

IMPLEMENTING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY
IN A SECONDARY ENGLISH CLASSROOM

By

Sacha B. Renner

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ABSTRACT

As there were a limited number of studies reviewed for this paper, the generalized findings are not to be regarded as conclusive, but as a steppingstone for further research and consideration. Hence, a lot of the research did not prove student learning but instead examined strategies that could be more effective at promoting an inclusive learning environment. This paper examines and critiques research on three aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. The first aspect is for teachers to acknowledge and examine personal biases. The second category of research investigates students' preferences for cooperative and active learning and how these are utilized in various secondary classrooms. The final category of research examines culturally relevant pedagogy in relation to critical thinking and high level questioning, with an emphasis on research conducted in the language arts classrooms. Although the reviewed research does not encompass all the dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy, it focuses on a portion of this literature that is of particular relevance to practicing teachers.

A major finding from the literature review is that students from various dominated groups prefer cooperative and active learning. The studies provided concrete examples of how active learning can be merged with cooperative learning in the classroom and indicated that some students believe that this type of pedagogy positively impacts their learning and motivation. Another significant finding was that teachers do not include critical thinking as much as they say they do. The studies found that teachers who are respected and identified as effective at culturally relevant pedagogy encourage critical thinking more often. Finally, the research provided explicit examples of how teachers

explored their personal biases and went on to utilize this information to inform their teaching practice.

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By

Sacha B. Renner

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By

Sonja Wiedenhaupt, Ph. D., Member of the Faculty

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Rationale

It is our responsibility as educators to ensure that every student is armed with the knowledge and skills that are necessary for future potential. Diversity of the student body is increasing, “[The United States] is undergoing striking changes in the ethnic and racial makeup of its adolescent population” (Feldman, 1990, p.7). Traditional methods of teaching were constructed around the needs and preferences of White, middle class students. These traditional methods of teaching are not as relevant for students who are not White and middle class. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a philosophy of teaching interested in altering traditional pedagogy into pedagogy that encompasses the needs and preferences for all students. According to Kohl (1994), although students of color are not typically the minority in the class, they still feel (and validly so) that they are underrepresented in the curriculum. This can create not only disengagement but also active non-learning. Kohl (1994) said, “willed not learning consists of a conscious and chosen refusal to assent to learn. It manifests itself most often in withdrawal or defiance and is not just a school-related phenomenon” (p. 27). A primary example of how this may be manifested is in the dropout rates of minority students. Black and Latino students are half as likely to be placed in gifted programs as White students (Nieto, 2004, p. 41). Latino students drop out of high school more than any other ethnic group; “to comprehend the enormity of the situation, one needs to imagine a school in which *80 out of every 100 students* enrolled do not make it to high school graduation” (p. 41).

There are many different and opposing voices on why there is an achievement gap. Some blame the teachers. Some blame the students. Some blame the parents. The foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy is that the system is to blame. In this instance, the “system” means the way society is constructed and whom it caters to and whom it ignores. Nieto (2004) wrote that many teacher education programs “still function within a monocultural framework, and, because of this, few teachers are prepared for the numerous cultures, languages, lifestyles, and values they will face in their classrooms” (p. 107). The students who suffer because of this teaching approach are the students from subordinated groups. This is why these students drop out or simply tune out. It does not stem from a deficit in them or in their homes. It stems from a very oppressive deficit in the traditional system of education.

Lewis (2003), described the inequities of schooling in terms of “capital.” In this case, capital refers to a resource whether it is economic, social or cultural. Students enter school with different capitals. These are just as important for their success in school as are their effort and talents. In other words, if a teacher values the capital of one group and devalues the capital of another, the students who are not in the valued group will be at a major disadvantage despite their effort and talents. In the United States, it is commonly believed that education offers everyone equal opportunities. This false ideology contributes to the blame for the achievement gap being placed on the students or their families. It removes students from their larger context and implies that “educational outcomes in a low-income, under-resourced elementary school in the Mississippi Delta are comparable to educational outcomes in a wealthy school in Westchester County, New York” (Lewis, 2003, p.5).

The Question

The focus of this paper is to examine culturally relevant teaching practices and students' preferences for these specific approaches. Culturally relevant teaching stems from the notion that a student's culture is central to his or her learning (Gilchrist, Hughes & Holloway, 2005). Culturally sensitive teachers not only recognize the importance of culture in student learning but also the role that culture plays in their approach to teaching. Hence, the question that provides the foundation for this paper is: *What are some core aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy?* This question is broad on purpose. This is a very complex and progressive issue.

The Primary Aspects Of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

I examined two different definitions and explanations of culturally relevant pedagogy (Brown, Ford & Heraldo, 1996; Osborne, 2002). Both of the definitions formulate culturally relevant pedagogy into numerous aspects. Although all the aspects are relevant and valuable, I have narrowed my focus to three specific aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. These are: Teacher biases, cooperative learning and critical thinking. I will explain these in detail further in this chapter. Before I do this, I will describe the other aspects that were evident in both descriptions of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Aspect One

Teachers must know who the individual students are in their classroom in order to know what and how to teach them. Teachers need to be aware of the realities that exist for their students outside of their classrooms and how these affect what happens in the classroom. Only by investigating the inequities of standardized tests, socioeconomic conditions in reference to schooling and student learning needs, values and resources,

will teachers have the knowledge to authentically “know” their students (Osborne, 1996). Along similar lines, Gilchrist et al. (2005) wrote that teachers should learn about the experience and history of various groups. This allows them to have a clearer view and a framework for understanding how students’ history shaped their perspectives and current situations.

Once teachers begin to learn about their students, they can more effectively assess their curriculum. Osborne (1996) claimed that teaching practices typically do not accrue with the educational theory that teachers should build upon students’ prior knowledge. The fact that teachers may have biases and assumptions about students’ prior knowledge is one hindrance to this theory working in real class settings. Without genuine understanding, teachers create curriculum on a subjective belief about students’ experience. This does a disservice to students who are not part of the teachers’ cultural identity, as the teacher’s assumptions (and strategies) are based on his or her cultural experiences.

Brown et al. (2002) echoed this sentiment. One aspect he wrote about in reference to culturally relevant pedagogy stated that teachers needed to critically examine the school’s resources and texts. If there were biases and stereotypes or the perspectives were informed only from dominant groups, then the material must be supplemented. Teachers should look for images and stories that relate to their students’ lives and that respect each student’s identity.

In addition to what educators choose to include in their curriculum, they also need to make purposeful and informed decisions about how they teach it. One way is to validate different learning preferences. For example, some cultural groups tend to value

cooperation and do not believe in competition. It would be important for these students to engage in cooperative learning in order to feel included and hence, to succeed (Brown et al, 2002). As cooperative learning is one of the three aspects of CRP that I am covering, it will be discussed further in this chapter.

Aspect Two

Both Osborne (1996) and Brown et al. (2002) stressed the importance of building connections with students' families and communities. This builds a reciprocal relationship wherein family has voice in the education of their children, thus creating a community involvement. In addition, it helps counter the power imbalances between teachers and family members of marginalized groups (Osborne, 1996).

Brown et al. (2002) wrote that by visiting students' family, teachers get to know students as whole and complex beings. They gain insight into students' behaviors and values. If teachers cannot meet with students' families, they can attend community events that are valuable to their students. Some parents had dehumanizing and difficult times in school and are therefore hesitant to meet with their child's teacher. "Time spent in an informal setting allow [educators] to meet community members on a more equal basis, rather than on the school grounds where teachers automatically have more status" (Klug & Whitfield, 2003, p. 20).

Furthermore, teachers should promote a positive connection between students, their communities and their school. Students' participation in school and in their homes is interconnected. Teachers will foster a positive relationship by tapping into the community resources and inviting parents to be active participants in the classroom. This will strengthen the connection for students and their families (Brown et. al, 2002).

Aspect Three

Osborne (1996) and Brown et al., (2002) explained the disposition of a culturally relevant teacher as being authoritative. This means that teachers have a warm and respectful relationship with their students but also hold high expectations. Teachers should especially be careful with students who are disenchanted because of previous failure. When teachers do not believe in the success of their students, their students will not believe in their success. Teachers should continually create more demanding curriculum as students' skills and abilities progress, so that learning is never stagnant (Brown et al., 2002).

Aspect Four

Students should not be hindered from using their native language in the classroom. In order for students to gain deep knowledge and perspective in content area, they must learn in their native and familiar language. Nieto (2004) wrote that a student's native language is the foundation for all their learning. If educators do not value native language and use it as a resource for learning, students will not be able to build new knowledge as their foundation is destroyed. "All good teachers know that learning needs to be based on prior knowledge and experiences, but, in the case of language minority students, we seem to forget this as we effectively rob students of access to their prior learning" (Nieto, 2004, p. 214). Although this is not one of the three areas of CRP focused on in this paper, I will discuss this aspect more in chapter three, as a lot of the studies directly reinforced this aspect.

Examining Teacher Biases- The First Aspect of Focus

Examining personal biases, the first aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy that I am focusing on, is a practice that needs to happen before teachers enter the classroom.

Many professionals interested in cultural relevance and multiculturalism emphasize a need to confront personal biases. Sonja Nieto (2004) said that it “is impossible to be a teacher with a multicultural perspective without going through the process” (p. 383). She wrote that we are all products of a racist, sexist and homophobic society and therefore have internalized biased ideologies. This can be conscious or unconscious. The fact that teachers may unknowingly act on racist beliefs or attitudes makes the examination of biases even more essential. Teachers cannot be culturally relevant if they are acting on internalized biases. If they do not acknowledge and examine biases, they cannot know whether or not they are acting on them.

Research has shown that peoples’ history and experiences create an “internal dialogue” that carries with them in every aspect of their life. This thinking may be unconscious; therefore even well intentioned teachers have biases toward students without realizing it (Heron, 2003).

Osborne (1996) emphasized that teachers can be culturally relevant in spite of not coming from the same cultural group as the students they teach. This is extremely important because it proclaims that all teachers have the power to be culturally relevant. Being a culturally relevant teacher is based upon a practice of effective teaching principles. Teachers who are from a different culture than their students may or may not have knowledge, or incorporate such knowledge, of culturally relevant pedagogy. Osborne (1996) emphasized that as the student body continues to diversify, the teachers

from marginalized groups are decreasing. Therefore, it is important to equip all teachers with the tools and strategies that are proven to be effective in teaching students from these marginalized groups. If more teachers implemented culturally relevant pedagogy, perhaps more students of dominated groups would pursue educational careers, as they would find a positive connection between their identity and the school's curriculum. Finally, all teachers should strive for cultural relevance in their teaching practice. If culturally relevant pedagogy were only possible for teachers who were in marginalized groups, we would be doing a major disservice to our students, as most of their teachers would not be a part of this "group" who were considered able to teach in culturally relevant ways (Osborne, 1996; Brown et al., 2002).

Brown et al., (2002) identified components of teacher biases in three different aspects of CR teaching. Teachers need to examine their biases by looking into personal histories and experiences. There were three specific ways that teachers could go about this. One way was to engage in reflective writing and thinking. The second way was to investigate personal history. Teachers should explore their early experiences in an effort to understand what contributed to their racial and cultural identify. Teachers can also interview family members about beliefs regarding different groups. This will provide teachers with a historical understanding of how their values were shaped. The third way Brown et al., (2002) emphasized was that teachers should understand their group membership. Every person is in groups that are either dominant or dominated and there are various classifications one person can be in. An African American male is dominant in that he is male but dominated in that he is African American. A white lesbian female is dominant in her ethnicity but dominated in her sexuality and gender. Teachers need to

be aware of their privilege and aware of the connections between dominant and dominated groups and how these operate in a system of oppression.

Based on the informed explanation of examining teacher biases, I will look for specific strategies teachers used in the studies. What led them to want to examine their biases? What did they discover? How did they use this knowledge to improve their teaching and their relationship with their students?

Cooperative Learning- The Second Aspect of Focus

The second aspect that I am centering my focus on is cooperative and interactive learning. Both definitions of culturally relevant pedagogy encompassed this idea in some way.

I combined active and cooperative learning as they go hand-in-hand. Active or cooperative learning can be a teacher interacting with students and providing consistent feedback, as opposed to standing at a podium and lecturing or handing out assignments that students are to work on individually. Active learning also encompasses students working cooperatively in groups to solve a problem or complete an assignment.

Kinesthetic activities are another way that active learning is utilized in a classroom. This is when students are provided opportunity to experience what they are learning through touch and not simply reading, writing or listening. This type of learning has proved to be beneficial for learners on a physiological level, as Zull (2002) wrote “activation of the basal structures occurred when the learner was engaged in postulating answers and getting feedback on them, an active learning setting” (p. 63). Zull (2002) explained that the “basal structures” as pleasure regions in the brain. Therefore, when students are given a sense of ownership or control over their learning, their pleasure

centers are activated. These structures were less active when students were asked to memorize or simply recite information.

The second reason why active and cooperative learning are important for students is because of the social benefits that they gain. Miller (2002) wrote about the psychological effects of cooperative learning and said that peer groups can make learning more equal than student- teacher or student- parent partnerships. She also emphasized that cooperative learning helps with perspective taking. A note of caution that Miller brought forth was that different cultural groups have different approaches and goals within cooperative learning or group activities. Some groups are more competitive, others are more interested in the process than the outcome and others are more intent to listen and reflect. Therefore, the studies I reviewed pertaining to group work and cooperative or active learning discuss student preferences.

The final reason why group work is studied in chapter three is that, if done correctly, group activities can foster more harmonious interactions among students. This specifically can help with interracial and heterogeneous groups. Research from numerous studies showed that students who were placed in interracial groups had more friendships with other students from different ethnicities than their own (Cohen, 1994). One point of caution is that creating an effective classroom environment conducive to cooperative learning is essential. Cohen wrote an entire book on how to create a cooperative learning environment. Too often teachers believe that they are enacting cooperative learning by lumping students into groups. This can actually harm students, as it can create more passivity and dependence (Nieto, 2004). Therefore, as I review the research I will be looking for concrete examples of how cooperative learning was

utilized. Does the author show how the teacher implemented group projects? Is there any indication of whether students preferred this form of instruction? Does the researcher specify which student preferred collaboration and why? Can the studies prove that learning occurred because of collaboration? All of these questions are important in order to fully understand the effectiveness of cooperative learning.

Critical Thinking- Final Aspect Of Focus

The final aspect of CRP that I am addressing is critical thinking skills. Teachers who encourage and implement critical thinking have high expectations, as they expect students to extend their thoughts beyond the basic levels of thinking. In Bloom's taxonomy, the most basic and least challenging forms of questioning are comprehension and recitation. The higher levels include evaluation and synthesizing, both aspects that encompass critical thinking.

These skills are even more imperative when thought of in the context of addressing racism in schools. Students from all cultural groups need to develop critical thinking aptitude in order to comprehend and evaluate the systems of oppression that are currently operating in society and in schooling. Brown et al. (2002) explicitly mentioned critical thinking in their list of CR strategies in instructional methodology. They wrote that students should be given space to analyze and synthesize information in order to become critical thinkers.

Self-regulation is included as a piece of critical thinking because it is tied to metacognition, which is a higher-level thinking skill. Self-regulation is a process wherein students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and then set goals and find effective

strategies to achieve set goals. Becoming self-regulated involves the motivation to take on challenges and to develop deep understanding of subject matter (Perry et al., 2006).

I will be looking at the specific ways that “critical thinking” is defined in the studies. How are critical thinking skills taught and utilized in the classroom? Are there particular strategies for teaching critical thinking? How are these skills targeted to the exploration of inequities that exist in society?

The main point is that students should learn in a way that gives them power and pride. Students should be provided opportunities, every day, to utilize their passions. Learning should not be presented in an isolated way in which what students do is only important for getting a grade and passing the class. Student’s work, thoughts and ideas should manifest

Controversies

A major controversy at the forefront of education today is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This is controversial due to the highly political nature of the law and the polarized attitudes that have manifested. There are many issues that arise from this law and there are many people who are supporters and proponents of this legislation. I will briefly describe the fundamental aspects of the law and why some professional voices are concerned with the effects of this law for students, teachers and schooling. I will also examine how this law aligns with culturally relevant pedagogy, particularly with the areas of pedagogy that comprise the focus of this paper.

There are two primary goals of the NCLB Act. The first goal is for schools to make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for all students to be “proficient” in reading and

math and must make a 10% improvement every year (Gerst, 2007). The second goal is that all teachers and paraprofessionals meet “highly qualified” standards.

Annual testing in reading and math determine whether or not students are meeting the first goal of the NCLB Act. The tests must show improvement for all categories of students (these include African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian American and White students as well as special education students, English language learners and economically disadvantaged students). If at least 95% of the students did not take the test then the school automatically fails. Most often special education students have to take the test. English language learners have to take the test in English if they have been in the U.S. for three years or longer (Gerst, 2007).

If schools do not “pass” these tests after six years the school has to replace all staff, become a charter school or have the state take over. Before the six-year mark, students within the failing school are provided free transportation to passing schools.

There are many factors built into the law or that come about from the law that raise concerns. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on the concerns that are directly relevant to culturally responsive pedagogy. One issue is that states make a public list of the schools that are failing and then categorize the students based on race, gender, disability and migrant status, English proficiency and economic placing (Spring, 2004). This can increase segregation in housing and schooling. As this information is public, parents with the financial means can move purposefully to schools that are “passing.” “Family income will determine whether parents can avoid these low-performing schools. The result could be the residential concentration of academically low-performing students” (Spring, 2004, p. 186).

The reason that inequities in housing is relevant to a teacher concerned with culturally relevant pedagogy is that teachers needs to be aware of the realities that exist for their students outside of the classroom. In addition, student who are in low placing schools are subsequently linked as deficient. As was stated previously in this chapter, the blame for the achievement gap should not be placed on parents, teachers or students. However, this legislation continues this blame. What the legislation fails to do is to provide resources to the poorly funded schools that can make them more equitable. “A number of reviews of testing legislation and practice have concluded that, instead of improving learning outcomes, such legislation is actually having a detrimental impact because gross inequities in instructional quality, resources, and other support services are being ignored” (Nieto, 2004, p. 99). Spring echoed this sentiment when he wrote, “rather than improving schools, high stakes testing just provides another way of labeling students” (Spring, 2004, p. 190).

The use of standardized tests in general to score student achievement is also questionable. This type of test typically focuses on low-order thinking skills and memorization. Therefore, teachers are forced to target this type of thinking if they want their students to do well on such tests (Spring, 2004). By focusing on what the tests deem as valuable for students, teachers are forced to abandon the foundation of CRP, which states that teachers should target their curriculum and their instruction to fit the needs of their students. The one-size-fits-all approach of standardized tests vehemently opposes the philosophy of CRP. “Because of the growing pressure to raise test scores, teachers may reason that they have little time for innovative approaches” (Nieto, 2004, p. 100).

A final, and a bit ironic, point of contention about the NCLB act is that it, in fact, does leave children behind. Nieto (2004) wrote, “tests are resulting in increasing the urban dropout rate” (p. 99).

Conclusion

This chapter described the diversity of our student body and how school systems typically ignore the individual needs of students and focus on a one-size-fits all approach to the curriculum that further benefits the White middle class while further oppressing other cultural groups. I discussed why culturally relevant pedagogy is one answer to the achievement gap and high drop out rate of minority students. I also investigated the No Child Left Behind legislation and how this affects teachers interested in implementing the philosophies of culturally relevant pedagogy.

The next chapter discusses how American schools reacted to the increasing diversity of the student body. It addresses aspects of segregation, bilingual education and multicultural curriculum. It then explains some of the movements and people that spoke about issues surrounding the three aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy that form the focus of this paper: Examining teacher biases, cooperative learning and critical thinking.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The previous chapter introduced the notion of cultural relevance. It explained the reasons why understanding and implementing a culturally relevant curriculum are so important. It provided a purpose, an underlying ideology, for this paper.

This chapter will broadly look into the history of immigration, bilingual education and the emergence of a multicultural curriculum as a way to provide a historical framework for culturally responsive teaching. Segregation was one approach that ended up being implemented in such a way that it was highly inequitable (Spring, 2004). Bilingual education was (and still is) an approach to linguistic diversity that some believe to be necessary for the cognitive development of English language learners (Nieto, 2004). Finally, multicultural education became one answer to the cultural diversity of schools, but this did not really manifest until the late twentieth century (Spring, 2004).

This chapter will also provide a broad view of movements and reformations relating to the three aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy that are the focus of this paper. There have been many influential people throughout history who had different ideas of what should be the instructional strategies and curricular emphasis in American schools. Some based this on the needs of the dominant students, some based it on increasing the economic success of society and others based it on the individual needs of students (Kliebard, 1986).

Segregation

The Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which was added in 1868, extended the freedoms of the Bill of Rights into the jurisdiction of both state and

local government. This should have made public schooling equal to everyone, regardless of gender, race or religion. In 1895, the ideologies of the fourteenth amendment were manifested into an idea of “separate but equal.” However, this statute was proven to be anything but equal (Spring, 2004).

In 1954, the inherently unequal “separate but equal law” was deemed unconstitutional based on a famous historical court decision called *Brown vs. board of education*. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 took the 1954 case of desegregation a step further. With this movement, the federal government became responsible for making sure that school systems were not segregated.

Gary Orfield, an advocate for desegregation, presented a report called *Resegregation in American Schools*. Although segregation was supposed to have ended in the 1950’s, this report was issued in 1999. His study proved that southern schools were steadily becoming more segregated from 1988 to 1997. Perhaps the students who suffered from this the most were the Hispanic population, as they attended schools that were over 50% non-white 75% of the time. They were (and still are) the most likely out of any racial group to drop out of high school. Still concerned with this increasingly oppressive issue, Orfield organized a conference with members from Harvard University’s Civil Rights Project and the University of North Carolina’s Center for Civil Rights. They reported reasons for segregation that included: court decisions outlawing race as a main factor in student assignment, residential segregation and increasing attendance of private schools by upper class White children (Spring, 2004).

Segregation is an enlightening issue in the context of culturally responsive education. Historically, segregation was considered an answer to biased schooling, as

teachers could not favor some students based on race if all the students were of the same cultural background (Spring, 2004). Although this theory may have worked in the individual classrooms, it did not work within the larger system of schooling. This form of schooling was proven to be the opposite of equitable as the dominated groups typically were educated in schools that were inferior on many levels Such as funding and resources for schools and teacher preparedness (Nieto, 2004).

Integrated schools are definitely not a cure-all for oppressive practices. What is called second-generation segregation is the problem of certain minority groups' over or under representation in higher and lower level classes, standardized test scores and other methods of academic tracking. Educational facilities are a smaller reflection of the larger society. As Spring (2004) states: "Integration of a school system can help ensure equality of educational opportunity, but it cannot break down society's racial barriers. Although schools attempt to deal with this problem, its solution requires a general transformation of racial relationships in the larger society" (p.77).

English Language Acquisition And Bilingual Education

As Mexican and Native Americans became more integrated in public schools in the 1960's, they fought for the implementation of bilingual education. They wanted schools to teach students about Mexican culture as well. School boycotts in Los Angeles resulted from the lack of response to this request, eventually leading to the creation of La Raza Unida. This organization fought for the teaching of languages and cultures that were being dominated by the majority culture. Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas responded to this demand through legislation entitled *Bilingual Education Act of 1968*. "The legislation promised that their cultures and languages would be preserved by the

public schools. Bilingual education, as it was conceived of in Hispanic and Native American communities, involved teaching both English and Spanish or a Native American language” (Spring, 2005, p.422).

Bilingual education was intended to teach non-native English speakers to be fluent in two languages; it was also a method of keeping cultural value for people other than Anglo Americans. Spring (2005) wrote that there are three forms of bilingual education. These terms are: maintenance bilingual, transitional bilingual and two-way bilingual. Maintenance bilingual is an education wherein students learn English while still writing and speaking in their native language. This used to be the typical way of schooling non-native English students. Transitional bilingual education uses the students’ first language until the student learns English. Two-way bilingual schooling aims to give students opportunity to learn two languages. The classes are composed of English and non-English speaking students. The teacher instructs in two languages. Hence, both sets of students are given opportunity to be bilingual (Spring, 2005).

Bilingual education soon became a point of contention and a political bipartisan issue. The Republican administration of the 1980’s and ‘90’s attacked the notion of teaching in any language besides English (Spring, 2005).

Nieto (2004) stated that bilingual education is a political issue rather than an educational issue. She wrote that it is not a matter of whether or not students can effectively learn to be fluent speakers of two different languages, but a matter of whether or not they should. Nieto (2004) believed that the Republican Party was threatened by the possibility of schools being purposeful in providing students the opportunity to speak

their native language. Nieto (2004) also believed that people opposed to bilingual education felt that it was unpatriotic to not speak English as your primary language.

Multicultural Education

From their conception, schools were operated as a way to bring the morals and ideologies of the dominant group onto the students. In the late 1700's, there were two primary beliefs in what education should do. Noah Webster stressed the importance of virtue and nationalism. He believed schools should teach children to love their government and to be obedient citizens. Contrary to that point of view, Thomas Jefferson proposed schooling as an institution that teaches reading, writing and the reasoning skills that would allow an individual to make his or her opinions (Spring, 2005).

After the civil rights movement of the 1960's, multicultural education became a major political issue. The underlying concept, however, started a little earlier. G. D. Spindler conducted ethnographic research in 1955 (Spring, 2004). He studied minorities in education and found that there was great division in the mainstream culture and the cultures of minority students. People who wanted to implement a more culturally relevant curriculum believed that it was inequitable to ignore these differences, as that would provide unjust favoritism to the majority group and continue to bring down the minority groups. This controversy led to a field entitled *educational anthropology*. Many researchers went on to study how schools impacted the identity of minority students (Kim, et al., 1999). The idea that schools were powerful avenues of socialization has not ceased from the time that schooling began. "Almost sixty years ago, Newton and others argued that education is a form of socialization because the primary purpose is to modify behavior and to make the individual a different person from what he or she would

otherwise be without this institutional influence” (Kim et al, 1999, p.2). It is now a matter of how that socialization should be employed.

Public School Curriculum And The Movement Toward Cultural Relevance

There has always been a political and social struggle within the American curriculum. The societal climate oftentimes dictated what would be implemented and how it would be implemented. Kliebard (1986) discussed four of the curricular models that vied for dominance throughout history. These are: Social Efficiency, Humanism, Social Meliorism and Developmentalism.

The social efficiency model had a dominant impact on American schools. This model emphasized vocations and preparing students to be efficient workers.

The humanist model favored general intellectual functioning, as opposed to vocational skills. This group emphasized cultural traditions and standard disciplines of study (Spring, 2004).

The social meliorists believed in social progression through education. “Sometimes this means educating students to bring about general political and economic changes. But more often it means the advocacy of courses to solve problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, AIDS, and traffic accidents (Spring, 2004, p. 255). Lester Frank Ward was a major player of the social meliorist movement in the late 1880’s. He believed that intellectual capabilities were equally distributed across cultural lines and that any differences in functioning resulted from the inequity of distribution and education. He viewed education as a tool for social progress. He believed that “the key to progress and the great undertaking that lay before us was proper distribution of cultural capital through a vitalized system of education” (Kliebard, 1986, p. 27).

The developmentalists viewed the curriculum in terms of how it impacted and complemented students' psychological development. Spring (2004) believed that this category of curriculum was the most radical and the least influential. He wrote that this is typically rejected as being anti-intellectual and that it failed to provide students adequate skills for work efficiency (Spring, 2004). G. Stanley Hall, a leader of the child-study movement, stated that the uniformity of school curriculum, wherein all students should be taught in the same way, was a major failure of public schooling (Kliebard, 1986). The developmentalists agreed that schools were treating children as passive vessels of knowledge, thereby limiting their intellectual engagement and development by working counter to their natural predilections (Kliebard, 1986).

What is given precedence in the curriculum seems to be whatever the society values at any given time.

The route between the knowledge a society values and its incorporation into the curriculum becomes infinitely more torturous, however, where we take into account the fact that different segments in any society will emphasize different forms of knowledge as most valuable for that society. Rarely is there universal agreement as to which resources of a culture are the most worthwhile (Kilebard, 1986, p. 8).

Based on the above descriptions of the four categories of American curriculum, the social meliorists are the most aligned with culturally relevant pedagogy as this movement emphasizes social progression and a distinction of knowledge based on the individual students represented in any given class.

Conclusion

The above descriptions show that there has always been disagreement concerning education: what was most important to implement in the curriculum and to whose needs education should serve. Although schools are no longer segregated purely by ethnicity, there is still a segregation based on economic status, which typically corresponds to race. Therefore, students who are not White or middle class are likely to not have the same access to quality teachers, technology, classroom resources, extracurricular activities and educational programs that more privileged students have (Spring, 2004). Teachers concerned with culturally relevant pedagogy need to be aware of this inequity in order to work toward changing it.

Forcing immigrants and non-native English speakers to speak only in English was another way that American schools furthered the dominance of White, middle class values and furthered the oppression of cultural groups that did not fit into this mold. Immigrants have fought for their right to maintain a bilingual education. Currently, bilingual education is not a standardized curriculum and there are disagreements about how to accommodate non-native English speakers (Nieto, 2004). This is an important issue for teachers concerned with culturally relevant pedagogy, as they should always consider the needs of English language learners. Although this is not a major focus in chapter three, there are a lot of considerations for English language learners embedded in the studies.

Multicultural education came up as a counter approach to the traditional methods of schooling that focused on teaching White culture. Similar to not allowing English language learners to use their native language, creating a curriculum that is devoid of any

culture other than European creates a disengagement from minority students. They need to see themselves represented in the curriculum to feel a valued member of society (Kohl, 1994). Creating a multicultural classroom is an important aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy.

The curriculum in American schools has been based on many different ideologies. The ideology that most closely resembles the philosophy of culturally relevant teaching is the social meliorists who believe that schools should be avenues for social progression. Culturally relevant pedagogy creates methods for teaching that counter the assumption that low minority achievement is due to a problem with the students or their parents. Similar to the social meliorists, culturally relevant teachers believe that a solution lies in the restructuring of the school system.

The next three sections discuss a general overview of the history of the three aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy that are focused on in chapter three.

Teacher Biases

Finding historical evidence of schools working toward overcoming teacher biases was a difficult task, as the teacher biases weren't discussed, but rather the schools' biases. Teachers overcoming biases appears to be a relatively new idea. Brazilian educational philosopher, Paulo Freire, was a pioneer for educational reform in the 1970's and was one of the first people to speak about teacher biases. He was classified as a social reconstructionist and was interested in fair education of all people, especially people who were oppressed. He believed that education attempted to integrate oppressed people into a society that furthers their oppression. He wanted to build an educational system that taught people how to work for social change, in order to alter the educational foundation

of oppression (Spring, 2004). Freire thought out a process of educational reform, which allowed students to better understand their world. The last part of this process was reflection. This involved students and teachers. “Freire warns, teachers must not assume that they know reality” (Spring, 2004, p. 269). On the part of the teacher, this reflection process provides space for them to ask themselves why they think the way they do. Teachers form biases about their students and their student’s world that can deter students from gaining the full benefit of a social reconstruction approach. If teachers generalize or form assumptions about students, they are furthering the oppressive attitudes that shape students’ disconnect to school. Therefore, in order for teachers to reflect in a manner conducive to Freire’s approach, they must always examine and question their biases.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning has been valued throughout the world. There are many cultures that believe in putting the interests of the group ahead of one’s own. The origin of cooperative learning stemmed from ancient tribal customs (Holt, et. al, 1991).

The traditional methods of American classrooms, however, have been teacher centered. This form of instruction occurs when the teacher provides instruction to the whole class instead of to groups and the class is arranged in rows facing the front (Spring, 2004). Although there were efforts to evoke more cooperative learning, these efforts did not penetrate the mainstream. “In 1942, after eight years of attempted instructional reform, it was estimated that only 25 percent of all city elementary schools incorporated activity methods in some classrooms” (Spring, 2004, p. 265).

One of the twentieth century’s most famous educational theorists and leaders of democratic classrooms was John Dewey. His book, *Democracy and Education*, set forth

the belief that teachers should create their classrooms to resemble the outside world. In so doing, teachers must encourage and teach children how to work cooperatively through democratic principles and group activity (Arends, 1997). “Dewey tried to see the school as embodying a form of social life, one where cooperative social living in miniature could provide the setting for the development of thought” (Kliebard, 1986, p. 82). Dewey emphasized that this was not meant to assimilate children to social institutions as they currently operated (Kliebard, 1986).

After World War II, advocates of student centered learning came under attack. Proponents blamed student centered learning for the deterioration of academia that was necessary for success of the Cold War. The political right accused people like Dewey of promoting communism. Most likely due to this backlash, student centered advocates went under the radar until the late 1960’s (Spring, 2004).

An idea called *open classroom* emerged in the 1960’s. This came from England, but soon became popular in the United States. This form of instruction worked toward active as opposed to passive learning. Students were divided into areas of interest, and each area had a wide array of materials and resources. This movement ended in the 1970’s as demands for student discipline and basic subjects emerged again (Spring, 2004).

Nevertheless, cooperative learning grew popular once again, and so educational theorists conducted research on the effectiveness of social learning by comparing groups of people working individually on a task to groups of people working collectively on a task (Arends, 1997). These experiments, conducted in laboratories and classrooms, revealed that cooperative settings were more effective than competitive settings. This

research is important more so than ever in a twentieth century “characterized by global, interdependent communities and complex social institutions that require a high degree of cooperation among members (Arends, 1997, p. 116). Further studies showed similar effective results of cooperative learning. Forty-five studies that were done between 1972 and 1986 showed that classes built around cooperative learning outperformed control group classes in academic achievement. The other eight studies were neutral. Therefore, not one control group class outperformed the cooperative learning classes (Arends, 1997).

It is valuable for a teacher concerned with cultural relevance to understand the history of cooperative learning, as cooperative learning is one of the fundamental aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy (Brown et. al, 2002). If cooperative learning is implemented correctly, it can benefit students’ relationships with one another and provide them a framework for understanding another’s perspective. Historically collaboration has been criticized as a counter intelligent approach to education. Current research proves this claim to be false. Therefore, cooperative learning is becoming a widely hailed approach to schooling (Arends, 1997).

Critical Thinking

The origins of critical thinking can be dated back 2,500 years ago to ancient Greece, where Socrates led the Athenian youth on a quest to continually question rhetoric, even that espoused by authority. This method of questioning is now termed the Socratic method and it consists of seeking evidence, examining assumptions and reasoning and looking for implications of words and actions. Socrates overall aim was to

take people beyond the surface and to an authentic view and understanding of life. He sought out logic, clarity and reason.

Although Socrates pioneered critical thinking, it was not widely used or valued in schools until much later. Typically, schools were institutions that aimed to mold students into better patriots or workers (Kliebard, 1986). William Torrey Harris, whom Kliebard (1986) called a major figure for education in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, attempted to moderate the cries for reformation in education by saying that the American schools were already inducing critical thinking. He was born in 1835, and although he was aware of the many changes in American society that transpired throughout his life, he believed that education always served one major purpose- the development of reason (Kliebard, 1986). Harris believed that the development of reason was in tandem with the development of will.

As we proceeded to higher orders of knowing – analysis, synthesis, reflection (analysis and synthesis), and finally to insight or philosophical knowing –the will continued to play a vital role. The training of the will, therefore, especially through correct habit formation, became an essential element in the principal function that education performs, the broadening and deepening of the intellect (Kliebard, 1986, p. 40).

Colonel Francis Parker did not believe that schools promoted authentic upper level thinking. Therefore, he created a child-study movement in the 1870's that incorporated a much greater amount of freedom for children. He believed study should favor a child's natural sense of play. He replaced drill in phonics with what he termed "word method." Natural language activities, such as letter writing, replaced formal

grammar. President Adams endorsed this method of schooling, as he believed effective learning was taking place.

Paulo Friere, the social reconstructionist whose ideas were discussed in the previous section on teacher biases, also played a role in emphasizing critical thinking in schools. He believed that schools should help students understand the world in which they lived. “Through a process of discussion, people take apart the elements of the scene. Out of this discussion, a critical awareness of the social and political forces in society is developed” (Spring, 2004, p. 268). Friere and other educational theorists concerned with social progression believed that in order for students to have true freedom, they needed space and opportunity to think critically about the disciplines in the curriculum as well as the society at large. Traditionally schools did not want to endorse critical thinking, as it did not equate with proper patriotism (Kliebard, 1986).

Nieto (2004) believes that the current curriculum is a great resource for promoting critical thinking. “When studying the Industrial Revolution, students can explore the role of the nascent workers’ movement and of children and young women factory workers, as well as the impact of European immigration on the rise of cities” (p. 408). Teachers concerned with cultural relevance need to understand the role critical thinking plays in helping students make sense of and explore their society. If students are not taught and provided opportunity to utilize critical thinking skills, they are denied the freedom to be active learners, and instead are passive vessels of teacher rhetoric.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the major point of contention concerning education. Should it serve the needs of society (typically the needs of people in positions of power)

or should it serve the needs of the individual students? Could education that serves the needs of individual students also serve society as a whole? Culturally responsive teachers believe that education should serve the individual students, who can then work toward changing society for the better of everyone. There have been influential people throughout history who emphasized the need for educational reform. These people were the pioneers of culturally responsive pedagogy. They were the people who fought against segregation, who fought for the use of native language for English language learners and who fought for a multicultural curriculum.

Exploring biases is a relatively new concept that historically was not given much precedence. Implementing cooperative learning did not become popular until relatively recently as new research proves its effectiveness for student learning and social gains. Critical thinking has always been emphasized by some but was not utilized in the beginning of American schools for schooling was merely a way to create efficient and obedient workers. The next chapter will critically review the research literature on these three aspects of culturally relevant teaching.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter two presented the history of segregation, multicultural education and bilingual education. In addition, it examined some movements and ideologies accompanying the three aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy that I am examining in this chapter.

Chapter three presents a critical review of the literature based on three aspects of culturally responsive teaching. I am specifically looking for explanations of how teachers implemented the examination of biases, cooperative and active learning, and critical thinking in a secondary language arts classroom.

Teacher Biases

Examining, and working toward overcoming, personal biases is the first aspect of this paper because it is one of the first things that teachers must do. This takes place before teachers enter the classroom. Values, attitudes and biases are shaped by experiences. It is through the examination of their past experiences that teachers can have a more explicit and holistic understanding of their biases. If teachers do not know of their biases, they can unconsciously damage their students by manifesting their stereotypes and ill-informed conceptions onto their students (Nieto, 2004).

Culturally relevant teachers understand the importance of seeing each student as an individual with unique abilities, challenges and needs. On the same note, teachers interested in cultural relevance must also look upon themselves as individuals with unique experiences that have shaped their understanding (Brown et al, 2002).

Since examining biases is a personal endeavor, the research utilized is qualitative by nature. Some of the research has quantitative measures, but the focus remains on

personal narrative and comprehension. I was interested in the specific ways that teachers went about examining biases, how they reacted to these (or resisted them) and then how they implemented them. It makes sense to explore case studies as these allow me to see the progression of one person's journey.

M. Arthur Garmon (2004) wanted to explore how a teacher successfully developed multicultural sensitivity and a desire to teach in an urban school. Specifically, he wanted to see how she utilized past experiences concerning diversity to learn about how her attitudes manifested and then how she utilized her findings to inform her teaching practice. He conducted a case study on a 22-year-old White lady named Leslie. Leslie was raised in a rural Michigan town that was 99% White. Leslie entered a teacher education program with a minority population of 11%. Leslie was described as intelligent, religious and outgoing. Garmon emphasized that he was an older African American professor who had previously taught Leslie. He said that most of his students only demonstrated small changes concerning multicultural sensitivity. Leslie, on the other hand, changed remarkably in her attitudes and interests concerning diversity. Therefore, he made Leslie the subject of his study. He wanted to see specifically what factors affected this change.

Garmon conducted over 10 hours of interviews with Leslie. These were transcribed and analyzed. A researcher conducted repeated systematic analysis of the data in order to produce categories for discussion. Garmon stated that he read the interview transcripts repeatedly and refined them until he could settle on six categories of factors that he believed most contributed to Leslie's remarkable change in perspective. Afterward, he had Leslie review the accuracy of his interpretations.

The six factors that most influenced Leslie's attitudes toward diversity were: openness, self-awareness, commitment to social justice, intercultural experiences, support group experiences and educational experiences (Garmon, 2004).

Garmon defined openness as being receptive to another's ideas. He believed Leslie demonstrated this through her willingness to participate in this study. She also chose to write about her multicultural awareness for her Honor's Thesis. Leslie discussed with Garmon her concern about the racial segregation she noticed her freshman year at college. She had tried to discuss this concern with her peers, who did not show interest in analyzing the segregation.

Self-awareness was defined as having acknowledgement of one's beliefs and the willingness to think critically about them. Leslie discussed her homogeneous background and her limited socialization with people who were from different cultures than her. She was open about some of her biases toward African Americans. "I really thought that a lot of African American people were lazy. In my classes I didn't understand—it just seemed like they just weren't motivated" (Garmon, 2004, p. 9). Garmon inquired whether or not she had those attitudes in high school. Leslie responded that she probably did, but that she never noticed or acknowledged them. Leslie went on to reflect about what shaped her prior thoughts concerning African Americans. She said that she lived near Detroit and heard about the violence that occurred in that city through the media. She knew there was a heavy residence of Black Americans in Detroit and so she subconsciously related African Americans to crime, thus, making her fearful. Leslie also discussed her revelations in college when she tutored African American girls. She quickly learned that

love and compassion was not enough to effectively teach and reach out to these girls. She needed to understand them and their situation.

Garmon said that a commitment to social justice was a “sense of social justice as a commitment to equity and equality for all people in society” (Garmon, 2004, p. 11).

Leslie said that she noticed inequity at an early age. She cited an example of students and teachers cringing when a student who was not a native English speaker read out loud in class. Leslie’s strong religious beliefs also led her to work for change. In her sophomore year of college she spoke out about racial reconciliation, a cause that her involvement in the Christian Youth Fellowship encouraged. Leslie’s desire to teach in an urban school came about after viewing a video about the discrepancies between urban and suburban schools. “It is not surprising that a person committed to social justice would want to work where he/she perceives that the most injustices exist” (Garmon, 2004, p. 13).

Intercultural experience was defined as having direct interaction with people who were from a different culture than one’s own. Leslie’s role as an orientation leader, in which she hosted incoming freshman, created this opportunity for her. The training sessions she participated in to become a leader were based on diversity issues. This experience was daunting for Leslie, as she retreated from the diversity based on her discomfort and fear of not knowing how to interact with people so different from her. This made her more determined to relate to different cultures when she entered her next year of college. Leslie joined the Detroit Residential program. For six weeks she lived with a Detroit family and conducted a Bible study for neighborhood children. Leslie said that this was a very significant experience for her and that she learned that most of her biases were based on fear of the unknown.

Support group experiences were defined as any experiences in which an individual participated in a group that encouraged his or her growth. Leslie's involvement in her campus religious organization was considered a support group. This group pushed one another to examine why there were not any minority members. This forced Leslie out of her comfort zone as she had to confront issues of racism. Her involvement in the Detroit Residential Program also created long lasting friendships of support and encouragement.

Garmon reported that Leslie's educational experiences had less of an impact on her change than her social experiences, however, they did further her awareness and intent to confront her biases. One of her classes required her to tutor a 12-year-old African American girl. As Leslie became more interested in the prospects of teaching in an urban school, she enrolled in more courses that dealt with diversity and issues surrounding race.

Garmon stressed that it is not enough for educators in urban schools to take classes on multiculturalism. They also need to have an internal desire to learn about and an inherent belief in the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy. In addition, teachers need more than educational experience surrounding this concept. They also need to interact with people from different cultures in a social setting.

Wimpenny (2005) was interested in how cultural immersion helped nurses become more culturally sensitive in their practice. Although this study was conducted for the purpose of helping nurses become more culturally sensitive, the results of the qualitative research illuminated a lot of valuable insight for teachers who are concerned

with understanding their own attitudes and beliefs through immersion with other cultures. (Wimpenny, Gault, MacLennon, Boast-Bowen & Shepard, 2005).

Garmon (2004) concluded that teachers needed more than an academic understanding of cultures to effectively engage in the processes of examining biases. This study (Wimpenny et al., 2005) examined an academic program, but the program incorporated a personal and social immersion with various cultures. Therefore, the study's results are not merely theoretical, but the outcome of real situations.

SOCRATES funded this program entitled Intensive Programme (IP) that was attended by teachers and students from nine different countries. The writers of the research used the metaphor of a journey (both spiritually, culturally and physically) to describe the program the participants ventured through. This journey was more than metaphorical, for students visited different countries as they participated in this research. “[The point of this study] is not to be prescriptive about the manner in which culture is taught and learned about; it is rather to examine a number of themes that arose during a particular course, and to speculate as to their wider relevance, particularly in terms of personal and professional transformation” (Wimpenny et al., 2005, p.2).

The methods utilized were multifaceted. They consisted of tape recordings of group meetings at various points throughout the journey. There was also an informal and formal interviews that lasted approximately 45 minutes. Subjects were interviewed individually and in groups during the journey and a few weeks after returning home. Questions were geared around lingering issues from previous interviews.

The participants stressed that the program did feel like a journey without a final destination, for learning about cultures is a dynamic and continuous process. Students

stated that their personal views toward different cultures constantly shifted as they interacted with others. Although students learned more about aspects of the cultures, they could not thoroughly learn about the culture as a whole.

Some students discussed how active listening and responding were difficult. They could not make assumptions about the social norms for communication. Hence, personal, cultural and structural analysis were always interacting and at play with all the experiences.

The students' experiences with their various dialects of English presented another interesting point. The role of dialects illuminated issues surrounding English language learners. There was discussion about ones' own idea about the standard and proper form of English. The authors stressed that in order to have effective collaboration, there must be value for all forms of English. "ESL students and teachers may be reluctant to speak if the level of language skill was felt to be insufficient" (Wimpenny et al., 2005, p.5). The researchers believed that ESL students felt more comfortable working in small groups, as this put pressure off them to speak English "properly."

Students were expected to bring artifacts on the journey that represented their culture. This was difficult, students said, because their culture was comprised of values and beliefs, not of inanimate objects. In addition, every individual experiences and expresses a culture differently and they bring that culture with them wherever they go. This illuminated their biases that culture can be represented (and minimized) through objects. This is valuable information for teachers because they may unknowingly minimize a culture when they speak about objects and symbols from that culture without addressing values and lifestyle components that make up the culture.

Students also reported feeling ignorant when they visited countries in which they had no previous knowledge. A couple students stated that they were less likely to engage with people from a culture they were unsure about because they feared that they would say something wrong or offensive. This reinforced the idea that education and understanding is the key for overcoming fear and reluctance in the pursuit of knowledge concerning other cultures. Another interesting result of the journey was that students reported feeling vulnerable when they left their culture without any of their own cultural support, however, it was the absence of that support that allowed them to learn about other cultures.

Students also stated that they learned how important it was for them to ask for clarifications, as they frequently found that their assumptions were wrong.

The authors found compelling ideas about how to overcome stereotypes based on the experience of the research subjects. They found that in order for students to see past stereotypes they encountered through the media, they needed personal face-to-face contact with people from such cultures. This taught students that there is not a static view of cultural identity.

As Wimpenny's (2005) study emphasized the importance of immersing oneself into a culture to rethink biases and assumptions, McAllister & Irvine (2002) also looked at how immersion into a different culture can inform teaching. They specifically examined the role of empathy and how this manifested when teaching diverse students. The researcher was interested in empathy because previous research identified this as the major component of effective teaching in urban and culturally diverse schools. The

authors described empathy as being able to take on another's perspective (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

The subjects of this study were 34 teachers involved in a professional development seminar called CULTURES (Center for urban learning/teaching and urban research in education and schools). "The goal of this course was to foster culturally responsive practice" (McAllister & Irvine, 2002, p. 2). This was a 40-hour program that modeled effective practices of multicultural development. The course emphasized three components: "culturally responsive pedagogy, cultural awareness and adaptation of content to culturally diverse students" (McAllister & Irvine, 2002, p. 5). The course encouraged teachers to reflect on their views and how these influence their teaching practices.

The researchers had four data sources that examined the subjects' views about empathy. These were: 1. Teachers' applications to the program. 2. Final projects. 3. Exit interviews. 4. CULTURES project report. "A computer software program, QSR NUDIST... was used to manage more than 200 documents as well as to code data, create categories, and examine relationships between the categories" (McAllister & Irvine, 2002, p. 7). Possibility of researcher bias was reduced through an inductive approach.

The teachers were involved in a Bafa Bafa simulation within the first few days of the study. This was intended to allow the teachers to experience a new culture. During this experience, teachers had to try to communicate with foreigners and learn to function within a different culture. Forty-four percent of the teachers believed that this gave them an opportunity to experience empathy. Other teachers expressed feeling ostracized and uncomfortable.

The most valuable part of the program, according to the majority of the teacher participants, was visiting families in their homes. They visited African American, Mexican American, White Appalachian and Southeast Asian American families. The teachers believed that this direct immersion was more effective than learning through secondary materials.

What the teachers learned through the course of the program influenced them in their teaching practice. Fifty-nine percent of the teachers claimed that they changed their interactions with students by using empathy. Teachers also stated the importance of patience. One teacher talked about an experience wherein an African American student accused her of racism when she would not let him sit where he wanted. This teacher said that she would have been offended before participating in the program, but after she felt more empathy and understanding for this student. Teachers also acted in a proactive manner with their students. One teacher said that she would end her class with the students lining up to hug her. The Vietnamese students were “stiff huggers,” and this offended her. After going through the program, she changed her daily ritual and gave students the option of a hug, handshake or high five (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

Another positive outcome of the program was the change in the teachers’ classroom environment. One teacher sat language minority students together so that they could help each other understand instructions. Other teachers talked about how they reached out to non-English speaking parents through a translator. Sixty-two percent of the teachers discussed in their reflections that they focused on students’ interest more in the curriculum.

The study provided many examples of how teachers can overcome personal biases. Interviews with the children would have helped show the effects of the program on the subjects' teaching. Although the teachers claimed they made radical changes in their attitudes and behavior in the classroom, these were not entirely evident, as the students did not comment on how these changes affected them.

Conclusion

Examining and overcoming personal biases is a two-step process. Garmon (2004) specifically looked at how a teacher examined her personal history in order to understand her biases. He also emphasized that she immersed herself with other cultures in order to overcome or rethink her biases. These intercultural experiences were ones that she sought out, initially through religious and academic organizations. Support groups aided her in this process.

Wimpenny et al. (2005) and McAllister & Irvine (2002) focused on intercultural immersion rather than looking back through personal experiences. It was through this immersion that teachers began to examine their biases (and think about their personal history). Wimpenny et al. (2005) explained how teachers' experiences with immersion helped them understand the challenges of adapting to other cultures. Through this experience, teachers could better predict the needs of their diverse students. This fostered empathy. McAllister & Irvine (2002) also focused on empathy and how the teachers' experiences provided them with a greater understanding of their students' needs and struggles.

Active And Cooperative Learning

Both active and cooperative learning were the most common aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy I found in the many definitions and explanations I read. As I stated in the introduction chapter, cooperative and active learning are similar in that they create active rather than passive learning. When students work with their peers, they are discussing, challenging, extending, synthesizing and analyzing their ideas. They are doing this through the input of others. Active learning, in this case- hands-on activity, also fosters non-passive learners as students are experimenting with something, not sitting and listening to a lecture.

I am looking at the following studies to see which (if any) cultural groups prefer cooperative learning. Why do they prefer it? Does this help them learn more effectively? What does cooperative and active learning consist of? How do teachers implement it in a secondary classroom?

Although I am looking at the studies to see if there is indication of preferences for cooperative learning, I cannot make generalizations based on the limited number of studies that I am reviewing. Nieto (2004) emphasized that teachers cannot make assumptions about the students in their class based on research claims. It is important to review such research with a critical but open mind. This research serves a purpose of providing a broad framework for preferences. It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that she learns about each individual student's preference for learning and that she does not lump all minority students in the same category. Even if an overwhelming amount of research proved a preference for collaboration for specific minority groups, it in no way implies that every student within that minority group shares this preference.

Kim, Clarke-Ekong & Ashmore (1999) conducted a study to examine the effects of a groundbreaking educational program built around a cooperative and active learning mode. Researchers looked at how much students' knowledge concerning the content of the program (human origins) improved as well as whether or not their self-awareness changed. The program they utilized provided a hands-on approach that educated students about the origin of humans and the value of social and cultural diversity. This is called the CHOCD program (Center for human origin and cultural diversity) and is used as a model for new generations interested in cultural education. It is based on a learning-to-learn model. Students work in small groups in a kinesthetic environment, discovering solutions to questions that are posed.

The program used anthropologically based information with a purpose to extend knowledge of ones and others' origin and how differences are important to survival. Students encountered these issues at three different learning stations. The first station presented students with history of fossilization. They worked together to assemble fossil casts from oldest to youngest. After the assemblage, students engaged in discussion about what they noticed in the morphology of humans over time. Finally, students placed pictured stickers on a map, which reinforced the importance of Africa.

The second station interacted students with fossils in a museum-like setting. They learned about geological dating, functional dental morphology and proportions of skeletons.

In the third station, students were presented with information about skin color variation. Discussion about skin color distribution throughout the world ensued.

The stations addressed sensitive subjects. Therefore, students may have held emotions and attitudes that contradicted what they learned. Schools are powerful tools for reinforcing or critiquing attitudes from the home. The researchers stated that it is mandatory for children to “acquire this foundation [concepts pertaining to human origin] to be able to function in our global society” (Kim et al., 1999, p.3).

The overall purpose of the research was to see if this form of hands-on and cooperative learning was effective in meeting the goals the program was set up to achieve. These goals were: Enhance students’ content knowledge about human fossil records and value of biological variation and the characteristics that are common to all humans; and to influence their self-awareness about human origin.

The participants were 187 students from sixth to twelfth grade. There were 80 males and 106 females.

Pre and post questionnaires were constructed to measure students’ development of content knowledge, with three questions given for each station’s content. The pre-questionnaire was given a week before the program to assess prior knowledge. In addition, students were given four Likert-type questions to test their self-awareness.

These questions were:

1. Knowing about the places that humans came from will help me better understand people today.
2. Understanding why people have different skin color is helpful in understanding people.
3. Knowing that there are similarities and differences will help me get along better with other.

4. My skin color is just as important as a skin color different from mine (Kim et al., 1999, p.4).

The results of the content knowledge questions indicated significant learning improvements from all three learning stations. The lowest score of the three stations was station 3 (skin color). The authors emphasized that it was highly predictable that skin color would yield the lowest overall improvement in score because of the abstract nature of the information and because issues involving skin color are politically and emotionally saturated. Thus, the researchers felt this response difference may have been due to apprehension in overcoming previously held stereotypes.

The results of the self-awareness scores demonstrated a significant progress, $t(172) = 5.096$ [less than] .05.

A problem with the study was that they did not measure the long-term effects of the program. It is not known whether students would retain the specific factual information they learned or the underlying social and political connotations and self-awareness. Another fault with the study was that it did not break down which students improved the most. In other words, the study did not say whether certain ethnicities learned more about human origin than others. Would a student whose origins have been most likely ignored throughout their schooling show a more intense interest in such a lesson and hence learn more than those students who have been taught about their origins consistently in their schooling? This would have been an interesting fact to note. Along the same line, the researchers could have polled students about how much they learned about their origin in school, instead of just asking them what they knew.

This research showed a well-planned, structured form of cooperative learning. Students could look at culture and origin from a historical and scientific manner while also realizing the social idiosyncrasies that came about through ignorance of skin color. The collaboration with peers not only helped students with the scientific endeavors, such as assembling fossils, but with understanding and contextualizing racist attitudes about human origins. It was also discovered that the more abstract an issue was (such as politics), the lower the improvement between students' pre and post scores. Researchers believed that more time was needed for students to absorb and integrate the knowledge of abstract issues. Hence, by discussing these abstract issues, students can have more time to absorb such information.

The program engaged students as it called for hands on activity as well as ongoing dialogue among students on what they were learning. By a process of kinesthetic activity interspersed with discussion, students were not passive learners. The activities provided students with a real-life situation and the following discussions helped reinforce the ideas and questions that were conjured through the activities. The hands-on activities served as a foundation for students- a creation of "prior knowledge" for the discussion to build on.

Sandra Champion (1993) researched the role of library and technology for adolescent immigrants. She wanted to see if and how the library could help ease immigrant student's transition into U.S schools. Kim's et al. (1999) study focused on a specific program built into the curriculum. This study extends this focus to an entire class and resource center. There was an abundance of valuable information about how the library utilized information from the school's curriculum in culturally responsive

ways. I am keeping my focus, however, on how the library utilized cooperative and active learning.

The study was conducted in Hialeah High School in Florida. The school was built in 1954 for a maximum of 2,000 students. At the time of the study, there were 3,006 students. The school library media center, which was the specific location for the study, allowed approximately 200 students a day to engage in reading, computing, producing, reporting and telecommunicating activities. The media services were integrated into all educational classes.

The faculty of Hialeah High School knew that they wanted to meet the needs of their immigrant students, with the majority coming from Cuba (57%) and Central and South America. The teaching methods used at the time of the study were the same that they had been thirty years ago. The method was mainly: teachers lecture and students guess as to the meaning of the lecture. The students' average score on the English section of the SAT was 360 out of 800. A team of teachers and a media specialist created reading projects with the theme of personal myth and the archetypal hero. Two English teachers worked with the media specialist to bring in literature. Their goal was to launch students, through collaboration with peers and library personnel, into a study of different cultural heroes. They wanted to see the effects of a personal engagement with reading material as opposed to an external, static and passive interpretation.

Data was collected through interviews, including with the principal, a bilingual program director, legislator, 10 teachers and 50 students. There were daily observations of students and teachers. Surveys were given and returned by 300 of the immigrant students. The surveys asked many questions on a variety of topics. The survey inquired

about learning style through 35 questions. It was conducted in a format in which a statement such as “I read the information carefully and then ask for help” was made and students marked: always, sometimes or never (Champion, 1993, p. 9). Another survey, done in the same format, inquired about students’ interests. An example of a question is: “Are you able to locate materials easily on your subject [of interest] in more than one language and in more than one format?” (Champion, 1993, p. 9).

The results were overall very positive in terms of the benefits of the media center in all aspects of students learning and social interaction. Two percent of students stated that they needed a quiet area to study, although almost all of them said the noise level in the center was conducive to study. Ninety-three percent of students surveyed indicated they preferred learning through collaboration.

The researchers also examined students’ learning style preferences. The library was a great place to utilize learning preferences as students had the option to engage in learning in a variety of ways. Thirty-two percent of the students who took the listening style preference inventory expressed a preference for auditory learning, and 80% of those checked out one or more books on tape. All students agreed that listening to the book while reading along with the text was helpful. In almost all instances wherein students could choose between printed and electronic databases, electronics were given precedence. Students stated that computers created a more symbolic learning form and allowed for more interaction with other adolescents. This is important to consider when looking specifically at active learning. Students were not passive receptors of knowledge when they were in the media center, but instead they chose the resources they wanted to utilize in order to engage with the knowledge.

One aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy is that students are allowed to speak in their native language. Although this concept is not one of the four components that this chapter is covering in its focus, it is still an important outcome of this study. The majority of the students reported that they enjoyed the media center over the classrooms because they were discouraged from using their native language in the classroom. In the media center, they were not told in what language to speak and were therefore able to ask questions and receive the information they were seeking. Most of these students said that they were less likely to ask questions if they were not permitted to speak in their native language. This is significant as teachers who believe they are helping students learn English by forcing them to speak it at all times could actually be hindering their students, who may be much less likely to ask questions and contribute to discussion because of fear of their English speaking ability. This relates to collaboration in that students can collaborate with others who speak their native language in an effort to learn the curriculum.

The most significant figure was that “93% of students indicated their preference for learning through some form of collaboration” (Champion, 1993, p. 4). This demonstrated that ESL students do not prefer old forms of teaching, such as teacher lecture. By having access to a media center, students can choose whom to work with based on native language, learning style preferences (auditory vs. visual) and interests.

One of the biggest differences between the old way that teachers taught in the school and the new way that incorporated the media center was that students were given space and resources to utilize the learning styles that were successful for them. This not only ensured that all students would be able to learn in a way that aligned with their

preference but also that students could see that there are many resources available to help them learn.

Curtin (2005) researched teacher demeanors in an effort to see what was effective for English language learners. She studied and discussed many aspects of teacher demeanors, but I will focus primarily on how effective ESL teachers utilized cooperative and active learning. The chosen school was an urban middle school in Texas with more than 30% of the student body being immigrants. All the student participants were ESL Students. There were six teachers studied from English, reading, mathematics, science and social studies classes. The researcher, Ellen Curtin, audiotaped 30 hours of teacher interviews and observed in the class for 18 hours.

Curtin (2005) studied two veteran teachers, Mrs. O'Reilly and Miss Monroe, because they displayed an interest in working with students from diverse backgrounds, especially ELL students. She wanted to see what methods they utilized when working with these students. The veteran teachers revealed a more democratic and interactive teaching style than the four novice teachers that participated in the study. They used cooperative learning, circulated the room and called on all students. The novice teachers stayed close to the overhead projector, sat at their desks as students worked independently on assignments (typically worksheets), and reprimanded students for off-task behavior. The teachers tried to maintain autocratic behavior management but transitioned into permissive, as they could not gain control over the class. "The literature pertaining to culturally responsive teaching clearly supports teachers with an interactive and democratic classroom management style that tends to exhibit more culturally

responsive teaching practices in general than those with a more Autocratic and Didactic discipline and classroom management style” (Curtin, 2005).

The veteran teachers relied on hands-on experience for most of students’ learning. This challenged the students to think critically and problem solve without having to rely so heavily on understanding English. Empathy was a major characteristic of their teaching style and allowed for them to gain a better awareness of what was connecting with the students and what was causing frustration or confusion. The novice teachers, on the other hand, looked at students’ work more so than their facial expressions. Thus, they were unaware of what the student was feeling.

Overall, the interactive (veteran) teachers demonstrated the following characteristics: the use of a variety of teaching methods; tests that accommodated different learning styles; provided students more kinesthetic activities and more critical thinking and problem solving. They demonstrated the ability to read non-verbal cues; focus on concept content; and use cooperative learning and a student-centered as opposed to a teacher-centered learning environment. Miss. Monroe stated, “I do a lot of peer grouping so maybe if they’re not getting it from me, maybe someone else can speak their language so they can get it. Reflective writing helps a lot too... they’re more comfortable writing down what they’re thinking rather than everyone listening.” (Curtin, 2005, p.8).

The author concluded her research by saying that teachers need to meet the unique needs of their ESL students who are expected to be on grade level proficiency within three years. They can effectively do this through interactive teaching and the use of cooperative groups. In addition, they should recognize and accommodate various learning preferences.

Biko et al. (2005) was interested in why a cultural group (as a whole, not necessarily as individuals within the group) would prefer cooperative learning to more independent forms. As Curtin (2005) studied English language learners, a group who are in need of educational shifts because of a difference in culture and in language, native English speaking students are also at risk. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that African American students at ages nine, 13, and 17 have scored lower than whites on standardized tests for three decades. Researchers Biko et al. wanted to study what caused this discrepancy (Biko, Sankofa, Hurley, Allen & Boykin, 2005). Essentially, they conducted a study to see whether change should occur in the attitudes of African Americans or in the school environment and teaching practices. They created a study based upon prior work by Marryshow in 1992. Marryshow had students read scenarios describing high achieving students and then answer questions about whether they would seek out relationships with such students in social and academic settings. Two of the high achieving students had mainstream characteristics of individualism and competition. The other two students exhibited communalism (cooperative learning) and verve (intense and variable stimulation), which were found in the cultural experience of many African Americans. Marryshow found that African American students rejected only the high achievers who were successful via mainstream means.

This study was an attempt to expand upon Marryshow's findings. They altered their study by way of assessing students' academic attitudes, not just students' social attitudes toward high achievers. They also investigated family and peer groups of the student subjects to see how these may inform student's beliefs. "In this study, we investigated the extent to which Black children's own attitudes toward mainstream

cultural and African American cultural values in the classroom are in fact reflections of that socialization process” (Biko et al., 2005, p.5).

Eighty African American children from a suburban school in the southern United States participated in this research. The Learning Context Scenarios (LCS) was an instrument used to measure students’ responses to the four hypothetical high achieving students (two of whom display mainstream values and two who inherit more communal ways). Results indicated that student’s attitudes toward high achieving students yielded alpha coefficients of .67, .68, .79, and .70 for interpersonal competitive, individualistic, verve and communalism scenarios. These coefficients show that there is endorsement for all four learning styles, but that the African American subjects felt a greater preference for verve and communal high achievers. Their beliefs concerning their parents’ attitudes yielded alpha coefficients of .71, .64, .65, and .71 respectively. The students’ beliefs about their peers were .78, .70, .63, and .67, in the same order as the parents’ attitudes. Hence, the student subjects also felt that their families and their peers would view high achieving students with communal and verve learning preferences as favorable over those with competitive learning preferences.

Scores for the students’ attitudes, beliefs about parent attitudes and about peer attitudes were dependent measures and independent variables were gender and scenario orientation. The findings displayed an overall endorsement for all learning scenarios, with a higher preference for communal and verve achievers. These findings were consistent with previous research. Students rated that their parents and peers would find the communal and verve achievers preferential over the individualistic and competitive achievers. The term preferential, as applied here, means that students view the learning

style (cooperative) in higher esteem. They find that people who have such a preference are more likable and more deserving of their successes. They also feel more comfortable and confident engaging in cooperative learning as opposed to individualistic approaches to learning.

These findings indicated that if Black students are given the learning instruction and tools that are congruent with their values and preferences in learning, they may have more difficulty adapting to the mainstream values of learning and others may choose not to adapt as it goes against their values. “These students’ achievement or lack of achievement is likely a choice they make between maintaining the integrity of their cultural identity and succeeding in school.” (Biko et al., 2005, p.6). The researchers stated that the children should be made aware of their preferences and have opportunity to reflect on them. It is important to note, however, that the Black students who participated in the study do not necessarily account for the same values of the majority of Black students.

Teachers can employ tactics to engage all values represented in the classroom by asking students directly or through questionnaires what they prefer in terms of competition and cooperative learning. “Thus, children, aware of their preferences, can reflect on how those can be related to learning, achievement, and social development” (Biko et al., 2005, p.4). Although the studies showed that the African American students interviewed preferred cooperative learning to competitive learning, it did not show whether or not cooperative learning yielded greater learning outcomes than competitive learning. However, the authors’ cited previous research stating that students may choose not to learn if they feel that it is counter to their values and beliefs. Therefore, if teachers

want to provide a culturally relevant classroom, they would need to find out how their students prefer to learn. Cooperative learning and group work should be integrated into the curriculum for the benefit of all students. Setting goals and working toward individual accomplishments should be encouraged over competition with other students.

One criticism of the study is that the researchers assume that White students favor the “mainstream” values over more cooperative learning tactics. This would be because the mainstream, dominant culture of education emphasized such an approach. They did not provide evidence or statistics, however, to back up such a claim. A final concern was that the researchers started the study, based on reviewing past research, with a strong prediction that Black students would favor a less competitive approach to learning. The actual questions were alluded to but not explicitly stated. However, whether the results of the particular study were reliable or not, there has been strong evidence favoring cooperative learning for all students. Working well with others teaches greater social competency and empathy as well as providing children with various and diverse perspectives.

Conclusion

Kim et al. (1997) described an explicit example of a well-planned cooperative and interactive learning activity. She provided evidence that students learned what was intended for them to learn by way of hands-on activities and discussion. Champion (1993) explained how resources could provide effective tools for immigrants, as it allows them to learn in their preferred style and to collaborate with other native speakers. Curtin (2005) also emphasized English language learners’ preference for cooperative learning. The final study explained minority, but not English language learners, preference for

cooperation in a context that extended beyond the classroom. This created an interesting aspect of cooperative learning as it illuminated it as a moral and social attitude rather than a learning preference. It showed that students from different cultural groups might feel that competition goes against their values.

One concern about this research is that people will assume or make generalizations that all African American or English language learners in their class prefer cooperative learning. These studies are meant to be a guide for teachers to better understand the learning preference of the various cultural groups in the class. They are not meant to indicate that all individuals from the studied groups will have the same preferences. Although groups may have general preferences, every person within that group is an individual and should be treated as such. Therefore, it is always valuable to get to know your students rather than only relying on research.

High Level Or Critical Thinking

The final focus of this paper is high level or critical thinking. Critical thinking is imperative if teachers want to foster independent thinkers. These skills allow students to effectively evaluate and utilize information even in the absence of a teacher. As was explained in the introduction chapter, self-regulation is a part of critical thinking. Self-regulation requires students to be critical thinkers of their own learning.

I am looking at the following studies to see what methods teachers use to promote critical thinking. Why do some students respond to critical thinking inquiries and others do not?

Jewell E. Cooper, Suzanne Horn and David B. Strahan conducted a case study of seven high school English teachers in an effort to find what techniques worked most

effectively in promoting self-regulation and critical thinking by the students (2005). Self-regulation coincides with critical thinking for it involves thinking about ones' goals in a holistic and in a focused way. Self-regulation is a piece of social cognitive theory and essentially means self-generated thought and actions for the purpose of creating and reaching valuable and attainable goals. The process of self-regulation is cyclical with forethought (student's attitude toward learning) beginning the journey, volitional control (what affects perseverance and concentration) during the learning process and self-reflection (examining what occurred and helped and inhibited reaching goals) completing the process and transcending into the next learning venture. This is different from traditional schooling in that students decide what they value and what they want to get from a class rather than the teacher telling them.

The study consisted of seven English teachers and 42 students. Seventy-two percent of the students enrolled in the school were of minority descent. Data included interviews with students and teachers, archival records, direct and participant observation, teacher instructional information and homework logs. The data was analyzed in three stages. First, the researchers clustered the interview responses through emerged patterns and variations among teachers and students. Second, they identified ways that teachers promoted self-regulation and promoted reading comprehension, higher order questioning and student awareness. Third, they examined the data holistically to see how they answered the initial questions the researchers were pondering. These questions were: *How did the teachers promote self-regulation and higher-level thinking? How did students respond to teachers' effort?*

The teachers worked collaboratively on the higher-level questions and altered them according to individual student's level of understanding. They used a homework log as a tool for assessing students' feelings about their ability to finish assignments. The questions for students to answer were based on a Likert scale. All teachers agreed upon a detailed plan of conducting and recording student progress. The plan included weekly quizzes and student estimates on how well they did and a comparison of actual grade with estimated grade.

Six of the seven teachers thought that the higher order questions were harder to create than the type of questions they were used to asking in class. "We've become so accustomed to asking literal questions and emphasizing the meaning of certain vocabulary words...since students are more successful and comfortable with the literal interpretation of readings, teachers have become comfortable in asking literal questions" stated one of the six teachers (a 20 year veteran) (Cooper et al., 2005, p.8).

All the teachers agreed that the questions helped students to think about their own responsibility in learning. They also all stated individually that collaborating with other teachers helped them learn different methods for planning, organizing and presenting instructional material to students.

Twenty-eight out of the thirty-two students who responded to this specific question acknowledged reaching goals they had set for themselves. Thirty students stated that their teachers helped them set goals and believed that contributed to their learning. Forty out of forty-two students agreed that their predictions concerning grades were revealing and helpful in guiding self-regulation.

Researchers cited these methods as the most helpful in promoting student self-regulation based on both students and teacher responses: Challenging questions that ask open ended questions as opposed to ones that elicit a yes or no response; classroom activities structured to introduce students to the vocabulary of self-regulation and to teach them how to monitor their invested effort in assignments; teacher modeling of ways to thoroughly answer questions and chart reading progress; and providing challenging but not overwhelming tasks (Cooper et al, 2005).

Teachers stated that students needed more support at the beginning in order to eventually move toward a more self-governing work habit. The teachers reported that the greatest benefit of the experience was the opportunity to work with fellow teachers and to share experiences and work toward solutions for problems and concerns. One piece that teachers did not find as helpful were the learning logs. Teachers reported that students needed consistent monitoring to fill out the logs and that they took up valuable class time

A problem with this study was that it ran nine weeks as opposed to an entire semester. Therefore, the researchers were not able to see how student self-regulation would improve through an entire course. Specific implements such as the learning logs may require more teacher practice and experience in order to be effective. Not all of the teachers came into the experience with familiarity with higher order questions (Cooper, et al., 2005, p. 14). Therefore, time was spent getting used to these types of questions. Finally, the results of the study were not scientifically based and biases on account of students and especially teachers could skew the results to favor these implementations. For example, the authors wrote, “All of the teachers noticed that students became more comfortable in answering the questions” (Cooper et al., 2005, p. 9). These results were

very subjective, as teachers were not describing how they knew students were more comfortable. Furthermore, teachers were probably looking for positive outcomes of their instruction.

A final point is that there was no evidence of improvement in students' self regulation. The primary foundation for this critique was that there were no pre and post assessment tools to show growth of students' ability to self regulate. All of the data were based on what students said after teachers attempted to promote self-regulation. Even if the researchers could prove that students were highly self regulatory after the process, they could not prove that there was improvement unless they had a pre assessment of students self regulation processes.

Although the study's findings were primarily subjective, the researchers' conclusions were based on prior research concerning the benefits of students to self regulate and how teachers can aid in this ability. One helpful strategy that the research based its approach on was previous evidence that students need direct instruction in how to be self disciplined along with visual skill modeling. Teachers should start with challenging, but not overwhelming, tasks. This allows students to become increasingly confident as they achieve the goals that they established for themselves. Teachers should continually guide students throughout such endeavors. In other words, teachers can utilize low-level questions as a tool in teaching students the skills of self-regulation in order to gradually manifest high-level thinking.

Taylor et al (2003) also looked at methods that encouraged students to be in control of their learning. The researchers investigated how teachers could create cognitive engagement in literacy, specifically with high-poverty students (Taylor,

Pearson, Peterson & Rodriguez, 2003). CIERA (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading achievement) School Change study was created to investigate the efficiency of a school-based reading improvement model. The researchers picked out four components of this model: Supporting higher level thinking; encouraging independent use of word-recognition and comprehension; student support stance during literacy and promoting active involvement. For the purpose of this focus on critical thinking, I am looking primarily at how teachers supported higher-level thinking.

The study was done in 2000-2001. The nine schools that participated were all high poverty as 70- 95% of the students were on subsidized lunches. There were 67%-91% of the students who were of minority groups. A total of 88 teachers and 792 students were participants. Out of the students, an even distribution of low, middle and high level reading ability were included.

The observers of the study were retired teachers and graduate students of a literacy program. They were trained in the CIERA Classroom Observation Scheme. The observation system was part note taking and part quantitative coding. Several steps were taken to ensure the validity of the codes. Each observer had to meet a standard of at least 80% agreement with a standard set of codes. There was a research team to compare codes of five-minute observations. The mean agreement among the research team ranged from 82% to 95% through the 12 observations.

Researchers noted that they observed little use of higher-level questioning related to text. They also saw that narrative text was more prevalent than informational text. Telling and recitation were common interaction styles. Modeling and coaching were much less prevalent. Telling was most common with the least accomplished teachers.

Students were also assigned passive reading more often than active responding. “Even modest levels of occurrence of these key variables, such as coaching and modeling or higher-level questioning, were associated with substantial growth in student achievement” (Taylor et al., 2003, p.16).

Effective teaching practices were recorded as they related to student improvement. One such method was teachers teaching comprehension strategies instead of telling students information. Another tactic that led to greater comprehension was small-group instruction. It was also helpful when teachers furthered student responses by asking more questions and extending thoughts instead of merely accepting a short answer and moving on. One teacher who proved effective in improving students’ reading ability coached small groups of struggling readers as the rest of the class were engaged in other activities. Hence, cooperative learning can also be merged with critical thinking.

A limit of the generalizability of the study was that it “involved schools that were engaged in a reform project that emphasized implementing researched-based reading practices” (Taylor et al., 2003, p. 21). Teachers also were provided with data concerning their school’s reading methods, which may have altered their implementation of the practices. The researchers commented that observations were gathered from three hours in each classroom. This would not provide a full picture of the reading instruction, however, the information gathered brought forth many examples of effective reading practices.

The main finding of the study was that the more high-level questions a teacher asked, the more growth the students experienced. “At least two-thirds of the HLQ teacher emphasized character interpretation and connections to experience, and they

focused more on thematic elements and student leadership in discussions than did LLQ teachers” (Taylor et al., 2003, p. 20). Hence effective teachers allowed active involvement in literacy activity. They expected students to hold their own discussions. These teachers used coaching instead of telling to bring about student responsibility in learning. These findings exemplify culturally relevant pedagogy in that they ask for critical, active thinking by students instead of regurgitation of teacher lecture and that by asking such higher level questions, teachers continually manifest their high expectations as well as welcome discussion.

Heron (2003) examined how teachers could promote more student participation in class through the use of critical thinking, specifically critical thinking around issues of race. She looked at inquiry-based classrooms, as these were designed to be student oriented; they gave students opportunity to explore curiosities. The classes she examined were summer school language arts classes for incoming ninth graders who struggled with academics. The inquiry program was five weeks, with language arts consisting of one and a half hours. The school served both suburban and low-income (subsidized housing) students. The students involved in the summer school were going to attend high schools with over a 50% drop out rate. Ten students ended up participating in the program. They were all African American except one boy from Lebanon. The three teacher participants were also African American. The Language Arts teacher was named Ms. Lydon.

Interviews were the primary source of data. Three hour long focus group interviews were conducted with students and teachers had one-hour interviews individually. Heron believed students would have more clarity of thoughts and understandings if they could hear others’ responses.

Student responses were informative and helpful in making sense of apparently disengaged student behavior despite seemingly relevant and interesting material. All the students agreed that they would like more choice in what to study but that they wanted more specific direction and instruction. An interesting point was that students said they received less choice as they grew older.

Students expressed love for one teacher in particular. The characteristics that made students love her were: taking time to get to know them, respecting their opinions and encouraging them to share their experiences. When this teacher did ask students to express their feelings concerning sensitive topics such as poverty and racism, she did not constantly interject or correct them.

The researcher noticed that students were asked to respond and express their opinions to issues surrounding racism in the summer school classes. The teacher had students read short narratives about poverty and racism. They then were engaged in class discussion about the content. Students resisted participating, which led to the teacher cutting off this form of instruction. The researcher was curious as to why the students resisted and set forth to ask them. Responses were that students felt lectured to, forcing them into passive states. Teachers were anxious to respond and interject, not allowing enough time for students to formulate their own responses. Some students claimed they did not like to have to talk about such personal information, especially in the absence of a more evolved teacher-student relationship.

One teacher said that his way of connecting with the students was to discuss his personal experiences and to demonstrate the consequences of poor decisions. “The message that the teachers seemed to be sending was that the students’ thoughts were far

less substantial or useful than their own. This message is evidenced, for example, by how quickly the teachers switched the focus from student response to teacher talk” (Heron, 2003, p.8).

Students said that there were times when class discussion was rewarding, leading to more responses and participation. One such time was during a discussion of racism and students were talking about their experiences of discrimination.

This research provided a lot of valuable and relevant information for teachers interested in creating a culturally responsive classroom with high-level thinking. One major point the research found was that a teacher needs to do more than implement evocative content that pertains to students’ lives in order to bring about student participation and critical thinking skills. The way in which teachers teach sensitive material is essential. Also, and perhaps even more important, was the relationships that teachers built with students. Teachers who were patient, who let students respond without interjecting their own experiences, who allowed students to keep the flow of conversation going and who ask and value their students’ opinions are the ones that students responded to the most. Teachers also could accommodate the students who are less comfortable talking in front of the class by assigning write-ups of arguments or personal narratives. This provides them with a chance to utilize critical thinking skills without feeling insecure in front of peers.

Conclusion

Cooper et al. (2005), Taylor et al. (2003) and Heron (2003) all demonstrated how critical thinking could be utilized in secondary classrooms. Cooper et al. (2005) revealed that teachers tend to use literal questions for that is what is familiar to them. Hence,

critical thinking is not embedded in a traditional teaching mode and is therefore uncomfortable for some teachers to implement. Cooper et al. (2005) also revealed that students need more guidance when beginning to engage in critical thinking, but the guidance should gradually decrease as students become more self-sufficient in their thinking. Taylor et al. (2003) revealed that higher level questioning was effective for reading growth. Heron (2003) revealed that students prefer a freer space to discuss sensitive topics in which they can direct the discourse. Teachers should not constantly interject their opinion, as it can stifle students from examining their own ideas.

Conclusion

Although this chapter provided many detailed accounts of how teachers implemented three aspects of culturally relevant teaching, interspersed with some illuminating and interesting complementary information, there was not much evidence of improvement in student learning. The following chapter will highlight some of the patterns found within the studies and ask lingering questions based on the holes in the research. These missing pieces of evidence create a need for further research, which the next chapter discusses.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

This paper investigated the value of culturally relevant pedagogy in a contemporary society of diverse students. It explained various definitions and translations of culturally relevant pedagogy as well as the numerous aspects within them. It explained why this practice is important to me and why it makes sense in context of today's student population. In addition, it examined the No Child Left Behind legislation and the hindrance this law places on teachers and schools.

Historically, culturally relevant teaching practices were not valued or even considered. Schools were meant to serve the needs of society and did so by attempting to mold students into effective workers and unwavering patriots. There have always been social reformers, however, that worked toward changing the system. Some of these revolutionary ideas influenced schooling and others quickly fell by the wayside. Cooperative learning and critical thinking are two aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy that are widely embraced in education today.

Chapter three presented the research on the three aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy that I decided to examine for this paper. The research provided me with general and broad ideas about implementing these principles into my classroom. The research also examined students' preferences for these methods. I must emphasize that this paper reviewed a limited amount of studies for each of the three aspects of culturally relevant pedagogy. Therefore, the evidence found within the individual studies cannot be generalized. This is a point I make sure to address, as it is very easy and very dangerous to draw generalizations from research and to form assumptions about your students based on a few research studies. As a teacher concerned with examining my biases, I must

always check in that I am not forming assumptions about my students. Therefore, the current chapter will examine some findings and missing pieces from the research. These findings and missing pieces will be used as a guide for future research.

Teacher Biases

The research I reviewed on teacher biases all pointed toward the same belief: the best way to examine your biases and begin the process of overcoming them is to immerse yourself in different cultures. Teachers need social interaction with people from various cultures. Reading secondary accounts is not enough (Garmon, 2004; Wimpenny et al., 2005 & McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

The studies also revealed that it takes more than compassion to overcome biases. It does not matter if a teacher understands that she has biases and feels bad for having them. She must use this acknowledgement to begin an examination for why she has these biases (Garmon, 2004 & McAllister & Irvine, 2002). Empathy is an effective tool for perspective taking, and a way to move beyond the limited role of sympathy. Wimpenny et al. (2005) and McAllister & Irvine (2002) demonstrated ways that empathy was implemented in the classroom. The teacher subjects were placed in situations where they spoke a different language than other people. This provided them with the perspective of English language learners, as they had to try to communicate without much, or any, knowledge of the dominant language. This experience gave them more patience and understanding of their English language learners. One teacher wrote that she no longer was irritated with a particular non-native speaker when he struggled through the reading. Another teacher said that she grouped students together based on their native language (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

Both Garmon (2004) and Wimpenny et al. (2005) emphasized the examination of biases as a life-long process. Garmon (2004) explained that his subject utilized support groups, mentor programs and seminars to continue her examination. Wimpenny et al. (2005) demonstrated that immersing within cultures brought the subjects more and more challenges to their previous assumptions. Therefore, this is a process that does not end at a specified time. It is a cyclical journey.

Garmon (2004) wrote that teachers need an internal desire to become culturally relevant in order to be effective in their examination of biases. McAllister & Irvine (2002) and Wimpenny et al. (2005) did not reveal that teachers needed this internal desire to be effective. Their studies did not address a desire in their subjects to become culturally relevant.

Education has a history of molding the curriculum and the instructional methods to what people in authority view as important for students in the broader context of societal values. Hence, they did not differentiate the curriculum based upon the needs, development or culture of the individuals within a class. Educators and politicians forced their views, values and biases onto the students.

As a future teacher concerned with cultural relevance, I need to make sure I do not repeat the mistakes of history by imposing my values on to my students. I also need to make sure that I am not forming assumptions about how students should learn. This point is essential in light of the following two aspects (cooperative learning and critical thinking) of culturally relevant curriculum. As I learned about students' preferences in terms of cooperative learning and critical thinking, I needed to constantly check in with my assumptions and generalizations. Just because one or two or three studies indicate a

preference for cooperative learning among minority students, I cannot believe that all minority students share in this preference.

Further Research

Based on Garmon's (2004) view that teachers need an internal desire to be effective in examining biases, I think it would be interesting to see research on teachers who do not possess this desire. What would happen if they examined biases for the sake of a class, professional development or a research study? Would this translate in any improvement in their teaching methods or relationship with students? What would happen to these teachers if they were immersed in a different culture? Could this immersion possibly create greater biases or enforce already present biases?

I also am interested in students' response to teachers who have gone through the process of examining biases and immersing within other cultures. A study that interviewed students of a teacher who had not gone through the process and then interviewed students after that teacher began the process, would illuminate how students reacted to teachers that had this experience. Would students feel more validated? Would they have more motivation to do well in the class? Would this lead to enhanced learning or understanding of the subject matter?

Cooperative And Active Learning

Biko et al. (2005) and Champion (1993) both revealed that an overwhelming majority of minority students preferred learning in some form of collaboration. This was based on actual interviews and surveys of the students. These two studies alone, however, did not provide enough evidence to claim that minority students in general prefer collaboration to individual tasks. There have been many

previous studies that formed a comprehensive and detailed examination of minority students' learning preferences on which the four reviewed studies in this paper based their research. The evidence pointed toward collaboration as an effective and preferable form of learning for minority students. Teachers need to ask students within their class, however, how they prefer to learn before making assumptions about their students' learning preferences.

Champion (1993), Kim et al. (1997) and Curtin (2005) all included hands-on activities as a culturally relevant instructional tool. Champion (1993) explained how a media center could help students utilize active learning through computers and audio and visual resources. Kim et al. (1997) provided a very explicit explanation of a class project in which students worked in groups and moved around various stations. Curtin (2005) described general approaches that culturally relevant teachers took to encourage participation and active learning with their students.

Kim et al. (1997) and Curtin (2005) both described empathy as an important component to culturally relevant teaching. Curtin (2005) explained how veteran teachers known for being culturally sensitive utilized empathy in order to better meet the needs of their English language learners. For example, one teacher looked for facial expressions of students to see how they were feeling about the material being presented. Kim et al. (1997) showed how a teacher used a cooperative and active learning activity in an effort to promote empathy in her students.

Champion (1993) and Curtin (2005) examined how collaboration and active learning affect English language learners. Champion (1993) revealed how the media center provided ELL students freedom to work with individuals that spoke the same

native language. The students also had access to resources that could benefit them.

Curtin (2005) showed how the veteran teachers read non-verbal cues of their ELL students in addition to placing students in purposeful peer groups.

Although collaboration was not always valued throughout history, our current situation of global interdependence brings about a greater need for it. As the social, political and economic situations of society tends to dictate the instructional material and curriculum of the schools, culturally relevant teachers will have a strong case for collaboration in their classrooms.

Further Research

The reviewed studies focused on students who prefer collaboration. I wonder about the students who prefer individual or competitive tasks. What happens to these students when they are forced to work with peers? Is there a benefit to working alone? Should teachers provide a balance of cooperative and independent work? How should they strike this balance? Should students always have a choice in whether they work alone or with peers?

I also would like to see studies that compare different approaches to group work. The studies could have teachers implement collaboration in a variety of ways and examine which method tends to be most effective for students learning. I would like to see more comparative studies between collaboration and individual tasks as well. The reviewed studies did not provide this comparison and so it was difficult to make a solid case that collaboration was more effective for student learning. While several studies focused on student preference, none of these studies could prove that collaboration helped students learn better than individual or competitive tasks.

Critical Thinking

Cooper et al. (2005) and Taylor et al. (2003) described metacognition and self-regulation as forms of critical thinking. Cooper et al. (2005) revealed that the majority of the students claimed that they reached the goals that they set and found self-regulation skills to be effective for academic success. Both Cooper et al. (2005) and Taylor et al. (2003) discussed that teachers need to teach critical thinking skills and that students need more support and scaffolding in the beginning in order to reach a more independent level of critical thinking.

Heron (2003) explained how teachers could encourage and promote students' confidence in utilizing critical thinking to discuss sensitive and relevant issues. This requires a relationship with students wherein teachers express interest in their students' lives and feelings. Teachers also need to allow students time to discuss issues openly. When teachers interject their opinion too much, students feel as if their opinions are not valid by themselves.

Further Research

Historically, teachers were not concerned with critical thinking. They wanted to mold students into good patriots or good workers. Critical thinking could actually be a hindrance, as good citizens did not question authority. They just obeyed it. This runs counter to the principles of culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant teaching embraces the interests, goals and values of every individual student. Culturally relevant teachers do not try to ply students into a formulistic ideal. Instead, they provide students with tools and skills that will help them become independent and critical thinkers.

There are not any concrete measures of critical thinking in the studies I reviewed, which is perhaps the biggest obstacle in the research. Although Taylor et al. (2003) claimed that some enhanced students' academic success, there was no solid proof that this transpired because of the use of critical thinking.

I am interested in research on the various ways that students utilize critical thinking skills in the classroom. Do they regurgitate what the teacher or text say or do they come up with independent ideas based on their use of upper level thinking? When students collaborate with other students, does this help or hinder their ability and use of critical thinking?

There should also be a guide, based on research of effective methods, for teachers interested in implementing critical thinking. For example, how much of class time should be spent exercising critical thinking skills? What are possible ways that teachers could unknowingly hinder students from thinking critically? How much are teachers' biases present in their evaluation of students' critical thinking abilities?

Conclusion

I want to make sure that I am equitable in my teaching practice. I believe that culturally responsive pedagogy is a way to work toward equity in education, as opposed to further perpetuating an unjust system. Culturally responsive pedagogy takes into account the learning needs and preferences of all students. Schooling in the United States perpetuated the dominance of the White and middle class. It was inequitable in its resources, instructional approaches and curricular materials. There were many people throughout history, however, who fought to change the system. Some of these people

even felt that education was the tool for social progression. Currently, culturally responsive pedagogy is one such answer to fostering equity.

There have been many studies on the various aspects of culturally responsive pedagogy. Some of these studies found illuminating ideas about student preferences and about how teachers actually implemented, or did not implement, culturally responsive practices. Further research is necessary, however, to make valid claims about what is effective for student learning. As a future teacher concerned with cultural relevance, I plan to continue to seek research that will help inform my teaching practice and perhaps create a more equitable classroom.

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