. The discussion became a great

foundation when they wrote the historical narrative from the perspective of a character they developed using information collected from different multicultural children's books. By having students dive deeper into a perspective of their choice, they were able to better understand history as well as how a different perspective could affect the description and memory of events.

After reading and discussing different perspectives regarding the Civil War, the students wrote their own historical narrative from the perspective of a character they created who witnessed the Civil War. Before the writing, they learned basic skills for narrative writing to help them develop the narrative. These skills included choosing the main characters, time, and place; describing the feelings and desires of the main character and other characters; and the describing the main events and end of the story. Various historical fiction books and picture books related to the Civil War helped create the students' own narrative because they knew what a good story looked like before they wrote their own. The students were able to choose from one of five characters: a Confederate soldier, a Union soldier, a slave, a slave owner, and President Abraham Lincoln. The students attempted to write through the eyes of the character they chose.

The students then researched the pertinent historical information for their narrative, including important events and living conditions that might be represented in their story and how that would influence the way their character would think and act. Based on their research, they narrowed the scope of their story to the exact period or events they wished to cover. For example, one student wrote a letter to her father, a wounded Union soldier at the Battle of Gettysburg. Another student wrote an imaginary

journal entry from a Confederate soldier's perspective during the Civil War battle in which the Confederacy was finally defeated. After the students chose their setting, they outlined their narrative story with a beginning, middle, and end, showing key plot points. After students finished their first draft, they reread the story and checked historical inaccuracies by searching the Internet or referring to books related to their topic. Throughout the process of writing, the students developed their ability to write a historical narrative based on the teacher's constructive feedback. Figures 24-28 include students' historical narratives from the five different perspectives options in first person narrative or third person narrative.

Those historical narrative writings are a part of students' action that incorporate the fifth-grade writing standards, which include writing a narrative with an effective introduction, descriptive details, clear event sequences, and a conclusion as well as adding dialogue to move the story along and develop characters based on the imagined experiences or events. The students' narratives demonstrated their ability to understand

When people hear I come from the proud state of Georgia, they always assume I am fighting to defend slavery. After all that was the whole reason Georgia seceded from the Union. But that's not why I fight because I am a true-blue Southern boy and I love my state and country. The truth is, I don't know much about slavery. I don't come from money and my family has never owned slaves. We have never been wealthy enough to live on a big plantation or spend our days sitting under the shade, watching others farm our lands. We are farmers, but we farm everything ourselves. We don't grow cotton or tobacco like the big plantations do, we grow vegetables and grain to feed ourselves and our livestock. We are also very poor.

When South Carolina seceded from the Union I knew war was coming. The thought of a fancy new uniform, three square meals and a new adventure stirred my blood but didn't call me to fight. It was the money that did it. In the South, if you don't have money you aren't worth much and we ain't worth nothing but our name. The steady pay from being a soldier will help put food on our table and help my little sister go to school. I would love to see her make a better life for herself so, in a way, I fight for her.

*Figure 24.* Jill's historical narrative from the Confederate soldier's perspective.

I am a soldier for the Union. I have been in this war long before it ever started. I grew up in the South and watched as my Daddy cared for our slaves like no other man I had ever seen and pretty soon, when I was old enough, he couldn't take it any longer. He quit his plantation and we moved North. Little by little he started printing information about the awful attitudes of my birthplace. He had some of his articles published in different Newspapers, and the older I became, the more proud I was of him. Despite his opinions on slavery, I also felt that the South was important to our national security. It wasn't long ago that we had become a new nation, and many of us in the North felt that if the South slipped away, we'd be lost to fight off foreign invaders and once again we'd be ruled by foreigners.

I had come to love my America too much, and so I decided to fight. I'm here fighting for my cause and for daddy's. The days are long, hard, and hot. So often, after a long day of waiting around and polishing my gun I start to think about my family in New York. I think of my husband and children. I miss them dearly, but one day they'll be proud of me like I am proud of my father. I know that a woman isn't welcome in the war, but I've always been strong, and fast, and I just knew I had to fight. Our family has fought long and hard with words, but I couldn't let a moment pass me by to fight for the perseverance of our nation. I have to be really careful sometimes. No one even knows I left to join the war, I told them I was going out to Virginia to check on a new printing press. I was too. I mean, I had thought about joining the cause, but I guess I hadn't decided until I got further south and I started to remember what it was all like. I cut my hair, pulled out some eyelashes, rubbed dirt on my face, and enlisted in the army. I told them my name was Derrick. I told them I was 19 and that all of my family was dead. I was white enough and skinny enough, they assigned me right to the front lines.

I miss reading daddy's paper and thinking that all of this mess is just philosophical, and not real, and convoluted. I hear that Mr. Lincoln is a good man. A lot of people talk about him like he has a vision and a lot really don't like him. I don't know him, so what do I know. I just know that if his war can make me into a good person, maybe it'll all be worth the fight.

*Figure 25.* Olivia's historical narrative from the Union soldier's perspective.

"The U.S. of America, the land of the free." Not for me, not for mama, and not for no one that looks like me. We are slaves. Mr. Johnson owns us and we work all day every day for him. We do what he wants when he wants it. I mostly work in the cotton fields. It is so hot and my fingers bleed constantly, because they never have time to heal. I didn't use to pick cotton. I used to be in the house serving the family and guests. It was a lot nicer there, and I was treated better. Then one day Mr. Johnson caught me reading a newspaper. Us colored folk aren't allowed to read. I think it is because the white people don't want us to know nothing. They want to keep us in ignorance. I heard that there are slaves that escape on the underground railroad. Maybe that is way they don't want us to know much. They need and want us to stay. They want to own us forever. I know am in the cotton fields as punishment. I hope one day I can leave. I don't know much for sure, since most of us don't know how to read, but if we do we can't read. But I do know that this isn't going to last forever. Mr. President Lincoln is on our side I believe. I hear he is going to band slavery. I sure hope so.

*Figure 26.* Mark's historical narrative from the slave's perspective.

Daddy got himself another couple of new slaves today. He bought him from his friend over in Borough House, the same place he got the last batch. It seems like they just keep coming and our fields keep growing. He always said he never wanted a plantation like those other men, but sometimes it seems like I'm seeing more black faces than a small-scale farm would have wandering around.

They used to be my friends, and Daddy's friends too. He said that they were helping us move ahead. The north is buying cotton in greater amounts than we've ever seen. They keep getting ahead off of what we sell them but then they turn around and tell us we shouldn't have our people working as slaves. They think all of us are as bad as some of those plantation owners that treat their workers like animals. They look past the fact that they pay their factory workers nothing while they're being injured and killed every day in the factories. Now I'm hoping we never turn into one of those people, but the more we get around this place, the harder it is to know them by name like I used to when it was just Adams, Abigail, and the kids.

Figure 27. Elene's historical narrative from the slave owner's perspective.

#### Master Cox's Plight

Bill Cox anxiously paced in his study, agitated by the news that the country was at war. He's heard nothing but news of the war and the fight over slavery. As a wealthy plantation owner that depended on slavery, the thought that it could be abolished was a particularly unsettling idea.

"What would become of me?" Bill growled to the portrait of his late father that hung behind his polished desk. A desk that is usually well-organized, but has lately become cluttered. "What would become of our home?"

Bill's biggest fear was tarnishing his family's good name and the legacy that was left to him by his father. He couldn't shame his father like that. The Union soldiers could NOT be victorious in this war! He could NOT lose his property and livelihood!

"Master Cox," a timid voice sounded from the office door. "Mr. Warren come to see you."

Bill glared at the slave girl, Harriet, who began to quiver where she stood. He felt mild satisfaction at his ability to strike fear in the girl. She belonged to him, as did the rest of his slaves.

"Don't just stand there," Bill sneered. "Let Mr. Moore know that I'm ready to see him."

"Yes, sir." Harriet nodded frantically as she raced out the door.

Bill sighed, rubbing his temples with the fingers of his right hand.

*What am I going to do if those Union soldiers win this war?* Bill thought helplessly.

Figure 28. Tony's historical narrative from the slave owner's perspective.



the Civil War from multiple perspectives. The writing activity helped them to improve their critical thinking and reading skills by researching and evaluating relevant information for their writings. Students analyzed both primary and secondary sources regarding the Civil War, read different texts, both fiction and nonfiction. While they learned about these perspectives, they chose a character to develop for their own piece of narrative writing. Furthermore, by reading and writing from various viewpoints the students were able to see a situation from different perspectives and think more flexibly and critically.

### **Taking Steps to Understand Inclusiveness and Fairness Through Students' Experiences**

The students understood the concept of inclusiveness and fairness through their own experiences. The following event that took place in the cafeteria helped students to comprehend those abstract concepts from children's perspectives. One day in March after lunch, Diana and I prepared a book lesson for *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001) related to the topic of racism, discrimination, and inequality. The classroom suddenly became very rowdy. Students gathered and argued about seating problems in the cafeteria. Diana asked students what happened during lunch time. Andrew got his tray and sat next to Mark, a popular boy among the fifth graders, and two other boys sat down in the extra seats next to Andrew. While Andrew left to get his salad, one of the two boys took Andrew's seat and refused to move. Andrew was upset and they kept arguing during lunch time. Then Mr. Whitaker, a teacher who was in charge of regulating punishments, found out and

punished them. They could not play outside during lunch recess for two weeks. Students spoke about the event to me and Diana.

Jessica: They kept yelling so Mr. Whitaker pulled them out.

Heidy: George and James said, “You can’t sit at my table. I won’t move. You need to move.”

Andrew: That was my seat!

Diana: Wait, hang on. Do we really have “my table”? Really? Aren’t we a community?

Jessica: No such thing.

Diana: That’s right. If I heard from someone, “You’re not good enough to teach me,” then I would be really sad. That kind of comment makes your friend hurt. Really hurt. It doesn’t feel good. Doesn’t feel right.

Diana decided to address the cafeteria event by exploring the theme of racism and discrimination in the literature. Before reading *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001), she provided an explanation for the complex content in the literature. Diana felt it was necessary to develop students’ background knowledge beyond simply reading the text. She felt compelled to address complex historical and social issues, such as racism and other related inequality, especially when reading and discussing the book *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001).

Diana showed images of discriminating signs, including a sign for the White waiting room and the Colored waiting room at a bus station, a sign for the Colored water tap at a drinking fountain, etc. These photographs helped her students who are mostly White to understand the concepts of discrimination. It was beneficial to the homogenous body of students to have a historical sense of society at that time. In her lesson reflection interview, Diana stated, “They know that the color of skin is one-way people judge others

and that it is an example of discrimination.” She reread a few paragraphs from *White Socks Only* (Coleman, 1996) that particularly depicted a little African American girl that drank from a water fountain that said “White only” and was yelled at by someone who was White. Diana asked students to compare and contrast discrimination against the little girl in the story and the cafeteria event. Students collectively pointed out that the cafeteria event was an example of discrimination.

Diana continued reading aloud from *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001). The students pushed themselves to think about social justice issues such as inequality, discrimination, and racism that might be unfamiliar or uncomfortable to them. Those were difficult topics for the students, especially the mostly White students. The two books, *White Socks Only* (Coleman, 1996) and *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001), helped them understand those subjects but in a different way. Both stories conveyed the message to students that when people stood up for what they believed, the situation could be changed for the better. It encouraged students to stand up for what they thought right and just. The students connected both stories and the cafeteria event to the related theme of discrimination.

Diana: Can you find any similarities between the two stories and the thing that happened in the cafeteria? We can always learn from the consequence. It’s not just making you uncomfortable or torturing. I want you guys to think about what really happened from different perspectives. Jason?

Jason: The common thing is excluding people. The chicken man didn’t care how the little Black girl felt. He thought Whites were superior to Blacks because he was White.

Jessica: That’s not very respectful.

Jason: Yeah, it is not the right way to treat people. The problem was society

allowed that kind of discriminative behavior against Blacks. That was the problem.

- Diana: That's a great point. Racism is not a personal problem. It's a huge social issue that affects all people and institutions. This is more systematically discriminating against certain groups of people. What do you think it means to exclude people?
- Whitney: It means that you aren't included.
- Jill: At least it makes you feel really bad.
- Tony: That means you are treated differently.
- Diana: Let's say my name is Joe. I come to the table and sit down at the table, and what happens? Kids say, "Oh, I'm sorry you can't sit at the table." So, how do I feel now? Do I feel like lunch time is the top of my day?
- Students: No. [Students collectively answered.]
- Karla: That makes people feel wronged.
- Diana: Yes, lunch time is so hard for me, guys. Lunch time is a reminder that I'm not as good as all of you. That's what that means. Lunch time means that I don't count, my feelings don't count. I look funny, I'm stupid, and I look weird. No one wants to play with me. That's what lunch time is like for a lot of kids. That's why the grownups come up with a rule that says, "It's not okay to say that you can't sit."
- Jill: Sometimes when people say, "Someone is already sitting there," it's because they got up to go get something from the salad bar.
- Susan: Yeah... that happened to me.
- Diana: Yeah, that's true, I've seen that happen to a few kids. Like they are sitting there and decide to get up and go to the bathroom, that's okay. That's generally okay. Let's go Amber, then Olivia.
- Amber: It's very hurtful to feel like you're not included. "You're not cool, so you can't sit with us." That kind of message makes you feel very hurtful.
- Olivia: The lunch table thing was a discrimination. Excluding people is a discrimination.

Diana: Yeah, you're right.

Miranda: That's not nice.

[Several students signaled that they agreed with Miranda's opinion.]

Jessica: Hey, you guys should apologize to Andrew.

Amber: Yeah, you should!

George: But we sat down there because the other table was full of girls. I didn't want to hear girls' talk.

James: Yes, you did! You girls were talking and talking.

Amber: Maybe we were excited to talk about something.

Olivia: Yeah, we can talk to each other in the cafeteria, but it'll be better to talk not so loudly.

Tony: If it's not crazy noisy, I think that's okay.

These conversations illustrated that students began to understand the concepts of discrimination and equality. The students' responses demonstrated their ability to construct meaning from the text related to their own lives as critical readers. Comparing and contrasting the discrimination cases in the two books and the cafeteria event enabled students not only to learn about historical hardships African Americans faced but to also bring their experience of marginalization during lunch. This provided a space to share the meaning and impact of discrimination from students' perspectives. It deepened students' contextual understanding of the concept of discrimination.

### **Focusing on Sociopolitical Issues**

Through the examination and discussion of themes in the literature related to racism, discrimination, fairness, equality, and acceptance, students explored different

perspectives and the meanings of various historical events and current events in their own lives. It encouraged students to become more informed critical learners.

### **Increasing Sociopolitical Awareness**

Diana fostered students' discussion by connecting multicultural children's literature to larger social issues, such as racism and discrimination. Diana felt that connecting the text to real-life issues was a key element of the literature instruction. Each week in Diana's classroom, a student would take the role of a captain leading the students in their calendar routine. The captain had the privilege to present an individual experience that they wanted to share with their peers. This was Diana's effort to provide an equal opportunity for all students to experience a leadership role. After spring break, Jason was the captain and shared the experience of his family trip to Hawaii. During the trip, his family visited the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor in Honolulu. He showed video clips and pictures to the class.

Jason: I want to share my Hawaii trip. I visited the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor. The memorial was built right over a sunken battleship. Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941. Over a thousand soldiers and Marines were killed. There is fuel still seeping out of the wreckage. You can smell and see it on top of the water. I watched the movie before the boat ride to the memorial site. It reminded me of people who gave their lives for America.

Andrew: Wow.

Jason: Yeah, it's cool. You can see it just right there where you're standing.

George: Did you see the battleships?

Jason: Yes, I saw several. USS Arizona, Oklahoma, and...Utah.

George: Utah?

Jason: Yes. The Utah remains on the Pearl Harbor floor but the USS Arizona was damaged a lot and sank *to the bottom of the sea*. I saw Japanese send some flowers.

Heidy: Japanese?

Jason: Yes. Japanese mayors sent the flowers.

Heidy: Why did they send the flowers?

Jason: I think that is for memorizing the soldiers and peoples who died from the bombing.

Elene: I went there too. Maybe the Japanese wanted to apologize for the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Diana: What a great experience! I was very emotional when I went there. I want to visit again someday.

Jason: The site was quiet and peaceful, and I couldn't believe there was a bombing and so many people died.

Diana decided to help students develop a critical lens by making connections between the text, students' experiences, and the world event, World War II. Learning about the unfair treatment at Japanese American internment camps increased student' sociopolitical awareness. Reading *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011) made this connection more explicit. Before reading the book aloud, Diana clarified and explained the complex content of the book associated with the theme of equality and discrimination. The book helped students develop their critical awareness of inequities and racial discrimination. This book made students aware of the true stories of Sylvia Mendez and Aki Munemitsu who had experienced racial discriminations, such as school segregation and the Japanese American internment camp during World War II. In particular, it was important that Diana explained why Japanese Americans were placed in internment camps after the attack on Pearl Harbor and why Sylvia's father pursued fair access to a good education

through the courts that resulted in *Mendez v. Westminster*. Based on her explanation, students were enabled to make a deeper connection between their prior knowledge about racism and discrimination and the text associated with the theme of equality. Before reading, Diana reminded them of Jason's experience visiting the USS Arizona Memorial.

Diana: Do you remember that Jason went to the memorial in Hawaii?

Students: Yes. [Students answered collectively.]

Diana: This book is about World War II. In that war, America and Japan were fighting against each other. The attack on Pearl Harbor was a trigger. [Diana showed an illustration of *So Far From the Sea* (Bunting, 1998) that portrayed the attack on Pearl Harbor.] It led to America's involvement in World War II. There were a lot of Japanese Americans who lived on the West coast that were forced into internment camps, even though America was their home and their country.

Kale: My great grandfather was in World War II. He was a navy pilot.

Diana: You and I have a connection. My dad was in the army. He was in World War II and went to Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

Savannah: My great grandfather too. He was in the army.

Diana: Yes, we have a few connections. Let's find connections between Aki's family and Sylvia's family. You can talk about this in your groups. Here is a tip. What are their experiences related to the internment camp and school segregation? How do you deal with unfairness, and how would you change things?

Diana made historical events, such as World War II, real for her students by providing insight into her own experience. By sharing the experience of Diana's father and other students' great grandfathers' fighting in World War II, students were able to make an explicit connection to the text and the world event. It was important that Diana modeled her own connection to help students engage in similar thinking and set the context for understanding the complex historical event. Moreover, she provided



scaffolding strategies to draw students' basic understanding of the story and their participation. The following small group discussion transcript demonstrated students' in-depth understanding of discrimination of race and ethnicity in society as a whole.

- Susan: After the bombing, Aki and her family had to leave their farm and go the camp in the desert. And Sylvia... Sylvia's family, they rented Aki's family farm.
- Tony: What a coincidence! Sylvia's family bought the farm!
- Whitney: Yeah, their lives overlapped.
- Susan: Sylvia's father wanted to send his kids to a White school. But they were turned away and had to go a Mexican school. The question is to find historical connections between two families. Connections...
- Tony: Both were discriminated against. Look, Aki's family had to leave their home and were sent to the camp. Sylvia and her brother couldn't go school, umm, the White school because they were Mexicans.
- Whitney: No, it wasn't. Their cousins were Mexicans but they could go to the White school. So this wasn't because of...their ethnicity. Because of color of their skin. They had darker skin than their cousins.
- Tony: Alright. Yeah, yes.
- Whitney: Then her dad challenged in court the racial segregation in the school. He won.
- Tony: I like that.
- Susan: I like what the principal said at Sylvia's high school graduation. [Susan read a paragraph from *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011).] He said, "This is a time of unparalleled opportunity for students of every race and every color. One year ago, the U.S. Supreme Court, in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, unanimously ruled that schools could no longer separate children by race. Equality in education is the first step toward equality in opportunity."
- Whitney: Sylvia is kind of a symbol of fight against segregation. I'm proud of her.
- George: Yeah.

- Susan: Her dad was amazing too. He knew the right thing to do.
- Tony: He was so brave. It's like the round discussion thing. If you don't try to change things, then nothing changes. But if you do, you can make difference. He did the same kind of thing.
- Whitney: Yeah. He influenced the end of segregation.
- Susan: Yes. His case influenced the case of Brown v. Board of Education.
- Whitney: Hey, hey. We have two minutes. The connection is...umm. They challenged discrimination?
- Susan: They fought against racism.
- George: But what about Aki's family? Did they do something? They were in the camp.
- Whitney: It's not easy to be there. Just being there makes you sick. Does that camp look like a camp that you would like to go to?
- George: No way.
- Susan: It doesn't look like a camp place.
- Tony: It's a camp but not a summer camp kind of thing. It's a jail.
- Whitney: Yeah, I think they were very strong to live there.

In the small group discussion, students were able to understand the connection between two different historical events: Japanese American Internment camps and school segregation of Mexican American students. Based on the historical understanding, students identified common aspects of the two events. They comprehended the complex historical context of Japanese American internment camps, and the school segregation and its impact. They compared and contrasted two historical events and found connections between them. They recognized that racism and discrimination were the main causes of the difficulties in two protagonists' lives during World War II. They were able to identify the historical facts from the text, summarize the key supporting details

and ideas of the text, and make a relevant quotation to underpin their opinion. Susan quoted the principal's speech accurately from the text. This meant that she was able to provide proper textual evidence to support her argument. In other words, she sufficiently understood the impact of the Mendez v. Westminster case as an initiative for the end of school segregation. Based on her response, Tony and other students successfully realized the social and historical significance of the Mendez v. Westminster case.

Diana gathered students for the large group discussion on making connections between the experiences of the two families.

- Diana: What did you find out? Any connections between the two? Which group wants go first? Okay, Jill and then Mark.
- Jill: We found the two families that suffered racism like Aki's family had to go the internment camp, and Sylvia and her brother couldn't go the school they wanted to go to and had to go the Mexican school instead.
- Mark: They deprived their freedom. Freedom to go a school they wanted to attend and freedom to live where they wanted to live. Aki's family had to leave their farm and were allowed to bring only a few things to the camp. That's totally violation of property rights. Their basic rights were denied.
- Diana: Great connection to the Constitution. Before we move on, let's remember what our rights are in the Constitution?
- James: The freedom of religion, speech, umm...
- Jill: The freedom to press something.
- Diana: Yes. I can add one more. The freedom to petition the government. Alright. Yes, Amber? Do you want to say something?
- Amber: Yes, they were treated unfairly by the government.
- Diana: Yes, it was very unfair, huh? Elene? Go ahead.
- Elene: Japanese and Mexicans, they were Americans, but they got unequal treatment because of their skin color.

Diana: Exactly. Sylvia's cousins who had lighter skin were able to go the White school. [Diana read aloud a paragraph.] Look at the page 10...the second paragraph, Sylvia thought, "Is this why they would take Alice and Virginia but not me? She wondered. Is it because my skin is too brown? Is this why me and my brothers were told to go the Mexican school? But I'm not even Mexican. I'm American." But I wonder why Sylvia and her brother didn't want to go the Mexican school. It is closer than the White school from their house, though.

Andrew: Because the Mexican school wasn't good. No monkey bars and no new textbooks. Secondhand, second-best school.

Diana: Yeah. Can you find any evidence from the book?

Andrew: Yeah. Um, page...umm.

Miranda: Page 11. And Sylvia bitterly thought, "We're being treated like second-best people."

Jessica: This is a second class citizen thing.

Diana: What do you mean a second class citizen?

Jessica: I mean... the schools didn't care about Mexican students. They pushed them away because of their color of skin. Sylvia and her cousins, they were all Mexicans, but Sylvia couldn't go to the White school. I think it was discrimination. So unfair!

Karla: It's unfair.

Students: It's unfair.

These conversations illustrated that the students clearly recognized the structure discrimination in the larger society despite their status as citizens. Students collectively insisted that discrimination existed on the basis of physical appearance. This response demonstrated that students began to understand complex social issues such as inequality. In particular, Mark and Jessica comprehended their civil rights as citizens. Mark stated, "They deprived their liberty." This meant that he understood the concept that citizenship could be exercised based on the social and legal link between individuals and the

government. Moreover, Jessica described school segregation on the basis of appearances as “a second class citizen thing.” This expression demonstrated her critical understanding of the meaning of citizenship. She knew that the status of citizenship entailed both responsibilities and duties. However, she also understood the government, as a governing body to represent and provide services for citizens, had to ensure the civil rights of all individuals. These student responses indicated the importance of collaborative and critical discussions about social issues such as racism, discrimination, and equality. According to Diana, “The group discussion is an essential part of the book lesson. They can clearly understand difficult topics by sharing different ideas. Sometimes they get confused, but it’s necessary to understand and see the things in different angles.”

### **Interrogating Unequal Power Relationships**

Diana provided an opportunity for her students to rethink how democracy works in a constitutional democratic society by asking about the relationship between civil rights, responsibilities, and the authority of a nation. She asked students to find the most compelling part of the book that made them think about American citizenship. She divided students into small groups and distributed sticky notes to each group. Each group selected one person to present their excerpt and the reason for their choice. Each group selected a similar part. The students’ selection of the excerpts included a description of Aki’s family being forced to live in the internment camp, the Mendez family’s decision to address the lack of educational quality, and an argument of a Westminster School lawyer for keeping the segregation of Mexican American students.

- Diana: Now let's talk about your excerpts. Please explain the reason you chose that part. Who wants go first? Okay, Savannah, Tony, and then Miranda.
- Savannah: We chose this: "As the time drew closer for them to leave—"
- Diana: Sorry to interrupt. What page is it?
- Savannah: Oh, page 29. "As the time drew closer for them to leave, Aki thought more and more about the unfairness of having to leave behind her farm, her school, and her friends. 'Some people believe that people from Japan are a threat to our national security.' 'How am I a threat to national security?' Aki had asked." We chose this part because it tells how the government abandoned the Japanese in the camp. It wasn't the right thing the government could do to their people.
- Diana: Great! Tony?
- Tony: We have two. One is on page 62. "Your son is risking his life for his country, while his little brother can't go to school with his white neighbors." And page 111, "The lawyer for the school system told the judge that having separate schools was good for the Mexican children because it allowed them to take 'Americanization' instruction to learn American values and customs. Americanization? Doesn't that mean to make someone an American who isn't one? Sylvia wanted to say that she was just as American as he was. She wanted to tell him she had spoken English her entire life, that she could speak two languages—English and Spanish—not just one." And we think this is the best because what the lawyer said about Americanization.
- Jason: Can I add something really quick?
- Diana: Yes, go for it.
- Jason: The lawyer said that the segregation was a good thing because Mexican Americans could learn American values and customs. I think they thought Mexican Americans were not really Americans. The Mexicans fought for America in the war, though. It doesn't make sense. The government didn't protect their right to have a good education. So we think this one is the best part.
- Miranda: We chose the part that Aki's brother was upset when he answered the questionnaire to serve the military. "What nerve! I'm imprisoned in this camp, being denied my rights as a U.S. citizen, and at the same time I'm being asked to deny my loyalty to any other group. Are we still U.S. citizens?" Aki realized she didn't know. "What am I

supposed to do?” Seiko asked. Aki felt sorry for her brother and torn in two herself. No longer fully American, yet not Japanese, either.” Oh, it’s on page 88. Aki thought a lot about herself and the citizenship. She felt she belonged nowhere. “No longer fully American, yet not Japanese.” That is what she thought, and I think this part is talking about citizenship.

Jill: The government people thought the Japanese were betrayers, but I think they were betrayed by the country. It’s shameful.

Diana: Yes, it is. It’s a shameful history. But I want to tell you something. Even though the government wronged Japanese Americans, they tried to make up for it. The government formally apologized to them for the internment camps, for the discrimination. I think this is very important. We all make mistakes. Every one of us. However, when you know you did something wrong, then you admit that and try to make it right and don’t make the same mistake again. Then you should be able to have a second chance.

James: The clean slate thing?

Diana: I don’t quite get that one.

Jason: What James is saying, it’s kind of like what we talked with Mr. Whitaker. Let’s say James says, “No, you can’t sit with us.” Well. He knows that’s not right and says sorry and he doesn’t say that again. So, even though he made a mistake but after changing then he can fix his bad reputation. The negative labeling.

James: Yeah! That’s mean!

Diana: Oh, okay, got it.

[Students giggled.]

Savannah: Yeah, it’s the same thing. You say to someone, “You can’t sit at my table. You can’t play with us.” The government did the same thing to the Japanese.

Diana: That’s a very good connection to the story. Whitney?

Whitney: Do you know who decided to send the Japanese to the camps?

Diana: Who do you think who made that decision?

Whitney: Umm. The government?

- Diana: Yes, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the act. He was one of them, but there's more.
- Mark: Politicians. And other Americans. Because they were scared that Japan would attack again and other Japanese in America would help them instead of us.
- Diana: Yes, right. That is social pressure. Many people questioned the Japanese Americans' loyalty. Go ahead, George.
- George: Yes. Did all Japanese follow the order to go to the camp? No one refused it?
- Miranda: Yeah. They had to tell the government. That wasn't right.
- Jill: Didn't anyone say that was unfair?
- Diana: Well... I don't know very much about that. Maybe some did? But soldiers took the Japanese over to the camps. So, they didn't have much choice.
- Jessica: I think many people thought that the Japanese were not human. Otherwise, they couldn't just take them to the camps.
- Kale: Yes.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Miranda: Yeah.
- Diana: Alright. You have been waiting so long. Amber.
- Amber: We selected the part where Aki was upset about the government's decision on page 86. "I'm willing to serve my country," he said. "I'm willing to fight." Then why not answer yes? Aki wondered. "But not against Japan," the young man went on. "Not in Japan. My grandparents, my cousins, they still live there." Aki understood: he might be fighting against his family. How could this government—any government—ask such terrible things. I think if the government forced people to fight against their family and relatives, then that's not a good government for the people.

Students were more aware of the sociopolitical dimension of the issue of racial discrimination. These conversations demonstrated their abilities to analyze a wide scope



of unequal power relationships. Students were able to present their claim and support it with valid reasoning and relevant textual evidence. First, they commonly criticized racial discrimination by the government. They questioned the authority that made the decision to relocate Japanese Americans to the internment camps and school segregation. Their responses, such as “No longer fully American, yet not Japanese,” “I think they were betrayed by the country. It’s shameful,” “She felt she belonged nowhere,” “The government abandoned them in the camp,” “It wasn’t the right thing the government could do their people,” and “that’s not a good government for the people,” indicated that they critically explored the legitimacy of the power relationship between the government and its citizens.

Moreover, they connected this historical understanding to their own lives. Students thought about marginalization by drawing on their experiences on the playground and in the cafeteria. They were able to link their experiences with marginalization to the racial discrimination in society as a whole. Through this connection, students gained an understanding of the complexity surrounding the power relationship and began to imagine how things might be different. It was essential to foster students’ critical consciousness about social justice issues. Diana described the process of students’ critical consciousness development as “a journey to get true understanding.”

In addition, students interrogated the unfairness of school segregation. The excerpt of Tony’s group demonstrated students’ understandings of the logic of segregation that maintained the status quo. They pointed out the contradiction of authority through their responses, such as “They think Mexican Americans are not really

Americans” and “The government didn’t protect their right to have good education.”

These responses showed students’ realization of the racial segregation problem. Diana did not merely emphasize the responsibility of citizens and obedience to authority. By questioning the meaning of American citizenship, she encouraged students’ critical thinking of the relationship between the government authority and citizenship. When students were exposed to literature related to social justice issues, students’ motivation and retention of learning were increased.

Furthermore, Diana encouraged students to think about their active civic engagement for social change by examining *Mendez v. Westminster* and its impact. She asked students what they thought would be the best way to enact change in relation to the case of *Mendez v. Westminster* and the courage of Sylvia’s father. Many students mentioned the round table discussion with Mr. Whitaker. Students spoke a lot about the brave decision of Sylvia’s father to fight against racism. Students said that “He knew what the right thing to do was and worked to create change, and a lot of people didn’t,” “You should say no like him when you think something is wrong,” “he was cool,” “If you just keep silence, you become the part of the problem,” and “He tried to change the unfair situation, and he changed it.”

The following small group discussion transcript showed how students understood and evaluated Mendez’s family decision to change the unjust social practice and made the connection to the case of local school segregation.

George: Separating children by the color of their skin was wrong.

Mark: Yeah, so he sued the Westminster school.

- Heidy: After this case, it was legally prohibited to separate children by skin color.
- Mark: No, no. Not just after this. After the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. This case influenced the Brown case and it affected nationally.
- Heidy: Okay, okay. Anyways he was so cool. He fought against the school.
- George: Yeah! He just stood up. It's nice to go to school together.
- Mark: He gave the message that you have to fight when you need to.
- Amber: He did it the right way. Everybody wants to go to a good school.
- George: Good school? Which school? The White school?
- Amber: Not the White school. But the school has good teachers, good buildings, books... something like...
- Mark: Do you know there was an Indian school in Brigham City?
- Heidy: What?
- Mark: Yeah.
- Heidy: Is it true?
- Mark: Yeah. My dad told me that Navajo kids went to that school.
- Amber: Oh my...
- Mark: Yeah, I know. The school building was a hospital during World War II. I saw the building on the way to go to Salt Lake City. It doesn't look good. More like the Japanese internment camp.
- Amber: Really?
- Heidy: Do the kids still go there?
- Mark: No, it was closed.
- Heidy: When?
- Mark: I don't know.
- George: It's not only a California thing?

Amber: What do you mean a California thing?

George: I mean... Sylvia case was in Cali so... I mean.... It's shocking that happened in Utah.

Amber: Yeah. I didn't know about that either.

Mark: I know. Me too. Do you want to find out more?

In the small group discussion, students were proud of the Mendez family's courage, and the students were motivated to stand up and make a difference. They understood Sylvia's father pursued fair access to a good education through the courts that resulted in *Mendez v. Westminster*. They identified that the same issue of access to quality education was tried in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, and it had sociopolitical impact on the larger society. In addition, they made an important connection between the larger social issue of racial segregation and the local school segregation in the Native Indian School. The school was called Intermountain Indian School. It was a Native American boarding school in Brigham City, Utah. Not many students knew about the existence of this school. They were shocked to learn of the racial segregation in a local school of a neighboring city. The group of students wanted to do more research about the school in regards to the school segregation issue. Diana allowed them to research this and present their findings in front of the entire class.

The research project was simple, but it enabled the group of students to actively participate in their learning by equipping themselves with knowledge of the local history of school segregation. After they finished the presentation, they were very confident and became experts on the Native Indian school segregation history in Utah. They had a request from other fifth grade teachers to present their research. In doing so, students

became co-constructors of knowledge and engaged in the democratic learning process. Their knowledge was respected and valued. Diana highlighted the benefit of investigating the local history related to students' active engagement in their learning. She stated, "Knowing about the local history is important. It helps them understand how democracy works at the local level. It makes them feel more connected and share the same issue. The more connected they are, the more likely they are to be civically engaged."

During the last day of the discussion of *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011), the theme of inequality and power relationships continued to surface.

Diana: Any surprises from the story?

Amber: I was surprised by the discrimination against Mexicans. I thought that happened to African Americans.

Jason: Me too. I haven't heard about racism against Mexicans, umm Mexican Americans. I like that we talk about this [racial inequality]. It's too bad that minorities have suffered all that kind of crap. Why didn't White people experience it?

Diana: Umm. Whites are mostly European decedents and came to this country earlier than any other groups. So, they had more time and resources to set the social systems for them, their interests. But not all Whites enjoyed that sort of privilege. For example, Irish experienced harsh discrimination.

Jason: Why?

Diana: There are many reasons, but religion and stereotyping problems were involved.

The students' responses indicated they obtained a sociopolitical lens to analyze the structure of the larger society. Students realized an additional level of understanding of the concept of inequality and discrimination.

In reading and discussing *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011), students examined

racism and discrimination against Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans. The subject of treating others differently because of their appearance or ethnicity was evident in both small and large group discussions. Students' conversations about equality and discrimination developed their contextual understanding of historical events such as internment camps and school segregation. Diana's critical literacy questions about the meaning of American citizenship, the role of government, civil rights and responsibilities, authority, and action for social change increased students' comprehension of the text and world events. Moreover, these critical questions fostered students' sociopolitical awareness of racism and its consequences. The message of the reading and discussion was very powerful to students. According to Diana, "Kids get an idea that discrimination affects members of a society negatively. They understand that people who were discriminated against, their quality of lives were miserable." Later, during the lesson reflection interview, Diana mentioned,

I was surprised because the kids could go a lot further than I thought. It helped them a lot to think that other races, other ethnic groups had suffered unfair treatments. Especially since their community is predominantly White and religiously homogenous. They live in a small bubble. These kids can't quite get the sense about what other people experienced in terms of racism against them because they're the majority. They never experienced those kinds of hardships. Everything is safe and peaceful for them. However, the reality, out of their bubble, is not like that. These reading and discussions really help to break their own little bubble and open their eyes.

She explained that her students could expand their horizons and be able to go beyond their understanding of others and the world.

### **Taking Action and Promoting Social Justice**

Multicultural children's literature was a springboard for discussion that provided a space for the students to take action to promote social justice on social issues. The students engaged in action in a number of ways.

### **Becoming Aware of Social Responsibility**

When reading and discussing the books *A Sweet Smell of Roses* (Johnson, 2005), *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Park* (Ringgold, 1999), and *The Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (Weatherford, 2005), the students engaged in exploring the issues of equality and fairness as it related to race. Furthermore, the students applied events and situations from the text to their life experiences by making connections and responding to a range of the teacher's questions, such as: Did this book remind you of anything? Has that happened to anyone before? Does that remind you of anything else we read? Did it remind you of a time you had to persevere? Does anyone have any connections to home, or community, school, or world? The use of those questions helped the students develop their critical stance and become critically literate beings.

Diana: What do you think is the best way to handle a similar situation in the cafeteria or a situation that you think people are treated differently?

Karla: We couldn't do anything then because they didn't care.

Diana: I think there is something that you can do to create change.

Jason: Maybe we can go over and say, "Hey, that's not cool what you're doing."

Mark: I could have said something, but I didn't.

- Jill: Yeah, we should have said something.
- Elene: Yeah, but I didn't know what to say...
- Diana: I think that is a great starting point. Admit what you did and think about the alternatives. Let's say it was to Whitney. You could say to Whitney on the side, "I saw what you did today and that's not nice." Here is my challenge to you as a group. We keep talking about social responsibility. Right? If someone is doing something and someone is excluded, I think we all have an obligation to stop it. If we can't muster up the courage to do it right there at that moment, then pull them aside. Or when the opportunity strikes to say something like, "It's not okay to be this way, it's not okay to say that, and I saw what you did to that person."
- Jason: Or you can say, "I don't mean to offend you, but..." or "I don't want to be rude but..." You can say something like this. It is important to say something because if we keep quiet then they think, "Oh, it is okay to be mean and disrespectful."
- Jill: Cool. You can just say what you see, the fact! You don't need to blame them.
- Elene: Okay, so what me and my friends do is when somebody sits at our table, we just stand up so the other person can sit down.
- Susan: So, we can have lunch together. No conflict, no fight.
- Diana: Okay, I like that. I like that. Did you have your hand up? Miranda?
- Miranda: The point is if we say to someone "you can't sit my table," then that person feels really hurt and thinks, "These are my friends, but I guess not anymore."
- Diana: Yes, Kale? Go ahead.
- Kale: Yeah, I remember when boys played tether ball, no one wanted to play with me because I wasn't very good at it. Then I just sat there and watched. Then Mark told the boys he wanted to play with me.
- Diana: Yes, that's leadership! We need to make people feel safe. That is our social responsibility. Go ahead, Elene.
- Elene: That's what we really need to avoid. Like they feel they don't count, like there's something wrong with them.



Mark: It is super important. We need to avoid making people feel isolated, not accepted, not being part of our community.

Revisiting the cafeteria event made a significant impression on how students actively participated in the politics of daily life at school. Through the teacher's questioning about taking action, the students extended the discussion to focus on ways in which people were treated unfairly for being different and what action could be taken to foster equality. It made the students more aware of their social responsibility to take action towards positive change as a member of the community. Kale was willing to share his painful experience of marginalization. Andrew also shared his thought with a moral lesson related to the book *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001). The teacher's question about taking social action for change in relation to the cafeteria event resonated with Jason, Jill, Miranda, Mark, and Elene. They responded that they wanted to take action against discriminative behaviors. This meant that they began to internalize the importance of respect for others and how they handle discriminative situations as they relate to their own experiences in the classroom and the literature that was read and discussed.

The theme of discrimination and segregation came up in several other books that the students read and discussed. Diana addressed the theme of discrimination and segregation in the literature by asking students questions to connect their own experiences related to discrimination to the text. The following small group discussion demonstrated how the students made text-to-text connections between the books *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Park* (Ringgold, 1999), *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001), and *Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins* (Weatherford, 2005).

Diana: [Diana read aloud a few pages of the book *If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Park*.] One day on the way home from work, the bus

driver told Rosa to get off and enter at the back of the bus after she had paid her fare. Then he drove off, leaving her in the street. This was common practice then. It was no wonder that Black people would often walk a mile or more to and from work rather than ride the segregated buses...But as a result of the boycott, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested and his home was bombed. Many others were arrested, too, and threatened with hateful letters, phone calls, and bombings. What do you think about those things?

- Andrew: I was surprised she was just left, even after she paid her fare. That was stealing her money.
- Jason: I didn't know Martin Luther King was arrested and his home was bombed.
- Heidy: It wasn't fair to her.
- Diana: Yes, that was very unfair. What if someone said you have brown skin, and you can't have lunch with your friend at the cafeteria or you have to use different restroom?
- Elene: I would be really mad... and sad. I can't change the color of my skin.
- Heidy: Well... It's a similar situation that happened to me when I was in fourth grade. I wanted to read a book at the girls table, but the girls didn't let me sit. They hung out together all the time. I was sad.
- Elene: It's kind of the same thing that happened to Kale.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Jason: Yes.
- Diana: Can you find any similar situations that occurred to Heidy or Kale from books we read?
- Andrew: In the *Freedom Summer*. John Henry couldn't swim at the pool because that pool was for only Whites. Blacks weren't allowed to use it.
- Heidy: So many. Rosa Park, and the book... Blacks couldn't sit at the same table with Whites. Which one was it?
- Jason: *Freedom on the Menu*.
- Heidy: Yeah, yeah.

- Elene: *White Socks Only*, too. A White guy yelled at an African American girl because she used the White drinking water tap.
- Heidy: Right. The Ruby Bridges book was the same. People were so mad and threw tomatoes to her.
- Jason: I'm surprised Blacks had suffered so much. No joke.
- Andrew: Not all Whites were mean. In the *Freedom Summer*, Joe did lots of things with John Henry. In the 60s, not many Blacks and Whites became friends. I think other people don't even do that. It's nice to try to be a friend.

This discussion transcript illustrates that students were able to compare and contrast the events in the story and analyze how the protagonists of the stories engaged in praxis to confront discrimination. By posing questions about racism and discrimination, students seemed to better relate to the literature with themes of social justice and internalize the conversation and how it related to their own lives. Students developed a critical lens to examine the literature and describe multiple meanings and perspectives. Learning through multicultural children's literature extended students' abilities to think in a more contextualized and meaningful way.

### **Writing a Petition for Equal Treatment for Boys and Girls at School**

The discussion of social action for change continued during the reading about the women's rights movement through the books *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote* (Stone, 2008), and *I Could Do That!: Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote* (White, 2005). The two books were stories of the women's achievements in helping to gain the vote for all women. The protagonists in both books knew that women were not given rights equal to men and stood up and challenged the

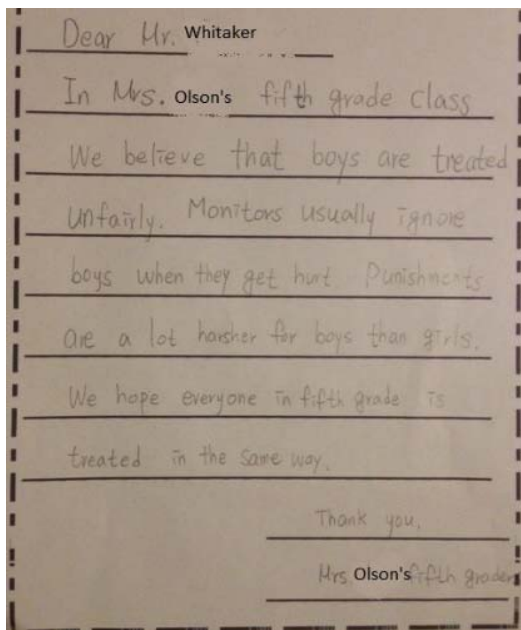
status quo for what they believed in rather than accept their lesser status. Diana asked students how they would handle any unfair treatment and what they would do to change the situation. Many students mentioned writing a petition as a way to change the situation. Several boys strongly insisted that they wanted to write a petition to Mr. Whitaker about the unfair treatment of the fifth grade boys in the cafeteria and on the playground. They complained about two things. One was that the three boys received a punishment in the cafeteria because of rowdiness. They could not play outside during lunch recess for a week. The boys thought that, compared to the girls, Mr. Whitaker scrutinized them more and was harsher in dealing out punishments. They wanted the lunch rules and punishments applied equally, regardless of gender. The other complaint was about female playground monitors. All the boys thought the monitors did not pay attention when students needed their help. They pointed out the monitors' irresponsible behaviors, such as when they were on their phones, texting, talking, or not paying attention to people who had been hurt.

Diana suggested that the students make a list of topics that they wanted to write a petition about. The list included fair treatment of boys and girls, recess rules, birthday parties, and no homework. Then they voted on the topic they would write for their petition. 18 out of 24 students voted on the fair treatment of boys and girls. Most students agreed that the playground monitors treated the boys unfairly. In addition, when Diana asked students how many of them felt school punishments and rules were applied differently for boys and girls, 22 out of 24 students raised their hands. It was obvious that they felt they were treated differently based on gender. Students were eager to discuss the

topics of the playground monitor issue and equal punishment for boys and girls with Mr. Whitaker. Students decided to write the petition collectively to Mr. Whitaker (see Figure 29). Students wanted to invite him to the round table discussion about equal treatment in order to raise awareness and change the situation.

### **Participating in the Round Table Discussion for Equality**

The following day, Diana delivered the petition to Mr. Whitaker and invited him and the vice principal to her classroom to participate in the round table discussion related to students' concerns about punishments and the playground monitors. Mr. Whitaker and the vice principal willingly scheduled a round table discussion with Diana's students. On April 16, Mr. Whitaker and the vice principal visited her classroom.



Dear Mr. Whitaker

In Mrs. Olson's fifth grade class we believe that boys are treated unfairly. Monitors usually ignore boys when they get hurt. Punishments are a lot harsher for boys than girls. We hope everyone in fifth grade is treated in the same way.

Thank you,

Mrs. Olson's fifth graders

*Figure 29.* Students' petition in Diana's class.

- Mr. Whitaker: The fifth grade class wrote a petition to me. Nice. Let's talk about the first one. Fifth grade petition that boys are treated unfairly. Evidence, monitors ignore boys when they get hurt. We've got the only playground in America that doesn't have a fence around it, I think. Because we have got college students and professors walking through, so it's kind of a difficult thing to keep track of you all. Some of you should give me an example, so I can take that. Tony, I will start with you.
- Tony: One time we were on the playground, and we were playing tether ball. Someone got up on something and fell and hit George's face and knee. The monitor, we called her over and she walked over and she took out her phone. Three minutes later she said, "So, you think you need an icepack?" and then she didn't do anything. Instead we were helping him walk over to the office, and she just sort of stood there.
- Andrew: Another one. Mark hurt his ankle really bad, but the monitors were just looking at him.
- Mr. Whitaker: So yeah, tell me more.
- George: Sometimes when we play tetherball, the ball accidentally hits someone in the face. And one time, girls got hit in their face, and the monitor was talking to the girls and helped them, and then when that happened to boys, they just looked at the kid who got hit in the face.
- Mr. Whitaker: Okay, so that's probably something recent because the ball hasn't been out for more than a week or two. Do you remember which monitor it was? Is it the same monitor or is it all of them?
- Gorge: I can't remember who was who.
- Mark: Me too.
- Andrew: But I can say many of them did that.
- Susan: Yeah, I saw that a few times.
- Students: Yes. [Students answered collectively.]
- Jason: A lot of the time when the same stuff happens. If we are playing a game and someone comes in and they drop kick our ball away from us, then we tell the monitors that they did that. Then they just say that, "Okay, I'll talk to them," then they just pull out

their phone and keep on texting and don't do anything. The entire rest of the recess nothing happens.

Mr. Whitaker: So, that's the second time I've heard phone and texting and talking, right? And they are talking to each other and they are not watching you is what you are telling me. Okay, Mark.

Mark: A lot of times they only have their focus on a few people that they like. So, when somebody gets hurt or something happens and they are just talking to those people, and they are not really doing their job.

Mr. Whitaker: I agree with you. These are things I can take action on and things I've talked to them about in the past. You're right, if I get sucked into talking to two or three kids, I can't really see what's going on in my little quadrant. All of these are things I promise I will be speaking with these people at lunch. Right here.

Kale: I was the one who got hurt. And a while ago, I got hurt again, kind of felt like that I twisted my ankle. This one monitor lady didn't come over to help me. She was texting on her phone with a big smile while looking down. And when girls get hurt, they come over and put their phone away. And big frowns.

Mr. Whitaker: So, you feel like they're more responsive...to girls? Are girls seeing that too?

Girls: Yes, yeah. [Girls nodded their heads collectively.]

Mr. Whitaker: Okay, I'll share that with them. Andrew? You've been patient, go ahead.

Andrew: Sometimes the girls sing songs to the monitors, and the monitors make them their favorites. So, the monitors treat them different than everyone else. It's kind of like they give them a VIP pass of being cared about.

Mr. Whitaker: Alright, I'll kind of address some of those issues. I think you're right, I think it's very possible that that is going on. Mark, what's up?

Mark: The biggest problem is they didn't do their job. They need to help and protect us instead of just looking their phones.

Mr. Whitaker: That's the strongest message coming through for me right now is that monitors need to not be on their cell phones and they need to

respond when you're hurt. Alright, I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to work hard to change that, the playground monitors on their phones, texting, talking, not paying attention to people being hurt, or favoring certain people. I want to address that.

It was challenging for many students to take initiative to resist the unfair treatment by adults on a daily basis on the playground. However, by writing a petition to the teacher and inviting them to the round table discussion, students appeared more confident and inspired that they could change unfair social practices by making their argument. This process empowered them to be aware of their rights and responsibilities as a member of the school community.

After they finished the first topic of discussion, Mr. Whitaker and students discussed the second topic, equal punishment for boys and girls.

Mr. Whitaker: Alright, the next question is the punishments are very unfairly being applied to boys and girls. Particularly, that "problem kid" labels are not being cleared at the beginning of the year as we have been told to do. Once a person is labeled, it continues to be with them throughout their lives at White Pine Elementary.

Amber: I noticed that there are a lot of times the punishments were much harsher for boys than girls. That's very unfair because if the girls are doing it then we are okay, but if that happens to the boys they get punished.

James: It's not very fair when the girls can do really what they want to do, but boys can't.

Susan: Last year and this year there's the same thing with girls. I don't know what they did, but they got in trouble, and they were reminded not to do that, and the same thing happened to some boys this year, and they were sent to the principal's office, and then all of them got a big talking to and it was the exact same thing. They were just treated unfairly.

Mr. Whitaker: That's true, and that would be unfair. Go ahead.



- Savannah: Eventually this will not help girls. Because they think that, “Oh, I can do whatever I want, and I won’t get in trouble for it.”
- Tony: In the cafeteria, James, Kale, and I were talking about something. But suddenly you came over to us and told us that we couldn’t play outside in a week. I know our voices were loud, but at the other girls’ table, they were being loud too.
- Heidy: But usually boys are noisier and louder than girls.
- Jill: Boys take a little longer than girls to calm down from summer break; they are really loud at the start of school. So, it just shows them they can act a couple of months that way.
- Mr. Whitaker: I haven’t seen any research or data on that. And as I think about my experiences here at the school, I haven’t really noticed that the boys come back any different than the girls come back. Do you notice that?
- Diana: No, I have never noticed a difference.
- Mr. Whitaker: Sometimes we’re all excited to be back for the first week, then it hits us that we have to do homework. And we’re like, “Oh, can’t I just got back to summer?”
- Heidy: When something happens to a boy and the boy gets hurt or someone is mean to a boy, they don’t hear it, they just say, “Okay shake it off. I’ll talk to you for a couple more minutes.” Say, a girl gets hurt by someone and they complain, and the boy gets suspended.
- James: Yeah, I remember that will happen because lots of times that will happen and you will be doing something and maybe a girl will hit you and you will fall down and you will actually get hurt. Or maybe you will be running and a girl will be running and bounce into you and if your hand hits them then all teachers pay attention to girls and if they say like, “Oh, my gosh! Mr. Whitaker, he just like punched me in the face,” then you all believed just what they say and don’t listen to the boys. And then it becomes a super big deal and the boys get punished.
- Mr. Whitaker: Did that happen with me?
- James: I don’t know. They just over exaggerate it a lot, and teachers pay attention. They don’t hear what the boys say.

When students discussed the second topic, they seemed more confident and seemed to participate more actively because they felt teachers paid attention to their voice. The conversations between students and Mr. Whitaker documented the process of students' active engagement in delivering their voices. Speaking and listening at the round table discussion was an active opportunity for both teachers and students to express their opinions and make decisions regarding school punishments. Students had a meaningful role and involvement in the leadership decisions.

As students became more involved in the discussion and knew the logic behind the school punishments and decision making process, they were able to gain an understanding of who got punished. This also helped teachers discover an instructional approach that would be more effective at involving and engaging students in learning about the concept of equality.

Tony: I think what we're trying to work to get away with the being labeled type of thing, it's that we're more likely to get punishments or something. Me, James, Kale, Georgy, we're all labeled as "bad kids." There's just a giant sharpie marker that just got that written on our foreheads.

Mr. Whitaker: Hang on, did I just mention you as a bad kid?

Tony: No, but it's what we're labeled as.

Mr. Whitaker: Okay, hang on. I think before we talk about fair punishment, we should talk about an image a person has. A reputation. Talking about it has to change. I like to talk about Mark, because he's been a really super good leader this year. I've noticed him really stepping up; it really just stands out a lot. So, we're at Teton Science School and we're driving around and I'm kind of bummed and I'm in the van and I'm saying, "Man, I can't believe we're not seeing any animals yet," and Jason makes this comment like, "I don't care if we see any animals on this trip, this is just beautiful, this is just awesome, this is just wonderful." Whoa, I'm impressed. What a positive outlook! What a great kid, and you

just set the tempo for everyone in that van and on that day. Because there's been a few people complaining, but that's how life goes on. He's getting a reputation on this trip for being a positive thinker. I've seen him do a good job. There's been a number of examples where he's been asked to do something to talk in an assembly by the principal, and he took the time to memorize his lines and he did a good job. So, he's got a positive reputation going with me. A label going. A positive label going. What would happen if he went out and brought a cigarette to school tomorrow? Sometimes, depending on how big the event was, it could wipe out a whole bunch of stuff. So, honesty and your reputation kind of go together.

- Miranda: Yeah, I think it is important to try to keep a good reputation in different settings. If I have a reputation that is very positive with the Spanish teacher or with music, humanities. Since those teachers talk, though, those things go on. If my name is coming up over and over in different settings, it's not part of that positive one with Mrs. Olson, maybe something we ought to own up to. It's something we've got to work on. Then, how do we do it? How we do it, is we work hard on those settings and make sure these go on. And it's going to take longer than a week, two weeks, maybe more than a month. It's going to take all year. Yeah?
- Elene: When we get labeled, then everyone else gets labeled. Because we get stereotyped or biased. It's almost impossible not being biased in life. I know every single year we start school with the first assembly and there is a clean slate for everyone. Everyone is free to a new life back at school. Then our labels are stuck on our foreheads, and then when we get put in for our first punishment, or you get sent home for a suspension for two weeks. Same person does the same thing, they get off with a slap on the wrist. So, you should keep working hard to have a good label.
- Mr. Whitaker: Here is something else too. Is it fair that when I drive down the road and the speed limit is 65 and I'm doing 80, is it fair that I get a ticket and I'm the only one that gets a ticket? There's like a thousand people that will pass me by.
- Students: No. Not even close. [Students answered collectively.]
- Mr. Whitaker: Everybody is going like 85, everyone is going 85. How come I got the ticket?
- James: Because you are the target.

- Karla: Because life is not fair.
- Jill: Yeah, because you are a target.
- Mr. Whitaker: Maybe that person knows me, alright?
- Diana: Hey, can I just interject really quickly? That's interesting too because I've had a few tickets in my life and what they will do is if a policeman pulls you over, a lot of times they will look at your record, and if your record shows that you've had other offenses they are a lot harsher than if you have just a clean state and no tickets. Past behavior really...even when you're an adult, your past behavior catches up with you.
- Mr. Whitaker: What's the moral of the story? For me, it doesn't matter if everyone was going 85, I was speeding. The moral of the story is to not speed. If you don't want to get caught, don't speed. I bring that up because like, "everyone is doing it," or "it was a group," or "you know we're kind of picking on you." I don't think anyone is picking on you. If you guys don't do things, you won't get called on the carpet on it. If you don't start to get a reputation... you have a reputation with me that is very positive.
- Mark: I got your point, but I'm still wondering what you think about punishments for boys and girls.
- Mr. Whitaker: I treat everyone the same, at least I try to, but I would like to change the way boys are treated at White Pine Elementary. I make a purposeful effort to do the same thing with boys and just don't buy the stereotype theme. I think that all behaviors should be pursued and people judge you based on your behavior. If your behavior is to mess around or play around with an origami, the teacher is not going to trust you with what's going on. And if your reputation is to do something else, then oh well, they're judging on behaviors.
- Olivia: So you mean...If we change our behaviors, the reputation will be changed? But it takes a while. It takes a while if you get all those slides out. If this is your slate here, it takes a while, you've got to build some up. I've been dishonest for three years, and then this year, for this month, I've been pretty good and you don't treat me the same as you treat this kid over here. It takes time. People have to trust you.
- Mr. Whitaker: Yes, yes! That's it! Honesty and trust are going to go together and they are all going to be based on your behavior. I think that if you

don't stand out and change, then just don't expect something will change. When someone brings it to my attention or I see a sad person, then that's the kind of stuff that needs to be brought to my attention. If I see something that looks like someone is being mean to somebody someone sitting off by themselves with a tear in their eye and they can't talk to me but later on, if that's happening, let me know, please let me know because it needs to be consistent. Truthfully, maybe I do have a bias, but at least I try to not pick that up.

The students' responses demonstrated understanding of the moral as it related to the honesty and consequences of behaviors in the larger world context. The teachers brought up the example of a speeding ticket so students could easily understand the moral message in addressing students' behavior problems. Mr. Whitaker explained that he worked hard to treat students fairly but also admitted to the possibility of being biased in his judgment. His humble and open attitude influenced students to revisit their behaviors and think about the big picture of the relationship between their reputation and the consequences of their behaviors. Later in the same discussion, Mr. Whitaker asked students to consider the way in which they could avoid negative labeling.

Diana: I think these girls are dying to say something.

Mr. Whitaker: Yeah, girls, I've ignored you the whole time. What do you want to say? Go for it.

Miranda: Really? Okay. This is on the punishment topic thing. Just when you were a boy, would you want punishment?

Mr. Whitaker: Well... no. But what we try to do, and I can only talk about the things I have some control over, when I decide a punishment, I want to do something that is related to what happened. Let's say we exclude somebody from sitting at the table. Now, I want to control where you guys get to sit at the table, and you guys don't get to decide who sits next to you. Then should you guys be punished from doing that all year long? No. Some principals, some people might be so mad and in the moment they say that "No, you guys can't sit together for the rest of the school year." But I think

the punishment should fit the crime. It should be somehow related to what they are doing. So, yes?

Elene: Lots of time when multiple people are doing it, some people are trying to get the blame off of themselves. Everyone else is doing it, and that person gets the blame off of them, and the other person has it on them.

Mr. Whitaker: Yes. If you don't want to get punishment or unfairness put upon you, then don't put yourself in that situation.

Mark: So, if you don't want to get a speeding ticket no matter how many cars are driving the same speed, you've just got to drive the speed limit.

Mr. Whitaker: Exactly. If I'm a duck and I look like a duck and walk like a duck, then I'm a duck, okay? I think the adults in this school are certainly trying to do what's best for you and come up with something that is going to work, that's going to change behavior. And not just be doing something to torture you. I kind of try to pride myself in being fair, but you guys are right, I'm sure I have got some biases. Before we're done, I want to tell you something. You all want to stand up here now, and you want to come to me with the petition because the popular, cool boys, something happened to them, not for everybody, right? And where were you for the rest of the year? When Kale was getting pushed around. Or days when Andrew was isolated at the cafeteria. Where were you to advocate for them? You have to stand up and do that for everybody, not just for someone who is popular. That is your responsibility as a member of this community. Standing up means that you'll take some risk or discomfort. Let me tell you something that really happened to me. I went on a fishing trip to Alaska. The fishing guide thought, for whatever reason, he'd make some off colored racist joke about Hispanics. Myself and my two sons, we sort of pride ourselves in treating everyone equal. We didn't laugh, we just looked at him like, "Really? Really?" And it just got sort of quiet. Sometimes you have to step forward and say, "Hey, that's not right. Don't speak about Hispanics or people who are Jewish, or Islamic, or whatever. I am guilty, probably, of biases that I'm not aware of."

James: We can't do anything because then the monitors don't care. Yeah.

Amber: We talked about this with Mrs. Olson. Yeah, we had to say something.

Whitney: If someone is mean to others, I'll say, "That's not nice, and you are mean because we all should be respected. Everyone is equally important."

Jason: I like your metaphor: the duck. If I look like a duck, walk like a duck, then I'm a duck.

Mr. Whitaker: Yes, you're a duck.

[Students laughed.]

Diana: Hey, we've got to get going. Can I just say one thing to you guys? As I've sat here and listened I know this one thing 100% that Mr. Whitaker loves all of you. I loved how he even admitted that he had a bias, and he wants to be fair. That's the kind of person he is. Do we all need improvement? Absolutely, all of us do. I think that petition helped us understand a lot. I know it helped me understand a lot because I think I had biases as well. That I wasn't even aware of.

Jill: Thank you, Mr. Whitaker.

Savannah: Thanks for coming and listening.

Mr. Whitaker: You're very welcome. It's very helpful for me because I can take this down to our playground monitors, too. And say, "Hey, I see some of these things too, and I'm talking to you about these all the time, but wow, now the students are bringing them to my attention as well."

Diana: Yeah, and we really appreciate you taking the time, and we know you are busy. And thank you so much for showing us how much you care about us.

Through Mr. Whitaker's questioning and explanation of the principle of positive behavior and taking action against injustice, students were able to extend the conversation to focus on ways in which action could be taken to foster equality. The teacher's experience with a racial joke and the duck metaphor helped students develop a more critical understanding of the issues of discrimination. In particular, Mr. Whitaker's personal example provided valuable life lessons about social advocacy on a personal

level. By sharing his way of resisting racial discrimination, he encouraged students to develop their critical consciousness to help them engage in action to make a more inclusive society. The responses of Mark, James, Jason, and Whitney demonstrated their deeper level of understanding their social responsibility as responsible members of the community. They affirmed their willingness to act against discrimination. Moreover, Whitney shared an important message that everyone should be valued and respected.

The round table discussion with the teachers and their feedback encouraged students to pay attention and participate in action for social justice. In the post student interviews, students vividly remembered how they were empowered through the petition writing and the round table experience. Students commonly spoke about how they felt their voices were validated and respected by teachers. One student told me, “I didn’t know they [Mr. Whitaker and the vice principal] would come. I was surprised he listened to what we said. Even though we complained a lot, he wasn’t upset.” Another student stated, “That was cool. I thought teachers always wanted to put us in our places. They don’t ask what we think and what we want. I really appreciated them [Mr. Whitaker and Diana] because it makes me feel welcome and part of the community. I don’t need to just say, ‘Yes, yes.’” Through the round table discussion, students benefited from opportunities to practice skills, such as problem solving, leadership, and critical thinking, required to participate in a decision-making school community. This experience was invaluable in students building trust with the teachers but also developing self-confidence for moving forward with actions towards social justice.



## Summary

The preceding findings of this study reveal what happened when fifth graders engage in critical literacy with social justice themes using multicultural children's literature. The students actively engaged in meaningful learning to address social justice. Four major themes emerged from the data in this study: (a) the students disrupted the common curriculum practices by questioning intentions of authors and illustrators in the literature; (b) the students interrogated multiple viewpoints by exploring multiple accounts of the same event and taking steps to understand inclusiveness and fairness through their experiences at home and school; (c) the students focused on sociopolitical issues by increasing sociopolitical awareness of social justice issues and interrogating unequal power relationship in the texts, their lives, and the world around them; and (d) the students took action and promoted social justice by becoming aware of social responsibility as members of a classroom community, writing a petition for equal treatment of boys and girls at school, and participating in the round table discussion for ensuring equality for all fifth graders. In the final chapter of this study, I will revisit the findings through a discussion of the conclusions according to each research question. I will discuss implications for professorial teacher development and teacher education programs and address recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Findings**

In Chapters I and II, I addressed the need of an alternative approach to traditional scripted instruction that fosters students' critical thinking. This alternative instruction aims to develop students' critical consciousness of the self, others, and the world based on student-centered inquiry. In particular, I examined how the use of multicultural children's literature with social justice issues helped fifth graders foster their critical consciousness and commitment to addressing social justice issues. In Chapter III, I described the methodology employed in this study. Chapters IV and V focused on the findings that emerged from the data. In this chapter, I will draw conclusions based on findings, foreground implications for practice, discuss contributions to the field, and suggest the directions for future research that stem from this study.

The primary goal of this study was to explore what happens when fifth graders engage in multicultural children's literature through critical literacy approaches. I sought to address a number of research questions related to how Diana, the fifth grade teacher, implemented critical literacy approaches in the classroom, what students learned by engaging in multicultural children's literature with social justice issues, and how this learning influenced their critical consciousness development. The research questions that guided this study were as follows.

1. In what ways does the teacher incorporate critical literacy approaches in the classroom?

2. What were the learning outcomes of fifth graders engaging in social justice issues present in multicultural children's literature?

In an era of high stakes accountability, the use of a one-size-fits-all scripted reading and mathematics instruction is prevalent in many schools, and the student-centered curriculum loses its place in the classroom (Au, 2007; Boyle-Baise et al. 2008). Furthermore, since the release of the NCLB, instruction focus in elementary schools has shifted to standardized test preparation. Traditional scripted instructions do not foster students' critical thinking, social interaction, and examination of sociopolitical issues (Hargood, 2008; Stover, 2012). In this context, the teacher remains a holder of knowledge instead of being a facilitator of learning. Therefore, there is a need for an alternative student-centered and inquiry-based approach that fosters students' consciousness, including reflection and action that address social justice.

While critical literacy research has been increased in K-12 classrooms (Comber, 1998; Hargood, 2008; Luke & Freebody, 1999; Souto-Manning, 2009; Vasquez, 2006, 2010; Vasquez & Felderman, 2013), little research has been conducted at the elementary school level. A variety of barriers have impeded the implementation of critical literacy in elementary classrooms. Some teachers believe that adults need to censor reality for children, and they might feel uncomfortable exposing children to controversial topics related to equity or injustice that may be harmful to children's innocence (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Also, a fear of backlash from administrators or parents for teaching such sensitive issues might make teachers hesitant to incorporate critical literacy in their classrooms (Bargiel et al., 1997). Moreover, some teachers prefer to accept and follow the existing social order instead of questioning the status quo (McDaniel, 2004).

Because of this educational mindset, I investigated what happened when one fifth-grade classroom engaged in multicultural children's literature through critical literacy approaches. I employed a qualitative case study approach to provide a rich description of the case of Diana's classroom. Data collection took thirteen weeks, and it included classroom observations, interviews of the teacher and her students, field notes, a reflective journal, and student-made artifacts. An analysis of data revealed the following two main findings according to the research questions of the study:

1. The teacher's critical literacy pedagogy positively influenced students in developing their critical consciousness.
2. The students actively engaged in meaningful learning of the chosen multicultural children's literature, which taught them to advocate for social justice.

Four categories were identified in relation to the two findings of the study following the four dimensions of critical literacy outlined by Lewison et al. (2002): (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice. Each category had findings, identified as sub-categories, from my data. The two main findings provide a comprehensive understanding of this study. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit the two research questions of this study and the findings according to the four dimensions of critical literacy. In the following sections, I will discuss the findings discovered from each research question (see Table 6).

Table 6

*Research Questions and Findings*

| Research questions   | Findings                                   | Subcategories   |
|--|--|---|
| 1. In what ways does the teacher incorporate critical literacy approaches in her classroom?  | Disrupting the commonplace                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrating social studies and ELA curriculum</li> <li>• Creating a safe space for open dialogue</li> </ul>  |
|  | Interrogating multiple viewpoints          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posing questions to examine multiple perspectives</li> </ul>   |
|  | Focusing on sociopolitical issues          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching current events</li> <li>• Paying attention to sociopolitical systems</li> </ul>   |
|  | Taking action and promoting social justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing academic skills through student-centered learning</li> <li>• Assigning students a variety of meaningful writings</li> </ul>   |
| 2. What were the learning outcomes when the fifth graders engaged in social justice issues present in multicultural children's literature? | Disrupting the commonplace                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifying author's intentions through illustrations</li> </ul>   |
|  | Interrogating multiple viewpoints          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploring multiple accounts of the same event</li> <li>• Taking steps to understand inclusiveness and fairness through students' experiences</li> </ul>  |
|  | Focusing on sociopolitical issues          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing student' sociopolitical awareness</li> <li>• Interrogating unequal power relationships</li> </ul>   |
|  | Taking action and promoting social justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becoming aware of social responsibility as members of a community</li> <li>• Writing a petition for equal treatment at school</li> <li>• Participating in the round table discussion for equality</li> </ul> |

### **In What Ways Does the Teacher Incorporate Critical Literacy Approaches in Her Classroom?**

The teacher employed a variety of methods to engage students in critical literacy practices. First, the teacher disrupted the prevailing scripted instruction practice by integrating social studies and ELA curriculum and creating a safe and collaborative environment to enact critical literacy. The teacher integrated social studies content into literacy routines aligned with Utah Core Standards. The teacher also established a classroom community where students participated in their learning as co-constructors of

knowledge. Such an environment made the students feel comfortable and safe when examining social justice issues through multicultural children's literature.

Second, the teacher focused on hearing multiple, and sometimes contradictory, perspectives by asking open-ended critical questions such as, "What other perspective could be considered?" The teacher posed such questions so the students could examine the texts from multiple viewpoints. Third, the teacher provided opportunities for students to question the ways in which a sociopolitical system affects people's lives. The teacher taught current events related to racism and encouraged students to analyze the underlying cause of the racial tension associated with sociopolitical inequality. Lastly, the teacher provided a space for students to take action to advocate for social justice. Students developed their academic skills in reading comprehension, writing, and searching for information through student-centered learning experiences, such as a living wax museum project. Additionally, the teacher offered opportunities in which students could engage in a variety of writings, such as writing autobiographies of historical figures, writing letters to people who were related to the events in Ferguson, and writing poetry against racism and discrimination.

It was a significant and meaningful shift in pedagogy for the teacher to reconstruct her curriculum to foster students' critical consciousness and action for social justice. The teacher disrupted the common teaching practice that just focused on ELA and mathematics by integrating social studies and ELA curriculum associated with the themes of social justice. The curriculum integration of social studies and ELA based on thematic approaches allowed Diana to teach social studies content in everyday literacy routines

aligned with Utah Core Standards. The integrated curriculum fully reflected civic engagement and social justice disciplines to foster critical thinking (Parker, 2014).

Traditional social studies curriculum employs an expanding horizons model in which students gradually learn about self, family, community, state, and nation (Clarke, 1990). However, this expanding horizon model is problematic in that it fosters the value of social justice, but it does not do enough to prepare students as responsive global citizens in multicultural society. Because the model focuses on Eurocentric and androcentric concepts of citizenship and experiences, it emphasizes Western notions of child development that limit students' participation in the curriculum (Camicia & Saavedra, 2009). The teacher's social studies and ELA curriculum integration under the themes of social justice is crucial because it brings student-centered and democratic perspectives into the classroom. By engaging in the student-centered integrated curriculum, students were not only able to expand their knowledge of the current and historical social justice issues, but they also became an important partner of curriculum enactment (Camicia & Saavedra, 2009; Wade, 2002).

In order to promote students' active participation, it is important that the teacher creates a space where the teacher values students' voices and respects students as co-constructors of knowledge, so the teacher can move beyond the banking method of instruction where they deposit knowledge into students (Freire, 2000). A key feature of this space is the democratic and reciprocal nature of student-teacher power/knowledge relations. In this study, Diana established a safe and collaborative environment to implement critical literacy through both small and large discussions of multicultural

children's literature. In this setting, Diana positioned herself as an equal contributor of discussion with her students, and her students openly participated in the discussion. She supported and encouraged her students to lead small and large group discussions. They did not need to raise their hands and get permission to speak from Diana. This meant that the process of learning became student-centered and democratic.

In addition, the use of multicultural children's literature provided a safe space for students to open critical dialogue. The students were initially not comfortable enough to talk about their experiences, such as an experience of marginalization in the cafeteria or playground by their peers. The multicultural children's literature became a vehicle to begin an authentic and responsive conversation (Vasquez, 2010). In this space, students felt comfortable exploring a range of social justice issues, such as racism and discrimination, and problematizing taken-for-granted knowledge (Freire, 2000, 2014).

This type of environment also encouraged students to learn through social interaction with the teacher and their peers. The students co-constructed knowledge through both small group and large group discussions and informal conversations during independent work time. The students were exposed to various ideas and perspectives as a result of the sociocultural nature of the classroom setting. Vygotsky's social learning theory (1978) explains that learning takes place through social interactions with a student's peers, teachers, and other experts. Diana's students negotiated the meaning of social justice and taking action through social interactions, and these experiences led them to develop their critical consciousness on social justice issues. The authentic dialogue helped the students to communicate meaning across their individual differences,



such as social class, race, or gender (Delpit, 1995), and have meaningful social interactions with their teacher and peers.

Next, the teacher posed a variety of open-ended critical questions to foster critical literacy practice. Questioning texts from multiple perspectives was visible in both small and large group discussions in her classroom. Diana emphasized to her students that the text is not neutral, and the authors want to influence the students' positions as readers (Luke & Freebody, 1999; Vasquez, 2010). Her students attempted to understand the texts from various viewpoints by questioning multiple interpretations of the texts through questions such as, "What other perspective could be considered?" For example, her students examined the meaning of American citizenship and the role of the government through literature that deals with racial discrimination from both the majority and the minority perspectives in society. Such critical literacy practices encouraged students to bring their opinions and experiences into the classroom discussions and actively question the underlying messages and assumptions of social practices (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Lewison et al., 2014).

In doing so, the students were able to develop a critical lens to read the text and the world around them. Such a critical lens is what Freire (2000) called "critical consciousness." Students were motivated to analyze their own position in relation to the rest of the world (Freire 2000; 2012). These types of experiences encouraged students to examine dominant systems of society, question why certain groups were discriminated against over others, and show how they could begin to take action on social issues (Harste et al., 2000). This critical perspective and position allowed them to recognize

their own power to bring change and transformation to the world.

Next, the teacher provided opportunities for the students to interrogate the sociopolitical and economic structure of society by examining current events associated with racial tension. Diana challenged students' perception of racism being a thing of the past by examining the racial tensions in Ferguson. She brought two news articles about Ferguson from CNN and Fox News Channel. Her students compared, contrasted, and analyzed how and why the story was being covered in different angles. They closely examined the language used in each article (Egawa & Harste, 2001). Along with the current events in Ferguson, Diana introduced similar cases with racial dynamics involved, such as the Eric Garner case and the Los Angeles unrest of 1992. The students explored connections between cases.

In doing so, the students recognized that stereotyping plays an important role in racial problems. Students identified how the stereotypes of African Americans affect people's perceptions and responses to them and how those stereotypes can lead to racial tension. They also realized how events in the past and the present are interconnected and how decisions made in the past influence lives in the present. Furthermore, Diana provided additional information to analyze the root cause of the racial tension associated with poverty. The students analyzed several charts that indicated economic inequality between different races. These activities helped them take a critical point of view to question larger power relations (Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Gopalakrishnan, 2010) and challenge the acceptance of social conformity and the status quo (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Students were able to go beyond the personal level of understanding

the structural inequality of society and understand the sociopolitical systems to which they belong (Boozer, Maras, & Brummett, 1999).

Lastly, the teacher provided a space for students to take action in addressing social justice by engaging in a variety of books. The use of multicultural children's literature related to social justice issues helped students develop their academic skills in reading comprehension, writing, and searching for information through student-centered learning experiences. After reading aloud, students often chose other books related to social justice issues to read during recess or their free time. This means students consciously engaged in critical literacy practice. The more they read, the more they were able to comprehend social justice issues and the complex context in which they are situated. This reading experience helped students deepen their understanding of social justice issues and understand how language is used to legitimize domination (Janks, 2000). By understanding the larger society's attitude towards social justice issues, students were able to develop a social consciousness (Bishop, 1982).

The teacher also encouraged the students to engage in a variety of writing assignments, such as writing an autobiography and presenting at the living wax museum, writing letters to people who were involved in the events of Ferguson, and writing poetry against racism and discrimination. The use of multicultural children's literature for students' writing helped them enhance their understanding of American history and social inequalities. Engaging in experiences such as reading and writing in a variety of genres and contexts exposed the students to different cultural and social groups' experiences from an insider's perspective.

Students were able to empathize with others and understand their struggles in society (Bishop, 1994; 2007).

This empathetic understanding and emotional awareness toward others is another type of praxis (Freire, 2000, 2014) and helped students become willing to transform the existing state of society into a place of social equality and justice (Cai, 1998). Students' letters to people who were involved in the event of Ferguson and poems that criticized racism and discrimination showed their desire and willingness to take action for social justice. Through these experiences, the students became conscious individuals who took a critical stance of humanity and love toward others (Freire, 2000). They, as conscious beings, were able to reject any type of dehumanizing conditions and willing to fight to ensure human rights for living together in a more just and inclusive society.

### **What Were the Learning Outcomes When the Fifth Graders Engaged in Social Justice Issues Present in Multicultural Children's Literature?**

Diana's students actively engaged in meaningful learning of the chosen multicultural children's literature, which taught them to advocate for social justice. Her students were influenced by the literature and peer interaction when they engaged in critical literacy learning. Students participated in collaborative and critical discussions using multicultural children's literature as a springboard. The literature influenced students in a variety of ways. First, students disrupted the commonplace by identifying author's intentions through examining the illustrations in a book. Second, students interrogated multiple viewpoints by exploring multiple accounts of the same event and taking steps to understand fairness and equality through students' own experiences.

Third, they focused on sociopolitical issues by increasing their sociopolitical awareness and interrogating unequal power relationships. Lastly, students took action to promote social justice by becoming aware of their social responsibility as members of a classroom community, writing a petition for equal treatment of boys and girls, and participating in the round table discussion for equality at school.

Diana's students disrupted the commonplace by identifying author's intentions through examining the chosen literature's illustrations. Interrogating illustrations was one way to help students see that no text is neutral (Leland, Harste, & Huber, 2005; Lewison et al., 2015; Luke & Freebody, 1999). Students analyzed how the literature's text and illustrations related to each other, thus considering how the authors and illustrators position the readers in certain ways. The students answered a range of questions in order to examine the illustrations of the literature, such as: Who do you see in this picture? What is their clothing like? Are characters presented differently in illustrations according to race or gender? Do any characters carry negative or stereotypical connotations? Or, why do you think the illustrator did that?

When students read and discussed the books *Freedom Summer* (Wiles, 2001), *The Other Side* (Miller, 1998), and *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995) under a theme of racism and segregation, students found that the main characters in the illustrations wore similar types of clothing, and they concluded that the illustrator wanted to show the similarities of main characters, regardless of their race. The students thought that the illustrators wanted to emphasize that all people are equal and should be respected regardless of their race. It encouraged students to problematize the texts and illustrations

from their own point of view. When the students analyzed the purpose of a piece of literature as a sociocultural product, they were more aware of what messages the author wanted to convey (Leland, Harste, & Huber, 2005; Lewison et al., 2015; Vasquez & Felderman, 2013).

Through this examination, students were able to understand how the readers are positioned and framed by the texts and illustrations and how such positioning served to convey someone's point of view. The idea of framing helped students identify how the use of words in a certain way can structure one's point of view to perceive the world as it relates to someone else's beliefs and interests. These experiences allowed them to understand how language shapes discourses and their world as well as supports or disrupts the social practices (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1990). Critical literacy enabled the students to join alternative discourses that address social justice and equity and to read between the lines (Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Freire & Macedo, 1987). The examination of illustrations helped students to utilize a new lens to disrupt the commonplace by seeing texts and everyday events and experiences differently than they would normally.

Second, students interrogated multiple viewpoints by exploring multiple accounts of the same event and taking steps to understand fairness and equality through students' own experiences. Students used multicultural children's books to present various characters' experiences who had varying reasons to participate in the Civil War. *Pink and Say* (Polacco, 1994), *Abe Lincoln Remembers* (Turner, 2001), and *The Split History of the Civil War* (Fitzgerald, 2013) helped students understand the Civil War from multiple points of view, including the perspective of a Confederate soldier, a Union soldier, a

soldiers' family, children, women, and the President Abraham Lincoln. After exploring multiple perspectives entrenched in the Civil War, students wrote a historical narrative from the perspective of a character they created who witnessed the Civil War. They wrote the narrative from imaginary characters' perspectives, including a Confederate soldier, a Union soldier, a slave, a slave owner, and President Abraham Lincoln.

In addition, students made connections to the theme of discrimination between the literature they were studying and the cafeteria event during lunchtime. They compared and contrasted the discrimination cases in the literature and Andrew's marginalization experience in the cafeteria. It enabled them to understand the meaning and impact of discrimination and exclusion in their own lives and society at large. The students were also able to understand the notion of inclusiveness and fairness through their own experience.

These activities allowed students to analyze and synthesize both primary and secondary sources related to the Civil War and see the same situation from different perspectives. By comparing and contrasting different points of view, and combining one perspective with another, students improved their views of various topics and formulated new conclusions (Parker, 2014). This not only helped deepen their historical knowledge and awareness, but it also helped make them more flexible and critical in witnessing everyday events. The more perspectives students were able to explore and understand, the more likely they would experience a transformative perspective of the status quo and gravitate towards social justice (Jones, 2006). When multiple perspectives are valued, students can develop their own perspective rather than conform to the mainstream

paradigm and have a better opportunity to make a democratic decision for their community (Camicia, 2007).

Next, the students focused on sociopolitical issues by increasing their sociopolitical awareness and interrogating unequal power relationships. In Diana's class, students explored different perspectives and the meanings of various historical events and current events in their own lives through the examination and discussion of social justice issues, such as racism, discrimination, fairness, equality, and acceptance. This increased student's sociopolitical awareness, enabling them to become more informed critical learners.

Several students in Diana's class influenced their peers as a result of sharing personal connections to the themes in the literature during small and large group discussions. Jason shared about his family trip to the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor and made connections to the book *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011). His experiences made historical events such as World War II real for his peers, and they were able to make an explicit connection from the text to the world event. These text-to-self connections and text-to-world connections helped the students examine the theme of racism and equality through the case of the Japanese American internment camps during World War II. Along with the theme, Mark also shared his experiences visiting the Intermountain Indian School that segregated Navajo Indian children from the 1950s through the 1980s. Mark researched the history of school segregation in Utah with his group of peers and presented it to the class and to other fifth grade classes.

Through Jason's and Mark's connections, the students developed sociopolitical



awareness regarding authority and inequities that exist in society, specifically in relation to the issues of race. The examination of inequities and power relationships is one aspect of critical literacy that is a form of cultural citizenship and politics (Giroux, 2011). This sociopolitical awareness increases opportunities for students to participate in society and develop an ongoing act of consciousness and resistance. By being in an environment where their voices were valued, the students realized the power they have when they challenge the unquestioned legitimacy of unequal power relationships in their lives and the world around them. Critical literacy enhanced the students' critical consciousness development by increasing their sociopolitical awareness.

Along with exploring the themes of discrimination and inequality, the students interrogated unequal power relationships in the literature. Students had opportunities to rethink how democracy works in a constitutional democratic society by asking about the relationship between civil rights, responsibilities, and the authority of a nation through the books *So Far from the Sea* (Bunting, 1998), *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993), and *Sylvia and Aki* (Conkling, 2011). Students examined the double standard of citizenship that was applied to Japanese Americans in the internment camps during World War II and limited Mexican Americans' access to quality education. Students criticized the double standard of citizenship and the sociopolitical structure that maintained the status quo.

They began to ask whose interests were being served and what social roles, power, and privilege played in the context of the texts. This means that students became more aware of power relationships in their lives and the world around them by examining

power and privilege in literature. The examination of power relationships helped them develop agency to confront inequities and gain political awareness of the need for social change (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Comber et al., 2006). Also, the examination of inequities and power relationships is an essential aspect of critical literacy that, as a form of cultural citizenship and politics, increases opportunities for students to participate in society and conscious and resistant citizens (Giroux, 2011).

Last, students took action in promoting social justice by becoming aware of their social responsibility as members of the classroom community, writing a petition for equal treatment for boys and girls, and participating in the round table discussion for equality at school. In this study, multicultural children's literature as a springboard for discussion provided a critical space for the students to take action to address social justice. Diana's students engaged in action in a number of ways. While students read about and discussed characters and events in the literature that related to racism and discrimination, students could begin to respond to the text by making connections between the themes in the text and their own lives, other texts, and to the world around them (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). By connecting the text in various ways, such as text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world, the students were able to better understand what they read (Harvey & Goudvis, 2000).

This understanding of social justice issues helped the students to see their everyday events through different eyes. Students discussed and analyzed the cafeteria seating problem during lunchtime, and they obtained insights on how they participated in the politics of daily life at school. It helped students encode and decode the texts and their

own lives. When they discussed social action for change by studying the women's rights movement in the books *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote* (Stone, 2008) and *I Could Do That!: Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote* (White, 2005), students were more aware of inequality in their school experiences. After the discussion, the students decided to write a petition to the teacher who was in charge of the regulation of punishments, Mr. Whitaker, to advocate for equal treatment of boys and girls at school. The students invited Mr. Whitaker and the vice principal to a round table discussion in their class. By discussing their concerns with teachers and administrators, the students were able to critically analyze the social issues found in their texts in the context of a real-life scenario that concerned them as individuals.

Through writing a petition and participating in the round table discussion, students engaged in "praxis" (Freire, 2000, p.33). Instead of obeying the authority of the teacher and other adults, the students analyzed their daily experiences with critical eyes and spoke out against the unfair treatments that they experienced. This ongoing reflection of their reality empowered them to stand up for their right for equal treatment at school and then led them to action in writing a petition, organizing the round table discussion, and actively participating in the discussion. This examination enabled them to realize the power they have when they challenge the unquestioned legitimacy of power relationships in their lives and the world around them (Freire & Macedo, 1987). In doing so, they achieved new transformative knowledge that has a potential to change their social practices. This series of actions fostered students to understand and recognize their roles and responsibilities as members of the classroom and school community. They also

reaffirmed the value of their social participation, proving that they had power to collectively change their situation (Lewison et al., 2015).

In this study, the students actively participated in inquiry-based critical literacy practices based upon multicultural children's literature with the theme of social justice. Through the use of critical literacy and collaborative discussion, students advocated for issues of social justice in their own lives as well as beyond the walls of the school. Students developed critical perspectives towards texts through multicultural children's literature instruction with critical literacy approaches, and this enabled students to transfer these skills to their own lives, thereby reading "their world through a critical stance that leads to empowerment" (McDaniel, 2004, p. 473). In other words, students rewrote their world by engaging in social action (Giroux, 2007).

This critical approach in curriculum was a great starting point for students to develop their agency to confront the inequalities in their own lives and the world around them, engage in transformative learning, and take action towards a more just and inclusive world. Critical literacy fosters critical consciousness and a democratic way of life.

## **Implications**

### **Implication for Practice and Professional Teacher Development**

In an age of high-stakes assessments and teacher accountability, many teachers are encouraged to prepare students for standardized testing by following scripted programs. It has been widely reported that social studies instruction has disappeared in

elementary classrooms since the passing of the NCLB legislation in 2001 (Burroughs et al., 2005; VanFossen, 2005). Social studies instruction is being reduced and replaced by increased instruction for test preparation in ELA and mathematics. Under these circumstances, the integration of social studies and ELA curriculum with critical literacy can be an alternative approach to increasing social studies instruction and preparing students as active citizens in a democratic society.

The most important factor related to the success of this study was the teacher factor. Diana was very effective at integrating multicultural children's literature in her literacy routine related to social studies and this is the most important factor contributing to the success of the study. Diana integrated social studies content into the literacy routines of her curriculum. Her curriculum integration fulfilled the state and national standards for social studies and ELA. By incorporating multicultural children's literature, with social justice issues as a vehicle for the curriculum integration, Diana included civic engagement and social justice disciplines to promote critical thinking in her classroom (Parker, 2014). Wade's (2002) thematic approach made the social studies and ELA curriculum integration feasible. Based on the theme of social justice, students explored the issues of racism, discrimination, fairness, equality, and inclusiveness. This integrated approach allowed students to gain comprehensive understanding of historical and current social issues, improve academic skills, foster critical consciousness, and take social action to make a positive difference.

There is a need for professional development in the area of critical literacy for in-service teachers. In the initial stages of this study, Diana admitted that she had limited

knowledge of critical literacy approaches but became curious as she began implementing critical literacy and saw what the critical literacy practice actually looked like. She expressed her desire to help her students in terms of developing their critical thinking when she said, “I don’t know that I can do a good job [implementing critical literacy approaches], but I like the idea that it helps kids to become critical.” She wanted to find ways to make her students “talk about power issues and social justice.” After finishing this study, Diana gained confidence in her ability to teach social justice issues through critical literacy. In her interview at end of the study, she stated the need to implement critical literacy and expressed her desire to continue to utilize critical literacy in her classroom again the next school year.

When you asked me to join in your research, I thought I wasn’t ready to do so, but I wanted to change the way I teach social studies. But after having done all these things [implementing critical literacy through social studies and ELA curriculum], it wasn’t very hard to run that [critical literacy] in the classroom. I needed critical final touches for the activities, and I learned a lot from you and your project. It helped the kids a lot to think critically and in connecting the critical thinking to action for social justice at their level. I think I can do a better job next year.

In this study, Diana demonstrated a deeper understanding of the key tenants of critical literacy, including disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action to promote social justice. Diana’s case shows that teachers can benefit from ongoing professional teacher development to find their passion and strength through consciously reflecting upon their own teaching practices, extending their knowledge of critical literacy, improving instructional strategies, and deconstructing and reconstructing their pedagogy for students.

In addition, there is a need for in-service teacher training for multicultural literature. From my own experience as the researcher of the study, the most important aspects of teacher training for multicultural literature is to provide opportunities for teachers to access multicultural literature. Multicultural literature was completely foreign to me until I participated in a one-time professional learning community workshop on teaching cultural diversity through Korean children's literature. When teachers receive training related to multicultural literature, they have a better chance to understand students who come from diverse groups and be more sensitive to social justice issues that reflect sociopolitical dynamics of society and in history.

Moving forward, there is a great need to provide teachers a platform in which to explore and grow. These platforms include professional development workshops on critical literacy approaches and multicultural literature. Through these experiences, teachers will have opportunities to explore ways to implement critical literacy and multicultural literature in the classroom, and this will enable them to take a step forward in critical literacy practice.

### **Implication for Teacher Education**

There is a strong need for incorporating critical literacy as an alternative curriculum approach to the scripted instruction in preservice teacher education programs. According to McNair (2002), some teachers did not enact critical literacy instructional approaches in their classrooms because of a lack of awareness or knowledge about the use of critical approaches to instruction. Diana was unfamiliar with the instructional approach of critical literacy even though she had frequently taught social studies content

and incorporated it into her literacy instruction. While a new comer to critical literacy, she was knowledgeable of implementation structures that facilitate literature discussions. She emphasized that students had ownership of the discussion. She strived to ask interpretive questions that examined the texts with a critical eye and have both small and large group discussions related to racism, discrimination, fairness, equality, and social justice. She was able to enact critical literacy using multicultural children's literature in her classroom without disturbing her initial curriculum plan.

While some teachers' lack of awareness of the need for critical literacy in the classroom hinders the implementation of critical literacy, others have a limited understanding and acceptance of the critical literacy approach itself. Previous research suggests the reason why some teachers are reluctant to enact critical literacy in their classrooms. First, some teachers believe that children do not possess adequate intellectual capacity to participate in critical literacy practices. They think that children are not ready to handle sensitive issues, such as racism, discrimination, or sexual orientation (Leland et al., 1999; McNair, 2002; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Other reasons include thinking that a colorblind approach provides a safe space for innocent children because racism is too complex and controversial to fully understand the meaning and context in which it is examined (Swindler Boutte et al, 2011; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998).

Despite these viewpoints, there is no evidence to support the above claims that children will be negatively affected by engaging in critical literacy. The findings of this study indicate a need for incorporating critical literacy in the classroom. The findings also illustrate that children are capable of engaging in critical literacy, becoming reflective,



and taking action to make a positive difference in their lives and the world around them. A study of Souto-Manning (2009) shows how her first graders disrupted the commonplace through critical literacy instruction. She and her students problematized and challenged the racially and socioeconomically segregated nature of pull-out programs, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), gifted, and special education programs in their classroom.

Souto-Manning's (2009) young students raised questions regarding why they had to study in different programs and how it related to race. While the fifth graders continually and critically read multicultural children's literature that focused on racism and the Civil Rights Movement throughout the school year, they noticed that they could not study together with all of their classmates in the same classroom. They discovered that all classmates who received the gifted services were White or Asians, all students who were going to the ESOL program were Asian or Latino/a, and all students going to the resource program were African American. The students wrote letters, created a petition, and conducted their own presentation to which parents, other children, and teachers were invited. As a result, they were able to study together in the second grade with the same teacher.

Along with the findings of Souto-Manning (2009), Soares and Wood (2010) suggested that bringing a critical literacy perspective to the social studies classroom can teach students how the past can work for the common good in the future. They argued that elementary-age students can become critically caring citizens by examining current and historical social justice issues through critical literacy. The two studies demonstrated

that children have an ability to engage in critical literacy, and this helps them become critical thinkers while preparing them to grow into socially responsive citizens.

When critical literacy addressing social justice is excluded from the curriculum, children lose the opportunity to think deeply about the world. Without a critical lens to read the word and the world (Freire, 2000), we cannot expect that children can critically understand their own reality and develop a critical consciousness to promote action, transformation, and social justice. Therefore, a practical need exists to help teachers develop their knowledge of critical literacy approaches and implement critical literacy in the classroom. Providing opportunities for teacher candidates to improve their ability to take a critical stance on their teaching and the world can help them become consciously reflective teachers and increase the likelihood that they will enact critical literacy in their classroom. The research of Lazar (2007) and Kidd, Sanchez, and Thorp (2008) commonly indicated that when teacher candidates had opportunities to enhance their understanding of cultural diversity and develop culturally responsive dispositions, they were able to raise their critical perspectives and cultivate an attitude capable of fostering their own critically literate classroom.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

In this section, I will highlight the contribution of this study to the field and suggest future research that builds upon this study. This study was rich with findings about using multicultural children's literature through critical literacy to help student develop their critical consciousness of social issues. The findings from this study were

not intended to be generalized to contexts beyond the fifth-grade classroom in this study. Instead, I designed this case study to better understand how one fifth grade classroom engaged in critical literacy practices through multicultural children's literature related to social justice issues. However, the findings might be transferable to other classrooms.

The first major practical contribution of this study to the field is providing an in-depth description of what happens when fifth graders engage in critical literacy learning. This study also demonstrates how reading critically and discussing multicultural children's literature help students foster their critical consciousness and commit to take action towards social justice. This study also expands the area of implementing critical examinations in social studies instruction. However, this study also brings up new questions that need to be explored.

First, I recommend a need for future research that examines how students from diverse backgrounds engage in multicultural children's literature through critical literacy approaches in terms of cultural diversity and identity. I recommend this because Diana's class was a mostly homogenous group of White students from middle class family backgrounds. I suggest the following research questions for further research: What happens when students from multicultural or transnational backgrounds engage in multicultural children's literature related to cultural diversity through critical literacy approaches? How do diverse backgrounds and experiences of students influence their critical literacy learning? How does multicultural children's literature influence students' awareness of cultural diversity and identity formation? These questions can be explored in classrooms with students from diverse populations.

Next, I suggest a need to present a nested level for better understanding the complexity of students' critical literacy practice related to the four dimensions such as (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical issues, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice. Each level of the graphic model can propose meaningful ways of understanding critical literacy practices using multicultural children's literature. Here is a possible research question: How did students disrupt the common place of different levels? I also recommend to trace learning outcomes from beginning to end with a focus upon discourse analysis on how students' discourses change over time based upon themes such as empathy. For example, a researcher can trace how students' discourses about empathy can change over time.

Finally, I suggest a need for future research that introduces critical literacy to pre-service teachers. Here are possible research questions: In the context of teacher education programs, how do pre-service teachers in elementary education respond to and interact with critical literacy? How does the four-dimension framework of critical literacy help with the implementation of critical literacy in elementary classrooms? By providing support to pre-service teachers, the possibility of enacting such a curriculum is more likely. The examination of the aforementioned research questions would also be beneficial to in-service education for K-12 teachers.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, I have described what multicultural children's literature instruction with the theme of social justice looks like in one fifth-grade classroom. In doing so, I

hope this study provides snapshots of critical literacy practices that foster students' critical consciousness and social actions. This study provides a safe and collaborative space for students to examine social justice issues, such as racism, discrimination, fairness, equality, and inclusiveness, as well as take action to advocate for social justice. This study illustrates the usefulness of multicultural children's literature instruction with critical literacy approaches and highlights the need for in-service and pre-service teachers to interact and discuss the topic of critical literacy. By incorporating alternative and critical approaches to social studies instruction, teachers can help students gain deeper understandings of their lives and the world around them. They can become active and responsive citizens who transform the world into a more just and inclusive place.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A  
Research Phases

## Research Phases

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>Phases Phase I - Planning</p> <p>September - December</p> <p>2014</p> | <p>Initial work with teacher to develop research timeline, multicultural children's literature for social justice instructional framework, and list of multicultural children's literature</p>  |
| <p>Phase II - Data Collection</p> <p>Mid-February - May 2015</p>         | <p>Initial teacher interview</p> <p>Ongoing observation of large group multicultural children's literature instruction and discussions</p> <p>Ongoing observation of small group guided discussions</p> <p>Ongoing student conversations</p> <p>Collection of student work samples</p> <p>Ongoing field notes and reflective journals</p> |
| <p>Phase III - Follow Up</p> <p>May 2015</p>                             | <p>Follow up interviews of teachers and students</p>  |

Appendix B

Selection Criteria of Multicultural Children's Literature with

Themes of Social Justice

### Selection Criteria of Multicultural Children's Literature with Themes of Social Justice

1. Author's and illustrator's perspective (Gopalakrishnan, 2010)
  - 1.1 Is the author depicting characters and the story line from an insider's perspective?
  - 1.2 What assumptions do the text and the illustrations make about race, gender, class and culture?
2. Plots
 

Is the setting multidimensional in terms of showing the cultural authenticity that makes readers believe that story could be true and realistic?
3. Characters (Botelho & Rudman, 2010; Wooldridge, 2001)
  - 3.1 Are characters recognizable as being from a particular cultural group?
  - 3.2 Are characters multidimensional?
  - 3.3 How does real features of the culture or people depict?
  - 3.4 What (or whose) view of the world, or kinds of behaviors are presented as normal by the text?
  - 3.5 Who is silenced/heard in the text?
  - 3.6 Whose interests might best be served by the text?
4. Stereotypes
  - 4.1 Are characters stereotyped in illustrations?
  - 4.2 Do the characters have unique characteristics that are not stereotypes?
  - 4.3 Does the use of language carry negative or stereotypical connotations?
5. Inequitable power relations (Botelho & Rudman, 2010)
  - 5.1 In what ways are the cultural themes imbedded in these texts constructed by these power relations?
  - 5.2 How do the characters exercise power?



Appendix C

Instruction Model for Multicultural Children Literature for Social Justice:  
Reading, Dialogue, and Action

Instruction Model for Multicultural Children Literature Instruction for Social Justice:  
Reading, Dialogue, and Action

**Reading:** Students will engage in collaborative and critical reading of multicultural children's literature with themes of social justice through large group read aloud and independent reading.

**Discussion:** The teacher will challenge students to think critically and challenge the text by asking critical literacy questions (Stover, 2012; Thein, Guise, & Sloan, 2011). The critical literacy questions were based on Lewison, Flint, and Van Sluys (2002)'s four dimensions of critical literacy: disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on sociopolitical issues, and taking action and promoting social justice.

**Action:** Students will choose action options from writing, reading, art, and research centers worked individually or in small group.

Appendix D

Multicultural Children's Literature Lesson Plan Example for Social Studies and  
English Language Art Core Standard Connection

Multicultural Children's Literature Lesson Plan Example for Social Studies and English  
Language Art (ELA) Core Standard Connection

**Week 1**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Theme</b>  | Racism & Slavery   |
| <b>Literature</b>   | <p>Hopkinson, D. (1993). <i>Sweet Clara and the freedom quilt</i>. New York, NY: Knopf.</p> <p>Ringgold, F. (2009). <i>Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky</i>. New York, NY: Crown</p> <p>Levine, E. (2009). <i>Henry's freedom box: A true story from the Underground Railroad</i>. Norwalk, CT: Weston Woods.</p>  |
| <b>Connection to the Utah Core Standards for Social Studies</b>     | <p><u>Standard IV</u>: Students will understand that the 19th century was a time of incredible change for the U.S., including geographic expansion, constitutional crisis, and economic growth.</p> <p>Objective 2: Assess the geographic, cultural, political, and economic divisions between regions that contributed to the Civil War.</p>  |
| <b>Connection to the Utah Core Standards for Reading Literature</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Ideas and Details: 1,2,3</li> </ul> <p><u>Anchor Standard 1</u>: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text.</p> <p>5th Grade: Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.</p> <p><u>Anchor Standard 2</u>: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</p> <p>5th Grade: Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.</p> <p><u>Anchor Standard 3</u>: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</p> <p>5th Grade: Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Craft and Structure: 4, 5, 6</li> </ul> <p><u>Anchor Standard 4</u>: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</p> <p>5th Grade: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.</p> <p><u>Anchor Standard 5</u>: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</p> <p>5th Grade: Explain how a series of chapters, scenes or stanzas fits together to provide the overall structure of a particular story, drama, or poem.</p> <p><u>Anchor Standard 6</u>: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</p> <p>5th Grade: Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how event are described.</p> |
| <b>Connection to the Utah Core Standards for Reading</b>            |  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | Racism & Slavery  |
| <b>Literature</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 7 &amp; 9<br/> <u>Anchor Standard 7</u>: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.<br/>           5th Grade: Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g. graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).<br/> <u>Anchor Standard 9</u>: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.<br/>           5th Grade: Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g. mysteries and adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.</li> <li>• Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 10<br/> <u>Anchor Standard 10</u>: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.<br/>           5th Grade: By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poetry, at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Connection to the Utah Core Standards for Writing</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Text Types and Purposes: 1, 2, 3<br/> <u>Anchor Standard 1</u>: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.<br/>           5th Grade: Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information. Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose. Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details. Link opinion and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., consequently, specifically). Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.<br/> <u>Anchor Standard 2</u>: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.<br/>           5th Grade: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly. Introduce a topic clearly, provide a general observation and focus, and group related information logically; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic. Link ideas within and across categories of information using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g., in contrast, especially). Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.<br/> <u>Anchor Standard 3</u>: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.<br/>           5th Grade: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations. Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events. Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details</li> </ul> |

**Theme****Racism & Slavery**

to convey experiences and events precisely. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

- Production and Distribution of Writing: 4

Anchor Standard 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

5th Grade: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- Research to Build and Present Knowledge: 9

Anchor Standard 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

5th Grade: Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**Connection to the Utah Core Standards for Speaking & Listening**

- Comprehension and Collaboration 1 & 2

Anchor Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

5th Grade: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles. Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others. Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

Anchor Standard 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

5th Grade: Summarize a written text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

- Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas 4 & 6

Anchor Standard 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

5th Grade: Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

## **Lesson Procedures: Reading - Discussion- Action**

### **Reading**

1. Watch slide show about slavery and the Underground Railroad from website:  
[http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/underground\\_railroad/plantation.htm](http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/underground_railroad/plantation.htm)  
 . This will provide students some initial exposure to the concept of slavery as well as the Underground Railroad with historical context and timeline. Discuss the slides and answer any questions students may have.
2. Read aloud *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (Hopkinson, 1993), *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky* (Ringgold, 1992), and *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad* (Levine, 2007).

### **Dialogue (Small group & Large group)**

#### **1. KWL Chart**

The class will create a KWL chart (See Appendix F) about the Underground Railroad. Students will break up into four groups and each group re-read one of the book among *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* (Hopkinson, 1993) and *Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad* (Levine, 2007). Each group will complete the KWL chart. In large group discussion, the class will discuss the new knowledge obtained. The class will complete more information about the KWL chart. Post this list on a classroom wall.

#### **2. Critical Literacy Questions**

The teacher will challenge students to think critically and challenge the text by asking critical literacy questions such as:

- What do you think is the author's intention for writing this story?
- How would the story be different if the setting were in a different location such as Pennsylvania (the Union)?

#### **3. Examining Points of View of Slave Owners and Slaves**

(Small Group & Large group Discussion)

The teacher will organize small groups to discuss what students like to do know and whether or not they would have been able to do these things as slaves. Students will share

their response with class. Teacher will ask one group to pretend to be white slave owners and ask them to brainstorm why slaves were generally not allowed to learn to read and write.

#### **4. Discussion of a Quote from *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky***

(Small Group & Large group Discussion)

Each group will discuss the quote from *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky* "Freedom is more important than just staying together," and how slaveholders and others chose to view slaves as less than human. Large group will share small group discussions.

#### **Action (Student Choice of Action)**

##### **Art center**

- Dramatic Play

The teacher will form small groups and ask them to choose a favorite scene from the books and to plan to reenact it. The group will prepare to explain about why they chose the scene they did and if they made any historically accurate changes.

##### **Reading Center**

The teacher will ask students to select an independent reading book about Underground Railroad.

##### **Writing Center**

- Golden lines

Students will choose a golden line - quotations or key statements in the text that have special meaning or strike readers (Nikas & Scarce, 2009). Students will share their golden lines and why they chose the quote with group peers. Or students will select the same/similar passages and summarize the passage into 10 words or less. The teacher will provide the template.

- Imagery writing

Teacher will ask students to imagine themselves in Cassie's, Sweet Clara's, and Henry's shoes when they were a child.

Your perspective: You are a slave who lives in plantation in Virginia. What are some of the hardest things about being a slave? Describe the plantation where you live. What your



family do? How is your house different from your master's? Be as descriptive as possible  
- close your eyes for a moment and try to visualize the scene - now open your eyes and  
describe what you saw!

In order to help you in this process we think about the five senses:

Sight            Sound Smell    Feel (emotion)            Touch

Appendix E

Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan

## Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan

| Week   | Theme            | Activity   | Data source   |
|--------|------------------|--|---|
| Week 1 | Racism & Slavery | <p>Reading</p> <p>Watch slide show about slavery and the Underground Railroad.<br/>Read aloud <i>Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt</i> (Hopkinson, 1993), <i>Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky</i> (Ringgold, 1992), and <i>Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad</i> (Levine, 2007)</p> <p>Dialogue</p> <p>KWL chart about the books &amp; Examining different points of view of slave owners and slaves<br/>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions (see Appendix C)<br/>Large group discussion of a quote from <i>Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky</i></p> <p>Action</p> <p>Dramatic Play<br/>Self-selection of the books about slavery and the Underground Railroad and independent reading</p>   | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |
| Week 2 | Racism & Slavery | <p>Reading</p> <p>Read aloud <i>Never Forgotten</i> (McKissack, 2011) and <i>Follow the Drinking Gourd</i> (Winter, 1992)</p> <p>Dialogue</p> <p>Discuss the meaning of the lyrics in the song "Follow the Drinking Gourd" that Peg Leg Joe taught the slaves<br/>Introduce the concept of constellations and show students the constellations of the Big and Little Dipper, with special emphasis on the North Star<br/>Small group and large group discussion on slave efforts to resist and escape slavery and the risks slaves took<br/>Large group discussion of a question "Does the end of slavery mean freedom?"</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Imagery writing of a slave's point of view<br/>Making secret codes that slaves might have used codes to communicate information about freedom<br/>Self-selection of the books about slavery and the Underground Railroad and independent reading</p> | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |

(continued)

Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan (*continued*)

| Week   | Theme                                 | Activity   | Data source   |
|--------|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Week 3 | Multiple Perspectives                 | <p>Reading<br/>Read aloud <i>Abe Lincoln Remembers</i> (Turner, 2001) and <i>Pink and Say</i> (Polacco, 1994)<br/>Group reading of <i>The Split History of the Civil War</i> (Fitzgerald, 2013)</p> <p>Dialogue<br/>Discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action<br/>Writing a historical narrative<br/>Self-selection of the books about the Civil War and independent reading</p>   | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |
| Week 4 | Racism, Discrimination, & Segregation | <p>Reading<br/>Read aloud <i>White Socks Only</i> (Coleman, 1996) and <i>The Other Side</i> (Woodson, 2001)</p> <p>Discussion<br/>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions<br/>Small group and large group discussion about definition of "segregation", "discrimination"<br/>Large group discussion about a situation when students were treated unfairly</p> <p>Action<br/>Write a brief essay about unequal treatment situation and share it<br/>Self-selection of the books about segregation and discrimination<br/>Writing a letter to Mr. Whitaker about cafeteria rules</p> | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |

*(continued)*

Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan (*continued*)

| Week   | Theme                                  | Activity  | Data source   |
|--------|--|---|---|
| Week 5 | Racism, Discrimination, & Segregation  | <p>Reading</p> <p>Read aloud <i>Freedom Summer</i> (Wiles, 2001), <i>The Story of Ruby Bridges</i> (Coles, 1995), and <i>Through My Eyes</i> (Bridges, 2009)</p> <p>Watch a video about Ruby Bridges (<a href="http://www.biography.com/people/ruby-bridges-475426">http://www.biography.com/people/ruby-bridges-475426</a>)</p> <p>Group reading: Informational text of Scholastic News, "The Girl Who Changed History"</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Revisiting the definition of "segregation" and "discrimination"</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Classroom segregation experiment</p> <p>Small group and large group sharing of emotions and discussion of impact of segregation</p> <p>Self-selection of the books about segregation and discrimination</p> | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |
| Week 6 | Racism, Discrimination & Social Action | <p>Reading</p> <p>Read aloud of <i>A Sweet Smell of Roses</i> (Johnson, 2005), <i>If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Park</i> (Ringgold, 1999), <i>Freedom on the Menu: The Greensboro Sit-Ins</i> (Weatherford, 2005), <i>Love to Langston</i> (Medina, 2002)</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Large group discussion: Current event related to racial discriminations</p>  | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |

*(continued)*

Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan (*continued*)

| Week   | Theme                                     | Activity  | Data source   |
|--------|---|---|---|
| Week 7 | Discrimination, Fairness, & Social Action | <p>Reading<br/>Read aloud <i>Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Right to Vote</i> (Stone, 2008) and <i>I Could Do That!: Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote</i> (White, 2005)</p> <p>Dialogue<br/>Discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action<br/>Large group discussion of fair cafeteria rules and equal treatment for boys and girls<br/>Writing a petition to Mr. Whitaker and round table discussion</p> | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |
| Week 8 | Discrimination & Immigration              | <p>Reading<br/>Read aloud <i>So Far from the Sea</i> (Bunting, 1998) and <i>Baseball Saved Us</i> (Mochizuki, 1993)</p> <p>Discussion<br/>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action<br/>Research Project: The internment of Japanese American in the U.S., Location of Japanese Internment camps, Attack on Pearl Harbor, Topaz Internment Camp (Topaz War Relocation Center) in Utah</p>           | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |

*(continued)*

Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan (*continued*)

| Week    | Theme                                     | Activity   | Data source   |
|---------|---|--|---|
| Week 9  | Discrimination, Fairness, & Social Action | <p>Reading<br/>Read aloud of <i>Sylvia and Aki</i> (Conkling, 2011)</p> <p>Dialogue<br/>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action<br/>Finding golden lines from the book and large group discussion about it.<br/>Research project 1: Brown v. Topeka Board of Education case and completing a Venn diagram of Mendez v. Westminster and Brown v. Topeka Board of Education<br/>Research project 2: Researching incidences of discriminations that are occurring today in our world due to racial, religious, and gender differences</p> | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |
| Week 10 | Discrimination & Immigration              | <p>Reading<br/>Read aloud <i>If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island</i> (Levine, 1993) and <i>The Arrival</i> (Tan, 2006)</p> <p>Reading<br/>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action<br/>A storytelling<br/>In groups, the students closely examine one chapter of the illustration and write a detailed depiction of what is happening in the story and large group share it.<br/>Making a collage of immigrants' contribution in American culture<br/>Self-selection of the books related to immigration</p>                       | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |

*(continued)*

Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan (*continued*)

| Week    | Theme  | Activity   | Data source   |
|---------|--|--|---|
| Week 11 | Immigration & Prejudice                                    | <p>Reading</p> <p>Have students mark their opinion of several statements such as “I would leave my whole family to live in another country.”, “I could work 14 hours a day, outside, in all kinds of weather.”</p> <p>Digital reading of <i>Coolies</i> (Yin, 2003) (<a href="http://youtu.be/pQ-CaW-fJ8U">http://youtu.be/pQ-CaW-fJ8U</a>)</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Large group discussion about difference between a “right” and a “responsibility”</p> <p>Making a T chart on the rights and responsibilities the Chinese workers</p> <p>Opinion spectrum (adapted from Barney, n.d.)</p> <p>Students make judgements with their best reasons and evidence from the text based on each perspective of the bosses and the Chinese workers about who were accurate and/or fair.</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Self-selection of the books about west expansion and immigrant workers</p> | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |
| Week 12 | Immigration, Acceptance & Understanding Cultural Diversity | <p>Reading</p> <p>Read aloud <i>Grandfather's Journey</i> (Say, 1993), two poems “First rule” and Unpack and Repack” from <i>Inside Out and Back Again</i> (Lai, 2011), and <i>A Day's Work</i> (Bunting, 1994)</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Independent reading: <i>First Day in Grapes</i> (Pérez, 2002) or <i>Amelia's Road</i> (Altman, 1993)</p> <p>Writing a diamante poetry: “Put yourself in ___'s shoes”</p> <p>Self-selection of the books related to the racial segregation</p>  | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |

*(continued)*



Multicultural Children's Literature Instruction Week Plan (*continued*)

| Week    | Theme  | Activity   | Data source   |
|---------|--|--|---|
| Week 13 | Immigration, Acceptance & Understanding Cultural Diversity | <p>Reading<br/>Read aloud <i>The Name Jar</i> (Choi, 2001), <i>My Name is Sangoel</i> (William &amp; Mohammed, 2009), and <i>Nadia's Hands</i> (Enligh, 1999)</p> <p>Discussion<br/>Hearing the stories of real kids who have recently immigrated to the U.S. from website: <a href="http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/young_immigrants/">http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/young_immigrants/</a><br/>Small group and large group discussion of critical literacy questions</p> <p>Action<br/>Create a poem, illustration or a brief skit based on a specific text from the books about immigration and share it</p> | Field notes from participant observation, Student-made artifacts, Transcript from audio recording, Reflective journal |

Appendix F  
Observation Protocol

## Observation Protocol

|                       |                         |                      |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Date                  | Subject                 | Topic                |
| Time/Duration         | Teacher                 |                      |
| School                | No. of Students         | Lesson Objective(s)  |
| Observation No.       | Grade Level             |                      |
| Sketch of Classroom:  |                         |                      |
| Time                  | Descriptive Field Notes | Observation Comments |
|                       |                         |                      |
|                       |                         |                      |
|                       |                         |                      |
|                       |                         |                      |
| Questions & Thoughts: |                         |                      |

## Appendix G

### Interview Protocol for the Teacher's Pedagogy

### Interview Protocol for the Teacher's Pedagogy

The questions suggested below will serve as a guideline for two interviews with the Lincoln Elementary School teacher who will participate in this study to use multicultural children's literature with critical literacy in the social studies and language arts classes. The interview questions are based on the researcher's classroom observations and seek to understand five topic domains: (1) the teacher's personal experiences on teaching multicultural children's literature, (2) beliefs on teaching critical thinking, (3) perceptions of using multicultural children's literature in the social studies and language arts classes, (4) practices of the integrated social studies and language arts pedagogy, and (5) perceptions of multicultural education and critical pedagogy.

In the first interview, the teacher will be asked to respond to topic 1, topic 2 and topic 3. In the second interview, the teacher will be asked to respond to topic 4 and topic 5.

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Date of the Interview  |  |
| Place of the Interview |  |
| Interviewee            |  |
| Time of Interview      |  |

Topic 1. How did you become interested in using multicultural children's literature in your teaching?

Topic 2. What is your philosophy and beliefs on teaching critical thinking?

Topic 3. What are your goals and purposes for teaching multicultural children's literature in the social studies and language arts classes?

Topic 4. Do you think teaching multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approach is beneficial to promote students' critical thinking and reflections? Please provide specific examples from your experiences.

Topic 5. What did you learn about teaching multicultural children's literature teaching through critical literacy? Some believe that teaching about issues of racism, discrimination, oppression, and inequities to elementary students is too much and too early. What is your position on this?

## Appendix H

### Teacher Interview Protocol for Lesson Reflection

### Teacher Interview Protocol for Lesson Reflection

The questions suggested below will serve as a guideline for interviews with the Lincoln Elementary School teacher who will participate in this study to use multicultural children's literature with critical literacy approach in the social studies and language arts classes. The interview questions are based on the researcher's classroom observation and seek to understand the teacher's perception and practices of using multicultural children's literature in the classroom.

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Date of the Interview  |  |
| Place of the Interview |  |
| Interviewee            |  |
| Time of Interview      |  |

Topic Domain: Gender issues

1. Lead-off question: Yesterday I noticed that some female students, Hanna and Min were very actively participating in the group discussion about gender roles. Can you tell me about the whole event, as you recall it? Pretend I wasn't there and describe what happened as if you were trying to give me a written photograph.
2. Covert categories: Teacher's perceptions of Hanna and Min; teacher's strategies for facilitating active group discussion; teacher's beliefs on what causes active participation; teacher's implicit pedagogy
3. Possible follow-up questions
  - You say Min is very advocative. What other things do you remember Min doing that were advocative?
  - Do you have other female students who are advocative besides Hanna and Min? Please tell me about them.
  - You tried to encourage Anny to talk in the group discussion. However, she wasn't very cooperative. What happened in the discussion? Do you have any idea why she wouldn't participate in the discussion?

Appendix I

Teacher Post-Interview Protocol



### Teacher Post-Interview Protocol

1. How do you feel about engaging your students in critical discussion about social justice issues such as racial and/or gender discrimination, segregation, or fairness?
2. What are examples of some topics that arose in discussions about discrimination and justice using literature as a springboard?
3. Tell me about a recent conversation your students had about a book they read dealing with social justice issues.
4. Describe your experience with engaging your students in discussion about social justice issues.
5. How do you think critical literacy affects students' views of social justice in the classroom, home, community and the world?

Appendix J  
Student Interview Protocol

### Student Interview Protocol

1. What was your favorite book? Why?
2. What do you think the author's message is? Why did he/she write this book?
3. How does this book teach you about discrimination, segregation, or fairness?
4. How does this book remind you of something happening at home at school or in the community or world around us?
5. Tell me about your experiences and thoughts about reading and studying the social justice books?

Appendix K

Bibliographies of Multicultural Children's Literature Used

## Bibliographies of Multicultural Children's Literature Used

Bridges, R. (2009). *Through my eyes*. New York, NY: Scholastic Press.

This is an autobiography of Ruby Bridges. In her own words, Ruby tells the story of this important time in the Civil Rights Movement. This book is comprised of first-hand accounts from Ruby's teachers, family members and also newspaper documentation of events. The book sheds light on the significant contributions Ruby made and how she was able to become an icon of the Civil Rights Movement.

Bunting, E. (1994). *A day's work*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

This story follows Francisco, a small boy, who helps his grandfather who has recently arrived in the U.S. from Mexico. His grandfather cannot speak English and Francisco acts as his translator and is able to eventually help him secure work as a gardener. They find work by visiting a parking lot where a commercial gardener comes to find workers. Francisco learns a valuable lesson from his grandfather about honesty when they realize they made a mistake and his grandfather would not accept wages for the work they have done and works to fix the mistake the next day.

Bunting, E. (1998). *So Far from the Sea*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

This story is about a Japanese American girl named Laura and her visit to her grandfather's grave at the Manzanar War Relocation Camp in eastern California. This is where, along with tens of thousands of other Japanese Americans, her grandparents and father were interned during World War II. Laura pays her respects to her grandfather and places her father's Cub Scout bandana at his grave. The Cub Scout bandana was of significance because her grandfather had instructed her father to wear it on the day American soldiers arrived at their home to take them away to the intern camp. Her grandfather wanted the soldiers to see that they were truly Americans and that soldiers would be wrong to take them away. The story of Laura's visit as told by Eve Bunting is a reminder of the heartache and discrimination in the near distant past that afflicted Japanese Americans and is a dark time in the history of the U.S. of America.

Choi, Y. (2001). *The name jar*. New York, NY: Knopf.

This story is about a girl named Unhei who has recently moved from South Korea to the U.S. She is excited to attend an American school but worried that her name will be too hard for her classmates to pronounce and they will not like or accept her. The first day of school she decides that she will use an English name but struggles to pick one she likes. The class comes up with an idea to put names in a jar that she can pick one from. Later, while she is out at a Korean market she randomly runs into her classmate, Joey. Joey finds out by chance what her name is and the special meaning behind it. Later when Unhei goes to pick an English name from the jar her classmates had made for her, she realizes the jar has disappeared. It turns out that Joey wanted her to keep her Korean name because of the special meaning and had taken away the jar of names. This helped Unhei realize that it is okay to keep her Korean name and she then teaches her new classmates how to say her name.

Coleman, E. (1996). *White socks only*. Morton Grove, IL: A. Whitman & Co.

This story provides a strong vessel for classroom learning that teaches about current and past discrimination. A young African American girl goes into a town by herself. She becomes nervous as she passes a man known as the chicken man and quickens her pace. The man is rumored to have ability to transform those who do bad things into a chicken. When she reaches the town, she is thirsty and sees a drinking fountain that is for only Whites. Since she is wearing her white socks she justifies that she can drink from it. As she is drinking she is shoved off of the drinking fountain by a large white man who wants to hit her with his belt for not obeying the sign. At that moment, an old Black woman removes her shoes and takes a drink from the fountain as well. Right after this many other members of the Black community come and do the same. About this time the chicken man comes and helps her to her feet. He wipes away her tears and points at the white man who pushed her down. The white man was never seen again after that and the Whites only sign was gone forever.

Coles, R. (1995). *The story of Ruby Bridges*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

Ruby Bridges was a courageous young girl that was able to make a difference during the 1960's Civil Rights Movement. When her family decided to send her to an all-white school, she faced extreme opposition and backlash and was barred from attending by officials. After a ruling by the courts that she could not be prevented from attending she was ostracized by her peers and subjected to ridicule by protestors and parents of White children. These protestors positioned themselves outside the school shouting insults and showering her with hatred. All of the White children were then pulled out of the school by angry parents. Ruby endured their ridicule patiently and prayed for those who were so hateful towards her. She became an example of patience, faith and hope.

Conkling, W. (2011). *Sylvia & Aki*. Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press.

This story follows the lives of two girls after the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese and describes the racial segregation issues that they faced. The U.S. government viewed all Japanese Americans with suspicion and sent them to internment camps. One girl, Aki Munemitsu, is forced to leave her family farm and relocate to an internment camp with her family. The other girl, Sylvia Mendez and her family rent the Munemitsu family farm while they are gone. Sylvia and her siblings try to attend the local school but are instead forced to attend a school for Mexican children. This led to Sylvia's father challenging the legality of segregation in California and this ultimately was able to influence the desegregation movement across the U.S..

English, K. (1999). *Nadia's hands*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

This is a story about cultural diversity and being open minded to other customs. Nadia is a little girl who is Pakistani-American. She is chosen to be a flower girl in a traditional family wedding for her Auntie Laila. She experiences for the first-time mehndi, which is a traditional art that is temporarily drawn onto the hands. She excited yet worried at the same time that the mehndi will not come off and what her classmates at school will think

of her and her culture. She finally embraces the wedding when she realizes how proud her family is of her and realizes that being different, even culturally, is okay.

Fitzgerald, S. (2013). *The split history of the Civil War*. North Mankato, MN: Compass Point Books.

This book provokes thought and brings to mind how perspective can really be based on where you are standing. The book is centered on the American Civil War and provides equal insight into how the Union and Confederates perceived the war, their battles and outcomes and their enemy's beliefs.

Hopkinson, D. (1993). *Sweet Clara and the freedom quilt*. New York, NY: Knopf.

This is a story how a courageous young slave girl helped her friends escape slavery.

Clara, a young slave girl, works in a field and is sold away from her family. She learns about the Underground Railroad and how it helps slaves escape from slavery. She makes a quilt that is a map of how to run away to Canada to freedom.

Johnson, A. (2005). *A sweet smell of roses*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

This book describes the Civil Rights Movement as seen through the eyes of two little African American girls. The girls sneak out of their home in the middle of the night to join other people who are waiting to march for freedom. They hear Martin Luther King speak and they are inspired. This story helps recognize the role that children also played in contributing to the Civil Rights Movement.

Lai, T. (2011). *Inside out & back again*. New York, NY: Harper.

This is a poetry book that follows the life of Hà, a ten-year-old Vietnamese girl living with her mother and three brothers in Saigon. She lives on a ship, in a refugee camp, and then comes to Alabama as a refugee. She tells about her struggles adapting to new surroundings through free verse poetry.

Levine, E. (1993). *If your name was changed at Ellis Island*. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.

This book sheds light on immigrants, their reasons for immigrating and the challenges they faced coming to America. The gateway to America came through Ellis Island, which is where immigrants would be examined, forced to Americanize their names and processed before being allowed in the country. The book follows up with the contributions that immigrants made to the U.S..

Levine, E. (2009). *Henry's freedom box: A true story from the Underground Railroad*. Norwalk, CT: Weston Woods.

This is a book about a boy named Henry who was born into slavery and follows his life's journey to gain his freedom. When his owner sells his wife and children, he tries to find a way to escape to a life of freedom. He eventually shipped himself in a box to Philadelphia where he finally became a free man.

McKissack, P. (2011). *Never forgotten*. New York, NY: Schwartz & Wade Books. This story is written in prose as a series of poems telling the story about the grief of slavery from African's perspectives.

Medina, T. (2002). *Love to Langston*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books. This is a book filled with poems for children which tells the life of Langston Hughes, a famous African American poet. The poems touch on important events in Hughe's life including the struggles he faced with racism and segregation. The book sheds light on how came to be a writer of poetry and his contribution of the Harlem Renaissance.

Mochizuki, K. (1993). *Baseball saved us*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books. This book describes the challenges of a boy named Shorty who is sent to an internment camp for Japanese Americans during World War II. Told through Shorty's eyes, life in the camp is difficult and boring. One day, he and his father decide to build a baseball field and employ the help of other internees. The process of working towards something provides them with meaning and allows them to come together and boost their spirits. For Shorty, baseball becomes a way for him to find courage and inner strength. After the war ends Shorty's challenges did not end, he returned to school and joined the baseball team. He found that he had returned to a different world and was the target of ridicule and racist, derogatory remarks but was able to prove himself capable with his baseball ability.

Pérez, L. (2002). *First day in grapes*. New York, NY: Lee & Low Books. Chico and his family moves from one migrant camp to the next to picking fruits and vegetables for a living. The first day in the migrant camp picking grapes, Chico is afraid to leave to go to school because his English ability was very poor. He is worried about how he will be treated by the other children. However, his teacher turns out to be very nice to him which helps motivate him to study hard. One area he excelled in was math. At lunch, some of the school bullies approach Chico's table to make fun of him and insult his mother. He stands up to them but handles the issue cleverly using his math ability. Standing up to the school bullies earns him the respect and admiration of his fellow students.

Polacco, P. (1994). *Pink and Say*. New York, NY: Philomel Books. This is a story about an unlikely friendship that forms between two young soldiers who fought on opposite sides of the Civil War. One soldier is a black Confederate soldier named Pink who was formerly a slave. The other is a white Union soldier named Say. Pink discovers Say injured after a battle with a leg wound and decides to take him home where his mother can take care of Say. This is a wonderful gesture but this also endangers Pink's mother since Confederate soldiers are after Say. Unfortunately, Pink's mother is killed and they then decide to return to the war. Towards the end of the book the author, Patricia Polacco, informs the readers that Say was in fact her great-great-grandfather, and that the story of Pink rescuing Say had been passed down generation to generation through oral history.



Ringgold, F. (1999). *If a bus could talk: The story of Rosa Parks*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young People.

This story is about black history and the Civil Rights Movement. Marcie gets on a strange bus for school and notices that there is no driver. The bus begins speaking to Marcie telling her the story about important leaders of the Civil Rights Movement such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and Edgar Daniel Nixon.

Ringgold, F. (2009). *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*. New York, NY: Crown.

This is a story about two young children, Cassie and her brother, Be Be, who discover a train while flying in the sky. Her brother gets on the train but she is too late and must set out on an adventure to track down the train by following back in the footsteps of slaves who escaped on the Underground Railroad to Canada. Cassie is helped along the way by Harriet Truman, who is the conductor that helps guide her to Be Be. She experiences the same journey that slaves did on their escape to freedom and comes to understand the challenges they faced.

Say, A. (1993). *Grandfather's journey*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company. This book is a realistic fiction and focuses on the immigrant experiences and emotions of Japanese Americans who find themselves torn between their emotion for two countries. The story is about both a grandfather and later a grandson taking a journey to America from Japan many years apart. Both feel that they are comfortable in either country, and feel as if they have two homes many thousand miles apart.

Stone, T. (2008). *Elizabeth leads the way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the right to vote*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Co.

This is a book about Elizabeth Cady and follows her path in contributing to women's rights. She learned at a very young age that women could not possess the same rights as men. This was frustrating to her and she was determined to prove that women could do anything men could do. Rather than following the traditional path, she turned away from marriage and instead enrolled in a girl's school. Once she graduated she met Henry Stanton, who was an anti-slavery activist. She was influenced and inspired by his views and this helped lead her to form meetings with groups of women to tackle the issue of women's right to vote. It was from these meetings that the nation began to focus on and eventually pass reform for women's rights.

Tan, S. (2007). *The Arrival*. New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine Books.

This book is a wordless graphic novel which portrays the journey of immigrants moving to a new and confusing land where everything is new and challenging for them.

Turner, A. (2001). *Abe Lincoln remembers*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

This book describes the story of Abraham Lincoln. His journey from Kentucky, to being president, the civil war and slavery.

Weatherford, C. (2005). *Freedom on the menu: The Greensboro sit-ins*. New York, NY: Dial Books for Young Readers.

This story tells about the Greensboro Sit-Ins from the perspective of a young African American girl, Connie. The book depicts non-violent protests for civil rights after a sit in event.

White, L. (2005). *I could do that: Esther Morris gets women the vote*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

This book shows Esther Morris's influence on women's rights. Women were not considered as equals to men and were treated as second class citizens, she fought against slavery and for women's right to vote.

Wiles, D. (2001). *Freedom summer*. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

This is a historical fiction story that describes friendship between a young White boy, Joe, and a young Black boy, John Henry. When a law is passed in their town that allows everyone to swim in the public swimming pool, the two boys are so happy because John Henry cannot usually go where Joe can go because he is Black. However, when they get to the swimming pool, it has been filled in with cement by those opposed to the law. The boys learn about racial differences and how it is unfair to both sides.

Williams, K. & Mohammed, K. (2009). *My name is Sangoel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

This book describes the struggle of a young refugee boy named Sangoel, who came from Sudan and was forced to flee with his mother and sister in the middle of the night to escape the dangers of war. When they arrive in the U.S. they experience culture shock and struggle to adapt to their new home and way of life. He doesn't feel that he fits in and is particularly frustrated that no one is able to say his name correctly. He solves this issue by coming up with an interesting way to teach his peers how to say his name and understand who he really is. The story shows first hand challenges of immigrant/refugee children and the difficult process they must navigate to eventually be able to find a safe place to call home.

Winter, J. (1992). *Follow the drinking gourd*. New York, NY: Dragonfly Books.

This is the story of an old white sailor called Peg Leg Joe who went from plantation to plantation in the pre-Civil War south to helping slaves in their journey of escape on the Underground Railroad and to freedom.

Woodson, J. (2001). *The other side*. New York, NY: Putnam's.

Two young girls, one Black, Clover, and one White, Annie, become friends, but there is a fence between the yards of each house. They sit on the fence and play together every day over the summer. Although the fence is a symbol of segregation in the town, these girls could not understand why the fence separated them. This book shows that skin color does not matter when it comes to making new friends and the fences must be eliminated.

Yin. (2003). *Coolies*. Princeton, NJ: Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic.

This book describes how two brothers from China arrive in the U.S. to work on the transcontinental railroad to create a better life for themselves and their families. The story opens a window for understanding the many challenges and dangers they faced with their new jobs in addition to adapting to a new culture, enduring racism as well as segregation. An example of racism they endured was being called 'coolies' which is a derogatory term for new and unskilled Chinese laborers.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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## EDUCATION

- Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction** **December 2017**  
 Utah State University, Logan, UT  
 Dissertation Topic: *Changing the World through the Word: Developing Critical Consciousness Through Multicultural Children's Literature with Critical Literacy in an Elementary Classroom*
- M.A. Peace Education** **February 2011**  
 The United Nations mandated University for Peace, San Jose, Costa Rica
- B.A. Elementary Education** **February 2006**  
 Daegu National University of Education, Daegu, South Korea  
 Specialization: Korean Language Education  
 Licensure: K-6 Elementary Teaching, the Korean Ministry of Education, South Korea

## LICENSURE

Utah State Office of Education, Elementary Education (K-6)  
 Endorsement: English as a Second Language (ESL)

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

## PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**Elementary School Teacher**, Daegu Hwawon Elementary School, Daegu, South Korea (August 2010 – August 2011) Taught 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, All subject; Korean language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, visual arts, music, physical education, educational technology, etc. After school programs; mathematics.

**Elementary School Teacher**, Daegu Guji Elementary School, Daegu, South Korea (March 2006 - August 2009) Taught 3<sup>rd</sup>- 6<sup>th</sup> grade, All subjects; Korean language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, English language arts, visual arts, physical education, educational technology, home education, etc.

## **UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**School of Teacher Education and Leadership, Utah State University, Logan, Utah**  
(2011- Spring 2017)

**Instructor**, ELED 4050 – **Teaching Elementary Social Studies Methods & Practicum Level III** (Fall 2015 – Spring 2017) Undergraduate Course, Elementary social studies method course for pre-service teachers, a field experience practicum is required (Face-to-Face, Broadcasting & Online)

**Co-Instructor**, TEAL 6710 – **Diversity in Education** (Fall 2015) Graduate course, Co-Taught with Cinthya M. Saavedra about cultural diversity in K-12 classrooms (Face-to-Face & Broadcasting)

**Co-Instructor**, TEAL 6730 – **Critical Literacies in the Classroom** (Spring 2015) Graduate Course, Co-Taught with Cinthya M. Saavedra about critical literacies (Face-to-Face, Broadcasting & Online)

**Co-Instructor**, TEAL 4760/6760 – **Foundations of Bilingual/ESOL Education** (Spring 2012) Undergraduate and Graduate Course, Co-Taught with Dr. Patricio Ortiz about as second language acquisition, literacy acquisition, and dual language immersion programs (Face-to-Face & Broadcasting)

**Assistant Instructor**, TEAL 4770/6770 – **ESOL Instructional Strategies in Content Areas** (Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Fall 2014, Spring 2015) Undergraduate and Graduate Course, under the direction of Dr. Sue Kasun about ESOL education and content areas (Face-to-Face & Broadcasting)

**Assistant Instructor**, TEAL 6710 – **Diversity in Education** (Fall 2014) Graduate Course, under the direction of Dr. Cinthya M. Saavedra (Face-to-Face & Broadcasting)

**Graduate Teaching Assistant and Lecturer**, TEAL 4745/6745 – **Second Language Acquisition** (Spring 2012, Fall 2012, Spring 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014) Undergraduate and Graduate Course, under the direction of Dr. Cinthya M. Saavedra (Face-to-Face & Broadcasting)

**Graduate Teaching Assistant and Lecturer**, ELED 4050 – **Teaching Elementary Social Studies Methods & Practicum Level III** (Fall 2013) Undergraduate Course, under the direction of Dr. Steven P. Camicia (Face-to-Face)

**Guest Lecturer, ELED 3000 – Historical, Social, and Cultural Foundations of Education and School Practicum Level II** (February 24, 2014) (Face-to-Face)

## **LEADERSHIP & SUPERVISION**

**Level II, III, & IV Elementary Education Practicum Supervisor**, Utah State University, Logan, UT, (Fall 2014-Spring 2017)  
Supervised Education pre-service teachers to monitor classroom presence, content knowledge, effective teaching methods, classroom management, cooperation and collaboration with teachers and school staffs, students and parent relations, feedback on students' portfolio.

**Cache County School District, Administrative & Supervisory Intern**, (Spring 2014)  
Under the supervision of Chad Downs, formal superintendent at Cache County School District, and Eric Markworth, Hillcrest elementary principal, conducted observations and assessments of elementary education classrooms and students.

**Elementary English Learning Program Director**, Daegu Hwawon Elementary School, Daegu, South Korea (August 2010 – August 2011)  
Provided leadership in overall intervention services, monitored and supervised quality of English learners' achievement in a national standardized texting, submitted program enhancement reports to state and federal agencies.

**Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) Program Coordinator**, Daegu Guji Elementary School (March 2008 – August 2009); Daegu Hwawon Elementary School, Daegu, South Korea (August 2010 – August 2011)  
Supervised and coordinated TaLK program to the core content curriculum

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

**Classroom Teaching Volunteer**, Edith Bowen Laboratory School, Logan UT (March 2014 – May 2015); Emerson Elementary School, Salt Lake City, UT (January 2013 – May 2013)