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# Toward affective language arts teaching: the utilization of culturally relevant literature on urban african american high school students

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**TOWARD AFFECTIVE LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHING:  
THE UTILIZATION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT LITERATURE ON URBAN  
AFRICAN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

by

**BARBARA-BENITA CRAFT**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2012

**MAJOR: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

Approved by:

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Advisor

Date

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## DEDICATION

This Dissertation is dedicated to all of my mothers, Mary Pearl, Marilyn, Mama Lydia, Annie, Cannis, Aunti Vi, Aunt Renee, Terry, and Jacqueline.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge my Dissertation Committee  
for your support and appreciation  
of my love for learning.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### *Focus of Study*

Literacy education is of paramount concern to Americans. Mason and Schumm (2003) cite the International Reading Association (IRA) position statement of *Making a Difference Means Making it Different: Honoring Children's Rights to Excellent Reading Instruction* as a mandate for all children, especially those who attend overcrowded urban schools, for children who do not have access to technology, for children in poverty with limited family resources, and for children of cultural backgrounds that are different from the mainstream. The educational system and professional organizations of the U.S. have a moral obligation to make those rights a reality for all children in this country. In addition to moral considerations, our school systems must address literacy education for American students in order to secure preparation for secondary education (Texeira, Merchant-Christian, 2002). These mandates acutely affect African American students. In consideration of the urgent challenge to improve literacy competency among African American students, this study explored the adoption of culturally relevant literature in the English/Language Arts curriculum as a method of improving academic performance among African American students.

Despite the recommendations of the International Reading Association and the ambitious endeavors of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the Goals 2000 reform fell far short of achieving literacy among urban African American students (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Limited literacy education existed alongside a high student dropout rate as documented by the National Assessment Educational Progress (NAEP) (2009) published by the U.S. Department of Education. The report further confirmed that 75% of African American

students scored below basic on achievement levels in the National Reading Results, 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2009). Adopting the use of culturally relevant literature in the classroom might considerably improve the low achievement of urban African American students.

By observing English/Language Arts teachers in the classroom, this study:

- Investigated the incorporation of culturally relevant literature in classrooms
- Identified conflicting methodology based upon prior research
- Examined the effects of the use of culturally relevant literature
- Explored future teaching methods using culturally relevant literature

Whereas indications for low academic achievement levels in literacy persisted among urban African American students, research was needed in the areas of teaching methodology and curriculum planning. My assumption was that teachers' methodologies in English/Language Arts should transfigure from traditional practices to practices that are successful with urban low-income African American students.

## Background

### *Early Educational Policy*

The history of the education of African Americans as well as educational reforms were germane to this study. From the beginning, literacy and the quest for freedom were struggles that were inextricably linked for Africans in America. Many who suffered as slaves risked their lives in attempts to learn to read and write. Reacting to more of the hundreds of slave insurrections in the early nineteenth century, legislatures in the slaveholding southern states passed laws which prohibited literacy among Africans. Slaves and freedmen, alike, participated in teaching themselves and others to read in defiance of severe consequences. Many slaves secretly learned to read in spite of these laws (Manguel, 1996). Ex-slaves and free African

Americans contributed their own money and labor to build and maintain schools for African Americans.

The liberation struggle of African Americans was later articulated by Carter G. Woodson in *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (1933). Woodson confronted the ideological warfare waged on African Americans through distortions, omissions, and misrepresentations of Black thought and experience in literature, history, and the popular media. Woodson's work urged African Americans to take charge of the curriculum in order to contest white supremacist ideology. Contemporary writers such as Hilliard (1996), Kunjufu (1984), and Shujaa (1994) urged this as well, and have developed curriculum and literacy programs which do just that.

The era between 1820 and 1860 was one of dramatic change in the fledgling nation. Urbanization and industrialization reduced the dominant role of the family as the economic center in American society. Where the sons and daughters of rural America had once learned their trades, fulfilled their apprenticeships, or labored with the family unit, children of the emerging urban America increasingly worked in factories. The primary educational institutions in colonial America were the family and church, but with industrialization and the rising populations in the cities, the need for public schools was evident. Public schooling filled a void. Historian Stanley Schultz (as cited in Fraser, Allen, & Barnes 1979, p. 30) stated that the role of: "The public school was to be a classroom, a family room, a church house – all things to all children."

Historian James Fraser documented the thinking of the era that favored the institution of public schools for making future citizens. Fraser (1979) noted that Horace Mann, Secretary of Massachusetts' Board of Education from 1837 to 1848, was among the more prominent

advocates for the “common school” – public school as the institution that would make loyal citizens and full participants in the emerging nation. But as Fraser (1979) pointed out:

“When Mann talked about a common school, he did not mean a school for the common people; he meant a school that would be common to all people – the upper class, the working class, and the middle class. All would have a common experience, which would build a united society in America” (Murrell, 2002, p. 31).

The vision of creating a new democratic institution of the public school was completely at odds with the already established institutions of the fledgling nation – most notably slavery, and other laws and codes of systematic exclusion of African Americans from public life. It is safe to say that during this era, few counted African Americans among “the common people”.

As the historian James Anderson pointed out, this contradiction between the drive for universal literacy for the common man and the denial of literacy for African Americans sharply defined the legacy of *literacy for freedom, and freedom for literacy* among African Americans (Murrell, 2002). While Horace Mann was supporting a new and progressive movement of education, Horace Greeley declared his sentiment that “the settlement of the Midwest shall be reserved for the benefit of the white Caucasian race.”

As public schools in the 1840’s and 1850’s proliferated in Horace Mann’s golden age of the “common school” movement, the restrictions on African American education and literacy dramatically increased. On March 31, 1850, the Massachusetts Supreme Court rejected the argument of Charles Sumner in the Boston School integration suit and established the “separate but equal” racial segregation precedent. This precedent prefigured the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling that continued the doctrine until its overturn, with the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*

ruling. There were also severe civil restrictions that dramatically influenced African Americans access to education.

The racial restrictiveness of the legislatures of the states and territories of the Midwest became models for similar practices in new territories further westward. For example, in 1849, a year after Wisconsin formally became a state, delegates at the constitutional convention in California voted without debate, to adopt constitutional restrictions on free persons of color. In 1857, Oregon was admitted as the only Free State with constitutional restrictions against African Americans – demanding that all free people of color leave the state under penalty of periodic floggings (Murrell, 2002).

The Dred Scott decision of 1857 was the culminating event in the continuous drift away from the natural rights philosophy that had seemed so “self-evident” in the Declaration of Independence. When the U.S. Supreme Court held that “no black man had rights that a white man was bound to respect”, African American non-citizenship became the law of the land. Anderson (1995) showed that the abandonment of African American citizenship on the part of federal and state governments also meant the abandonment of access to literacy, when he wrote:

“As local and state governments faced the question of African American education in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the Civil War, they rejected the idea that African Americans had an inalienable right to knowledge. Rather, state and local governments maintained that it was the status of citizenship that entitled one to public education”  
(p. 25).

Not surprisingly, the locus of concern regarding African Americans following the Civil War shifted to the South, as the vast majority of Blacks still lived in that region following the

emancipation of over four million slaves. According to Anderson, more than 90 percent of African Americans lived in former slave states, which meant that more than 90 percent of them were illiterate by 1865.

However, James Anderson (1988) wrote that two generations later by the turn of the century, as a result of civil action, boycotts and community movements, designed to “wrestle” control of segregated and under resourced schools, African Americans actually had achieved high levels of literacy. Illiteracy among southern Blacks declined more rapidly than among whites. “At the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Black southerners seemed poised to achieve universal literacy and to increase their overall levels of educational attainment, particularly at the secondary and higher education levels” (p. 31). All that was needed was a decent system of public education in order to attain these higher levels of achievement. But this is precisely what was denied.

Further academic achievement was denied by the dramatic shift in educational equality. The relative equality of Black public education in the late nineteenth century gave way to the gross inequality in the dawn of the so-called Progressive Era of the early twentieth century. Dramatic differences in expenditures for Black southern schools and White southern schools began to appear. For example, in 1890, Black Mississippians received approximately 35 percent of the state’s school fund, but only 19 percent of that fund went to Blacks at the turn of the century, even though Blacks comprised 60 percent of the state’s school-aged population (Anderson, 1995, p. 32).

The dominant white power structure of the South mounted a massive campaign of resistance to the educational progress of Black southerners. For example, in 1890, the Mississippi Constitutional Convention signaled the beginning of systematic exclusion of Blacks from political life in the South. The Mississippi Plan (“literacy and understanding tests”) was later

adopted with embellishments by other states: South Carolina (1895), Louisiana (1898), North Carolina (1900), Alabama (1901), Virginia (1901), Georgia (1908), and Oklahoma (1910). Southern states later used “White primaries” and other devices to exclude Black voters.

Other state action reduced the Black-to-White ratio of per-pupil expenditures which declined in every state between 1890 and 1919 (Anderson, 1995, p. 33). Similarly, African Americans were excluded from the southern transformation of public secondary education. According to Anderson, in 1890, less than four-tenths of a percent of the African American children of high school age were enrolled in high school (Anderson, 1995). By the early 1930’s, children of rural Whites, working-class Whites, and the children of recent Europeans were systematically brought into public high school. African American children, as a class, were deliberately excluded (Anderson, 1988, pp. 187- 200). State legislatures in the South, in tandem with Jim Crow laws, had disproportionately diverted what meager public resources there were to the public education of White children at the expense of Black children.

Black activists sought to overturn the United States Supreme Court ruling in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which held that, if separate facilities for Blacks were “equal”, segregation did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment (Cornell Law Review). Fifty-eight years later in, 1954, the Court ruled, in the landmark decision, *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* that state laws establishing separate public schools for Black and White students denied Black children equal educational opportunities. However, school segregation and low literacy achievement levels in African American classrooms persisted (Herrick, 1990).

Further impacting the quality of education in predominantly African American schools were the demographic changes after World War II (Chicago Historical Society, 2005). To illustrate, Chicago’s population changed dramatically in the postwar period. The pace of suburbanization

accelerated, drawing middle-class whites from the city. At the same time, by 1960, Chicago's black population reached over 800,000, almost a quarter of the total. In black neighborhoods schools were overcrowded. This pattern of residential, or, de facto segregation, still exists today.

### *Recent Educational Policy*

Subsequently, the 1983 report of President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education – *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), ushered in the era of standards based school reform. From this juncture, the federal government exercised greater supervision and oversight of schools, which was reflected in the Goals 2000 initiative, under President Bill Clinton (U.S. Department of Education, 1989).

Thus, many existing teaching methodologies have evolved from the Goals 2000 legislation (1989) which state governments adopted in order to address America's ailing schools. By the year 1994, eight national goals were in place and Goals 2000 was an official federal program (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In these goals were several target areas intrinsically connected to English/Language Arts instruction: By the year 2000, all children were to start school ready to learn. The high school graduation rate would increase to at least 90 percent. In addition, all students would leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including English, and every school in America would insure that all students learn to use their minds well so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy. Furthermore, the nation's teaching force would have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century. Finally, every adult would be literate and

will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

In concert with the ambitious endeavor of these goals to meet the challenges in United States schools, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in conjunction with the International Reading Association (IRA), adopted Goals 2000 and established Guiding Visions, as well as *Standards* (1998), which strove to undertake effective teaching in the Language Arts curriculum. Guiding Visions for English Language Arts specified that all students must have the opportunities and resources to develop the language skills which they need to pursue life goals and to participate fully as informed and productive members of society. The new guidelines encouraged the development of curriculum and instruction that make productive use of the emerging literacy abilities that children bring to school. These standards provided ample room for the innovation and creativity essential to teaching and learning, and these standards assumed that literacy growth begins before children enter school, as they experience and experiment with literacy activities – reading and writing, and associating spoken words with their graphic representations (Standards for the English Language Arts, 1996).

Emerging from the Guiding Visions of NCTE/IRA were *Standards* which mandated that students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts were fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. Students were also required to read a wide range of literature from many periods, in many genres, to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. In addition, students would apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend,

interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. Students would draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word *meaning* and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context and/or graphics). Students were to employ a wide range of strategies as they wrote and used different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes. The policies adopted by the NCTE/IRA were gargantuan, but essential, if students were to acquire literacy and academic achievement in order to realize social, economic, occupational and professional goals.

Notwithstanding the utilization of *Standards* which evolved from Goals 2000, students in the United States did not master the competencies in English Language Arts instruction, as illustrated in the *Standards*. In fact, implementing standards-based reform throughout the nation was shown to be extremely inconsistent and fraught with difficulty across states. Currently, 46 states have established content standards in the core area of English/Language Arts (NCTE, 2010). Lack of consensus and clear definition of standards undermined possible academic achievement. Accordingly, the content standard was necessary but insufficient as a basis for education reform (NCTE, 2010).

Standards-driven change was designed to help guard against the self-fulfilling prophecy of low achievement that low standards produced, but in only a few states and districts have there been some signs of progress in closing the racial achievement gap. Minority students in urban areas, particularly African Americans, continue to lag in regards to English/Language Arts instruction, as the current standards do not address comprehension and literacy achievement. Reading performance has remained relatively unchanged according to the National Assessment of Education Progress, where the performance gap between white and minority students remains

unacceptably large (U. S. Department of Education, State Leadership for Local Improvement, Goals 2000 Report, 2009). The reforms of Goals 2000 in English/Language Arts have not been realized, especially in the population of urban impoverished minority students.

### *Current Educational Policy*

Partly in response to these findings, *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) legislation was enacted and signed January 2002 by George W. Bush (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). In this sweeping federal reform, states were mandated to adopt theories of standards-based education reform, which was based on the belief that setting high standards and establishing measurable goals can improve individual outcomes in education. The Act required states to develop assessments in basic skills to be given to all students in certain grades, if those states were to receive federal funding for schools. The Act did not, however, assert a national achievement standard; standards are set by each individual state (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Under the accountability provisions in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, all public schools, campuses, school districts, and the states were evaluated for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Districts, campuses, and the states were required to meet AYP criteria on three measures: Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and either Graduation Rate (for high schools and districts) or Attendance Rate (for elementary and middle/junior high schools). Since enactment, Congress has increased federal funding of education, from \$42.2 billion in 2001 to \$54.4 billion in 2007. No Child Left Behind received a 40.4% increase, from \$17.4 billion in 2001 to \$24.4 billion. The funding for reading quadrupled from \$286 million in 2001 to \$1.2 billion (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

Notwithstanding the NCLB Act, student academic achievement has still not improved. In virtually every state, the number of schools failing to make AYP increased dramatically between

2008 and 2009 (National Education Association, 2009). Almost 75 percent of all schools in all states have failing AYP. Nor has the NCLB Act increased high school graduation rates to 80 percent. Currently, the averaged freshman graduation rate for 2005-2006 was 73.4 percent. Urban areas have been especially impacted. African American high school graduation rates are extremely low (Greene & Winters, 2006).

Two goals established in the current legislation remained unfulfilled. African American students in high poverty area schools required teaching methodologies which addressed their demographic, cultural and social needs. Students of low socioeconomic status learned English language skills more effectively via multifarious teaching methodologies in curriculum and instruction (Cochran-Smith, 1984). In forming an articulate and coherent philosophy of education, teacher methodologies in curriculum and instruction must be addressed which uniquely promote student academic achievement in literacy education among urban African American students.

If more appropriate methodologies are not adopted, African American students might continue to perform poorly in English/Language Arts. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2010) report on fourth-grade reading achievement by race/ethnicity showed that the percentage of African American students reading at or above the basic level ranged from 5% to 35% in 18 major cities. In comparison, the percentage of white students performing at or above the basic level in 2009 ranged from 35% to 87% in the same cities. The reading achievement gap between African American and White students has remained relatively constant over a nine-year period. It was further established that nationally 75% of African American students in public schools are poor readers, confirming that accepted teaching methodologies failed to address the literacy needs of urban African American students.

The disparity in literacy achievement among African American students has persisted. As a result, many students have been remanded to the margins of society, never to experience full political, economic, and social participation. The proliferation of standards and the high rates of retention that resulted from not meeting these standards indicated that a move toward standards did not always lead to greater levels of success for urban African American students. With the persistence of standard based reforms, urban African American students appeared to become further disenfranchised.

### *Study Foundation*

The foundation of this study is based on the behavioral research related to curriculum and instruction, focused particularly on the works of Ladson-Billings (1994a), Hale-Benson (1986) and Lee (1993, 1995, & 1997). Ladson-Billings' (1994a) study identified the concept of cultural relevance as an essential component in educating African American students. Hale-Benson (1986) stressed on specific teaching strategies drawn from African American culture. Lee (1993) developed a framework for conceptualizing a productive relationship between learning and culture named "Cultural Modeling". Ladson-Billings (1994a), Hale-Benson (1986) and Lee (1993) each augmented the other's in the argument for the efficacy of culturally relevant literature in teaching methodologies with African American students.

Ladson-Billings (1994a) developed a theoretical notion of teaching termed "culturally relevant pedagogy," which described an approach to teaching that promoted academic and cultural success in settings where student alienation and hostility characterized the school experience. The propositions on which this theory was based are academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness.

Rather than focus on the particular “learning styles” of students, culturally relevant pedagogy theory argued that teachers need to adopt a particular set of principles about teaching which can be applied in various school and classroom contexts. The emphasis on academic achievement argued that teachers must place student learning at the center of all classroom activity. Ladson-Billings’ (1994b) detailed ethnographic research showed that specific “teaching styles” were critical to academic achievement in literacy among African American students.

From the interviews conducted by Ladson-Billings (1994b) in the literacy programs of the participating teachers, several tenets emerged. These included:

1. *Students whose educational, economic, social, political, and cultural futures are most tenuous are helped to become intellectual leaders in the classroom.*
2. *Students are apprenticed in learning community rather than taught in an isolated and unrelated way.*
3. *Students’ real-life experiences are legitimized as they become part of the “official” curriculum.*
4. *Teachers and students participate in a broad conception of literacy that incorporates both literature and oratory.*
5. *Teachers and students engage in a collective struggle against the status quo.*
6. *Teachers are cognizant of themselves as political beings.*

Hale-Benson’s (1986) research was designed to satisfy three purposes of educating African American children:

- Imparting skills such as the ability to read, write, spell, and calculate
- Creating information growth – there are things educated people know about the world

- Providing children with the opportunity to develop talents and interests that can lead to fulfilling leisure-time pursuits, the identification of careers, and an opportunity to make a creative contribution to the world

Hale-Benson's (1986) work was bolstered by the prior research of Boykin (1983), who specified nine interrelated dimensions of African American culture:

- Spirituality, an approach to life as being essentially vitalistic rather than mechanistic, with the conviction that nonmaterial forces influence people's everyday lives
- Harmony, the notion that one's fate is interrelated with other elements in the scheme of things, so that humankind and nature are harmoniously conjoined
- Movement, an emphasis on the interweaving of movement, rhythm, percussiveness, music, and dance, which are taken as central to psychological health
- Verve, a propensity for relatively high levels of stimulation to action that is energetic and lively
- Affect, an emphasis on emotions and feelings, together with a special sensitivity to emotional cues and a tendency to be emotionally expressive
- Communalism, a commitment to social connectedness, which includes an awareness that social bonds and responsibilities transcend individual privileges
- Expressive individualism, the cultivation of a distinctive personality and a proclivity for spontaneous genuine personal expression
- Oral tradition, a preference for oral/aural modes of communication in which both speaking and listening are treated as performances and in which oral virtuosity – the ability to use alliterative, metaphorically colorful, graphic forms of spoken language – is emphasized and cultivated

- Social time perspective, an orientation in which time is treated as passing through a social space rather than a material one, in which time can be recurring, personal, and phenomenological

Based upon these dimensions, Hale-Benson (1986) proposed that there is strong affective orientation in child rearing in African American families. African American children learned best when their learning was “people oriented” as opposed to “object oriented.” They responded best when they were taught in small groups with a great deal of nurturing interaction between the teacher and the child and the child and his peers. African American culture had a strong orientation toward oral communication, whereas the dominant culture had an orientation toward literacy. This difference needed to be bridged so that African American children were provided with the literacy experiences that the schools defined as intelligence.

African American children were immersed in the creative arts. Infusion of the creative arts into instruction would increase the children’s interest in activities and stimulate motivation to achieve. Hale-Benson (1986) contended that adoption of the strategies drawn from African American culture could curb the dropout rate, the practice of medicating African American students, and placement in special education programs. Hale-Benson’s research mirrored the findings of Ladson-Billings (1994a), as well as Lee, (1993) who developed a framework for conceptualizing a productive relationship between learning and culture called “*Cultural Modeling*.” Lee focused her study on urban African American students and literacy using “careful” ethnographic analyses and review of sociolinguistic literature on African American Vernacular English (AAVE) (Smitherman, 1977). Lee found that speakers of AAVE routinely interpreted figurative language and tropes, including satire, irony and use of unreliable narrators (Lee, 2003).

In “*Cultural Modeling*,” curriculum was designed around texts which were culturally responsive. Cultural modeling was developed around several objectives, among them were the following: helping students to understand disciplinary frameworks for problem solving, making clear, for and with students, the uses of knowledge that are being taught or that they possess, clarifying explicit, the links between what students know and what they need to understand, and providing precise techniques to address multifaceted learning tasks. Learning contexts were created that were based on urban classroom practices that offered engaging learning experiences with ongoing student supports. Culturally Modeling differed from other approaches that drew from similar interdisciplinary frameworks; for example, reciprocal teaching, where teachers taught students model strategies for understanding text.

In “*cultural modeling*”, students’ knowledge was the center of pedagogy and practice; students took the lead and were asked to model the strategies that they used to understand texts. Lee (1993) suggested that for students to gain broad knowledge about “character types, plot configurations, archetypal themes, and interpretive text” (p. 48), the high school curriculum must have a coherent sequence of cognitive activity and expectations around learning.

Ladson-Billings (1994a), Hale-Benson (1986), and Lee (1993) asserted that curriculum and instruction must be uniquely tailored to address the literacy achievement in urban African American students. In order to be effective, curriculum and instruction must be culturally relevant to urban African American students. The interrelatedness of their theoretical frameworks, culturally relevant pedagogy, teaching strategies drawn from African American culture and cultural modeling, in coordination, may produce high achievement levels.

Furthermore, fusion existed in the work of the three theorists. Ladson-Billings (1994a) noted that culturally relevant teaching used student culture in order to maintain achievement and to

transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. Hale-Benson (1986) described seeking out the cultural context of African American students out of which creative and intellectual responses occurred. Lee (1993) proposed the use of culturally responsive pedagogy, wherein teachers chose texts in which the social world of the text was closer to the experiences of the students.

These consonant strands provided a structure for investigating culturally relevant literature during a period in which literacy achievement in urban African American students was a grave concern. Contemporary school reform, steeped in standardized instruction and assessment, had not met the literacy needs of urban African American students. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was failing (NEA, 2010). From the perspective of curriculum and instruction, more can be done to raise the literacy achievement levels in African American students.

Moreover, contemporary school reform, (NCLB, 2002) based upon standardized instruction and assessment, appeared to be the mainstay of future pedagogy. The reality of the emphasis on “assessment for measurement” was growing (Klinger, 2003), as the reading profession faced the challenge of high-stakes testing and standards – based curriculum. Depending on how standards were shaped and used, either they could support more ambitious teaching and greater levels of success for all students or they could serve to create higher rates of failure for those who were already least well served by the education system (Darling-Hammond & Falk, 1997). Schools needed to respond by redesigning curriculum and instruction for urban African American students in order to bridge the present achievement gap and prepare these students for the highly technologized world in which they will live.

### *Statement of the Problem*

A low literacy achievement level among urban African American students is a major concern for students, parents and educators. Schools require information and strategies to bolster their effectiveness in teaching literacy to urban African American students. Education remains an important weapon against poverty and crime (Strickland, 1994). Pedagogy must provide a way for students to maintain their cultural integrity, while succeeding academically (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). As the substantial achievement gap continues between African American students and whites, the need for changes in curriculum and instruction is urgent. Teachers' methodologies in English Language arts should transfigure from traditional practices to practices that are successful with urban African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994a).

### *Purpose of the Study*

*The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of culturally relevant literature, cultural familial activities and strategies and cultural modeling in teacher methodologies.*

### *Initial Research Questions*

1. Among urban high school Language Arts classroom teachers, are methodologies included which use culturally relevant literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994a)?
2. Among urban high school Language Arts classroom teachers, are methodologies included that use culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a)?
3. Do high school Language Arts classroom teachers utilize lesson activities from African American familial culture (Hale-Benson, 1986)?
4. Are the teaching strategies of "cultural modeling" (Lee, 1993) applied among high school Language Arts classroom teachers?

5. How do these matters of interest vary across urban, metro-city, and suburban school districts?

### *Significance of the Study*

As SAT scores for urban African American students continue to lag behind all groups tested (College Board, 2009), achievement levels need to be raised so that African Americans are prepared for employment. Literacy achievement is vital to the social, emotional and intellectual well being of urban African American high school students. Without literacy achievement, these students cannot participate as fully functioning citizens (NCTE, 1998). Educators should redesign curriculum and instruction to include culturally relevant literature, cultural modeling and cultural pedagogy to address unique learning styles of African American students and to increase their literacy achievement.

### *Limitations of the Study*

The following limitations may affect the ability to generalize the findings of this study:

- The study sites were limited to one urban, one metro-city and one suburban high school in the Detroit metropolitan area. The findings may not be generalized beyond the Detroit metropolitan area or to any other schools.
- Ethnographic interviews, participant observations and artifact collection were used as the sources of data collection in this study, with no attempt to predict that the observed methodologies will increase literacy scores and/or raise achievement levels.
- The study population was exclusively limited to English Language Arts teachers in the three selected school sites. No attempt was made to generalize the findings beyond this population. No students were interviewed or observed in the study and no data were collected, analyzed or disseminated on the students.

### *Assumptions*

The following assumptions are made for the purpose of this study:

- Reading, language arts and literacy proficiency scores for African American students are significantly lower than scores for their white counterparts.
- Current methodologies developed from Goals 2000 Reform (1989) and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Reform (2002) have not raised literacy levels of African American students.
- Research of the past 20 years has identified the need for changes in curriculum and instruction to better address literacy achievement in African American students
- Present pedagogy exists to prepare African American students for participation in citizenship and employment.

### *Definition of Terms*

Achievement Level(s)	Percentiles ranging from high to low derived from standardized tests
Urban African American Students	Students who self identify as African American or having origins in the racial groups of Africa who attend public schools metropolitan areas
Curriculum	Knowledge, skills, attitudes and processes judged important to learn at an appropriate level

Instruction	The means by which the learning is to be achieved; methodologies, strategies and activities employed to deliver elements of curriculum
Standardized Assessment	State mandated tests designed in such a way that questions, conditions for administration, scoring procedures and interpretations are consistent
Culture (Kluckhorn, 1962)	The part of life that is learned by people as the result of belonging to some particular group. It is learned behavior that is shared with others.
School Reform	Changes initiated from an external source that alter existing policy, procedures, rules and requirements, to adapt the way schools function to new circumstances and requirements
“Cultural Modeling” (Lee, 1993)	A way of facilitating students’ learning generative concepts in subject matters, by helping them to

	make connections between the target knowledge from their home, community and experiences
African American Vernacular English (AAVE)	Any of the nonstandard forms of English spoken by African Americans
Literacy	The ability to understand and use written forms required by society and/or valued by the individual
African American Teaching Strategies	Approaches, methodologies and ways of presenting instructional materials or conducting instructional activities related to African American culture
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a)	Teaching that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes

Culturally Relevant Literature (i.e., Multicultural Texts)	Texts, materials, and discourse emerging, evolving, developed, and/or related to a specific ethnic or cultural group
Metro/City School	A school which is located in a smaller municipality and services urban populations
Affective Education	Value based education in which the curriculum attempts to have students problem solve and in doing so transform their view of the world
Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	The educational process that leads to the development of emotional intelligence wherein students become able to understand and manage their emotions

## Chapter II

### Introduction

#### *Review of Related Literature*

The review of literature related to culturally relevant literature and its use among urban African American high school students in curriculum and instruction is presented in this chapter. The literature of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a) and teaching strategies posited from African American culture (Hale-Benson, 1986) are presented. Literature which investigates “cultural modeling” (Lee, 1993) is discussed. The aggregate of the related research establishes the need for the use of culturally relevant literature in current teaching methodologies in curriculum and instructional practices. The literary review addresses the historical backdrop of educational opportunities for African Americans and current educational policy reforms that have impacted literacy achievement in urban African American high school students. The review of the literature traces the development of the curriculum and instructional practices which have attempted to address literacy achievement concerns in urban African American students. Best practices for facilitating culturally relevant literature are chronicled.

#### *Culturally Relevant Traditions*

*Recently, African American scholars have begun to look at specific cultural strengths of African American students and the ways that some teachers leverage these strengths effectively to enhance academic and social achievement. Scholars like Hale-Benson (1993), and Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines, (1988) identified cultural strengths that African American children bring with them to the classroom that are rarely capitalized on by teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Irvine (1990) suggested that what happens between African American students and their teachers represented a lack of “cultural synchronization” that related to other factors that*

*inhibited African American students' school achievement, including the "prescriptive ideologies and prescriptive structures that were premised on normative belief systems."*

Other studies looked at *cultural responsiveness* and *cultural compatibility*. Like the notion of cultural appropriateness, these terms were in a sociolinguistic lexicon used to analyze the ways in which schools can be made more accessible to culturally diverse learners. In a challenge to the sociolinguistic perspective, Delpit (1996a) suggested that the difficulties that students of color experienced in school were far more complex than "differences between the language and culture of home and school." Delpit maintained that culturally diverse students' failure in school resulted from societal conflict and a struggle for power. This view was consistent with the work of such critical theorists as Giroux and McLaren (1986), and Ladson-Billings (1994b).

The notion of *cultural relevance* moved beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. Thus, culturally relevant teaching used student culture in order to sustain culture and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. The negative effects were brought about, for example, by not seeing one's history, culture or background represented in the textbook or curriculum or by seeing that history, culture or background distorted. Negative effects resulted from the tracking of African American students into the lowest-level classes. The primary aim of culturally relevant teaching was to assist in the development of a "relevant black personality" that allowed African American students to choose academic excellence and yet still identify with African and African American culture (Ladson-Billings, 1994b).

Specifically, culturally relevant teaching was a pedagogy that empowered students intellectually socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These cultural referents were not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture. They were aspects of the curriculum in their own right.

*Learning Styles of African American Students*

In conjunction with culturally relevant pedagogy, specific teaching strategies derived from African American culture were investigated. J. Baratz, S. Baratz and Shuy (1969) focused their research upon the area of reading instruction with black children. They supported the position that Black children grew up in a distinct culture that gave rise to a distinct language system, in addition to distinct behavioral characteristics, that are often ignored in the educative process. Baratz and Shuy charged that most educational programs were not innovative but offered smaller classes doing the same thing that large classes had been doing. These researchers said that Black children do not need, as their first priority, smaller classes, intensive social programs and so forth. What they needed most was an educational system that first recognized that their abilities and their culture, and then drew upon these strengths and infused them into the teaching process.

Michael Cole (1971) researched cultural influences on cognition and shared the view that we must understand the culture of Black children if we are to gain insight into their learning styles. He suggested that more study is needed as to why problem solving and learning skills are not applied in the classroom. Even though scholars have demonstrated that Black children are using complex thinking skills on the street, the problem of transferring these skills to the classroom has not been solved. He cautioned further: "But before we can do this, we must understand the nature of street and school activity. In short, we must combine ethnography and experimental psychology in the service of understanding the relation between culture and thinking" (p. 234).

According to Hale-Benson (1986), several approaches to learning strategies, unique to African American students, evolved from the unique learning style of the African American student. Attempts to understand the learning styles of Black children may not advance without the development of an appropriate social-psychological theory of the educational process. This

theory would identify the social, historical, and cultural forces that affected the development of learning styles in the Black community. This theory would also describe the psychological characteristics of Black children within the context of environmental forces that created and maintained the characteristics (Hale-Benson, 1986).

Norman (1994) observed a specific difference related to how African Americans processed information and acquired knowledge. There was reason to believe that because of their cultural background, African American children approached the processing of information differently. This difference was found in two major dimensions: (1) perceptual preference which dictated the preferred ways that individuals selected and transmitted information to the brain for processing, and (2) their approach to thinking about the material (Norman, as cited in Hollins, King, & Hayman, 1994).

Norman (1994) suggested that the thinking process incorporated three functions: (1) acquisition of new information through chunking, elaboration, and connection to existing knowledge; (2) restructuring of new information which involved the reformulation of old concepts and relationships; and (3) the adaptation of knowledge to particular uses. Although this process may be true for all individuals, there was little doubt that culture affected the use of memory, that existing knowledge may have differed because of prior experiences, and that the adaptation of knowledge depended upon perceptions of the individuals. While much more empirical data are needed to clearly define this difference, the intuitive hypothesis which was generated within the community indicated that the modal thinking style of African Americans appeared to be holistic and intuitive. Cooper (1977) used written essays to examine African American thinking style and concluded that there was a difference in style which tended toward a more holistic or integrated approach, rather than the hierarchical orientation she observed in

other cultural groups. Cooper noted that the writing of African American students tended to examine information and ideas based upon relationships and the interdependence of the concepts.

Additionally, Baruth & Manning (1992) and Boykin (1984) identified these specific characteristics for African American learners. African American learners were identified as field independent, relational or field sensitive and tended to:

- Respond to things in terms of the whole instead of isolated parts
- Prefer inferential reasoning as opposed to deductive or inductive
- Approximate space and numbers rather than adhere to exactness or accuracy
- Focus on people rather than things
- Be more proficient in nonverbal than verbal communications
- Prefer learning characterized by variation and freedom of movement
- Prefer kinesthetic/active instructional activities
- Prefer evening rather than morning learning
- Choose social over nonsocial cues
- Proceed from a top-down processing approach rather than a bottom-up approach
- Prefer “vervistic” (Boykin & Toms, 1985) learning experiences

To wit, the challenge to the educator, and specifically to the American educator, scarcely requires elaboration. The task of education has been first and foremost that of transmitting, expounding, and in some cases refining the great values of each culture. The teaching of information and of skills, until recently, has been essentially little more than a means to the more ultimate end. Today, among us, the picture is startlingly

different. Except in religious institutions of learning, most teachers shy away from any direct consideration of values (Kluckhorn, 1962).

### *Focus and Function of Literacy*

The question may then arise, why focus on African American learners? One reason to focus on African American learners was because so many educators had low expectations about these students' ability to achieve, and thus accepted excuses for failure. Rather than look at the research on successful approaches for teaching these students, many educators blamed the victim and proffered pathological reasons for poor achievement. They wanted to design new and often ineffective remedies for children who they viewed as exotic, primitive, and less educable than other students. Some educators advocated doing nothing because they have adopted the troublesome notion that Black culture was adverse to academic success (McWhorter, 2000; Ogbu, 1995), or that Black students had genetic deficiencies (Hernstein & Murray, 1994).

Another compelling reason for the focus on African American students was that much of this miseducation existed today as remnants of the deliberate resistance to providing children of African American descent with an equal education. Ineffective literacy and schooling practices include: low ability grouping, the overrepresentation of children of color in special education classes, the deliberate selection of instructional materials that were counter to the learning styles of many children of color and the high incidence of suspension and detention given to these students. Major discrepancies also existed in per pupil expenditures in poorer communities where many of these children lived. Poorly qualified teachers were often provided to these students.

These discredited practices were so prevalent in schools with predominantly African American populations that one was reminded of the similar practices described over 70 years ago

in Carter G. Woodson's landmark commentary, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (1933). Given the level of inequality that existed between the access to quality human and instructional resources in many communities where these children lived and learned, there was little wonder that many African American learners at all grade levels were performing at a level that was significantly lower than white students.

Negative pedagogical approaches in African American learners, especially those that embraced a "universalized pedagogy", (Delpit, 1996a) resulted in pervasive dominant culture education. Delpit contended that when the views and perspectives of persons of color differed with the assertions and beliefs of the dominant pedagogy, they were often discounted and ignored. Delpit (1988) termed this as "silenced dialogue". Within the classroom, there then existed "the culture of power," based upon these elements:

1. Issues of power were enacted in classrooms.
2. There were codes or rules for participating in power; that is, there was a "culture of power".
3. The rules of the culture of power were a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who had power.
4. If you were not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture made acquiring power easier.
5. Those with power were frequently least aware of – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power were often most aware of its existence.

The culture of power conflicted with pedagogy described in African American learning styles and effective teaching styles. Teachers were advised to focus on sociopolitical consciousness. This focus referred to the kind of civic and social awareness that students strove to develop in

order to work toward equity and justice beyond their own personal advancement. This focus had been reflected in successful programs such as Freedom Schools, Citizenship Schools, and Nationalist Schools. This notion of sociopolitical consciousness presumed that teachers themselves recognize social inequities and their causes. However, teacher educators such as Ladson-Billings and King, (1990) as cited in Delpit, (1996b), had not observed this consciousness.

The idea of social justice in pedagogy and the learning styles associated with that pedagogy was addressed by Freire (1970a, 1970b, 1970c). From the Freirean perspective, the approach to literacy encompassed the ideal of proper literacy. According to Freire (1970a), to become more fully human was to become ever more critically aware of one's world and to be in creative control of it. The more one engaged in conscious action to understand and transform the world – one's reality – in a praxis of reflection and action, the more fully human one became. He wrote,

“As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly, we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is, not at the same time, a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world” (1970c, p.75).

The connection of literacy to liberation made by Freire was captured in his conception of words and process. The *words* that people learn to read and write, through a process of

cooperative human action, must stimulate critical examination of oppression and enhance the ability of people to break from this oppression. Liberation was accomplished, in part, by overcoming the shackles of illiteracy. The *process* by which literacy was transmitted and employed in the praxis of critical reflection and transformed action must be democratic and liberating. The literacy process, according to Freire, should be a dialogue characterized by social relations of equality and liberation and should reflect the values of trust and mutual respect. Similarly, Lankshear and Lawler (1989) argued that the literacy that comprised reading and writing words was seen, ultimately, as an intrinsic part of a much larger literacy: the act of “reading” and “writing” the world itself: “‘Writing’ was the act of creating history, culture, and the human being, in the light of ‘reading’ the text of social reality through the act of critical reflection” (p. 70).

Scholars contended that the failure to achieve this revolutionary conception of literacy for African American children, youth, and adults, ought to be considered against the background of the African experience. Some have argued that the strong oral tradition of African people suggested that Africans did not develop writing systems. A more careful review of the archaeological, historical, and epigraphic evidence demonstrated that Black Africans emerged at the dawn of civilization with many writing systems, and that these writing systems were used from ancient times to the present (Bekerie, 1994; Bernal, 1987; Diop, 1955/1974; Osei, 2002; Williams, 1976; Winters, 2004). In fact, southern Ethiopia was the source for most of the papyrus plants from which Black Africans invented paper for purposes of writing (Williams, 1976).

African people used writing systems for essentially two purposes: (1) to help merchants maintain records on business transactions and (2) to preserve religious doctrines or write

obituaries (the Proto-Saharan script). Winters, (2004) concluded that the role of traditional (oral) historians accounted for the scarcity of documents written for historical preservation among ancient African groups. He argued:

“These historians memorized the histories of their nation and people for future recitation before members of their respective communities. This oral history was often accompanied by music or delivered in poetic verse and remains the premiere source for the history of most African nations even today” (p. 3).

However, writing on paper was only one form of sign and symbol communication in classical African civilization. Communication also existed in gold weights, hair braids, architecture (Churchward, 1910/1978; Schwaller-deLubicz, 1978) and drum sounds. In short, African culture relied heavily on symbols for conveying messages. It is a matter of historical record (Bekerie, 1994; Bernal, 1987; Diop, 1955/1974; Osei, 2002; Williams, 1976) that Black Africans developed the oldest literacy tradition in the world. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the Africans who were brought to the western hemisphere as slaves were literate at that time, as demonstrated by the many symbolic representations woven into the social fabric of their diverse cultures. The African slaves could read, write, and speak the language of their respective tribal groups. However, in the western hemisphere, African literacy was either suppressed or destroyed. Because teaching slaves to read and write was a crime, they were prevented from continuing their own educational system or from participating in the White educational system of the colonies.

From this rich heritage of African American literacy, Hoover (1984) argued that anyone interested in addressing the literacy crisis in the African American community today must use

the prior knowledge of African and African American history and the models of Black excellence in the past for two purposes: to advocate on behalf of literacy for all people, and to challenge the established theories and rationales for the failure of African American children to learn to read successfully. These findings were bolstered by Lee (2003), who asserted that “cultural modeling” has great impact upon literacy achievement in African American students. Lee suggested that the focus on basic skills in reading, writing, and literacy instruction for African American students has disadvantaged them by not preparing African Americans for the complex tasks associated with achievement in school.

Lee (1993) began her work with African American students using canonical African American literary text. According to Ladson-Billings (1994a), the rationale for choosing texts in which the social world of the texts was closer to the experiences of the students was the second tenet of culturally responsive pedagogy. The purpose of culturally responsive pedagogy was to emphasize the development of cultural competence within the students’ home culture and an explicit attention to sociopolitical issues that focus students beyond their personal advancement as individuals. A preponderance, although certainly not all, of African American literature invited reflection of what it meant to be an African American and struggled with some of the major tensions within African American historical and cultural experiences. In particular, African American literature invited students to engage such texts. These texts empowered students with the technical tools, similar to what Delpit, (1996a) called the language of power, to attack classic interpretive problems of canonical literature. In this way, these students learned to strive for high academic standards and experience cultural development simultaneously.

Lee (2007) attempted to link students’ cultural experiences and knowledge, and their competencies in African American Vernacular English and hip-hop culture, to the understanding

of literature across time periods and genres. The model, Lee argued, acknowledged the devaluing of African American students' cultural displays of knowledge and the resistance that may ensue even when such displays of knowledge are valued and validated. In addition to being a site for students' display of cultural knowledge, the classroom became an open space for students to position their knowledge alongside, within, and at odds with other cultural knowledge. In short, students were able to assume the role of authorities in the classroom.

Subsequently, LeMoine (2001) reported that in secondary schools in reading and language arts, only 20% of the African American students read at a proficient or advanced level, versus 60% at the proficient or advanced level for White and Asian students. In comparison, results from classrooms that followed a culturally and linguistic responsive approach, as outlined by the Academic English Mastery Program, showed a different trend. The most impressive results came from the Culture and Language Academy of Success Elementary School (CLAS), whose scores compared almost evenly with White and Asian populations. Over 50% of the students at CLAS were reading at or above the proficient level. CLAS was located in a working class neighborhood of Los Angeles. Its student population was 100% African American. CLAS was an exemplary school wide model of teachers who subscribed deeply to the philosophy and pedagogy of the Academic English Mastery Program (AEMP) and utilized five instructional strands. It is believed that when implemented appropriately, these were the ingredients of success for the students at CLAS and in AEMP, in general (Hollie, 2001).

Therefore, there was evidence that the strategic and purposeful use of culturally relevant literature improved literacy achievement. LeMoine (2001) asserted that the use of authentic literature in the classroom, coupled with time for reading, and for opportunities to be read to, benefitted students linguistically and culturally. For Social Emotional Learners (SELs), those

who were learning to manage their emotions and personal choices while learning, access to culturally relevant literature and books that reflected their cultural and familial experiences were essential. Use of such texts provided a mirror and a window for these students. They could see themselves reflected in the pages authentically through fictionalized accounts or in real-life situations. They identified with characters that looked like them, engaged in the activities they did, ate the foods they ate, played similar games, celebrated the same holidays they celebrated, and talked like they talked. The students also saw outside of themselves as well. These cultural situations became bridges for creating new knowledge and understandings about other places, other cultures, and other situations. Use of culturally relevant literature served as a point of reference for SELs (LeMoine, 2001).

Moreover, experts on culturally relevant pedagogy, such as Lisa Delpit (1996a), Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994a), Beverly Cross (2003), Asa Hilliard (1976), Geneva Gay (2000) and Janice Hale-Benson (1986) underscored the fact that such pedagogy is mutually beneficial for students and teachers, primarily through improving student achievement. Ladson-Billings (1995a) summarized the definition and goals well when she stated, “Specifically, culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes”(p. 159). Cross (2003) emphasized that in culturally responsive teaching, “Sources of knowledge are not limited to textbooks, teachers, and the written curriculum, but instead include the knowledge and experiences students gain outside of school” (p. 205). Such teaching was participatory, personal, situated around big ideas, and built upon emotional and societal issues. Gay (2000) said that among other benefits, culturally responsive teaching required teachers to use a variety of instructional strategies so they potentially target all learning styles.

Tatum (2000) conducted an eight-month study on Chicago's South Side using a variety of strategies related to the learning styles of African American students and concluded that African American students, in low-level tracks, were often not required to read literature, and they commonly received limited amounts of reading instruction. Their reading failures were exacerbated by inadequate or poor-quality instruction that focused solely on improving reading scores. Teachers might have increased reading achievement by combining explicit skill and strategy development to address fluency, word study, comprehension, and writing, while using culturally relevant literature to nurture identities and develop cultural competence.

Further, Tatum (2000) found that a closer look at the "good teaching" (Foster, 1993; Foster & Delpit, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995a) of African American students has emerged during the past decade. A distinctive educational philosophy and pedagogy along with the aspects of teacher behavior which students considered to be effective have been pointed out. The "good teachers" of African Americans, whose major attributes were revealed by these studies, may be described as follows:

1. They are concerned individuals who command respect, respect pupils, and are strict, although caring, in requiring all students to meet high academic and behavioral standards.
2. They are concerned not only with the students' cognitive development, but also with their affective, social, and emotional development.
3. They use a culturally relevant approach to literacy teaching.

A culturally relevant approach involved talking to black students about the personal value, the collective power, and the political consequences of choosing academic achievement. In such an approach, activities based on African American community norms were incorporated into the

classroom, cooperation was emphasized over competition, and learning was structured as a social activity.

Also, Tatum (2000) determined that culturally relevant literature should be used to help African American students understand changes in history, substantiate their existence, and critically examine the present as a mechanism for political, social, and cultural undertakings that may arise in the future. Culturally relevant literature should extend toward empowering students to honor their presence; “a powerful demanding presence not limiting the space in which the self can roam” (Achebe, 1988, p. 530). When used, culturally relevant literature helped to engage students and offset much of the resistance and student apathy exercised in low-level reading tracks. It also provided the opportunity to develop deeper processing strategies through reading, writing, questioning, and discussing (Tatum, 2000).

Tatum (2000) offers the following findings about improved literacy achievement:

1. Students must experience academic success, develop and maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness to challenge the status quo.
2. Teachers should attend to students’ academic needs, not merely make them feel good.
3. Students’ culture should be made a vehicle for learning.
4. Students need help to develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities.

Using culturally relevant literature was crucial to a culturally relevant approach. It has been suggested that African American adolescents in low-level reading tracks, particularly those who live in poverty and in politically and socially defunct communities, need to read, write about, and discuss literature that would help them to develop cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

There was a fundamental tension between a basic skills approach designed to meet standards and a culturally relevant approach. Developing cultural competence with culturally relevant literature did not solve the problems of teachers confronted with students who lacked reading skills. Instruction which increased reading scores by focusing on skills, in isolation, did not strengthen cultural competence or nurture students' identities. Economically disadvantaged African American adolescents in low-level tracks needed reading instruction that infused a culturally relevant framework with explicit strategy and skill development (Hale-Benson, 1993).

Prior to Tatum's (2000) study on Chicago's South Side, it was found that African American students in low-level tracks were often not required to read literature, and they commonly received limited amounts of reading instruction. Their reading failures were exacerbated by inadequate or poor-quality instruction that focused solely on improving reading scores. Teachers could increase reading achievement by combining explicit skill and strategy development, using a framework to address fluency, word study, comprehension, and writing, while using culturally relevant literature to nurture identities and develop cultural competence.

Tatum's (2000) study involved a change in class structure that invited low-achieving adolescent students to learn specific skills and strategies and to read literature. Word study activities, fluency development, and writing in a cooperative environment allowed the students to gain confidence in their reading abilities and to improve reading behaviors. The students in this inquiry did not resist the explicit skills, in large part, because they were thrust upon them in a very challenging forum, and opportunities to exercise their new knowledge were made available through literature activities.

Culturally relevant literature helped the students to develop a broader social consciousness that was observed in their discussions and writings. Students' culture was used as a vehicle to

learn new vocabulary. Students were challenged to read materials at their grade level and received the support to experience academic success. Restructuring the classroom and engaging the students' voices created a cooperative atmosphere. These goals of a culturally relevant approach for African Americans were meshed with explicit word study, fluency, writing, and comprehension instruction to improve reading skills (Tatum, 2000).

This combination of a culturally relevant approach and explicit strategy and skill instruction resulted in 25 of the 29 students earning promotion to high school under the Chicago Public School System's reform initiative, in which the program required eighth-grade students to achieve a minimum grade-level equivalent of 7.0 on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Several students scored well beyond this minimum standard. The quantifiable gains were noteworthy, given the fact that all the students were several years below grade level in reading at the beginning of the year (Tatum, 2000).

Strengthening Tatum's (2000) research was a situated/sociocultural determination of classroom dynamics. In their British study, Edwards and Mercer (1987) investigated ways that knowledge was transmitted and received in elementary classrooms. Their research was based on the premise that human thought, understandings, and knowledge construction were intrinsically social and *cultural*. In *Common Knowledge* (1987), Edwards and Mercer described how the process of education, investigated primarily through the analysis of classroom discourse, imparted different kinds of knowledge. Much of what children learned in classrooms was not the intended aim of instruction but rather other, "hidden agenda" knowledge rooted in the philosophy of instruction itself.

Akin to sociocultural considerations, Shade (1982) examined African Americans' cognitive style in relation to their adaptation and survival. Shade concluded that Afro-Americans

developed a parallel culture in response to their isolation through discrimination, slavery, and ghettoization. Using the various elements of African culture patterns, they were able to retain, while acquiring others from the Europeans with whom they had contact, Afro-Americans developed an approach to life that assisted in their survival (Shade, 1982).

Shade's theory also maintained that Afro-Americans developed a culturally-specific method of organizing and processing information. While this method was effective in social situations, Shade (1983) concluded that this strategy differed from the one required for success in the typical educational setting. Proponents of this thesis found that the cognitive strategies of many African Americans were described as holistic, intuitive, and person-oriented (Boykin, 1994a). However, a review of the literature suggests that successful functioning within the typical school context required the cognitive strategies that were described as sequential, analytical, or object-oriented.

Hollins (1996a) proposed that the following conditions should be present in schools to help black students to achieve:

1. The process and content of the learning should be related in a meaningful way and should be familiar to the learner.
2. The content should be communicated in a way that is acceptable and comprehensible to the learner.
3. The learner should be provided adequate time to access, process, and apply the content.
4. An affective environment ought to be such that the learner feels comfort and support so that he/she will take the risks necessary for learning.

Educators such as Rupley, Nichols & Blair (2008) found in their research of language and culture in African American students that multiethnic literature helped students to discover the

intricacies of a language, as well as the people's history and culture. In addition, when students read literature they encountered a multitude of characters who are both similar to and different from themselves. Each character of a story was driven by certain emotions and dealt with the problems and joys of life in various ways. How the heroes and heroines reacted and coped provided students with insight and information well beyond their own personal experiences. Teachers were encouraged to use the two highest levels of multicultural integration, "transformation approach" and "social action approach", when designing curriculum.

Use of the transformation approach completely reconstructed the curriculum in order to allow students to view concerns, themes, problems, and concepts from the perspective of diverse groups (Banks, 1993b). This reconstruction represented a commitment to culturally responsive instruction throughout the year. The highest form of cultural integration was the social action approach. Teachers using this approach selected literature that allowed students to identify social problems and concerns, and to read about how the main character made decisions and took action to solve the problem. In this method, students experienced exemplary models for identifying and resolving problems related to cultural differences according to Rupley, Nichols & Blair (2008).

Boykin (1984) concluded that in regard to the current research on African American education, there were some rather clear implications for the schooling of African American children. Current arguments contended that significant progress in schooling African American children could be made if teachers: (1) acknowledged the cultural fabric of the schooling process and the issues of power contained therein, (2) acknowledged the social cultural integrity of the African American experience, (3) created greater home-school cultural continuity, and (4) predicated the mainstream socialization function on these preceding considerations.

### *Historical Perspectives*

Educators considered the following historical account from *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation* (Berlin, Favreau, & Miller, 1998), part of which was aired as a two-part radio documentary produced by Smithsonian Productions:

“My name is Tonea Stewart. When I was a little girl about five or six years old, I used to sit on the garret, the front porch. In the Mississippi Delta the front porch is called the garret. I listened to my Papa Dallas. He was blind and had these ugly scars around his eyes. One day, I asked Papa Dallas what happened to his eyes.”

“Well daughter”, he answered, “when I was mighty young, just about your age, I used to steal away under a big oak tree and I tried to learn my alphabets so that I could learn to read my Bible. But one day the overseer caught me and he drug me out on the plantation and he called out for all the field hands. And he turned to ‘em and said, ‘Let this be a lesson to all of you darkies. You ain’t got no right to learn to read.’ And then daughter, he whooped me, and he whooped me, and he whooped me. And daughter, as if that wasn’t enough, he turned around and he burned my eyes out!”

(p. 280).

DuBois (1903/1953) in his classic work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, analyzed the identity struggle among African Americans that resulted from a history of slavery and the calculated denial of access to literacy. African Americans saw literacy as a tool for liberation. After the

ratification of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1870, which provided specifically that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, a new vision of liberty emerged:

Slowly but steadily, in the following years, a new vision began. It was the ideal of “book-learning.” Here at last, Black Americans seemed to have discovered the mountain path to Canaan, the biblical land of freedom (Dubois, 1903/1953, p. 19).

From the Civil War until World War I (Moses, 1978), separatist theories emerged. These theories of Black Nationalism and pan Africanism promoted self-help and alliance with African nations, respectively. From World War II onward, separatists played a prominent role in the social and educational thinking of the African American population. Their ideological foundations, personalities, and historical evolution offered explanation of the 150-year quest to influence the shape of black curriculum as well as the larger sociopolitical protest.

Alexander Crummell (1885), an early black intellectual and a nationalist, was among the advocates of a black-oriented curriculum (Watkins, 1996). Pious and perhaps conservative by today’s standards, the educated and well-traveled Crummell matured in the reconstructed South and saw possibility for the education of blacks in the twentieth century. For him, the only hope for the race was education. Crummell declared that the day was past for appeals to the conscience of the white man. It was Crummell (1885), before DuBois (1903), who conceptualized the notion of the “talented tenth.” He wrote:

“Who are to be the agents to raise and elevate this people to a higher plane of being? The answer will at once flash upon your intelligence. It is to be affected [*sic*] by the scholars and

philanthropists which come forth in these days from the schools.

They are to be the scholars; for to transform, stimulate and uplift a people is a work of intelligence. It is a work which demands the clear induction of historic facts and their application to new circumstances – a work which will require the most skillful resources and the wise practicality of superior men” (p. 24).

In 1887, Crummell founded the American Negro Academy. By bringing together the best of liberatory science, art, literature, and philosophy, Crummell assembled a curriculum for emancipation. From the separatist and nationalist theories, cultural perspectives gained popularity.

However, prior to the focus on culture, Kliebard (1987) examined social meliorism in the traditional curriculum. He observed that it was rooted in a view that America’s early twentieth century corporate industrialism was the source of great misery to the less fortunate. American capitalism seemed to be creating great debt, unemployment, poverty, and inhumane social policy as it relied on models of efficiency and productivity. Educational reconstructionism or social meliorism was a movement in the 1930’s led by social democratic professors and educators who believed that schools and the curriculum should join, and even lead, the critique of social and economic injustice. For meliorists, schools served the cause of change and reform (Cremin, 1961).

Evolving from radical thought and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, the decade of the 1970’s provided persuasive empirical research suggesting that public schooling was failing African Americans. Culturalist arguments resonated loudly during this period. Proponents of cultural pluralism and ethnic identification raised doubts about the possibility of a melting pot or

a truly integrated society (McPhail, 1987). Following this culturalist movement, there was a call for the “Afrocentric” curriculum (Hilliard, Payton-Stewart, & Williams, 1990). Afrocentrics desired a curriculum focused on African themes. Holding African forth as the cradle of civilization, they turned to ancient Kemet (Egyptian) civilization as the model for knowledge, culture, and social development. Afrocentric mathematics included computational formulas predating Euclid and Pythagoras. African models of statecraft stemming from the great civilizations were preferred over European models of democracy. Traditional African humane and communalistic social structure was viewed as preferred. Indispensable to the African curriculum was the comprehensive study of the continent’s art, literature, music, religion, and anthropological development. Additionally, history, geography, and the sciences had a role in the Afrocentric curriculum.

Afrocentric pedagogy and method were more complex. Proponents did not believe methods of teaching should be limited to prevailing practices. They acknowledged a place for orality and spirituality beyond the role of memorialization and “skill and drill” that was later acceptable. Asante (2003) acquainted scholars with African ways of knowing. Afrocentric method legitimized expression, public discourse, feeling, myth-making, and emotion as acceptable avenues of inquiry. Such methods sought out “transcendence, which is the quality of exceeding ordinary and literal experience.” Asante asserted that the Afrocentric pursuit of knowledge went beyond the material world. Central to the Afrocentric concept was the notion of intellectual emancipation. The teaching and learning experience in this approach was destined to free the learner from the shackles of Western positivistic thought.

More recently, a majority of African American scholars have advocated for curriculum that calls attention to the relationship of knowledge and culture. This new scholarship rejected a

reproductionist theory, which posited that schools recreated society's existing cultural and power relationships. For example, the Eurocentric world view and value system were transmitted in school knowledge (McPhail, 1987).

Curriculum theorist Gordon (1997) argued that there existed an African American cultural knowledge. This knowledge emanated from the African American "existential" condition and was the product of people's experiences. This cultural knowledge was located in literary arts, dance, media, theology, athletics, music, cinema and so forth. Gordon (1997) acknowledged that while this cultural knowledge has gained some visibility, it was for the most part marginalized. Suppressing this body of knowledge in schooling denied students' connectedness. Gordon (1994) wrote:

"The information, facts, values, stories, legends, ideals, and mythology, that are passed on intergenerationally, provide students with the world-view/context through which they learn history and cultural and societal identity. The critical issue, however, is the nature of the cultural and historical knowledge included in this process. Such knowledge is the global history of humankind. Moreover this knowledge demonstrates definitively that people can engage in action to change societal structures in ways that result in the improvement of their lives. These, I believe, are at least some components of an education that is liberatory" (p. 65).

The concern regarding the connection of knowledge and culture heralded the desire for culturally relevant pedagogy. Murrell (2002) described this pedagogy:

“I purposely use the term pedagogy rather than “teaching strategies” to connote teacher thought and action that are part of a deliberate attempt to promote the development of young African Americans – both in terms of the knowledge they acquire and the identities they assume. On this account, instruction and pedagogy are by no means synonymous. Pedagogy, as the term is used here, includes teachers’ awareness of their own culturally mediated values and biases” (p. xxiii).

Despite entreatments for culturally relevant pedagogy, the late 1980’s ushered in federal school reform policies in Goals 2000 (1989) followed by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U. S. Department of Education 2007). Both reform measures were undergirded by standardized instruction and assessment, exemplified by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Neither reform measure significantly improved literacy scores for African American students. The exigent body of literature which attempted to validate “excellent literacy education” (NCES), conflicted with data from “*The Nation’s Report Card*” (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Data from the report indicated that reading and writing scores for African American students, in grades four through twelve, were substantially lower than their white counterparts. Scholars who insisted upon a culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a) which included culturally relevant literature and teaching strategies derived from African American culture (Hale-Benson, 1986) sought to reverse these trends.

### *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

A diverse body of scholars extended a bevy of curriculum and instructional strategies which focused on raising the literacy achievement levels of urban African American students. The

common thread of these *best practices* was the use of *culturally relevant literature* as a teaching methodology. Considerable attention was given to theorizing and inventing culturally relevant and responsive curriculum (Asante, 2003; Foster, 1993; Hale-Benson, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 2000). These studies suggested that curriculum development for literacy was a complicated and multifaceted process that required all participants in the educational community to reexamine their assumptions about what was necessary and appropriate for diverse groups of learners (Lytle, 1995).

The previous literature established the need for the infusion of the culture of urban African American students into the curriculum and instructional practices and behaviors of teachers. Many best practices, especially those concerning culture within the urban African American community, had been ignored primarily because teachers did not recognize or accept this relationship between culture and pedagogy. Hollins (1996a) proposed a theory to explain the relationship between culture and instruction:

“The basic premise underlying the theory of cultural mediation in instruction has two components based on the centrality of the students’ home-culture in framing memory structures and mental operations. First, teaching and learning are more meaningful and productive when curriculum content and instructional processes include culturally-mediated cognition, culturally-appropriate social situations for learning and culturally-valued knowledge. Second, the authenticity of schooling is validated, for students, by the interactions and relationships between adult members of their community and school personnel” (pp. 137 – 138).

Hollins' (1996a) view of instruction had also been termed *culturally compatible* instruction and *culturally responsive* instruction (Au, 1993). Cultural congruence in instruction did not make an attempt to replicate a home or community environment in the classroom. The concept of a *cultural context* denoted a setting in which there were patterns of expectations, specific behavioral norms and accepted activities deemed appropriate for that particular milieu (Boykin, 1994a). The context of the school was one which epitomized a cultural orientation which had been accepted as a part of proper school behavior since the establishment of the first schools in this society. Individuals who functioned well in this particular setting were those who valued and expected passive receptivity by the learner, authoritative transmission of information by the teacher, individual effort aimed at completing an assigned task, performance for recognition, avoidance of confrontation, and minimal antagonisms (Dreeben, 1968).

The majority of African American youth entering schools had a different cultural orientation than the one rewarded in schools. For the most part, the African American child was more likely to have been socialized within an urban context which had its own patterns of behavior and expectations. Of twenty-six million African Americans, eighty-two percent of them lived in cities, largely metropolitan areas. More importantly over sixty percent of these urban dwellers lived in central cities with physical and social decay. The cultural capital with which most African American children came to school included a set of behaviors and mental habits which helped them to cope with: drive and interpersonal conflict, urban noise such as honking horns, loud engines, and general traffic, lack of adequate space in the residences and more people in the residence, the block, or the neighborhood, highly prescribed geographical boundaries which reduced contact with the larger society, and exposure to a disproportionate amount of industrial pollutants such as smoke, soot, dust, flyash, fumes and carbon monoxide which have been found

to have a serious effect upon brain functioning (Shade, 1989). Students had less opportunity to learn when school lessons and other activities were conducted, or socially organized, in a manner inconsistent with the values and norms of their cultural context (Au & Kawakami, as cited in Hollins, King & Hayman, 1994).

Denial of and lack of appreciation for cultural context appeared to result in “*silencing*” within African American students. Although there was a dearth of literature on students’ voice as a salient factor in the study of schooling for African American youngsters, what existed suggested that voice was a powerful resource that had potential for becoming one of the most important benchmarks. Traditionally, students were silenced in the schooling process and their voices were conspicuously absent in the research and examination of what went on in schools. Michelle Fine (1987) studied a New York public high school and defined silencing as a practice that suppressed the experiences, concerns, and interests of youngsters, resulting in negative attitudes and behaviors. Silencing maintained the privilege of power for teachers and other adults in the school setting.

Students’ voices were important from two perspectives: First, students’ voices provided insights which were needed for effective teaching and learning. Second, as Giroux (1988) pointed out, developing a radical pedagogy is “an important starting point for enabling those who have been silenced or marginalized by the schools...to reclaim the authorship of their own lives” (p. 63). In this instance, Giroux suggested that critical educators “must develop pedagogical conditions in their classrooms that allow different student voices to be heard and legitimated,” and that critical pedagogy “takes the problems and the needs of the students as its starting point” (p. 71).

A study conducted by King (Hollins, King & Hayman, 1994) suggested that teachers should attempt to become more aware of students' feelings and should use classroom strategies that relate to the effective concerns of youth. King (1994) concluded:

“It appears that cognitive learning does not take into account either the feelings and concerns of the student or the social environment that affects those feelings and concerns. But, as our study demonstrates, they have their inevitable consequences. Cognitive learning cannot take place in a state of affective disorder, and we can no longer assume that the family or some other agency will take responsibility for the student's affective development. It is imperative that school systems devote both their wits and their financial resources to the production of programs of affective learning. In them lies a response not only to youth alienation, but also to many other human problems that challenge the educational system in this decade” (p. 137).

Affective education, which incorporated the recognition and appreciation of the individual student's experiences, emotions, attitudes, values, and schemas (Thayer, 1976), and was developed by David Krathwohl (1956/2002), includes five intrinsic ordered elements. The taxonomy was ordered according to the principle of internalization. Internalization referred to the process whereby a person's affect toward an object passes from a general awareness level to a point where the affect is “internalized” and consistently guides or controls the person's behavior (Seels & Glasgow, 1990, p. 28). The five elements, listed and defined below related to student affect:

- Receiving; student is aware of or sensitive to the existence of certain ideas, material, or phenomena and willing to tolerate them. Examples include: to differentiate, to accept, to listen (for), and to respond to.
- Responding; student is committed in some small measure to the ideas, materials, or phenomena involved by actively responding to them. Examples are: to comply with, to follow, to commend, to volunteer, to spend leisure time in, to acclaim.
- Valuing; student is willing to be perceived by others as valuing certain ideas, materials, or phenomena. Examples include: to increase measured proficiency in, to relinquish, to subsidize, to support, and to debate.
- Organization; student is to relate a new value to those already held and bring it into a harmonious and internally consistent philosophy. Examples are: to revise, to require, to rate high in the value, to resist, to avoid, to manage, and to resolve.
- Characterization by value or value set; student is to act consistently in accordance with the values he or she has internalized. Examples include: to revise, to require, to be rated high in the value, to avoid, to resist, to manage, to resolve.

Accordingly, affective instructional approaches coalesced with the cultural characteristics of African American students which derived from Afro cultural expression Boykin (1983). Therefore, attention by teachers to culturally characteristics, within the framework of affective approaches, substantiated the use of culturally relevant literature in curriculum planning and instructional methodologies for urban African American students. The benefits of using multicultural literature in the reading program were highlighted as follows:

1. Moving toward culturally responsive instruction fostered new literacies that made connections to students' home cultures, allowed educators to engage students in literacy

experiences they found meaningful and motivating, and provided for a means to bring children from diverse backgrounds to levels of high literacy.

2. Students gained insights about themselves and their families and discovered the value of their own experiences.
3. Students who did not share the author's ethnic identity learned that different cultural groups have histories and experiences that while unique, offered lessons about life to all readers.
4. Multicultural materials had the advantage of making literacy learning immediately rewarding to children of diverse backgrounds (Au, 2001).

Harris, Kamhi and Pollack (2001) and Taylor (1999) noted the following benefits regarding shared African American literature for children with students: cognitive development, familiarization with patterns of language, and the stimulation of the imagination (Akanbi, 2005).

Additionally, Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) discussed the importance of children relating to characters and situations found in books reflective of their own culture. These researchers noted the absence of African American characters and culture in books found in many primary classrooms. Students needed to be able to make connections between literature and their everyday lives. Children needed to receive affirmation of themselves and their culture through literature (Bieger, 1995/1996), and be able to connect text to self in order to promote greater meaning (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Keene & Zimmerman, 1997; Rosenblatt, 1978). According to Gay (2000), culturally relevant pedagogy used, "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant and effective ... It taught to and through strengths of these students; it was culturally validating and affirming" (p.29). Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy catalyzed

both the content and process aspects of the teaching and learning paradigm, critical to the success of all students, particularly to the success of students of color.

Educational reforms have ultimately increased school organization based on high stakes testing, tracking, and standardized assessment practices, which have been shown to be inappropriate for African American learners (Cusick, 1993; Oakes, 1985). The use of culturally relevant literature helped to engage students and to offset much of the resistance and student apathy exercised in low-level reading tracks. It also provided the opportunity to develop deeper processing strategies through reading, writing, questioning, and discussing.

### *Promising Practices*

In their 2001 study, Manheim-Teel and DeBruin-Paracki concluded that many African American high school students created a type of “counter-culture” to protect their sense of identity and to cope with racial discrimination and the devaluation of their cultural heritage in the classroom (Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986). Inner-city, African American students often struggled between representing their own cultural norms or conforming to mainstream standards. As a part of this conflict, students often resisted doing well in a competitive structure for a variety of reasons, including the stigma of “acting white” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). This attitude often revealed itself in the form of negative motivation.

In order to counter negative motivation in African American students, Manheim-Teel & DeBruin-Parecki (2001) infused literacy strategies designed for the validation of cultural heritage. Their findings were based upon three criteria:

*Criterion 1: Time on task during sustained silent multicultural reading program*

*Criterion 2: Volunteering for book talks focused on self-selected culturally relevant materials.*

*Criterion 3: Student engagement in discussions about culturally relevant issues.*

The students responded positively to opportunities that they were given to express their reactions to the reading. In interviews and on questionnaires, the majority of African American students indicated a sense of validation toward their concerns and an appreciation for a teacher of a different racial background willing to listen and accept their feelings.

Culturally appropriate pedagogy was desirable due to the disparity in achievement of many children from non-traditional ethno/cultural groups within the schooling process. Often termed as culturally relevant, culturally congruent (Au & Blake, 2003), culturally responsive (Gay, 2000) or culture-centered (Ladson-Billings & King, 1990), this particular framework suggested that culturally diverse children are often marginalized in educational systems that are based on cultural and educational hegemony. Culturally appropriate pedagogy suggested that there are positive outcomes when teachers acknowledge and affirm the cultural values and beliefs of culturally and economically diverse students (Gay, 2000; Gordon, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2000). Gay (2000) recommended that teachers use ethnically diverse students' cultural frames of references and knowledge so that learning experiences were more relevant and effective for them. Gay's (2000) study furthered the investigation of the usefulness of culturally appropriate pedagogy by incorporating collaborative inquiry using a mediated form of lesson study.

Most recently, Roxas (2008), conducted qualitative research at the Rosa Parks Academy. His research undergirded by Gay (2000), provided characteristics of culturally responsive teaching, which are presented in the table below. Roxas found, based upon student adjustment, satisfaction and achievement, that the culturally responsive pedagogy was effective in all characteristic elements.

Table 1: Roxas: Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Characteristic	Description
<i>Validating</i>	Used the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming.
<i>Comprehensive</i>	Developed intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by using “cultural referents” to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes.
<i>Multidimensional</i>	Encompassed curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments. For example, language arts, music, art, and social studies teachers may collaborate in teaching the concept of “protest”.
<i>Empowering</i>	Boosted students’ morale, provided resources and personal assistance, developed an ethos of achievement, and celebrated individual and collective accomplishments. Teachers and students worked toward an “agenda of values” that emphasized participatory, problem-posing situated, multicultural, dialogic, de-socializing, democratic, inquiring, interdisciplinary, and activist learning.

Table 1: Roxas Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teaching (continued)

Characteristic	Description
<i>Transformative</i>	Made academic success a non-negotiable mandate for all students and an accessible goal. It promoted the idea, and developed skills for practicing it. Students were obligated to be productive members of and render service to their respective ethnic communities as well as the national society. It also circumvented the tendency towards learned helplessness for students of color in traditional public schools, where their achievement levels decreased the longer they remained in school (Holliday, 1985).
<i>Emancipatory</i>	Lifted the veil of presumed absolute authority from conceptions of scholarly truth typically taught in schools. No single version of “truth” was total and permanent. Nor should it be allowed to be uncontested. These learning engagements encouraged and enabled students to find their own voices; to contextualize issues in multiple cultural perspectives, to engage in more ways of knowing and thinking and to become more active participants in shaping their own learning.

Further research indicated that when culturally relevant literature was introduced to students in a variety of teaching strategies, achievement levels among struggling readers, including urban African American students, could be raised. One such strategy confirmed to be both appropriate and effective with urban African American students was ReQuest (Gunning, 1996; Manzo, 1969; R, Vacca & J. Vacca, 1989), which encouraged students to build on previous knowledge and consider what might be important in the assigned reading. For example, before reading a story that deals with family dynamics, students discussed their knowledge regarding the various types of family structures (such as single parents, guardianships, extended families, traditional families, and others) and how each might play a role in how a person might react in various situations. In this strategy, students were able to write questions about things that they did not understand and the text was broken into short sections so that it was not overwhelming to the students. After a selection of text had been assigned, students read the first paragraph or short section and wrote questions to ask regarding the topic. Students then asked their questions and used the text to answer. Following this step, the teacher asked some higher-level prepared questions. This procedure was used throughout the selection with a question-answer session at the end of each section. Discussion was then initiated to assess comprehension.

Yet another strategy, appropriate for culturally relevant literature, was *SQ3R* (Gunning, 1996; Robinson, 1961). It was effective in improving comprehension because it broke the text into manageable parts. The teacher began by teaching the students the following steps: [S]urvey – look through the chapter for an overall idea of the topic; [Q]uestion – turn each heading into a question; [R]ead to answer the questions; [R]ecite – at the end of each section, try to answer the questions without looking back; do not take notes until the entire section is read; [R]eview – what you have read – go over all of the questions and try to answer them. This strategy was

modeled using information that had been previously covered in order to help the students understand the steps. The level of comprehension was determined by assessing the students' responses during the Recite and Review parts of the strategy.

*Jigsaw* (Aronson, 1997; Hendrix, 1999) was a cooperative learning strategy that allowed the students to learn from one another. This strategy was highly effective but required specific directions when it is initially implemented. Groups of three to six students were placed in teams. Each team member was given a specific topic on which to become an "expert." The teams split up and students located members from other teams that studied their same topic. They worked together in topic groups, determined the information that was most important, then returned to their teams to share the information that they had learned. Culturally relevant literature was found effective in initial engagement of the reader to text.

Justification for specific strategies, which were befitting to culturally relevant literature, was seen in the need to provide greater cultural continuity for African American children in the classroom setting by proactively building on their cultural capital. This concept was predicated on a genuine acknowledgement of the cultural integrity of Afro cultural expression. This issue of cultural continuity suggested providing culturally compatible learning and performance context in order to create a better fit with the prevailing cultural repertoires of many African American children. The reasons why this made good pedagogical sense are observed in recent work relating to culture and cognition which was referred to earlier. By providing culturally compatible or culturally appropriate texts, teachers (1) provided outlets for, and further developed, present or potentially existing competencies that had been fundamentally linked to such contexts out of school; (2) discerned intellectually valued skills in groups for whom such

skills were thought to be absent; and (3) created more intrinsically motivating learning environments that can lead to increased academic time on task (Boykin, 1983).

Further substantiation for the need for culturally relevant literature in teaching strategies designed for urban African American learners was the concern for them to culturally construct knowledge. Cultural construction was the body of beliefs that have been produced through our cultural experiences and not through innate mechanisms, independent of experience. Such constructions referred not only to a person's long-standing, culturally acquired knowledge, but also to a person's beliefs or inferences formulated on the spot, in some particular situation, albeit through the lens of long-standing, culturally acquired knowledge (Esrock, 1994).

### *Summary*

While scholarship related to *culturally relevant literature* was diverse, the underlying theme was the recognition of, appreciation for and inclusion of the cultural backgrounds of urban African American students in the delivery of pedagogy. As a matter of course, the literature affirmed that the pedagogy, in its very nature, should be culturally centered (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Supporting this premise was the literature of Hale-Benson (1986) in which specific activities, strategies and goals, based upon the communal backgrounds of urban African American students, were recommended for purveyors of curriculum and instruction, as it related to literacy achievement. Underpinning the aforementioned researchers was the body of evidence from Lee (1993) who substantiated the need for selecting texts which reflected the experiences of urban African American students. Lee (2007) also developed the concept of "cultural modeling" in which she linked African American students' cultural experiences and knowledge to African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

A number of researchers, including R. Baratz & J. Baratz (1969), Boykin (1983), Norman (1982) and Tatum (2000), further confirmed the need for pedagogy that was immersed in African American culture and the benefit of utilizing culturally relevant literature in teaching methodologies. Literature was presented which justifies the need for the restructuring of curriculum and instruction based upon specific and unique learning styles of urban African American students (Baruth & Manning, 1992), (Hale-Benson, 1986) and (Shade, 1982). Literature addressing specific African American learning styles was complemented with cognitive research wherein the focus and function of literacy education for urban African American students was investigated by Herrnstein & Murray (1994), Woodson (1933), Delpit (1996a) and Freire (1970a, 1970b, 1970c).

Accordingly, literature was presented in which a historical perspective of the education of African Americans was illustrated, which spanned the struggles of slavery (Moses, 1978), the nationalist movement (Watkins, 1996), social meliorism (Kliebard, 1987), the culturalist movement (Hilliard, 1995), and contemporary school reform, notably, Goals 2000 (1989) and The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001). The literature denoted that the latter two educational reform measures were both *Standards* based and *Standards* driven. Research was provided which indicated that literacy achievement as well as graduation rates for urban African American students were affected by contemporary school reforms. Discrepancies in the test scores of African American students were illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean SAT Scores, By Race and Ethnicity, 2011

Race/Ethnicity	Verbal	Math	Combined	Achievement Gap
White	516	536	1052	——
African American or Black	420	428	848	204
American Indian or Alaskan Native	467	492	959	93
Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander	526	591	1117	-65
Mexican or Mexican American	448	467	915	137
Puerto Rican	443	452	895	157
Latin-American, Central American or Other Hispanic or Latino	447	462	909	143
Source: <i>Profile of College-Bound Seniors – National Report</i> , The College Board.				

The research attended to descriptions of culturally relevant pedagogy (Au & Kawakami, 1994; Erickson, 1987; Fine, 1989; Hollins, 1996a). Research was then presented which described the affective nature of culturally relevant pedagogy through the taxonomy of the affective domain (Krathwohl, 1956/2002) and the Afrocultural expressions noted by Boykin (1983). The more promising practices which emerged from the literature of Manheim–Teel and Debruin–Parecki (2001), Roxas (2008), Gunning (1996) and Aronson (1997) were investigated. Promising practices were presented and justified by the literature which addressed “cultural construction” in literacy acquisition in urban African American students (Esrock, 1994).

Recently, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in current *Standards* language:

- shifted English from a course for a few to a course for the many.

- shifted the definition of the learner from passive receiver of the cultural tradition to an active constructor of meaning.
- shifted the role of literary studies from delivering readings of moral touchstones in constructing readings within diverse cultural settings.
- moved education from strictly local agencies to an interaction of school sites with federal and state agencies.
- shifted the public policy role of national subject-matter organizations from a minimal role to a major role.

Each of these changes had an impact on American classrooms (Myers, 1994).

Table 3 illustrates the visits by Unit Accreditation Board members and their citations of weakness in institutions charged with applying the current *Standards*.

Table 3: Attention to Multicultural Education and Cultural Diversity in the NCATE *Standards*

Standard	Weakness	Dates of Visits				
		F92	S92	F91	F88-S91	All
I.E	Professional studies lack attention to cultural diversity and/or exceptionalities.	16.1% (9)	14.0% (7)	12.0% (6)	17.9% (37)	16.3% (59)
	Professional studies lack attention to global awareness.	10.7% (6)	0.4% (2)	16.0% (8)	17.9% (37)	14.6% (53)
	Professional studies lack attention to multicultural perspectives.	8.9% (5)	0% (0)	6.0% (3)	20.3% (42)	13.8% (50)
II.A	Candidates do not have adequate or systematic experiences with culturally diverse populations.	26.8% (15)	20.0% (10)	18.0% (9)	26.1% (54)	24.2% (88)
III.A	Student population is not sufficiently culturally diverse.	50.0% (28)	48.0% (24)	50.0% (25)	28.0% (58)	37.2% (135)
	The recruitment plan for a culturally diverse student population is insufficient or nonexistent.	25.0% (14)	16.0% (8)	24.0% (12)	22.7% (47)	22.3% (81)
	Alternatives admission policies to encourage the admission of underrepresented groups are unclear or nonexistent.	10.7% (6)	10.0% (5)	20.0% (10)	10.6% (22)	11.8% (43)
IV.A	The faculty lacks sufficient cultural and/or gender diversity.	55.4% (31)	70.0% (35)	66.0% (33)	55.8% (120)	60.3% (219)
Total Institutions:		56	50	50	207	363

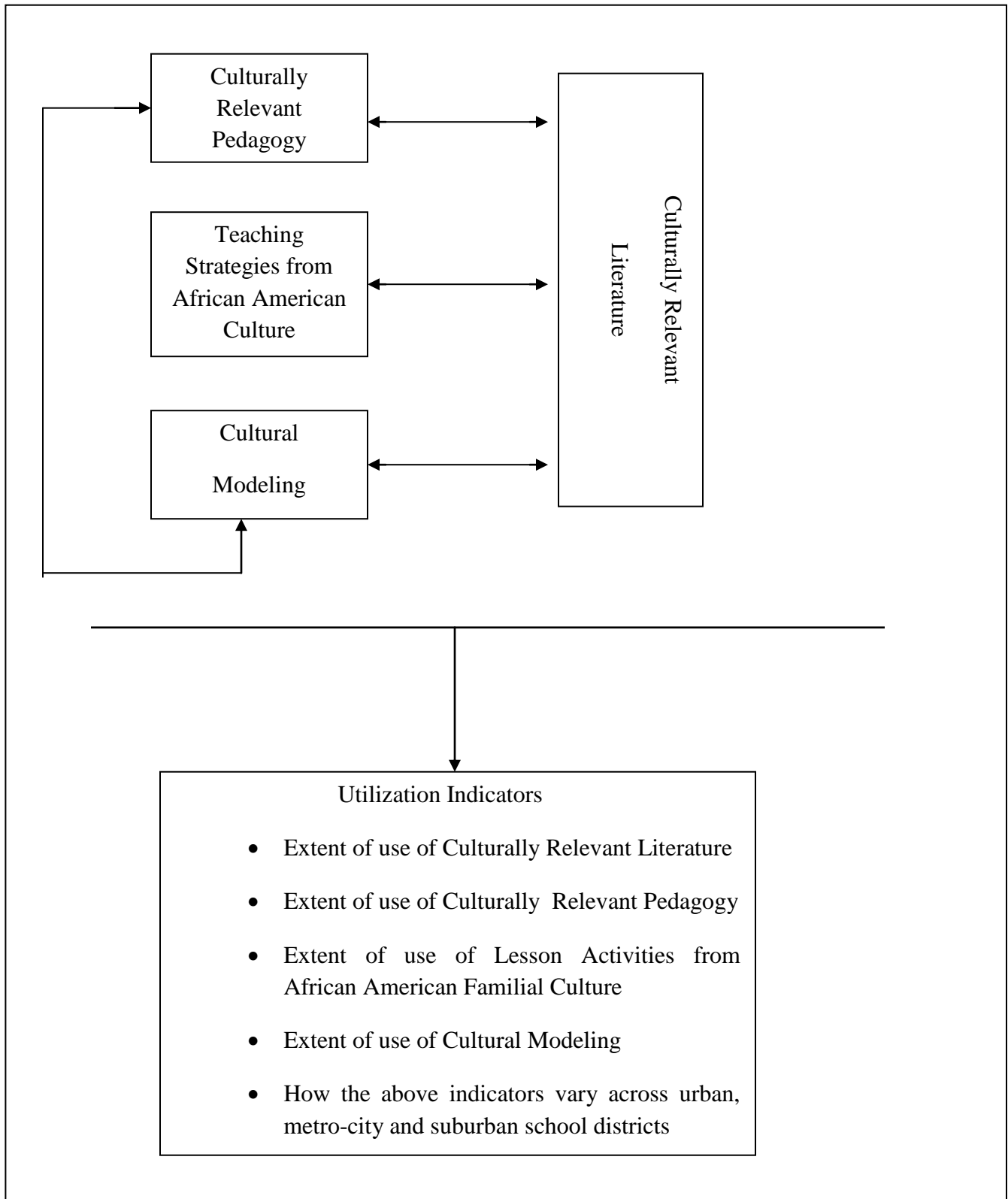
These data are the Unit Accreditation Board's citations of weakness for all institutions reviewed under the NCATE standards between fall 1988 and fall 1999.

The numbers in cells under the "Dates of Visits" are the percentage and number that were cited for not addressing the weakness statement.

Teachers' methodologies in English language arts should transfigure from traditional practices to practices that are successful with low-income urban African American students (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). The literature confirmed, unequivocally, that the kind of proper literacy called for and required by urban African American students should transcend teaching to low-level, basic skills and the threat of placing an unintended ceiling on learning. For example, teaching directly to the test and aligning curriculum directly to the test resulted in knowledge that is not liberating (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Shepard, 1991). Teachers needed to be committed to helping urban African American students to become more critically aware of their world and in creative control of it. The new scholarship in literacy education that was more directly linked to African American culture, information processing, and instruction provided a more powerful alternative from which to transform classroom practice and to increase opportunities for the literacy learning. The centrality of culture in literacy learning and the use of literacy as a tool for empowerment and transformation marked a departure from the old paradigms.

Figure 1.1

## Conceptual Framework for the study: The Utilization of Culturally Relevant Literature



Chapter III  
Research Design  
*Introduction*

An extensive variety of educational research has addressed the challenges of effectively teaching urban African American high school students. Additional study was warranted, as educators, parents, students, and other stakeholders continued to document their concerns. Research in this domain ought to be innovative, thoughtful, diverse, and have transferability, in that the findings are applicable to other populations (Bernard, 1994). Teachers who were intrinsic stakeholders should have a voice in this research. Research design and methodology should be appropriate to the nature of the research, research questions, and the social setting or context. Qualitative research properly sought to address questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabited those settings (Berg, 2004). Ethnography, a fruitful methodology born of qualitative research, was a process of gathering systematic observations partly through participation and partly through various types of interviews. I endeavored to understand the pedagogy, teaching experiences, strategies, and modeling of urban high school English Language Arts teachers in their classrooms. Based upon the nature of the initial research questions, research sites and participants, the current study merited a qualitative, ethnographic research design, a distinct field of inquiry that drew upon historical, comparative, structural, observational, and interactional ways of knowing, which was a situated activity that located the observer and the world (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004).

The current chapter addressed the methodology that was used to collect and analyze the data for this investigation. Topics which were presented in this Chapter included the Rationale for the Conceptual Framework, The Theoretical Basis for Qualitative Research, The

Theoretical Basis for Interpretive Inquiry, Comparative Theoretical Methodological Approaches, Review of the Research Purpose, Research Site Selection, Research Site Demographics, Criteria for Participant Recruitment and Selection, Data Collection Strategies, Protection of Data, Data Storage, and Data Analysis Strategies. Further sections of the Chapter addressed Rapport, Ethical Considerations, Trustworthiness Strategies, Credibility, Transferability, Researcher Perspectives, Limitations for the Current Investigation, and Summary.

### *Theoretical Basis for Conceptual Framework*

Historically, theorists and scholars of the research endeavor have counseled novice researchers regarding the application and benefit of the conceptual framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994) as a foundation for the research design. The conceptual framework explained, either graphically or in narrative form, the main topics to be studied, the key factors, constructs or variables, and the presumed relationships among them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The conceptual framework for this study, which girdled, strengthened, explicated, and illustrated the parameters of the investigation, was based upon the research of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a) teaching strategies posited from African American culture (Hale-Benson, 1986), and cultural modeling (Lee, 1993) in order to observe and determine the utilization of culturally relevant literature by English Language Arts teachers among urban African American high school students. Figure 1.1 illustrated the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework provided a parameter for observing teacher pedagogies, methodologies, strategies, and classroom activities. The conceptual framework specified who and what was studied. The framework also specified the relationship between and among culturally relevant pedagogy, teaching strategies immersed in African American culture, and cultural modeling, as well as, their relationships to the infusion of culturally relevant literature. The framework further

indicated the extent of the use of culturally relevant literature, the use of culturally relevant pedagogy, the use of teaching strategies from African American familial culture, and the use of cultural modeling.

### *The Theoretical Basis for Qualitative Research*

Qualitative research was a distinct field of inquiry that encompassed both micro and macroanalyses drawing on historical, comparative, structural, observational, and interactional ways of knowing. Multiple epistemological positions, theoretical frameworks, and research methods were included in qualitative research (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004). The quaestitum of qualitative inquiry was epistemology, the nature of knowledge and the justification of knowledge claims (Fenstermacher, 1994). In the search for knowledge and justification, a number of theoretical approaches have been explored, including phenomenology (Schutz, 1962) and grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These approaches were keenly related to the interpretive theoretical model (Schutz, 1962) which constituted a constellation of procedures, conditions, and resources through which reality. It was apprehended, understood, organized, and conveyed in everyday life (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994, 2000). The interpretative model engaged both the *hows* and the *whats* of social reality, it is centered both in how people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds and in the configurations of meaning and institutional life that inform and shape their reality-constituting activity. Interpretive research was fundamentally concerned with meaning and it sought to understand social members' definition of a situation or phenomena (Schwandt, 1994). Three ways of conceiving of the notion of interpretive understanding constituted the tradition of interpretivism. All three shared the following features: They viewed human action as meaningful, they evinced an ethical commitment in the form of respect for and fidelity to the life world, and from an epistemological

point of view, they shared the neokantian desire to emphasize the contribution of human subjectivity (i.e., intention) to knowledge without thereby sacrificing the objectivity of knowledge. In other words, interpretivists argued that it was possible to understand the subjective meaning of action (grasping the actor's beliefs, desires, and so on), yet do so in an objective manner. The meaning that the interpreter reproduces or reconstructs was considered the original meaning of the action. So as not to misinterpret the original meaning, interpreters must employ some kind of method that allows them to step outside their historical frames of reference.

Interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation. Hence, there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking, reasoning persons. Interpretivism often addressed essential features of shared meaning and understanding. Comparatively, constructionists argue that knowledge and truth are the result of perspective (Schwants, 1994) and that all truths are relative to some meaning context or perspective. Central to the interpretivist model is the concern with subjective meanings. From the understanding of the interpretivist model, it is essential to explore the approaches of phenomenology (Husserl, 1962; Schutz, 1962), grounded theory, (Glaser, 1978), and ethnography (Farfinkel, 1967).

#### *Comparative Theoretical Methodological Approaches*

Hence, phenomenology (Husserl, 1962) and (Schutz, 1962) was the study of human experience and of the ways things presented themselves to persons in and through such experience. The study of phenomenology was rooted in the sociological perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1967). Symbolic interactionists sought to faithfully represent and describe the social world as it was known to those who lived in it, thus reflecting the phenomenological stance (Psathas, 1989).

Therefore, by focusing on knowledge as an important topic for sociological investigation, Mannheim (1952) brought to the forefront the importance of the subjective dimension of social life. Not only were institutions and social structures which supported and provided the framework for intellectual life and activity to be studied, but so were the persons, the individuals whose activities were part of and constituted that group or class, or collectively expressed thought. The historical and social formation of the thought of members of society became a matter of epistemological importance. In Mannheim's work, the meaningful structure of human activity was ever a subject; meanings continually emerged from social interaction and were subject to reinterpretation.

Additionally, the investigator sought to study the phenomena in the life-world of the individual. Validity of these studies was a paramount concern. The key issue for sociology of the life-world was whether the results of an inquiry fit, made sense, and were true to the understanding of ordinary actors in the everyday world. One test of the validity of investigations was in the extent to which the findings were faithful to and consistent with the experiences of those who lived in that world. Were the findings faithful representations, descriptions, accounts, or interpretations of what those who ordinarily lived those activities would, themselves, recognize to be true? If second order constructs were translated back into the first order constructs to which they referred, would the observer's report be recognized as a valid and faithful account of "what the activity was really like" (Psathas, 1989)?

A second test was whether the descriptions and accounts of the activities would allow others—not directly knowledgeable as to their occurrences but sharing the same cultural stock of knowledge—to recognize the activities, if confronted with them in the life-world after having only read or seen the account presented by the social scientist analyst. That is, armed with "only" the

knowledge gained from reading the account presented by the observer-scientist, would someone else be able to understand what she/he was seeing when confronted with the actual life-world reality of the events described (Psathas, 1989)?

A third test of validity involved the rules which guide the investigator's inquiry. The rules provided the recipes for performance, based upon and including many everyday operating assumptions (Psathas, 1989). For those activities that can be so described and analyzed, the patterned structure and order of acts can be revealed most fully in the formulations of *how* the activities are performed, depending upon the rules of the investigator.

Consequently, the life-world of the individual was prestructured and the meanings of the elements contained within it were also pre-given. The stock knowledge provided the actor with rules for interpreting interactions, social relationships, organizations, and institutions (Schutz, 1962). The individual was not motivated to question the meaningful structures of his life-world. His interest was a practical one and his task was to live, in rather than to make, a study of the life-world. It remained for the social scientist to adopt the stance of a disinterested observer and to study the life-world of others. Though he may draw on his own experiences, since he was also a human being who may have lived in similar situations, he did not study the life-world from his own perspective. He attempted to transcend the everyday intentionalities in which he was the center of his own existence and adopted another point of reference. Depending on the problem he had chosen for study, the social scientist selected that which was relevant (Schutz, 1962). The phenomenological approach, then, was both viable and appropriate in qualitative investigation.

Comparatively, grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was theory that is grounded or rooted in observation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) challenged (1) the arbitrary division of theory and research, (2) the prevailing view of qualitative research as primarily a precursor to more

“rigorous” quantitative methods by claiming the legitimacy of qualitative work in its own right, (3) the belief that qualitative methods were impressionistic and unsystematic, (4) the separation of data collection and analysis phases of research, and (5) the assumption that qualitative research only produced descriptive case studies rather than theory development. They articulated explicit analytic procedures and research strategies that previously had remained implicit among qualitative researchers. Previously, qualitative researchers had taught generations of students through a combination of mentoring and direct field experience. Glaser and Strauss changed that oral tradition by offering a clear set of written guidelines for conducting qualitative research.

Therefore, grounded theory methods provided systematic procedures for shaping and handling rich qualitative materials, although they may also be applied to quantitative data. Grounded theory methods allowed the investigator to conduct qualitative research efficiently and effectively because these methods helped in structuring and organizing data-gathering and analysis. The distinguishing characteristics of grounded theory methods (Charmaz 1983) included (1) simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research, (2) creation of analytic codes and categories developed from the data, not from preconceived hypotheses, (3) the development of middle-range theories to explain behavior and processes, (4) memo-making, i.e., writing analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories, the crucial intermediate step between coding data and writing first drafts of papers, (5) theoretical sampling, i.e., sampling for theory construction, not for representativeness of a given population, to check and refine the analyst’s emerging conceptual categories, and (6) delay of the literature review (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004).

To wit, grounded theory was a complex iterative process. The research began with the raising of generative questions which helped to guide the research but were not intended to be either static or confining. As the researcher began to gather data, core theoretical concepts were identified. Tentative linkages were developed between the theoretical core concepts and the data. This early phase of the research tended to be very open and could take months. Later on, the researcher is more engaged in verification and summary. The effort tended to evolve toward one core category that is central. The aim of the approach was to thoroughly describe the topic of study and also to develop adequate theoretical conceptualizations of findings. The researcher began with individual cases which were chosen purposely or theoretically, rather than randomly, collected and analyzed data simultaneously, conceptualized from the beginning, and allowed findings and conceptualizations to come together. One data collection episode built on the prior collections and the conceptualizations that had been developed up to that point. The researcher gathered “thick” data and made the meanings of the participants explicit. The researcher continued this process until reaching “saturation” when he/she was no longer learning anything new. The researcher’s conceptualizations were guided by his or her theoretical sensitivity, based on unique skills and experiences.

The key analytic strategies were detailed in coding, memoing, and integrative diagrams and sessions. Coding was a process for both categorizing qualitative data and for describing the implications and details of these categories. Initially one did open coding, considering the data in minute detail while developing some initial categories. Later, one moved to more selective coding where one systematically coded with respect to a core concept. Memoing was a process for recording the thoughts and ideas of the researcher as they evolved throughout the study. One might think of memoing as extensive marginal notes and comments. Again, early in the process

these memos tended to be very open while later on they tended to increasingly focus in on the core concept. Integrative diagrams and sessions were used to synthesize details and to help make sense of the data with respect to the emerging theory. The diagrams could be any form of graphic that is useful at that point in theory development. They might be concept maps or directed graphs that could act as summarizing devices (Charmaz, 1983).

Alternately, ethnography (Malinowski, 1967) was a term steeped in anthropological study and originally used by Westerners to define theories entirely concerned with culture, about people living in non-occidental environments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The guiding frameworks for those who have used this method in sociological research, in the past, have all but been abandoned by contemporary ethnographers. The social-historical transformations of society and consciousness in the modern world have undermined the theoretical and value foundations of the older ethnography (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In order to establish ethnography on an even firmer foundation in the symbolic interactionist perspective, Manning (1982/1991) urged sociologists to conduct ethnography by analytic induction which was a procedure keenly related to Herbert Mead's (1934) writing on scientific method. Although, analytic induction did not sustain as a viable foundation for ethnography, due to Manning's emphasis solely on the case study, it advocated purpose for the ethnographical approach.

Thus, the concern for purpose in ethnography, which linked it closely with methodology, continued to be a concern for the postmodern research. The characteristics of ethnographic study purported by Spretnak (1991) have become widely accepted in terms of definition and purpose of ethnography. Spretnak's definition permitted one to see how the postmodern ethnographer proceeds. The post-modernist ethnographer entered into a world from which he or she was methodologically required to have become detached and displaced. Such an ethnographer was in

effect reconstituted as Simmel's (1950) "stranger". This social scientist began work as a self-defined new-comer to the habitat and life world of his or her subjects.

Hence, he or she was a citizen-scholar as well as a participant observer. Older traditions and aims of ethnography, including especially the quest for valid generalizations and substantive conclusions, were temporarily set aside in behalf of securing "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) that would in turn make possible "thick interpretations" joining ethnography to both biography and lived experience (Denzin, 1989, pp. 32-34). History was banished from the ethnographic enterprise except when and to the effect that local folk histories entered into the vocabularies of motive and conduct employed by the subjects. Because crossing the postmodern divide required one to abandon all established and preconceived values, theories, perspectives, preferences, and prejudices as resources for ethnographic study, the ethnographer bracketed these, treating them as if they were arbitrary and contingent, rather than hemonic and guiding (Rosenau, 1992, pp. 25-76). In so doing, the ethnographer displaced and deconstructed his or her own place on the hierarchy of statuses.

Consequently, Norman Denzin (1989), a leader of postmodern approaches to ethnography, approached the generality issue in ethnographic studies through two distinct though related ways. His advice to ethnographers was that they first immerse themselves in the lives of their subjects and, after achieving a deep understanding of these through rigorous effort, produce a contextualized reproduction and interpretation of the stories told by the subjects. Ultimately, an ethnographic report would present an integrated synthesis of experience and theory. The "final interpretive" theory was multivoiced and dialogical. It built on native interpretations and in fact simply articulated what was implicit in those interpretations (Vidich & Lyman, 2000).

Equally important in ethnography was that knowledge and the perception of reality were socially constructed and were best understood through an interactional approach between researchers and participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1991), as knowledge of the self and of the “other” mutually informed each other in the co-construction of knowledge (Fine, 1994). This point acknowledged the concept of reflexivity in qualitative research, a conscious use of reflection to examine one’s own personal biases, views, and motivations and to develop self-awareness in interaction with others. The goal of reflexivity was not to replace the self for the other, but to understand the ways in which knowledge of self and other mutually inform each other. As a methodology, ethnography potentially connected the researcher and the research subject in a dialogue and in interaction with one another that would not be possible without the type of “common ground” that participation can build (Powell, 2006).

Following a review of three of the major investigative approaches to the current study, ethnographic research emerged as both the most appropriate and productive in order to address the research topic, the initial research questions, and the conceptual framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). An ethnographic study enhanced the phenomena of participant observation, spoke to the generative nature of epistemological inquiry, and addressed the issues of subjectivity and reflexivity within the study.

#### *Review of the Research Purpose*

The purpose of this study was to investigate the use of culturally relevant literature in teacher methodologies. The purpose was also to investigate the use of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), cultural familial strategies and activities (Hale-Benson, 1986), and cultural modeling (Lee, 1993). Because of the nature of the investigation, a qualitative, ethnographic, and culturally responsive research design was undertaken. This design reflected

inductive, interactive, and recursive processes in order to explain the behaviors and beliefs under study (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). In the inductive process, the investigation sought to move from specific teacher behaviors and teacher methodologies to more generalized principles concerning the use of culturally relevant literature. Interactive in its design, the study allowed the researcher to administer an Interview Guide to the teachers and utilize both participant observation and artifact collection in the classroom setting. The researcher became an interpretive *bricoleur*, understanding that research was an interactive process shaped by his/her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting. Recursivity in the study referred to the cyclical process of moving back and forth during the study, in the inductive manner, in order to build more general explanatory statements (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). A qualitative methodology was warranted because it promoted an understanding of the *meaning*, for participants in the study, of the events, situations, and actions in which they were involved, and the particular *context* within which the participants acted. Qualitative methodology identified *unanticipated* phenomena, as well as an understanding of the *process* by which events and actions took place (Maxwell, 1996).

Meaning and context for the English Language Arts high school teachers was described in their interview responses, observations of their teaching behaviors, observations of their teaching methodologies, and artifacts collected from their classrooms. When teachers were studied in this manner, the investigation addressed the function of ethnographic research for the identification of educational problems and solutions, exploring theories of instructional behaviors, observations of educators in natural settings, and the intimate and reciprocal involvement with the educators (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

The qualitative data were collected directly from the teacher responses to the Interview Guide, descriptions and interpretations of the teacher observations, artifacts, written notes, jottings, memos, and summaries which documented the teacher pedagogies and methodologies in the classroom. Interviewing strategies and compilation of detailed notes and narratives allowed for the flexibility in the investigation of the topics under study and the emergence of the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, social organization, behaviors, and responses at both the inductive and factual level within the classroom culture (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Inclusion of participant observation and artifact documentation and collection informed the benefit of triangulation in data collection. The proposed research sought to provide a comprehensive demonstration of urban high school English Language Arts teachers' experiences, using culturally relevant literature, with urban African American students. It is important to note that no data were observed or collected on students.

#### *Research Site Selection*

Critical to the production of an ethnographic investigation or story was the ethnographic process, or how the research is conducted. The first defining characteristic of ethnography, as scientific inquiry, was its commitment to producing a story about events *as they occur in their natural settings* ( LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The investigator was not only sampling *people*, but also *settings, events, and processes*, and align these element with the research questions, in order to determine if the choices have done a representative, time-efficient job of answering them (Maxwell, 1996). The phenomena or “case” occurred in a specified social and physical *setting* (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The setting should be appropriate, in that, entry or access was possible and the target population was likely to be available. The probability should be high

that the study's focuses, processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures that are part of the research questions would be available to the investigator (Berg, 2004).

The research question was regarded as the primary guide to the appropriate site or setting selection (Silverman, 1997). In accordance with the research questions, the present study was conducted in three high schools in which populations were predominantly urban African American students. Three schools were selected within an urban, a metro/city, and suburban district, respectively. The urban high school, located in Detroit, Michigan in Wayne County was completely bordered by the city of Detroit and serviced 515 students in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The high school designated as metro/city, was located in Highland Park, Michigan in Wayne County and surrounded by the municipality of Detroit. It serviced 1385 students. These students resided in close proximity to the school and were enrolled in 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. The suburban high school, located in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan in Oakland County, north of Detroit, serviced 1623 students in 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades. A total of 155 teachers provided instruction in the three schools under study.

In the three selected high schools, English Language Arts teachers taught courses at each of the grade levels ranging from remedial to college preparatory. The suburban and urban schools provided Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, as well. The student to teacher ratios in the urban, suburban, and metro/city high schools were 1:14, 1:21, and 1:30 respectively. The student demographics in the urban, suburban and metro/city high schools generally mirrored those of the county. Table 2 illustrated the distribution of students by grade, enrollment, gender and race. The urban high school, designated as charter, and the metro/city public high school serviced approximately the same number of students, while the suburban public high school serviced twice the number of students than the urban and metro/city schools. Student enrollment

by grade level indicated a decline in both 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade in the urban and metro/city high schools. Student enrollment increased in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade at the three selected schools. The graduation rates were 99% in the urban school, 93% in the suburban school and 38% in the metro/city school, based upon reported statistics from the districts. The large discrepancies in the graduation rates for the metro-city school were due to student population movement to other schools and excessive dropout rates. An almost equal number of males and females were enrolled in the three high schools under study. The racial composition of students was 99% African American in the urban school, 96% in the suburban school and 100% in the metro/city school. The demographics were provided in order to frame the criteria of the study, in that the high schools were urban and serviced African American students. No data were observed or collected on the individual students in the three selected schools. The demographics, which also served to describe the site selections, were derived from [localschooldirectory.com](http://localschooldirectory.com) (2012).

Table 4: Student Demographics – Spring 2012

Demographics = 3523 Total Students		
Urban High School	Metro/City High School	Suburban High School
515 Students	1385 Students	1623 Students
Grade – Students Enrolled	Grade – Students Enrolled	Grade – Students Enrolled
9 <sup>th</sup> – 128	9 <sup>th</sup> – 513	
10 <sup>th</sup> – 129	10 <sup>th</sup> – 594	10 <sup>th</sup> – 593
11 <sup>th</sup> – 129	11 <sup>th</sup> – 127	11 <sup>th</sup> – 570
12 <sup>th</sup> – 129	12 <sup>th</sup> – 151	12 <sup>th</sup> – 460
Gender	Gender	Gender
Male – 253	Male -694	Male – 799
Female – 262	Female – 691	Female – 824
Race	Race	Race
African American – 514	African American – 1385	African American – 1619
Asian – 1	White – 0	Asian – 9
	Unknown – 0	White – 4

*Research Area Demographics*

Researchers who are interested in studying behavior in and with specific ethnic or social race groups define the population by geographic, ethnic identity or both (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The demographic composition of the geographic areas under study is important, in that it provides a specific context and a clear composite of the location of settings and participants. The following are the site demographics for the current study based upon U. S. Census data, 2010.

For the city associated with the urban school, there were 778,002 people, 336,426 households and 218,483 families residing in the city. There were 375,096 housing units. The racial composition of the city was 81.8% African American, 10.4% White, 0.33% Native American, 0.97% Asian, 0.03% Pacific Islander, 2.54% from other races, and 2.32% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 4.96% of the population.

There were 113,961 households, of which 33.87% had children under the age of eighteen living with them. 26.65% were married couples living together. 31.62% had a female householder with no husband present. 35.06% were non-families. 29.68% of all households were composed of individuals and 9.16% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.77 and the average family size was 3.45.

In the city, the population was distributed by 33.86% under the age of 18, 6.9% from age 18 to 24, 29.54% from age 25 to 44, 19.27% from age 45 to 64 and 10.41% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 30.9 years. For every 100 females age 18 and older, there were 75.4 males.

The median income for a household in the city was \$19,157 and the median income for a family was \$35,200. Males had a median income of \$27,232 versus \$22,480 for females. The per capita income for the city was \$17,366. Approximately 36.4% of families and 26.1% of the

population were below the poverty line, including 50.6% of those under age 18 and 15% who were age 65 or older. The unemployment rate in the city was 24.4% ([www.uscensusbureau.gov](http://www.uscensusbureau.gov)).

For the city associated with the metro/city district, there were 16,746 people, 6,199 households and 3,521 families residing in the city. There were 7,249 housing units. The racial composition of the city was 93.44% African American, 4.11% White, 0.27% Native American, 0.24% Asian, 0.02% Pacific Islander, 0.25% from other races, and 1.67% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 0.57% of the population. Most of the White population was of Chaldean descent.

There were 6,199 households of which 27.6% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 17.0% were married couples living together, 33.4% had a female householder with no husband present, and 43.2% were non-families. 38.4% of all households were made up of individuals and 15.6% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.56 and the average family size was 3.43.

In the city, the population was distributed by 29.1% under the age of 18, 8.6% from 18 to 24, 27.5% from 25 to 44, 20.2% from 45 to 64, and 14.5% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 34 years. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 79.6 males.

The median income for a household in the city was \$17,370, and the median income for a family was \$26,484. Males had a median income of \$31,014 versus \$26,186 for females. The per capita income for the city was \$12,121. About 32.1% of families and 38.3% of the population were below the poverty line, including 47.1% of those under age 18 and 30.8% who were over age 65 or over (<http://www.uscensusbureau.gov>).

For the city associated with the suburban district, there were 29,793 people, 11,104 households, and 7,595 families residing in the city. There were 11,370 housing units. The racial

composition of the city was 46.95% White, 45.95% African American, 0.17% Native American, 2.18% Asian, 0.02% Pacific Islander, 0.60% from other races, and 4.13% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 1.28% of the population.

The population of Oak Park was once predominately Jewish and still has a large number of Orthodox Jewish families. The community and its surrounding areas had many synagogues and a number of yeshivas. It also has a small Russian-American population.

There were 11,104 households of which 34.4% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 44.0% were married couples living together, 19.5% had a female householder with no husband present, and 31.6% were non-families. 26.6% of all households were made up of individuals and 10.4% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.68 and the average family size was 3.29.

In the city, the population was distributed by 28.2% under the age of 18, 8.0% from 18 to 24, 29.8% from 25 to 44, 21.8% from 45 to 64, and 12.2% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 35 years. For every 100 females there were 88.0 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 81.9 males. The median income for a household in the city was \$48,697, and the median income for a family was \$54,786. Males had a median income of \$40,922 versus \$35,968 for females (<http://www.uscensusbureau.gov>).

The research has shown that socioeconomic status affected the academic achievement of African American students as well as other areas of their lives. The statistics rendered from the above demographics indicated that many of the students under study might live in poverty. African American children are among the poorest children in the United States. For the population as a whole, the rate of child poverty in the United States has increased 50% since 1969, and affects nearly one out of every three children under the age of six. Among African

American children, the incidence was even higher. The US Census estimated, in 2009, that 90% of all African American children will enroll in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) before age 20. By 2009, one in three African American children was being reared in poverty, indicating that those families had incomes below \$7,510 per year. Living in poverty placed many African American children at risk for school dropout and educational failure (Banks & Banks, 1995).

### *Criteria for Participant Recruitment and Selection*

The current research problem addressed low achievement in urban high school African American students in English Language Arts, according to the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, 2009). The foundation for the study was the theoretical framework of the use of culturally relevant literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994a) in order to meet the challenges of improving low achievement. The current study sought to answer research questions concerning the use of culturally relevant literature, culturally relevant pedagogy, teaching strategies (Hale-Benson, 1986) and modeling (Lee, 1993). Hence, English Language Arts teachers situated in areas which were geographically, demographically, and culturally described as urban, were appropriate subjects for investigation.

Selecting settings and individuals that can provide the information which was needed to answer the research question was the most important consideration in qualitative sampling decisions (Maxwell, 1996). Most qualitative research used the sampling strategy of *purposeful* sampling, or what was referred to as *criterion-based selection* (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In this strategy, particular persons or events were selected deliberately in order to provide important information that could not be gleaned as well from other sources. The current study used purposeful sampling in order to recruit participants. A sample of nine high school English

Language Arts teachers were recruited and selected from the three aforementioned schools. These nine teachers served as key informants who addressed the utilization of culturally relevant pedagogy and literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994a) culturally relevant teaching activities and strategies (Hale-Benson, 1986) and cultural modeling (Lee, 1993). The sampling was conducted in order to set *boundaries* to define the aspects of the case and events, and to create a frame to confirm the basic processes and constructs which undergirded the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The decision to interview and observe nine English Language Arts teachers incorporated *within-case* sampling, which is almost always *nested* in the environment (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Following the decision to use purposeful sampling in order to recruit nine English Language Arts teacher participants, the recruitment process was initiated. I drafted approximately twenty letters to the District Superintendents (Appendix A) of urban school districts within the Detroit metropolitan tri-county areas of Wayne, Oakland and Macomb counties. These letters requested support for the research which I wished to conduct in a high school within that district. In addition to requesting a Letter of Support from each District Superintendent, I also requested permission to contact the principal of each high school in the respective district, in the event I received support, in order to inform them of my research intention. In each letter to the District Superintendents I included a description of the intended research, a Letter of Support from my Major Adviser and a self addressed stamped envelope for his/her reply. In approximately three weeks, I received Letters of Support from three school districts, which were The Blue School, (Charter), The Yellow School, and The Green School Districts.

Per the directives of the Human Investigation Committee (HIC), I delivered the three Letters of Support to the (HIC) office. The (HIC) office reviewed the Letters of Support and sent an

approval to conduct the research. At the point that I received the approval from the (HIC), I drafted a Letter to the Principal (Appendix A) at each of the high schools within the aforementioned districts. These high schools will henceforth be referred to as Blue School, Yellow School and Green School respectively, in the Dissertation, for purpose of anonymity.

The Letter to the Principal served to introduce myself, provided a brief description of the intended research, and provided a copy of the Letter of Support from the District. The letter also requested that I be granted permission to gain entry onto the site (Maxwell, 1996) in order to attend an English Language Arts Department teachers' meeting, for the purpose of recruiting three English Language Arts teachers to participate in the study. The principals were informed that the teacher participants at each school, and only the teacher participants, were to be observed. No data were to be collected on students.

At the point that I was contacted by the school principals, I scheduled the site visits in order to attend an English Language Arts Department meeting at each school. Following each Department meeting, at each school, I met with each potential teacher recruit in a private room. Here, I explained the proposed research and asked if he/she wished to participate in the study. Three English Language Arts teachers were recruited to participate in the study from each high school. I then distributed an Information Sheet for Teachers (Appendix A) to each teacher recruit. The Information Sheet for Teachers adhered to the established guidelines of the Human Investigation Committee (HIC) in that it included the purpose and significance of the study, statement addressing the safeguard of confidentiality, and voluntary nature of participation in the study, and potential risks. Each teacher recruit retained a photocopy of the Information Sheet for Teachers. I retained the original document which was placed in a safe deposit box.

I endeavored to recruit a diverse sample of teachers in regard to gender, race, ethnicity and culture which would lend more credibility, and transferability to the study, in addition to informing the research questions and the conceptual framework. Because I engaged in *purposive* sampling strategies, it also achieved the goal of capturing heterogeneity in the population (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) in that the teachers were situated in a variety of schools. By defining the dimensions of variation (e.g. urban, metro/city, and suburban) that were most relevant to this study, and systematically selecting individuals and settings that represented the most important variations along these dimensions, maximum variation sampling was achieved. A diverse sample of teachers would also more comprehensively inform constructs addressed in both the interviews and the observations, such as content, administrative issues, and teaching strategies.

Once the teachers agreed to participate in the study, I distributed a Letter of Research Informed Consent (Appendix A) to each teacher participant, for his/her signature and initials. The Letter of Research Informed Consent also adhered to (HIC) guidelines in that it included the purpose of the study, study procedure, voluntary nature of the study, benefits, risks and statement addressing the safeguard of confidentiality. When each participant had signed his/her Letter of Research Informed Consent, I gave each participant a photocopy of the Letter of Research Informed Consent and placed the original documents in a safe deposit box.

Once the Letters of Research Informed Consent were obtained, I scheduled one meeting with each of the nine teacher participants. I explained to each participant that the purpose of the first meeting was to administer the 34 question Interview Guide (Appendix B) which required one hour. I also explained to each participant that, following the administration of the Interview Guide, I would schedule three teacher observation visits with each of them, in order to observe

their teaching methodologies. I further informed each teacher participant that I would be observing them, exclusively, and that no data collection would be conducted on the students.

In this study, the participants were nine female English Language Arts high school teachers. Six were African American and three were Caucasian. Each was certified in English Language Arts. All held Master of Arts degrees. Three held degrees in other fields. Their teaching experience ranged between four and thirty years, with seven of the teachers having more than ten years of experience and all had a variety of vocational backgrounds prior to their teaching careers. About half expressed that they came from backgrounds “similar to those of their students”. The remaining teachers expressed coming from middle or working class backgrounds. Interestingly, all expressed a love, passion and/or satisfaction for teaching (Goodlad, 1984).

A more thorough description of each teacher, her adopted curriculum, and the school in which she taught was presented in Chapter 4 in the case studies. Although the narrative case studies described the schools, demographics of the schools and surrounding geographical areas were presented immediately before the topic, Criteria for Participant Recruitment and Selection, in order to illustrate the context and set boundaries that define the aspects of the case (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It should be noted that although student enrollment data were presented in the demographics, no data were observed and/or collected on individual students in this study. It should also be noted that pseudonyms were given to the school sites, as well as the teacher participants and their assigned curricula in order to insure confidentiality for the communities, schools, and teachers.

### *Data Collection*

Following the process of sample selection/teacher recruitment, data collection was undertaken. Essential methods, especially participatory observation and interviews, are those

without which no researcher can conduct an ethnographic study (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Observation was used to record situations as they happened and record the meanings of those events at the time (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Interviewing is a valuable way of gaining a description of actions and events (Maxwell, 1996). Accordingly, both participatory observation and the ethnographic interview were used in this study, along with artifact collection. The data collection strategies for the current study included the administration the ethnographic interview, aptly titled, Interview Guide (Appendix B), participatory observation, which was facilitated by the Observation Guide (Appendix B), the collection of Artifacts (Appendix B), and the administration of the Conclusion Interview (Appendix B). All of the tools utilized in the data collection process were constructed prior to entering the field.

Accordingly, data were collected, managed, and analyzed from nine English Language Arts teachers over the span of four months in the fall of the academic year 2011-2012. During eight weeks of this period, a total of eleven hours was spent interviewing teachers and a total of 54 hours was spent observing teachers. A total of seven hours was spent in artifact collection and documentation. A total of approximately eleven school days was spent on data collection. The remaining eight weeks were spent engaged in data analysis. The data collection decisions were based upon the principle of triangulation, in which I collected information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods (Denzin, 1970), in order to reduce the risk that the conclusions in the study reflected systematic biases or limitations of a specific method (Maxwell, 1996). The data collection process was consistent and cyclical, in that all data collection was completed on one teacher, before moving to the next teacher at the site. I then continued this process at the two remaining sites. The data collection schedule was displayed in Table 5. This display was a visual format that presented information systematically and

simultaneously in order to avoid the sole use of extended and unreduced text which might be weak or cumbersome (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Valid analysis requires, and is driven by, data displays that are focused enough to permit a viewing of the full data set in the same location and are arranged systematically (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The following Table 5 displayed the data collection schedule. The coding utilized was: Teacher (T), Interview (I), Observation (O), Data analysis (DA), Concluding Interviews (CI), and Artifact Collection (AC).

Table 5: Data Collection Table – Culturally Relevant Literature

<b>T1-urban</b>	I/DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA	DA	DA	DA
<b>T2-urban</b>	I/DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA	DA	DA	DA
<b>T3-urban</b>	I/DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA	DA	DA	DA
<b>T4-metro/city</b>	I/DA	O/DA/O	DA	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA	DA	DA
<b>T5-metro/city</b>	I/DA	DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA	DA	DA
<b>T6- metro/city</b>		I/DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA	DA	DA
<b>T7-surburban</b>				I/DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA
<b>T8-surburban</b>				I/DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA	DA
<b>T9-surburban</b>					I/DA	O/DA/O	O/DA/AF/CI	DA
<b>Week</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>

T= Teacher, I= Interview, O= Observation, DA= Data analysis, CI= Conclusion Interviews, AF= Artifact Collection

### *Teacher Interviews*

Subsequent to the purpose of this study, which was to observe the extent of which English Language Art Teachers used culturally relevant literature in their teaching pedagogies, it was critical to utilize methods that were most appropriate to discern and appreciate phenomena. In

order for interviewing to be useful in providing descriptions of actions and events, specific questions related to pedagogy, content, and methodology were asked. These would provide data which contributed to answering the research questions, rather than those which elicited general information (Maxwell, 1996). The interview elicited in-depth information pertaining to the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study. I used the Interview Guide which addressed personal teaching history, framed cultural knowledge and beliefs about pedagogy, informed curriculum content and *Standards*, addressed administrative issues, and described teacher methodologies and strategies. It was standardized in that it used a formally structured schedule of questions worded identically for each teacher respondent in order to facilitate comparable responses (Berg, 2004).

Following the recruitment process, the decision was made to collect data beginning with the urban school. In anticipation of potential *data overload* and needed *data retrieval*, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested coding. *Codes* are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential data compiled during the study. I color coded the urban school *blue*. On the scheduled date, I met with each teacher participant for approximately one hour in order to administer the Interview Guide. The formal Interview Guide, which I constructed based upon the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study, was composed of 34 closed and open-ended, non-leading questions (Berg, 2004). These questions related to their teaching experiences, teaching pedagogies, curriculum content and use of culturally relevant literature, African American familial activities, and cultural modeling. The Interview Guide also addressed teaching history, parental involvement, and institutional issues.

During the administration of the Interview Guide which took place in the private setting of an unoccupied classroom, each teacher verbally responded to questions. The responses were

recorded onto audio cassette, with the permission of each teacher, and spanned 60 minutes. I wrote jottings, copious notes, memos (Glaser, 1978), and descriptions of the verbal responses and observable behaviors. These were grounded in the theories which undergirded the research questions and conceptual framework. I assigned each teacher participant a number at each school site along with the color coded designation of the school. After exiting the site, I transcribed each of the interviews as the information was mentally fresh. This process allowed for the expansion of information and detail when necessary. Speech was recorded and documented verbatim.

At the conclusion of the administration of each interview, I scheduled three additional meeting dates which were appropriate and convenient for each of the teachers, on which I would return to each classroom in order to observe the English Language Arts teaching. I reviewed with each teacher that each of the three subsequent observation visits would be two hours in duration. The aforementioned procedure of data collection, through interviewing, was repeated for the remaining six teachers in the two remaining schools.

### *Teacher Observations*

In accordance with the prescheduled dates, I returned to the Blue School for the purpose of conducting the second strategy of data collection, which was participant observation of the English Language Arts teachers. Observation was used to record situations as they happened and record the meanings of those events at the time (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). The observations informed the previous interviews (Spradley, 1980), provided knowledge unseen in the interviews, and provided evidence, or lack of evidence, of the use of culturally relevant literature in teaching methodologies. During each of the two hour observation sessions, I wrote copious notes, jottings, memos, descriptions of the physical setting, and descriptions of teacher

instructional behavior. I visually tracked movement by the participant, watched, and listened (Berg, 2004).

I asked questions of myself as I observed, cognizant of the fact that *reflexivity* was ongoing (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) in that I was an inextricable part of the phenomena under study, an instrument of the study, and the means by which the research would reach fruition. I participated in a total of nine teacher observations at the Blue School. During each observation, I attempted to become the *invisible observer* (Stoddart, 1986) by the ability to be present in the setting in order to observe and capture the essence of the setting, participants, and phenomena, without influencing them. I disattended by locating myself in the far rear of the classroom, away from the teaching phenomena, and by remaining still and quiet. I did, however, maintain a wide lens (Spradley, 1980) in order to capture all phenomena related to instruction.

During the observations, I utilized the Observation Guide (Appendix B) which I constructed as a document for recording and accurately cataloging data (Berg, 2004). All data, which included field notes, jottings, memos, quotes, and detailed descriptions of teacher instructional behaviors, pedagogies and practices, were documented on the Observation Guide. No data were collected on students. The Observation Guide also allowed for the documentation of the date, school, time, teacher (identified by pseudonym and assigned number), class, lesson focus, content, lesson presentation, initiation and/or presentation of prior knowledge, and description of teacher instruction, materials, methodology, activities, and strategies. All data collected from the teacher observations were color coded, in this case blue, in order to ensure District and school anonymity, as well as teacher confidentiality in the subsequent Chapter 4. Data analysis was conducted immediately after exiting each site (Berg, 2004). The procedure for participant observation was conducted on the remaining six teachers at the two remaining schools.

After the investigator attended the 27 field observation sessions, at the conclusion of each final observation session, each English Language Arts teacher completed the Conclusion Interview (See Appendix C). The administration time for this interview was fifteen minutes. By conducting the Conclusion Interview, I was able to collect any additional data which were not gleaned in the previous interview and observation processes. It also prepared the community members, for my exit from the field (Berg, 2004). The Conclusion Interview asked each of the teacher participants if the transcripts of the Interview Guide were accurate, if they desired to change any responses, make additional responses and/or if they wished to give feedback regarding the research process. The Conclusion Interview also listed contact information for the investigator as well as the Human Investigation Committee (HIC). The responses to the Conclusion Interviews were color coded respective to each teacher and school. Data from the Conclusion Interviews, teacher observations, and Interview Guides were secured in a safe deposit box and on password protected computer.

### *Artifact Collection*

Furthermore, I collected and documented cultural artifacts from each teacher's classroom following each observation session. Artifacts are the products of people that are "ripe with human meanings" and "serve as a distinctive basis for inquiry in and of themselves, not just as a source of support for other findings" (Jorgensen, 1989). Artifacts are invaluable when interpreted in the context of other artifacts and in conjunction with data gathered through participant observation (Clair, 2003). The collected artifacts included books, trade books, magazines, comic books, videos, compact disks, DVDs, artwork, pictures, posters, signs, course syllabi, district websites, school websites, handouts, lesson plans, and other objects in the classroom which related to the teaching pedagogy. In documenting the artifacts, *free lists*, which are particularly

useful for identifying items in a cultural domain (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), were employed. The artifacts were documented by the teacher number, pseudonym, and school color and free listed in Appendix A, immediately following Chapter 8.

### *Field Disengagement*

Upon the conclusion of data collection, I prepared to exit the field. Disengagement involves the physical removal of the researcher from the research setting and emotional disengagement from the relationships developed during the field experience (Berg, 2004). Because of the uniqueness of every field experience, there were specific nuances to exiting, (Berg, 2004) which I recognized as I prepared both the community members and myself. The administration of the Conclusion Interview, which was discussed under the topic of *Data Collection*, facilitated the exit in that it was administered to each teacher following the final observation visit. The interview was brief, contained four questions, required fifteen minutes to administer and provided pertinent contact information for the investigator and the Human Investigation Committee (HIC).

It provided a definitive opportunity for each of the English Language Arts teachers to modify or elaborate any previous responses to the interviews. It also afforded them the opportunity to give feedback regarding the research experience. In addition, disengagement was facilitated by the fact that the community members/teacher participants were cognizant of my exit date, in advance, due to the prescheduled observation dates. As a last disengagement strategy, I drafted a letter to the District Superintendents, the School Principals and the teacher participants which expressed my gratitude for the opportunity to conduct the research.

### *Data Analysis*

Qualitative data analysis is a continuous iterative enterprise (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Issues of data reduction, display and conclusion drawing/verification interact successively as analysis episodes follow each other. The data analysis strategies employed in the current study addressed triangulation, and recursive analysis (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) or what Glaser and Strauss (1967) termed grounded theory. Data derived from teacher participants were subjected to item, pattern and structural levels of analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1994). Items were used to develop patterns, which were, in turn, used to identify conceptual structures which interpreted and explicated the data. These interpretations facilitated extensive written summaries, narratives, and descriptive case studies comprised of extremely rich, detailed, and in-depth data (Berg, 2004).

Under the topic of *Data Analysis*, the three steps to data analysis were described, which included data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Each of these steps was applied to the data collection strategies that were utilized, those being, the Interview Guide, the Observation Guide, Conclusion Interview, and artifact documentation and collection. In order to achieve data reduction, the Language Arts teacher responses were subjected to a process of selection, focus, simplification, and transformation (Miles & Huberman, 1994) according to the research questions and conceptual framework of the study (Maxwell, 1996) which were illustrated in Chapter 2. Data display was facilitated in the matrix in Table 6 and summaries and case studies in Chapter 4. Conclusion drawing and verification was addressed in the subtopic of *Trustworthiness*.

Hence, qualitative research data analysis required that the data be rearranged into categories that facilitated the comparison of the data within and between these categories in order to

develop theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 1996). Before researchers can produce scientifically supportable interpretations of their data, they have to isolate specific items or elements, patterns, and structures that are related to the research questions. This helps to make sense of what would otherwise be an undifferentiated morass of information. The items, patterns, and structures in a set of data begin to emerge and to become more elaborated or clarified only after the researcher has laboriously looked over, read repeatedly (Romagnano, 1991) and organized the data. Items become those events, behaviors, statements, or activities that stand out because they occur often, because they are crucial to other items, or because they are rare and influential. Related items are organized into higher-order patterns or cultural domains and structures. Structural analysis involves linking or finding consistent relationships among items and patterns.

Thusly, in concert with item, pattern and structural levels of analysis (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), the main categorizing strategy in qualitative research, which was coding, was employed. The goal of coding was to *fracture* the data and rearrange it into categories that facilitated the comparison of data within and between categories and that assisted in the development of theoretical concepts. Another form of categorizing, which could be coupled with coding, was what Maxwell (1996) identified as contextualizing strategies. Contextualizing analysis attempted to understand the data in context, using various methods to identify the relationships among the different elements of the text (Atkinson, 1992). What these strategies had in common was that they did not focus primarily on relationships of similarity that could be used to sort data into categories independently of context, but instead looked for relationships that connected statements and events within a context into a coherent whole. The identification of connections between categories and themes could also be seen as a contextualizing step in analysis. This step

was necessary for theory building, a primary goal of analysis. Both coding and contextualizing were implemented.

According to Miles and Huberman, (1994) *Coding* was analysis. Codes are tags and labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential data compiled during the study. In the current study, teachers were coded by number and pseudonym and schools and Districts were coded by color. Once the items, patterns, and structures had been systematically and thematically categorized, they were coded and referenced under the corresponding teacher. I worked recursively, back and forth, from theories and past experiences and back again, in order to develop explanations, interpretations, and themes for the interview responses and the events that I observed.

At the onset, individual related data items were linked in order to create patterns. Emerging patterns consisted of groups of items that fit together, expressed a particular theme, or constituted a predictable and consistent set of behaviors. Patterns were created using a cognitive process. Chunks of information were located that fit together in additional patterns. Through the process of comparison, contrast, integration, and interpretation, these patterns were organized, associated with others, and linked into higher-order patterns (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) and structures. The patterns emerged from prior studies and the current study's theoretical framework. Contextualizing was done as patterns continued to emerge and themes were generated. Over time, as more chunks of information, patterns, and themes emerged, the analytic pieces began to constitute the structure of the phenomena under investigation.

#### *Data Protection*

In consideration of data protection, precautions against accidental disclosure must be taken (Berg, 2004). Copies of the Letters of Support from the District Superintendents, Letters to the

Principals, Information Sheets for Teachers, Letters of Research Informed Consent, audio tapes of teacher responses to the Interview Guide, field notes and all other raw data were secured by the investigator in a safe deposit box at the Chase Bank. In order to insure the confidential nature of the District participation and the anonymity of the English Language Arts teacher participants, the use of color coding, numbers, and pseudonyms (Berg, 2004) was implemented. The urban, metro/city, and suburban districts/schools was coded blue, yellow, and green, respectively. The English Language Arts participants were assigned a pseudonym and number, during the process of data collection. Pseudonyms and color-coding were also utilized during data management processes, and for the assurance of community, District, and teacher anonymity in the subsequent Chapters 4-8. Copies of the documents, interview transcriptions, and field notes were also safeguarded on the investigator's password protected computer.

### *Data Reduction and Transformation*

#### *Transcription*

Data reduction was a form of analysis that sharpened, sorted, focused, discarded, and organized data in such a way that conclusions could be drawn (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data reduction process was initiated by transcription of the data from the cassette tapes of the teacher interviews. Transcription was done immediately after exiting the site, by playing back the audio recordings of the teacher interviews and then word processing, verbatim, what was said during the interview. Each interview was recorded on an individual cassette tape, which was labeled by school color and assigned teacher number, in order to manage, catalogue, and organize the data. This strategy prevented any potential misidentification of source information among the participants. Via word processing, I coded and categorized the raw data, from the transcriptions, into seven categories which reflected the content constructs on the Interview

Guide, the research questions, and the conceptual framework. These categories were teacher history/experience, teaching philosophies and pedagogy, curriculum content and *Standards*, use of culturally relevant pedagogy, use of culturally literature, use of culturally strategies, and use of cultural modeling.

### *Data Summaries*

Following transcription of the tapes into a word processed format, I was extremely careful in maintaining the data for each teacher and school in a separate file. From grounded theory (Glaser, 1978), coding and contextualizing (Maxwell, 1996) was done. Interpretations, themes and theories, grounded in the process by which the data were collected, were recorded (Patton, 2002). I obtained several sets of colored index cards which corresponded to the assigned colors of the schools under study. The cards within each color group were also numbered in correspondence with each teacher participant. Using the identical transcriptions from the word processed format, I recorded the data from the seven categories onto individual index cards which had been labeled for each teacher. The index cards were physically placed into a container. As I reviewed each set of cards, item and pattern levels of analysis and contextualization was used in order to create three categories into which I sorted the cards. These categories included teacher descriptions, direct quotes, and researcher interpretations. I segregated each set of cards by teacher number within their color group into these categories. Each piece of data recorded on the cards was read, studied, and considered again using item and pattern levels of analysis and contextualization, which expressed the particular themes of each category (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Following the emergence of dominant and secondary themes, complete written summaries were developed (Berg, 2004) from each of the teacher interviews. The summaries were then rewritten into case studies.

Guided by the research questions and the conceptual framework of the study, the complete summaries for the teacher interviews were written chronologically in the order in which the teachers were interviewed. During the development of the summaries, I considered grounded themes, identified analytic themes, and considered theoretical explanations (Berg, 2004) in order to draw accurate conclusions regarding the English Language Arts teacher responses to the Interview Guide. The summaries, which were assigned the number and color code for each teacher participant, were presented in Chapters 4-6 Findings. The data reduction strategies of coding, item and pattern level analysis, contextualization, emergence of themes and summarizing, in conjunction with the research questions and conceptual framework, continued for each of the nine teacher participants throughout the data analysis process.

In addition, reduction of the data collected during the 27 teacher observations, in the forms of written notes, jottings, memos, and descriptions, were summarized into complete case studies and presented in Chapters 4-6 Findings. Artifact collection and documentation was *free listed* in Appendix A. Data gleaned from the Conclusion Interviews were summarized and presented within the case studies. Data displays, in the form of matrices, were documented in Tables 6 through 15 and followed each subsection of Use and Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling.

#### *Data Storage and Retrieval*

To wit, how data are stored and retrieved is the heart of data management (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A clear and working storage and retrieval system is critical in order to keep track of the reams of large amounts of data that have been collected. Data management and data analysis are integrally related and there are no rigid boundaries between them (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The main concerns related to data storage and retrieval are having a system that ensures high-quality accessibility to the data, documentation of any analysis that is carried

out, and retention and protection of data and related analysis of documents after the study has been completed.

To this end, the data, which included field notes, interview transcripts, and artifacts, were color coded, filed, and stored in a locked cabinet in my home. Transcriptions and summaries were stored on password protected computer, as well. Data were readily accessed and retrieved by storage in these manners. Summaries and case studies of the teacher observations were stored on computer. The original recruitment documents, including the Letters of Support from District Superintendents, Letters to the Principals, Information Sheets for Teachers, and the Letters of Research Informed Consent, were placed in a safe deposit box at the Chase Bank. All data were *backed up* (Miles & Huberman, 1994) on computer in order to afford additional protection. All data will be retained in locked storage for a minimum of five years (Maxwell, 1996).

### *Data Display*

In the data display function of the data analysis, which followed data reduction and transformation efforts, I sought to present the data as an organized, compressed assembly of information which permitted conclusions to be analytically drawn (Berg, 2004). The significance of the data display (Miles & Huberman, 1994) is that it helped the researcher and the subsequent reader(s) to understand what was happening in the phenomena. Qualitative researchers often use a data display referred to as extended text. I used extended text in the form of written summaries. However, I also created a data displays, in the form of tables, that illustrated organized information into an immediately accessible and compact form, in order to observe what had occurred. The data displays which were created and developed to address the research questions and conceptual framework of this study appeared in Tables 6-15.

Furthermore, the data displays immediately presented the English Language Arts teachers by coded district. They further identified which of the English Language Arts teachers used culturally relevant literature and the instances in which it was used. It also identified the teachers who used utilized culturally relevant pedagogies and the methodologies in which the pedagogies were used in their classrooms. The data displays indicated which teachers infused activities and strategies from African American familial culture in their teaching methodologies and when these strategies were implemented. Finally, the displays of data identified the English Language Arts teachers who used cultural modeling and the instances in which it was used in their classrooms. The data from the Interview Guide, the Observation Guide, and the Conclusion Interview were managed, reduced, and accessible in each of the matrix cells (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data displays were used in the content analysis of the textual accounts to demonstrate the magnitude or frequency of a given word, phrase, pattern, and/or theme (Stoddart, 1986).

Table 6: Matrix: Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Components

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Used Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Used Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Used Strategies From African American Culture</b>	<b>Used Cultural Modeling</b>
1-Ms. Royal/Urban	Consistently in planning of lessons	At every opportunity in English Language Arts	When infusing books on African American family life themes into lessons	With characters, songs, music and art work in lessons
2- Ms.Cornflower/Urban	When teaching poetry and African American History	At every opportunity and when supplying own materials	When presenting cultural artifacts	When she models AAVE and Standard English in class and identifies differences
3-Ms. Azul/Urban	When connecting classics to African American culture	When connecting culturally relevant literature to British Literature	When relating the “tragic hero” to African American individuals	With magazine articles about African Americans
4-Ms.Canary/Metro/City	When teaching life skills	When connecting culturally relevant literature to life skills	In essays and discussions about holidays and recreational events	When using African American role models such as King and Obama
5-Ms.Coward/Metro/City	By infusing music and current events	Constantly uses culturally relevant literature	By allowing students to share family experiences	When viewing videos of Michael Jackson and Kanye West

Teacher	Used Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	Used Culturally Relevant Literature	Used Strategies From African American Culture	Used Cultural Modeling
6-Ms. Bright/Metro/City	Consistently in every lesson, especially instruction of journal writing	Constantly uses culturally relevant literature to develop journal writing	By assigning essays related to holidays	When inviting students to bring art, music and food from their cultures
7-Ms. Verde/Suburban	When framing lessons with culturally relevant literature	Consistently uses culturally relevant literature and African American history in lessons	When assigning reflections on articles that would affect African American families	With hip-hop and poetry
8-Ms. Hunter/Suburban	By connecting themes in <i>Death of a Salesman</i> to African American struggles	Often uses culturally relevant literature to connect to other lessons and for empowerment	To build rapport and in discussions related to family traditions	When she incorporates African Americans' successes into every story and text
9-Ms. Forest/Suburban	By framing speech and mass media lessons with the contributions of African Americans	Frequently connects African American media to black contributors	When students share art and music from their homes	When she models student aspirations by calling students "Doctor"

### *Verification and Conclusion Drawing*

In the third step of the data analysis process, verification and conclusion drawing, I noted regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, and propositions in the content analysis of the data collected from the English Language Arts teachers using the Interview Guide, Observation Guide, Conclusion Interview, and artifacts. These notations continued throughout the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Conclusions were held lightly and with openness and became more grounded as analytic conclusions emerged and defined themselves (Berg, 2004). Verification was sought by review of the data, data collection strategies, and data analysis procedures used to arrive at the conclusions in order to confirm that they had been clearly articulated (Berg, 2004).

Verification, also referred to as *trustworthiness*, was a twofold consideration (Berg, 2004). Firstly, conclusions drawn from the patterns in the data were confirmed in order to establish that they were *real* or actual, and not merely the aspirations of the researcher. This addressed the “how” research findings match reality (Berg, 2004). Trustworthiness is paramount in supporting the researcher’s findings. Although trustworthiness was a subjective standard, it was desired in order to demonstrate that the findings were accurate, useful, and plausible. It was important for readers and stakeholders to accept that the current study was significant and applicable. Three methods were used to insure verification which bolstered credibility and transferability.

I accomplished the first consideration of verification by carefully checking the path to my conclusions and retracing the analytic steps that led to the conclusions. Data analysis is continuous and recursive in qualitative research (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). Therefore, I continued the process of moving back and forth between inductive analysis as I wrote descriptions and interpreted responses.

Secondly, verification involved assuring that all of the procedures used to arrive at the conclusions had been clearly articulated, in order that another researcher could potentially replicate and draw comparable conclusions. Internal transferability (Maxwell, 1996), which is a central issue in qualitative research, refers to the transferability of a conclusion *within* the setting or group studied, rather than outside or beyond that setting or group. The descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity of the conclusions depend upon generalizations in the case as a whole. In facilitating the second consideration of verification, I thoroughly documented the study process and reviewed it often throughout data analysis. I examined whether the conclusions could in, in fact, be generalized within the group of teacher participants.

Four methods were used to insure verification. These included triangulation (Denzin, 1970), peer review (Creswell, 2002), member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), and negative cases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation was the technique of looking at research situations from several sights of vision. Every different line of sight directed toward the same point observed a social and symbolic reality. By combining several lines of sight, a better more substantive picture of reality was obtained, a richer more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts was explored, and a means of verifying many of these elements was achieved. Triangulation was achieved as I collected data from a diverse range of individuals and settings using a variety of methods. This process reduced biases and inaccuracies and produced “rich data” and “thick descriptions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by describing what was unique to a particular research site, while illustrating what all of the sites held in common.

Rich data were that which was detailed enough that it provided a full and revealing picture of what was going on. In the data collection and analysis related to the interviews, I wrote verbatim transcripts (Maxwell, 1996). In the data collection and analysis related to the participant

observations, I wrote detailed, descriptive notes and interpretations of interpretations, (Geertz, 1973) in order to compose “thick descriptions” about specific events that I observed. In both cases, the function of these data is to provide a *test* of developing theories, rather than a source of supporting instances (Maxwell, 1996).

In addition, peer review was used as verification strategy. Peer review was described as a technique in which the researcher asked a colleague to critique or question the research data. Questions of a challenging nature were posited regarding the data collection methods, analysis, and/or researcher interpretations in order to identify validity threats, researcher biases, and assumptions, and flaws in the logic or methodology. I facilitated peer debriefing by asking a colleague to read, critique, and question me regarding the methodology, data collection, analysis, and interpretations of the current study. The colleague enabled me to discern specific instances of bias and faulty interpretation, which I may not have observed independently.

A third method of verification was member checks. In this, the participants in the study were solicited to provide feedback about the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). This was the single most effective way of insuring that there was no misinterpretation of what they said and/or the perspective they had the phenomena. I provided each teacher participant the opportunity for member checking by providing them with a transcript of his/her Interview Guide in order to clarify any responses. They were also administered the Conclusion Interview, during which they could add, change, or elaborate any of their previous responses.

A final method of verification was the search for negative cases (Maxwell, 1996). In this method, discrepant data and negative cases were identified and analyzed. Data that could not be accounted for by a particular interpretation or explanation often pointed to defects and inaccuracies in the account. Negative cases either disconfirmed parts of a model or suggested

new connections that needed to be explored. Therefore, it was required that both the supporting and the discrepant data were rigorously examined, in order to assess whether it was more plausible to retain or modify the conclusion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Thus, I attended to searching for negative cases by rereading and reviewing the responses and descriptions on the color coded index cards in order to evaluate my interpretations about each one. In instances in which I was uncertain that I had formed an accurate interpretation, I modified or discarded the interpretations. I also reviewed the item and pattern analyses which I had constructed in order to clarify and refine connections to constructs related to the research questions. In those cases in which the patterns did not match the constructs, I discarded interpretations and sought out more accurate patterns. The summaries and case studies were also reviewed in order to confirm that they aligned with the model. Modifications of interpretations were made when warranted. The process of verification, using the four methods, continued throughout the data analysis.

After confirmation of verification had been established, I proceeded to confirm that the conclusions in the summaries of the teacher interviews, the case studies, and the interpretations, on which they were based, held external validity or *transferability*. Whether or not the conclusions of a study have greater import or if they are transferable to other contexts, was a necessary consideration in the current study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Transferability was considered through theoretical validity (Maxwell, 1992), whereby a more abstract explanation of described actions and events and interpreted meanings were connected to theoretical networks beyond the current study. These networks were displayed in the conceptual framework of the present study (Figure 1.1).

Once attention was given to transferability, internal validity or *credibility* was weighed. Whether or not the people under study or readers believe the findings, or determine them to make sense and be authentic, were concerns of credibility (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These issues received regard in that the informants confirmed accuracy, accounts were plausible, thick descriptions were generated, data were linked to theory, triangulation was used, negative evidence was sought, and areas of uncertainty were identified. Credibility was confirmed by checking, questioning, and theorizing.

### *Rapport*

Subsequently, ethnographers must become intimately involved with members of the community or participants in the natural settings where they do research (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). By establishing trust, rapport, and authentic communication patterns with the participants at the beginning of the study, the researcher is able to capture the nuances and meanings of each participant's life from the participant's point of view (Janesick, 1994a). The present study took place in three high schools within districts which were designated as urban, metro/city and suburban. As an outsider, unknown to the group under study, I strove to establish and maintain rapport, trust, and authentic communication within and among the study participants. Prior to the study, rapport was successively built through the requests for Letters of Support from each District Superintendent. Further rapport was established as I became acquainted with them by telephone and in person. Correspondence to the school principals, telephone, email, and face to face communication increased trust and rapport within each school site. Relationships were established and maintained through discussions pertaining to the research endeavor. Because the English Language Arts teachers had been informed that I would attend a teachers' meeting, the teachers anticipated my arrival. Additional trust and rapport was established with the teachers

during the recruitment and selection process (Appendix A). Through this scaffold of communication, I established substantial familiarity and acceptance in order to gain access to the site, become acquainted with the Language Arts teachers, recruit them for the study, and be availed to the interviewing processes, teacher observations, and classroom artifacts.

In addition, I established trust and rapport by exhibiting professional behavior. Ethnographers understand how they relate to the physical and material environment (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). I perceived myself as an appreciative guest in each school site. In this status I greeted community members, maintained courtesy and cleanliness, displayed proper school identification, and adhered to school policies. The process of building and maintaining trust and rapport continued until I exited each site.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Social scientists have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study population and the larger society because they delve into the social lives of other human beings (Berg, 2004). In consideration of this perspective, specific procedures were implemented in the current study, in order to address ethical issues and concerns related to recruitment of participants, data collection, data analysis, verification and findings. The current study was subjected to an *expedited review*, by which it was entitled, according to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), due to its examination of normal educational practices, instructional techniques, and curricula (Berg, 2004).

Social scientists have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study population and the larger society (Berg, 2004), due to the quantity of time they interact with study participants. The historical background, which included the Milgram, Nazi torture, Tuskegee, and “Tearroom Trade” experiments, led to the adoption of the Nuremberg Code (1949), the Declaration of

Helsinki (1964), and the National Research Act (1974) which established guidelines and laws for the ethical treatment of subjects. Currently Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are charged with the duties of formal oversight regarding reformed consent (Berg, 2004), sites establishment of where protection of human subjects, possible risks including liability, and assurance of participant confidentiality. In instances in which the researchers' personal ethical issues and considerations are challenged he/she must consult established standards for guidance (LeCompte & Schenpul, 1999).

In consideration of the confidential of the nature of the current study, the duration of time spent in intimate interaction with the participants in their social settings, and the nature of the topics of inquiry, it was imperative that the highest level of ethical commitment to the research and to all stakeholders was recognized. According to Berg (2004), the major areas for ethical concerns include confidentiality, of subjects and informational, avoidance of harm to the subjects, anonymous treatment of preexisting data, and specimens and informed consent. Institutional Review boards (IRBs) are responsible for the oversight of these ethical considerations.

Therefore, prior to this investigation, I obtained permission from the Wayne State University Institutional Review (IRB) Board and the Human Investigation Committee (HIC) to conduct the research (Appendix B). I then secured Letters of Support from three District Superintendents which I forwarded to the (HIC). After receiving Letters of Support for the research, I wrote three letters to the Principals requesting access to each of their school sites in order to attend a teachers' meeting. Finally, I gained consent from the nine individual English Language Arts teachers to be participants in the study. The teachers received an Informational Sheet for the Teachers in which the research was described in great detail. Each aspect of the research was

discussed with them including the focus of study, the methods to be used, the specifics of how confidentiality was and will be maintained for both them and their context, the voluntary nature of participation, and any foreseen benefits and/or risks. After obtaining signatures, each teacher was provided a photocopy of the Information Sheet for Teachers and the original documents were retained by the researcher. The teacher participants also received a letter of Research Informed Consent which detailed the study. After each teacher's signature was acquired, each teacher received a photocopy of this document. All stakeholders were apprised of the contents of the Research Informed Consent prior to and during the study. All original documents were secured in a safe deposit box at Chase Bank.

In addition, researchers must be extremely careful about how they discuss their subjects and the settings (Hessler, 1992) in order to avoid any potential foreseen or unforeseen risks. This consideration was accomplished by the use of color coding, for the schools and assigned numbers and pseudonyms for the teacher participants throughout the recruitment process, site selection, data collection, and data analysis phases of the study. The teacher participants were informed that no information or data would be shared with the District, principals colleagues, or others in the community. In the data collection and writing process of the Dissertation, I was circumspect to omit any data which posed potential harm to the participant. No inappropriate or sensitive information was reported to supervising personnel because none was witnessed. Following data collection, in the Conclusion Interview, the participants had an opportunity to member check their responses and were provided with contact information for the Human Investigation Committee (HIC).

*Researcher Subjectivity*

Therefore, in order to construct socially critical ethnography, Carspecken (1996) argued that the ethnographer needs to understand holistic modes of human experience and their relationship to the dialogical data. Both the examination of researcher bias and the discovery of researcher value orientations are included in this process. Having adopted ethnographic research which evolved from the interpretivist perspective, I was acutely aware that I was an intrinsic part of the study. I was no more detached from the objects of study than the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As an ethnographer, I brought my own understandings, convictions and conceptual orientations to the study, since I was a member of a particular culture at a specific time (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to minimize researcher bias and subjectivity, I reflected upon personal teaching experience, motivations, and aspirations which influenced the current endeavor.

Having taught English Language Arts and Social Studies in two urban high schools, I was cognizant that a number of my teaching experiences were negative in regards to the existence and maintenance of effective pedagogical, curricular, and methodological standards in those schools. In the current study, I was earnest and attentive in processing teacher responses, observations and/or behaviors in an objective and nonjudgmental manner, in order to preclude any bias and subjectivity related to personal teaching experiences. I kept a researcher journal (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) which assisted me in the reflexive paradigm and served to underscore, caution, and check any bias and subjective interpretations that arose. Member checking, in the Conclusion Interviews, greatly facilitated the exclusion of any inaccurate interpretations, as well.

*Summary*

The methodology in the current study addressed the rational for the conceptual framework, the theoretical basis for the interpretive inquiry, comparative theoretical methodological approaches, review of the research purpose, criteria for research site selection, and research site demographics. Also addressed were the criteria for participant recruitment and selection, data collection strategies, protection of data, data storage and retrieval, data management, and data analysis strategies. Additional topics included rapport, ethical considerations, trustworthiness strategies, credibility, transferability, researcher subjectivity, and the summary including a restatement of study limitations.

As the sole investigator in the present study, personal limitations included limited experience in the areas of purposeful sampling, interviewing in the data collection phase, recording data for the subsequent data analysis strategies of coding, display, and reduction. Meticulous data collection and management, effective organization and analysis of data, and attention to the research questions and conceptual framework in reporting of the Findings assisted in these areas.

The following limitations affected the ability to generalize the findings in the present study:

- The study was limited to the three schools under investigation, which included an urban, a metro-city, and a suburban high school in the Detroit metropolitan area. The findings may not be generalized beyond these schools or the Detroit metropolitan area.
- Ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and artifact collection were used as the sources for data collection in the study, in order to document the use of culturally relevant literature by English Language Arts teachers. No attempt was made to

predict that the observed methodologies would increase literacy scores and/or achievement levels.

- The study population was exclusively limited to English Language Arts teachers. No attempt is made to generalize the findings beyond this population. No student had data observed, collected, and/or disseminated on them.

Thus, the present study is exploratory in nature and likely will not be comprehensive. Nonetheless, it embarks upon a relevant investigation which may affect the teaching pedagogies, methodologies, strategies, and curricula of urban high school English Language Arts teachers and other interested stakeholders among urban African American high school students.

## Chapter 4

## Findings

*Urban, Metro-City, and Suburban English Language Arts Teachers**Introduction*

The current study investigated the use of culturally relevant literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), and pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), lesson activities from African- American familial culture (Hale- Benson, 1986) and cultural modeling (Lee, 1993). The investigation strove to demonstrate the use and extent of use, among nine high school English Language Arts Teachers, who taught in urban, metro-city and suburban districts and provided instruction to African American students. Findings are presented in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6. District and school portraits are drawn for each school and contained in each chapter. In addition, each of the nine teacher participants are profiled within the Chapter designated for her respective school. The teacher profiles were based upon responses from the Interview Guide and the participant observations. Detailed case studies, on each teacher, which addressed the five initial research questions, and were founded on interviews, observations, and artifacts, were provided in each appropriate Chapter. In addition, subtopics which illustrated similarities and differences in the use and extent of use, among teachers, of the culturally relevant elements under study, were explored for each school. Tables, which displayed each teacher's use of each culturally relevant element followed the case study of each teacher. Artifact collections were documented and free listed in Appendix A. Please note that pseudonyms have been used for all teachers, schools, and Districts in the study.

## Urban English Language Arts Teachers

### *Urban District/Blue School Portrait*

Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower and Ms. Azul were high school English Language Arts teachers in this urban charter school district which included an elementary school, a high school and a third school for the performing arts. The District stated that its mission is to prove that urban children can succeed in college through personalized learning and relentless commitment to their success. The high school under study in the district reported a 90% graduation rate for students and reports sending more than 90% of students on to post-secondary education, despite the fact that more than 56% of students receive free lunch. The three aforementioned teachers under study taught in the urban high school/or Blue School.

The Governing Board of the Charter school was ABC Charter Board, supported by DEF Learning and managed by GHI Management, a prominent educational management company. The high school serviced 515 students in 2010-2011 school year; 99% were African American. The high school/Blue School was described as one which delivered private school education for a public school cost, with small class sizes, dedicated teachers and up to date facilities. The District, situated near an urban University, is modeled on a campus style configuration, and pays \$1.00 per year for rental property, due to the support of its major contributor. The Blue School was built less than ten years ago. It was modern in its architectural design, situated in a newly developed area of Detroit, and served grade nine through twelve.

The three English Language Arts teachers in the Urban/Blue School within this district worked in Advisory Roles, as well as, classroom teachers. They collaborated with their colleagues within the English Language Arts Department and are regarded as highly qualified. The following information used to construct the teacher profiles and case studies was gleaned

from the Interview Guide and the participant observations. The Conclusion Interviews were not used to construct the teacher profiles and the case studies unless there was additional pertinent information provided, therein, by the teacher respondent.

#### Ms. Royal Case Study #1

##### *Teacher Profile*

Teacher number one, Ms. Royal, from the Blue School, was an African American female who had been teaching in secondary education for twelve years in English Language Arts. She taught grades nine through twelve. Her principle responsibilities included teaching English Language Arts and serving as English Language Arts Department Head. She also served as Lead Teacher, in that she set the pace for acquisition of the *Standards* in the English Language Arts curriculum in her department. She served as a mentor for the “younger teachers” and provided a collaborative springboard for those who desired such. She stated that she received her inspiration from a variety of sources and that her greatest source is the pleasure she derived from being a teacher. In addition to the educational mandates handed down by the State, Ms. Royal indicated that her reason for teaching the *Standards* was to give the students exposure to literature in order for everything to come to them, including authorship.

In addition to her instructional duties, Ms. Royal served as an Advisory Teacher. In this capacity, she met with students in a classroom forum in order to provide them mentoring and preparation for college and/or employment. The Advisory Placement class was scheduled into her daily activities. Ms. Royal also interfaced with potential employers in order to locate and maintain job placements for eleventh and twelfth grade students. Ms. Royal described herself as a “feisty, little, energetic coach who tried to keep the students on track.”

Ms. Royal explained her need to take the approach she does with the students when she stated, “I feel there is a disconnection with this generation from, let’s say, the generation of their grandparents. I feel it’s a complete disconnect, they have gone to the point where they really just don’t get it. It’s almost like they have lost themselves. All they know is what they see and what they see is constant negativity. This generation has to be reminded of who we were and not what we are right now. It’s more than just Barack Obama. It’s more than just Shaq and more than just Kobe Bryant. They have to know who we were.” She said, in order to help the students to know where they came from, she used a great deal of African American history.

Ms. Royal elaborated on her motivation to become a teacher by explaining that her Language Arts teachers were very much like her and that they made her want to be a Language Arts teacher. Early on, she was encouraged to explore and write. She started writing poetry around third grade. Her fourth grade teacher brought her a journal and just told her to write, and she still has it. She had a very good academic experience through middle school, and the teachers were still supportive through high school and college. Ms. Royal stated, “Language Arts is important to learn because it’s the foundation of all learning, across the curriculum, and it can be connected to life.”

Ms. Royal explained further that she believes in collaboration. She stated that hers is not the only voice that should be heard and that she relies on her teaching team to “come up with ideas.” She said, “This is because good teachers need more than just teacher education. Teacher education didn’t align or prepare me. You’re still growing and evolving, learning, and evolving. I don’t think that kind of education forms you into being a teacher. It’s being in a classroom, actually being a teacher. I am today, by no means, the teacher that I was three years ago, six years ago, and nine years ago. It takes years of experience. You’re still growing-yes. I’m still

growing. Everything that I've learned in my classroom, I didn't learn it in college. Teaching education was helpful on the Master's level, but nothing takes the place of classroom experience."

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Royal's use of culturally relevant pedagogy was explicated in her responses to the Interview Guide. Her teaching pedagogy originated from her philosophy of teaching. She stated, "My philosophy of English Language Arts is that we learn by studying literature. Our school has a website that encourages students to explore life through literature. Once the student goes deeper, engagement leads to learning." Part of her pedagogy included her teaching style, which she described as prescriptive, when she said, "It's prescriptive. I'm very assertive when it comes to the planning part. I spend a lot of time planning, because I think the delivery of it will come naturally. The planning part is so crucial because I have to make sure that what I'm delivering, it's what they need. I spend a lot of time planning. I let the classroom environment become organic. From hour to hour it switches, depending on the dynamic of the group."

Ms. Royal went on to explain that the Blue School had adopted the Sky Curriculum which impacted her teaching pedagogy, as she explained, "We rely on texts but we use other content to insure representation. Absolutely, there's always other content. I don't believe in just being a textbook teacher at all. We definitely rely on text books. I don't want to reinvent the wheel. There are a lot of good books out there, but what you will find is that we're definitely underrepresented, culturally, as African Americans. We're underrepresented in text books and represented only in certain portions of the text. So I have additional supplementary texts. In addition to that, we also have African American literature. I use that whenever I don't see us represented as often as I would like, or if I want to use a piece that is just about us."

In her twelve years of teaching, Ms. Royal indicated that she had been concerned about the limited African American literature and has made a conscious effort to address African American literary contributions in her teaching pedagogy. Concerning her teaching pedagogy, Ms. Royal stated that the adopted English Language Arts curriculum for the high school was Sky, which had been adopted by the charter school District. In explaining how she facilitated pedagogy and curriculum planning, with the use of Sky, she stated, “State requirements and National *Standards* are perfectly aligned with our Sky Curriculum. The core *Standards* and benchmarks are also aligned. We have pacing charts to hit benchmarks.”

The specific content that is required to be taught came out of the Sky Curriculum. The State greatly affects content. She referred to State mandates in order to make sure that she was in line with what the students should learn. She needed to make sure that as she was creating her pacing marks, that students were “hitting” those benchmarks every year. The students have to have four years of Language Arts, per the State guidelines. The Blue School offered electives, so that in addition to the four years, the students have another two and a half years of literature electives, such as creative writing and epic poetry. Ms. Royal further explained that in her pedagogy, it was insured that State guidelines and *Standards* were being followed, although she addressed them by using her personal philosophy, pedagogy, and materials.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Royal’s teaching pedagogy in English Language Arts instruction of tenth grade in English Literature, her lesson plan included teaching the mechanics of writing a paragraph. She instructed students to write paragraphs based upon their reflections on the short story *Marigolds* by Eugenia Collier, which came from their *Elements of Literature Anthology*. She instructed the students to construct paragraphs using

related sentences from their reflections by writing sentences, reading them, and then placing them in chronological order. She said the order should “make sense.” In order to complete the lesson, she also instructed students to use pronouns in their sentences and be able to identify the individual characters, in *Marigolds*, to which the pronouns referred.

Near the completion of the lesson, Ms. Royal, explicated the literary themes in *Marigolds*, including the desperation, heartache, heartbreak, loss of employment, and other challenges facing the African American family in the literary selection. She also spoke of financial survival and frustration and drew connections from the story to the lives of African Americans today. She then assigned homework which was a journal writing concerning any personal or family challenges which the students may have experienced. She told the students to write from an African American perspective.

During the second participant observation of Ms. Royal, in tenth grade English Language Arts, she introduced the lesson by inviting students to think about their culture and all of the important things in their cultures, and then asked the students to name some of the important elements, events, or artifacts. She then instructed the students to write an essay in their journals entitled, “What is your most prized possession?” She told them to describe or explain what it was and why it held importance for the student. During the assignment, Ms. Royal walked about the room addressing questions and checking for understanding.

During Ms. Royal’s third participant observation, which was grade twelve Advisory Placement for seniors and English Language Arts, she introduced her lesson by asking, “What is job shadowing?” After several responses, she explained that the seniors would be working closely with employees at various work sites in order to learn specific job elements, tasks and procedures. Ms. Royal instructed the students on proper attire, personal hygiene, grooming, and

neatness of appearance, especially hair, wardrobe, and shoes. She also gave instruction on how to behave at the jobsite. She entertained questions and distributed slips of paper containing contact information for the school. The advisory placement session was concluded by reminding the students that they represented African American communities and advised them to “put their best foot forward.”

In the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Royal added that, in regards to pedagogy, “While I do love teaching, in this current climate, it is more difficult for ELA teachers to teach, and that takes away from instructional time. It takes away from me teaching the things I want to teach, in the way I want to teach them.” Inclusion of responses to the Conclusion Interview served as a member checking strategy for the purpose of verification. Ms. Royal was afforded the opportunity to verify her responses to the Interview Guide, as were the remaining eight teachers. She also had the opportunity to delete or modify her responses or make additional responses.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Royal elaborated on her use of culturally relevant literature (Ladson Billings 1994a) during the administration of the Interview Guide. Her methodologies, learning activities and specific strategies were based upon the curriculum content from Sky. She was emphatic in saying that she used culturally relevant literature “all the time” and that she infused the home language of the students into the lesson plans. She asked the students to share current trends. For instance, in the lesson she did today, she said she talked about those things which persuaded students to dress or behave in a specific way. She used the example of Lil’ Wayne, who had on leopard skinny jeans in a picture. She said that the way in which Lil’ Wayne was dressed could persuade the students to dress in that manner.

She noted that when they're reading an article about Lil' Wayne and see a photograph of what he is wearing, the students may be influenced to do the same thing. Ms. Royal said she used music such as rap, art, and posters, in addition to culturally relevant literature, in order to help the students relate to the learning. She introduced culturally relevant issues, such as the "hip-hop scene" or recent crimes in their communities in her lessons because it often provided students opportunities to use their prior knowledge. Ms. Royal summarized her usage of culturally relevant literature by noting that at any time there is a teaching moment or when it's "off the cuff"; she used culturally relevant literature in her strategies. She also introduced culturally relevant literature with the graphic novel, at various points in time. Or, she would have the students write about a culturally relevant selection in their journals. She stated that she included African American history, culturally relevant books, magazines, trade books, poems, graphic novels and plays in her lesson plans. She stated, "Any culturally relevant literature that I can get my hands on, I use."

In the initial participant observation of Ms. Royal in grade ten English Language Arts, she instructed a lesson on *Marigolds* which was a short story by African American writer Eugenia Collier. She instructed the students to draw connections in the story to their own lives. In the second participant observation which was of Ms. Royal's instruction of grade ten in English Language Arts, she assigned the students an essay based upon the topic "What is your most prized possession?" In the essay, she encouraged the students to draw upon experiences and objects from their cultures in order to write the essays. She explained that the most prized possession could be souvenirs from a trip, an award or certificate, a letter or other correspondence from a family member, or some other meaningful object. She instructed the

students to write, in great detail, about how they came to possess the object, where the object came from and to whom the object was connected.

In the final participant observation which was of Ms. Royal's instruction of grade twelve in Advisory Placement and English Language Arts, she lectured the students on the definition of *job shadowing*. She introduced cultural referents into the lesson by illustrating the expectations of personal hygiene, courteous behavior, proper grooming and attire, and neatness of appearance especially regarding hair, nails, clothing, and shoes. She connected the expectations to the belief that the students who engaged in *job shadowing* would represent the whole of their African American communities.

Ms. Royal did not further address the use of culturally relevant literature directly in the Conclusion Interview, but did indicate that she was pleased that tangible research on the subject of culturally relevant literature was being done and that she would like to be informed of the outcome of the current research.

#### *Extent of Use of Teaching Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

In addition to the investigation of the use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant literature, the use and extent of use of teaching strategies from African American familial culture was investigated. Ms. Royal informed about using activities and strategies from African American familial culture (Hale-Benson, 1986) by saying that she assigned an English Language Arts journal to the students each semester. Herein, the students were encouraged to write about holiday traditions, special occasions, events and experiences related to their families, neighborhoods, communities and cultures. The students were also encouraged to share these familial experiences in class. Ms. Royal also assigned essays in which students were to write about a familial tradition, event, or experience.

In the first participant observation of Ms. Royal's instruction of grade ten in English Language Arts, she asked students to compare the familial circumstances in *Marigolds* to their own family experiences and write about them in their journals. In the second observation, of Ms. Royal, in which she instructed grade ten in English Language Arts, she instructed students to write about their prized possessions. She explained that the possession could come from their home, family, or elsewhere in their culture. During the final observation of Ms. Royal in which she instructed grade twelve in Advisory Placement and English Language Arts, she reminded the students in Advisory Placement that during the shadowing work experience, each of them represented African American culture on the jobsite, and that it was important that each student offer their best impression of African American familial etiquette, training and behavior, hygiene, and dress.

Ms. Royal did not further address the use of teaching strategies from African American familial culture in her Conclusion Interview. However, in her artifacts, she noted that she had many books, stories, and poems which addressed African American family culture. These included *African Proverbs*, *Everyday Use*, *We Wear the Mask*, *Heyday in Harlem*, *Marriage is a Private Affair*, *The Weary Blues*, *The Rockpile*, *Jim Crow: Shorthand for Separation*, and *Fast and Break: In Memory of Dennis Turner (1946-1984)*.

#### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Ms. Royal said she used cultural modeling (Lee, 1993) so often that she almost forgot that it was a specific technique developed by a researcher. When interviewed, she noted that she used cultural modeling on a regular basis by introducing characters, songs, music, and artwork from the students' cultures. She also explained that she focused on cultural modeling, during instruction, by contrasting, for students, the appropriate ways for African Americans to behave

with inappropriate behaviors. Ms. Royal said this approach was especially effective in her Advisory Placement courses, which prepared students for employment and college interviews.

During the initial participant observation of Ms. Royal's instruction of grade ten in English Language Arts, she was observed to use cultural modeling during the delivery of her lesson when she spoke in the tone and dialect of the character Lizabeth in the short story *Marigolds*. She did this in order to dramatize what a character from the southern part of the country might sound like, compared to the way in which people from the north spoke. She explained the definition of *dialect* and assured the students that "You all have a certain dialect too!" The modeling of dialects demonstrated a kind of universality across the story and the lives of the students.

In the second participant observation in which Ms. Royal instructed grade ten in English Language Arts, she was observed to use cultural modeling during her lesson which focused on the description of a prized possession. Ms. Royal had brought her teaching degree which she presented to the students as her most prized possession. She described the challenges associated with earning the degree, the university from which she earned the degree, and the people who influenced her to achieve her degree. Following her presentation, Ms. Royal began to sing, "You know I'm bad, I'm bad, I'm really really bad!" (The lyrics were from Michael Jackson's song, *I'm Bad*). Singing the song appeared to greater connect the students to Ms. Royal's presentation of her degree.

In the third participant observation of Ms. Royal in which she instructed grade twelve in Advisory Placement and English Language Arts, she used cultural modeling during her informational lecture to the students regarding their experiences in *job shadowing*. Following the mandates related to etiquette, hygiene, dress, and behavior, Ms. Royal stated "I do not want to come up to that job site and see sagging pants, unlaced gym shoes, or hair all over your head."

Inclusion of these cultural referents appeared to affirm the expectations of the students in the *job shadowing* experience.

In her responses to the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Royal did not address cultural modeling further. However, prior to exiting Ms. Royal's classroom, a collection of artifacts which she said reflected the African American cultural experience, was documented. These artifacts reflected the further extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy, literature, strategies, and modeling. These are documented in Appendix A. Included in the in the artifacts was the short story which Ms. Royal taught during the participant observations, which was *Marigolds* by Eugenia Collier. Ms. Royal also had musical selections, which included the Negro Spirituals, *Go Down Moses* and *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*. She indicated that these were familial songs from some of the students' church or worship services.

Table 7: Ms. Royal: Culturally Relevant Elements Result

<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Strategies from African American Familial Culture</b>	<b>Cultural Modeling</b>
Supplemental use of African American texts, poems, stories, plays, and magazines due to underrepresentation of African Americans in curriculum texts	Taught a lesson using <i>Marigolds</i> by Eugenia Collier	Journal writing about African American holiday traditions	Dramatized the character Lizabeth in <i>Marigolds</i>
Used African American history texts	Taught a lesson using article about Lil' Wayne	Journal writing about African American family experiences, special occasions, and events	Sung the Michael Jackson song "I'm Bad"
Addressed African American contributions to literature in her lessons	Used articles on relevant issues such as hip hop and crime	Sharing of familial experiences by students in class	Modeled contrasting appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for African American students to display in the workplace
Made a conscious effort to focus lesson planning on African American life themes	Used culturally relevant books, magazines, trade books, poems, stories, and plays in her lesson plans	Student essays about familial traditions, events and/or experiences	Infused characters, songs and music from the students' culture into her lesson plans
Introduced emotions, affects and feelings familiar to African American life	Consistently conscious of the need for culturally relevant literature	Student discussions related to familial experiences	Spoke in the tone and dialect of the southern African American character in <i>Marigolds</i>
Encouraged students to write from an African American perspective	Used culturally relevant literature with graphic novels	Comparison of familial experiences in <i>Marigolds</i> to student familial experiences	Infused artwork and posters from the students' culture into her lesson plans
Reminded students that they represent African American communities	Used culturally relevant selections for student journal reflections	Entreated students to display positive African American familial etiquette, dress and behavior on the jobsite	Warned students regarding the negative impressions associated with sagging pants, unlaced shoes and uncombed hair

## Ms. Cornflower Case Study # 2

### *Teacher Profile*

Teacher number two, Ms. Cornflower, from the Blue School, is an African American female who taught in secondary education for eight years. In the past, she taught grade nine through twelve. Currently, she teaches grades nine and ten. She noted that her principle responsibilities were exposing students, through literature, to a variety of genre and multiple authors. In addition to teaching English Language Arts, she has organized a club called Build On which is a community service club that focuses on global education. In the summer, she also sponsored one student, who would travel to a third world country to help build a school. She did community service on the weekends. She served on a variety of committees at school and helped run summits. For each of the grade levels she taught, she has assisted in planning curriculum. Although the school adopted a new curriculum last year, she still did the planning for her elective classes such as creative writing. She served on the Homecoming Committee. She also presented papers for the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE). She was also a Fellow in Writing. Finally, she secured her own resources and materials for her classroom lessons and activities.

Ms. Cornflower exuded energy. She walked briskly about her duties and appeared to capture almost every behavior and circumstance in her environment. She laughed or smiled frequently and shared jokes with students in her classroom. She revealed that she is extremely active in her church, sorority and community. She said her passion for teaching makes it fun, rather than a job. Although Ms. Cornflower does not teach seniors in an Advisory Placement capacity, she explained that if she did, her students would be “Good to go!” [to a jobsite].

Ms. Cornflower described her teacher education as being “very helpful” on the Master’s level and how her teacher education experiences contrasted with the “cultural shock” she received when she began teaching. She stated, “My undergraduate college really spoke to realistic challenges. Undergraduate didn’t really focus on school education. My graduate college didn’t focus on urban schools. We’re not a school of choice, so the students were somewhat different than suburban or schools of choice. So I had to adjust to the students. I went to a public magnet school and before that, private school, so my experiences were different. I was sheltered. I wasn’t used to the type of language they used when I started teaching here.”

Ms. Cornflower elaborated on her love for English Language Arts by sharing that she has always loved English. In elementary, middle school, and high school, her father used to read to her every night. It was something that bound her to her parents. At her wedding, she read her favorite poetry from high school. She incorporated English into her entire life. Language Arts is important to her because Literature spoke to human experiences, *absolutely*. She thought that was why it’s easier to “hook” the students, and connect the literature to their experiences. She said that literature talked about the human experience and that anyone can relate to the human experience, because they’re human.

Ms. Cornflower described herself as an African American from the west side of Detroit, which was, according to her, a very “poor community.” She said that she shared many of her youthful experiences with the students and told them what it was like for her to grow up in a poor African American community. She shared her experiences with the “cops,” as well. She explained that many of the students have a fear of the police and run from them, so dealing with the police *is a real* experience for them.

Ms. Cornflower noted that her experiences as a student colored her teaching style and that she feels that she “must teach.” She used her own resources and materials, such as, books, magazines, songs, and music for content. She explained that she looked for diverse resources that would “bring the students in,” because many of the students do not respond to “a straight lecture.” She said her bottom line in being a teacher is that she wants the students, “Engaged! I want them with me!”

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Cornflower’s use of culturally relevant pedagogy was queried first in the Interview Guide. She responded that she used culturally relevant pedagogy and that she always engaged the students in discussions about culturally relevant issues. She supplied many of her own texts and musical selections and stated, “I think my students can connect to the texts. I like that we have a lot of freedom in our elective courses. I add a little flavor to it sometimes, but I’m still following the curriculum. I just want to hook the kids. That’s my philosophy, making kids love learning and engaging them. That’s my biggest thing. If they’re engaged, they will learn. I like that, because being a teacher isn’t all about teaching. You’re selling a product too. You have to make it intriguing. It’s all about presentation. You can get them to do a lot, but it’s all in how you present it to them. Once I brought in a John Lennon recording, and played the song *Imagine*. I had them break the words down into something they could relate to.”

She also stated that she uses African American texts, authors, stories and poems. She indicated that it was important for students to know where they came from. She also said that even when she teaches the classics, she attempts to connect them to the lives of the students.

Ms. Cornflower continued by explaining that the school administration decided upon the use of the Sky Curriculum. Therefore, the content came from Sky. She emphasized that although Sky

specified content, she used her own resources and materials. She explained the District's decision to use Sky by saying, "One of the reasons we chose Sky was because it aligned to the core *Standards* that the State is moving toward. Sky is greatly aligned with the National *Standards*. It also helped us to check benchmarks. The specific content that is required to be taught, according to State guidelines, is four years of English Language Arts and also electives. Sky was supposed to give us the content. We use the tenth grade edition of *Grammar for Writing*. We have different novels that we use independently that we connect to Sky, and of course, I use my own stuff."

She noted that when she decides the content of the lessons, she uses novels and poems such as *The Color Purple*, *Things Fall Apart*, and *Where I'm From*, because she wants to teach the students from an African American perspective. Ms. Cornflower noted that while doing this, she still gave attention to *Standards* and benchmarks.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Cornflower's teaching pedagogy in English Language Arts instruction with tenth grade, her lesson plan included the distribution of a handout on Langston Hughes. She instructed the students to read the handout, silently, for ten minutes. Following the silent reading, she instructed the students to sit in a circle. She then instructed the students to read excerpts of the handout aloud. She then explained to the students that one half of the students in the circle would ask questions about Langston Hughes, and the other half of the students in the circle would provide answers. Then, at a specified time, the students were instructed to switch roles. She instructed the student to ask interesting questions, try to learn information about Langston Hughes, and also make a personal connection with the information. In doing this, she explained that they were using their meta-cognitive markers.

During the second participant observation of Ms. Cornflower's teaching pedagogy in English Language Arts instruction with tenth grade, her lesson plan included a "show and tell" of artifacts which she had acquired in Africa. She had previously instructed students to bring in artifacts of their own from home. Ms. Cornflower modeled a presentation of each of her artifacts. The artifacts included beads, a wooden carving, and several bracelets. Following her presentation, she instructed the students to present their artifacts. She told them to explain what each one was, where it came from, and why it was important in their lives. Ms. Cornflower explained that cultural artifacts tell a lot about a people, such as Africans, but added that African Americans here in the United States have cultural artifacts, as well. She said that these artifacts are an important part of African American culture, here in the States, and should be regarded as such.

During the third participant observation of Ms. Cornflower's instruction in English Language Arts with tenth grade, she began the lesson by distributing a handout on Langston Hughes to the students. She informed them that he was one of the foremost poets during the Harlem Renaissance Period. She told them that he was born in 1902 and then she provided the students historical background on the poet. Ms. Cornflower then instructed the students to read the information regarding Langston Hughes, silently, for ten minutes and to then write a summary about the poet. She noted that other important African American artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Duke Ellington, and Zora Neale Hurston were prominent in Harlem.

Following the completion of the summaries, Ms. Cornflower continued her lecture on Langston Hughes by stating, "Langston Hughes wrote his poetry while 'chillin' in the club.' Iambic pentameter is not what Langston Hughes used. He used it to an extent, but what he really used was syncopation. Remember, hip hop is just poetry set to music. These clubs had pianists,

instead of DJ's, who are at clubs today. For instance, in *Wild Women Don't Have the Blues*, sadness was expressed in the music. Ma Rainey sang this song. She doesn't have a happy tone. This is a very sad song. This is very slow and downbeat. I call this kind of music 'slit your wrist music.' There is another famous blues singer. He does the diabetic commercials. Singers who you may know, who also have this deep alto tenor, are Anita Baker and Toni Braxton. The music has roots in slavery. The chain gangs repeated many of these words and phrases. Frats, such as your Alphas, Kappas and Omegas use this music to *step to*."

Ms. Cornflower then proceeded to the computer and played a rendition of *The Weary Blues* with an introduction by Cab Calloway. After listening to the poem, she told the students that they'd had their experience with African American blues. After the students listened to *The Weary Blues*, Ms. Cornflower went to the chalkboard and "mapped out" rhyming patterns from *The Weary Blues* and instructed the students to copy the patterns in their notebooks. Then Ms. Cornflower mapped out rhyming patterns with the students on the board. She then mapped out the rhyming scheme and told the students that the scheme was AAC BB CC. Ms. Cornflower introduced Biggie Smalls rap of, "*Reading the Word Up Magazine*." She made a point of the social and economic prospects in the rap. She pointed out words such as rickety and ragged, and phrases such as, "I ain't got nobody but myself." She told the students that the poem illustrated that there are people who have no one and are alone and that some of these people may even be mentally challenged. She said the word *weary* means that he (Langston Hughes) is tired of his lifestyle. She added that the singer Al Green said he was tired of being alone. She explained that Al Green's song was an updated version of this poem. She further noted that when the last line says that "he slept like a rock" or "like a dead man", that could mean he wished that he was dead or had died. She said his life was definitely hard and he was definitely tired of it. She added that

this was a very deep poem. It appeared that Ms. Cornflower had incorporated a variety of culturally relevant elements into her pedagogy.

In the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Cornflower did not expand further on her teaching pedagogy. Her artifacts, which mirrored culturally relevant pedagogy, included Langston Hughes, *The Weary Blues*, Langston Hughes, *Theme for English B*, George Ella Lyon, *Where I'm From*, Alice Walker, *Everyday Use*, Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, and Leopold Sedar Senghor, *Prayer to the Masks*.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Cornflower explained in her interview how and when she used culturally relevant literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Her methodologies, learning activities and specific strategies were based upon the adopted school curriculum Sky. However, she explained that within her pedagogy, she used culturally relevant literature, including current news articles. She noted that just last week she had discussed a current news article with the students concerning Lil' Wayne's release from prison. She also said that she used books that chronicled African American history. She also reported, in her interview that she used graphic novels and discussed plays such as Tyler Perry's *Madea*. She also exposed the students to magazines such as Ebony, Black Enterprise, and Vibe. She also suggested that articles on the "hip-hop" culture were good to include in her lesson planning because the students "are really interested in stuff like that." Finally, she said that the students are encouraged to bring in articles in which they are interested, for discussion purposes.

During the initial participant observation, Ms. Cornflower was observed instructing grade ten in English Language Arts in which she taught a lesson focused on the literary contributions of the poet Langston Hughes. She provided historical information about the poet, provided students

the opportunity to explore and investigate additional information regarding Hughes, and encouraged students to write a reflection concerning their reading of Hughes. Ms. Cornflower emphasized Hughes' contributions to the Harlem Renaissance and to the literary world. She encouraged the students to draw connections between the challenges Hughes faced and their own lives. It appeared that Ms. Cornflower was comfortable with the use of culturally relevant literature.

During the second participant observation of Ms. Cornflower's instruction of grade ten in English Language Arts, she demonstrated the presentation of cultural artifacts, in story form, and attempted to assist students in recognition and appreciation for the cultural contributions of Africans. She then instructed students to write a description of artifacts from their own cultural artifacts and the roles, noting the significance they held within African American culture. She then entertained the student presentations.

In the final participant observation of Ms. Cornflower's instruction of grade ten in English Language Arts, she presented a lesson wherein students read about the poet Langston Hughes, listened to a recording of *The Weary Blues*, and wrote a reflection on the information about the poet and their responses to the poem. She connected the biographical information about the poet, the poem, and their affect upon students' lives to the culturally relevant selection. She did not expound further on culturally relevant literature in her Conclusion Interview.

#### *Extent of Use of Teaching Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Ms. Cornflower elaborated on her use of teaching strategies from African American familial culture in her responses to the Interview Guide. She said that she did use cultural referents in her lessons especially in her inclusion of assigned essays related to holidays, trips, vacations, and

special events. By encouraging students to discuss and write about these things, they learned that their culture was very important.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Cornflower with grade ten in English Language Arts, she was observed using teaching strategies from African American familial culture when she suggested to the students that they make connections between *The Weary Blues* and the songs they heard at home. During the second participant observation of Ms. Cornflower with grade ten in another English Language Arts class, she used African American familial strategies when she assigned students to write a cultural artifact description and present it to the class. She was emphatic in saying that the artifacts should come from home and be related to the students' family histories. In the final observation of Ms. Cornflower with grade ten in English Language Arts, she drew a wide variety of literary connections from the poets' and artists' lives to the lives of the students. These connections included weariness, happiness, step dancing, DJ's, slavery, the club scene, hip-hop, and blues. It appeared that Ms. Cornflower infused several African American familial cultural strategies into her lessons. She did not expound further on strategies from African American familial culture in her Conclusion Interview.

#### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Ms. Cornflower explained the extent of use of Cultural Modeling in her responses to the Interview Guide, when she said that she allowed the students to use the language from their homes in class and in their papers. She said that she did not "down" the home language, because she "gets" that they speak that way at home. She stated "I am from the same place." She noted that the language of African American culture is very empowering to the students. She said she also worked with the students in teaching them when to turn the language on and off. She said that this "code switching" took practice.

Ms. Cornflower also indicated that she encouraged the students to bring specific cultural referents to school which included songs, music, or books. However, she was emphatic in stating that she did not allow them to bring in, or model, pornography. She did use visual aids frequently and often used them to model articles, stories, songs, and poems. She added that she initiated classroom discussion related to movies, as well. Sometimes she dramatized the behavior of a character in the movie and then she allowed the students to dramatize specific characters, as well.

Ms. Cornflower also demonstrated usage of cultural modeling in the participant observations with her three grade ten English Language Arts classes. In the initial observation, she instructed the students on how to answer, in turn, questions about Langston Hughes. Then, she modeled how one might ask a question and then, how one might answer a question. She also modeled the kinds of questions they should ask by saying that the questions should be interesting and relevant. She instructed the students to use the biographical information provided to them in order to facilitate the questions. In the second participant observation, Ms. Cornflower modeled the description and presentation of cultural artifacts from Africa, and then instructed the students to write a description and present their artifacts in order to affirm the significance of artifacts from African American culture. In the final participant observation, Ms. Cornflower modeled the poetry of Langston Hughes via a recording of *The Weary Blues* and then dramatized an interpretation of the poem, while making connections to the contemporary lives of the students. Ms. Cornflower appeared very at ease during the dramatization of the interpretation of a weary man who was tired of living.

Ms. Cornflower did not add, or delete any further evidence of cultural modeling in her responses to the Conclusion Interview. She did, however, use the following artifacts during the

participant observations, *The Weary Blues*, by Langston Hughes. A full list of artifacts from Ms. Cornflower's classroom was documented in Appendix A.

Table 8: Ms. Cornflower: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Strategies from African American Familial Culture</b>	<b>Cultural Modeling</b>
Used diverse resources including culturally relevant literature	Used current articles i.e. Lil' Wayne getting released from prison	Assigned essays about family trips	Used the language of home
Engaged students in culturally relevant issues	Used African American History	Assigned essays about holiday celebrations	Taught code switching from AAVE to Standard English
Used African American texts, stories and poems, and cultural artifacts	Used graphic novels with African American characters	Assigned essays about vacations and special events	Encouraged students to bring songs, music, and books related to their culture
Connected the classics to African American experiences	Discussed plays like <i>Madea</i> by Tyler Perry	Discussions about holiday traditions	Used visual aids with stories, songs, and poems
Used personal resources, texts, materials and African American history	Used magazines i.e. Ebony, Black Enterprise, and Vibe	Discussions about trips and special events	Dramatization of movie characters
Taught from an African American perspective, but is attentive to <i>Standards</i> and benchmarks	Used articles on the hip-hop culture	Assigned students to bring in cultural artifacts from home and gives model presentations	Modeled questions on the handout related to <i>The Weary Blues</i>
Her teaching spoke to human experience of African Americans	Used articles which the students bring in for discussion	Taught the students to value their culture	Presentation of cultural artifacts

## Ms. Azul Case Study # 3

*Teacher Profile*

Teacher number three, Ms. Azul from the Blue School, was a Caucasian female who had been teaching in secondary education for four years in English Language Arts. She taught grades ten through twelve. Her principle responsibilities included teaching British Literature, English Language Arts, and Advisory Preparation which prepared students for college readiness. She said that Advisory Preparatory was her number one goal because the students needed skills for college and work placement. She stated that, for college skills, the students had to get background information or they wouldn't have the foundations they needed. She said that in college a professor might ask a question and the student might not know what they're talking about, if they don't have the background information or be able to reference a specific text. So, preparing students for college was her primary responsibility. Ms. Azul elaborated that teaching students how to write was another one of her primary responsibilities. She said that when students got to the eleventh grade and their skills weren't where they needed to be, she had to focus on grammar and punctuation. She said she shouldn't have to do this, but she does, because students come to her lacking these skills. She spent a lot of time focused on logic in writing, word choice and style. She further stated that, "Many students need remedial help and I provide it." She tries to "pull them up to try to get them to grade twelve."

In addition to these responsibilities, Ms. Azul also worked on the Committee for Senior Institute, which was comprised of senior students who were being prepared for college entry. In this capacity, she worked with a teacher partner. They decided on the texts and materials which would be used in Senior Institute. As a committee member for Senior Institute, Ms. Azul also chose curriculum and content for seniors.

Ms. Azul said that she was happy that they had adopted the Sky Curriculum, which was based upon Michigan benchmarks and *Standards*. She used a variety of texts, both fiction and nonfiction and the adopted text for British Literature. She said she puts a lot of enthusiasm into her instruction of the texts and stories used in British Literature. She noted that the texts that the students used were *Beowulf*, *Gilgamesh*, *Achilles and Greek Civilization*, *the Canterbury Tales* and *Hamlet*. She emphasized that although these texts were considered to be classical, she always made connections between them and African American culture. She added that during the last school year, the genre of romanticism was covered, and that this year they would move beyond that to Frankenstein and fantasies. She said that she would also connect these genres to African American culture.

Ms. Azul indicated that a person could tell by looking at her classroom that she is a very visual person. She had many posters of pop culture on the walls and several floor and desk lamps which provided ambient lighting throughout the classroom. She said that the lighting provided a more relaxed atmosphere which was conducive to learning and that harsh lighting made the learning boring. Low lighting helped the student “get into” the videos she showed. She also showed documentaries. She said she loved showing documentaries because it models behavior for the students. When the students flipped through the channels at home, and they saw a documentary, they would want to stop and watch it if she has shown some good documentaries. She added that this will cause the students to have a thirst for knowledge. She wanted the students to read a lot of fiction and nonfiction reading and she hoped that the ambience in her classroom would make this all possible.

Ms. Azul revealed that she struggled with using group work when working with the students, although the District encouraged the teachers to use cooperative group work in their curriculum

planning. She said she liked lectures, PowerPoint, and showing videos. She restated that her primary focus is college preparation and that is what drives everything else. In order to get students interested in the stories and texts, she showed “really cool videos” and might have “acted stuff out.”

Ms. Azul explained her motivation to become a teacher by explaining, that when she was in high school she thought English was the most boring thing in the world because of the teaching styles of her teachers. According to her, most of her teachers were really old and nearing retirement. They had been teaching the same thing and the same way for thirty years or more. She really did not like her experience. She said she loved history classes because they were all lectures and she loved the lecture style of teaching. It was not until she got to college that her love for English really developed. She didn’t have to read all of these classic texts when she was in high school, so when she got to college, she felt she was really at a deficit. This was the reason that she tried to prevent the same deficit in her students. It was her professors in college that introduced her to the “literary canons.” She said her love for English developed in college because she was able to talk about stories and texts, and that was the component that was missing in high school. Ms. Azul said that her objective with her current students was to teach thinking skills and ways to relate to the texts. She wanted to impart the skills they would need in college.

Ms. Azul indicated that she liked to introduce students to texts that were unfamiliar to them, because they might enjoy something they wouldn’t have chosen on their own. She said it really surprised her at first, but it doesn’t any more, how the students really enjoyed the stories in British Literature. The students really got into the characters such as *Gilgamesh* and *Achilles*. The students really loved *Beowulf*. They really got into these characters as well. The boys loved

stories about the Danes invading England. She added that the students loved historical fiction, Anglo-Saxons, and “all that stuff,” and that it was all involved with college readiness.

Ms. Azul also said that English Language Arts was important for connecting to other individuals, as well as, for college preparation. She said that from a humanities perspective, stories are about everyone. She added that kids liked to watch T.V. and that she has done so much each semester that related to them watching T.V. and that she tried to connect the literature in class to T.V. shows. She taught them to analyze what they are watching. She assigned the students do a lot of reading outside of the class in order to prepare for the presentation of the lessons. Some of the important connections she made for students in the texts were analysis, synthesis, and values. She also let them do a lot of personal interest reading. She described herself as a jokester who runs her classes much like special education classes, because she might have five different graphic organizers going at one time.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Azul’s use of culturally relevant pedagogy was explored. Her teaching pedagogy originated from her teaching style which was visually oriented, and her philosophy of teaching, which emphasized the importance of writing. Because she was very visual and used a lot of materials from pop culture, she tried to connect the texts to the students. She said that she mainly used a culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching issues that are related to African American slaves. She also used this pedagogy when making comparison between Greek slaves and African American slaves. Part of her pedagogy included bringing culturally relevant books and magazines from her home and engaging students in discussions about culturally relevant issues. Another feature of her pedagogy was having students read and write about culturally relevant articles in their journals. In her Advisory Preparatory class she prepared students for

college by teaching texts such as *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. She also taught book assignments such as *Superman* and *The Help*.

Ms. Azul went on to explain that because the Blue School had adopted the Sky Curriculum she used a variety of texts, excerpts, and English Language Arts grammar texts for content in her pedagogy. She teaches a fifth English Language Arts course in the curriculum, which is World Literature and a sixth course which is British Literature. The goal of the curriculum was to connect the courses. She said the Michigan Merit Exam and the State laid out the curriculum for them, so the school really focused on the Michigan Merit Exam. The curriculum is completely aligned with the MME because it focused on British Literature.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Azul's teaching pedagogy in English Language Arts instruction in grade twelve included a lesson which focused on drawing connections between the *drama* and violence going on in the lives of the Greek Gods, to that of the students. Ms. Azul provided the students with a definition of the word *simile* and told the students that they would encounter a lot of simile in the *Iliad*. Ms. Azul told the students that life with the Greek Gods was like a soap opera and that Goddesses were always getting involved in human lives. She explained the role of each God and Goddess. She instructed students to draw connections between the lives of the Greek Gods and their lives, and illustrated to the students that the connections are relevant today. Ms. Azul drew connections between themes in Greek tragedy such as war, greed, jealousy, envy, cheating, lying, floods, earthquakes, misery, and havoc, to similar themes in contemporary life. She illustrated the universality of the Greek themes to themes today.

In the second participant observation of Ms. Azul in grade eleven Advisory Preparatory, she distributed copies of *The Passing Away Poem* by Christina Rossetti. She told the students that

there was a literary analysis following the poem and also thirty questions to be answered. She told the students to answer the questions by selecting the most accurate answer because this was the way the Michigan Merit Test would be presented, and that this was good practice for them. She then modeled several examples of questions and answers using information from the students' experiences.

During the final observation of Ms. Azul, she gave instruction to grades ten, eleven, and twelve in Creative Writing. She told the students that they would be writing a screenplay or a short story. The students could write the story on the computer if they wished. She told them to create two sites, on which one site was to take the perspective of the superhero and the second site was to take the perspective of the villain. Students were to list, on each appropriate site, characteristics which they would attribute to the superhero and those they would attribute to the villain. The students could create the superhero and the villain or use existing ones, and the superheroes and villains could be of any race, color, gender, or size. In the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Azul did not address culturally relevant pedagogy further. She did use an artifact, *The Iliad* in her participant observation.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Azul elaborated on her use of culturally relevant literature in her responses to the Interview Guide by saying that she sometimes used culturally relevant literature, but not to a great degree. She reported that she did use culturally relevant magazines and articles in order to address social issues which were relevant to her African American students. She used prior knowledge related to the students' cultures in order to tap their interest in specific stories that she taught. She said she might use culturally relevant literature when teaching Creative Writing, but not consistently. When she taught, she did include African American history, and also used it

when she connected with students informally. She introduced culturally relevant literature when she connected tragic Greek characters to African Americans and when she taught the connections of African Americans to heroes in the Sky Curriculum.

During the first and second participant observations, wherein Ms. Azul instructed grade twelve, British Literature, and grade eleven, Advisory Preparatory, respectively, she was not observed to use culturally relevant literature. During the third participant observation, during which Ms. Azul taught grades ten, eleven, and twelve in Creative Writing, she instructed the students to create characters for their “Superhero/Villain” assignment, who could be any race, color, gender, or size. She told the students to keep the characters which they created “true to themselves” by scripting or blogging precisely what the character would say, and how the character would say it. The use of culturally relevant literature was minimally observed, as she modeled examples of communication in which the superheroes and villains might engage. She said that the communication should be suitable for blogging, i.e. “I’ll see you at the crib,” “I need to sky” and “my superhero homey.” In the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Azul provided no further information regarding culturally relevant literature. She did, however, provide extensive artifacts of culturally relevant texts, which are documented in Appendix A.

#### *Extent of Use of Teaching Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

In addition to the investigation of the use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant literature, the extent to which Ms. Azul used teaching strategies from African American familial culture was investigated. Ms. Azul informed about using activities and strategies from African American familial culture by saying that students can bring in art and music from home and they can engage in discussions related to holiday celebrations. She also allowed students to use the language of home and neighborhood solely in discussions and

allowed students to code switch in class. She reported that she does not use many African American cultural referents in class, other than books. She exposed students to new cultural ideas and then encouraged the students to compare them to what they already knew. Students could also relate their cultural experiences to the stories taught in class.

In the first participant observation, Ms. Azul instructed grade twelve in British Literature, and was observed to use teaching strategies from African American familial culture in her instruction of *The Iliad* when she told students to draw connections between the behaviors of the Greek Gods and the students and their families. She instructed students to reflect on the intense *drama* in the lives of the Greek Gods, and compare it to the kind of *drama* which students and their families might have on a daily basis. (Ms. Azul used the word drama in a slang fashion). Ms. Azul was not observed to use teaching strategies from African American familial culture in the second observation. In the third observation of Ms. Azul with grades ten, eleven, and twelve in Creative Writing, she was observed to use a teaching strategy from African American familial culture when she instructed the students to create their superheroes and villains using any race, color, gender, or size and to create them based upon the characteristics of family, friends, or extended family members. Ms. Azul did not further address the use of teaching strategies from African American familial culture in her Conclusion Interview.

#### *Use of and Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Ms. Azul reported that she used cultural modeling when she “acted out” a character in one of the stories or books which she taught, when she assigned essays related to hip-hop artists, and when she instructed students to role play a favorite hip-hop or rap artist. She focused on cultural modeling when she assigned students journal writings related to cultural heroes and when students were provided the opportunity to dramatize stories from their religious cultures. She

also displayed relevant posters of pop artists from African American culture. Finally, when

<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Strategies from African American Familial Culture</b>	<b>Cultural Modeling</b>
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students used the home language, excessively, Ms. Azul corrected them. She considered this to be vital in cultural modeling, in order to prepare students for the “real world”.

During the participant observations which were documented in the previous subtopics, Ms. Azul used cultural modeling when she discussed the *drama* in the lives of the Greek Gods, and how that drama was similar to that in the lives of the students. She encouraged the students to reflect on instances and examples of family *drama*. She also used cultural modeling in a subsequent class when she modeled the kinds of questions students would be expected to answer on the Michigan Merit Test by posing questions in a manner which related to student experiences. She used *The Passing Away Poem*, from which to select words, such as “pedantic” and “bane” and phrases such as “wise by signs” and “false point of wisdom”, for the purposes of definition and translation into words and phrases which the students could comprehend. Finally, Ms. Azul used cultural modeling in her final observation when she instructed students to create their own superheroes and villains using the characteristics of friends, family, and extended family, in order to create the characters in the assignments. In her responses to the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Azul did not further address cultural modeling.

Used only when teaching African American issues related to slaves; not a lot in lesson plans	Used when teaching creative writing; but not consistently	Used when students bring art and music from home	Used when she “acts out” a character
Used when making a comparison between Greek slaves and African slaves	Used when instruction includes African American history	Used during discussions related to how students celebrate holidays	Used when she assigns an essay related to a hip-hop artist
Used when she brings culturally relevant books and magazines from her home	Used when she connects tragic Greek characters to African Americans	Used when she allows students to use home and neighborhood language in discussions	Used when students use home language in writing and she corrects it
Used in discussions about culturally relevant issues	Used when she connects with students informally	Used when students may code switch in class	Used when students role play a hip-hop artist
Used when students read and wrote about culturally relevant articles in their journals	Used when she taught the connections of African American heroes in the Sky Curriculum	Does not use many African American cultural referents in class	Used when students wrote about a cultural hero in their journals
Used with the advisory preparatory students for college readiness with <i>Their Eyes Were Watching God</i>	Used when magazines and articles are used to address social issues which are relevant to African American cultural	Used when she exposes students to new cultural ideas then compares them to what they already know	Used when students view posters which illustrate pop artists from the students’ culture
Used when assigning students reading from <i>Superman</i> and <i>The Help</i>	Used when students’ prior knowledge is tapped for their interest in stories	Used when students relate their cultural experiences to assigned stories	Used when she models stories from their religious cultures

Table 9: Ms. Azul: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower, and Ms. Azul: Similarities and Differences among Urban/Blue School Teachers

*Teacher Biographies*

There are similarities and differences in the teacher biographies, use and the extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant literature, activities and strategies from African American familial culture, and cultural modeling among Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower and Ms. Azul, as urban high school English Language Arts teachers. There were distinct similarities. All teachers spent their full careers in the Charter District. They were all highly qualified certified teachers in English Language Arts. Each collaborated with other teachers in the English Language Arts Department. All teachers emphasized their passion for teaching and their aspiration to ready students for college education. Each teacher partnered with another teacher in her Department and served in some capacity on the Curriculum Planning Committee.

Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower and Ms. Azul all held a Master's degree from three diverse state universities. The degrees were all in the field of English. Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower indicated that they would like to earn Ph.D.'s in the future.

All three teachers said that they were highly satisfied in their current teaching location. All three teachers taught Language Arts. However, Ms. Royal instructed grades nine, ten and twelve in English Literature, Creative Writing, and Advisory Preparation. Ms. Cornflower taught grades nine and ten in English Literature, English Language Arts, and Creative Writing. Ms. Azul instructed grades eleven and twelve in English Language Arts, British Literature, World Literature, and Advisory Preparation.

Although all served on the Curriculum Committee, Ms. Royal functioned as English Department Head, Lead Teacher and Chair of the Curriculum Committee. Ms. Cornflower functioned as Curriculum Committee member, and served on the Homecoming Committee. Outside of the classroom, she is a Fellow in Writing and has presented papers to the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE). She also founded a club for students called *Build On*,

which teaches about global education and sends one student abroad each summer. She noted that she is extremely active in her church, sorority, and community. She mentioned that although she does not teach Advisory Preparation, that if she were to, her students would be very prepared for the world of work.

Ms. Azul functioned as the Coordinator of Senior Institute which is the curriculum for grades eleven and twelve, which prepares them for college education by developing life and work skills. She worked closely with a team teacher who assisted her in Senior Institute curriculum planning.

None of the three teachers had previously taught elementary, middle, or post secondary education. Although their instructional experience was in the high school, each differed in their years of experience. Ms. Royal had taught for twelve years. Ms. Cornflower had eight years of experience and Ms. Azul had four years of experience. Perhaps because of their varied lengths of teaching experience, their philosophies of teaching English Language Arts varied. Ms. Royal's philosophy emphasized exposing students to literature which could lead to authorship. Ms. Cornflower's focus was to expose students to a wide variety of genre and literature. Ms. Azul's primary objective was to prepare the students for college and careers.

All three teachers taught from the Sky Curriculum which was adopted by the Charter District, and expressed satisfaction with the curriculum choice, notably because they perceived it was well aligned with State and National *Standards* and Benchmarks. Ms. Royal expressed that the curriculum allowed her to "hit" specific benchmarks and pace the students appropriately. Ms. Cornflower stated that she was "very happy that the District had adopted Sky," because it allowed her to "check the students' benchmarks." Ms. Azul reported that the principles in the Sky Curriculum afforded guided practice, independent practice, meeting Benchmarks and *Standards*, and preparation for the Michigan Merit Exam (MME), which was the factor which

drove the adoption of the current curriculum. All three teachers supplement the Sky Curriculum with their own resources, texts and materials

In addressing the curriculum in their lesson plans Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower and Ms. Azul had differing styles and instructional delivery. Ms. Royal described her style as prescriptive in that she spends a great deals of time planning for any number of classroom dynamics, so that she will able to give the students “what they need.” She allows the classroom to be organic and her delivery changed and modified to fit the organism of the class.

Ms. Cornflower described her style of instruction as relevant to students. She described herself as a lively and energetic person who liked to connect hip-hop to her lessons. She explained that her style of delivery went well with the curriculum because she supplemented the curriculum with her own materials and books.

Ms. Azul described her teaching style and delivery as very visual. She described herself as a visual person who firmly believes in using a large number and wide variety of graphic organizers. Because her students arrived at a very low achievement level, Ms. Azul said it was necessary to teach English and grammar before she could move on to other skills. College preparation was foremost in her teaching priorities. Therefore, her delivery focused college readiness, usage of Standard English, and knowledge of the classics.

Prior to being asked in the interviews about their relationships with their principal and District Administration, all three teachers expressed a very positive working relationship with their principal and the District Administration. Ms. Royal explained that the one thing she really admired about her principal is that she affords Ms. Royal mutual respect when they disagreed on an issue. They would “agree to disagree.” Because the District is located on the campus, the

administration is accessible and so far the decisions which they have made have kept the school running effectively.

Ms. Cornflower got along “really well” with her principal and applauded the administration for its idea of team teaching, which she said is extremely helpful to the students because they experienced tremendous growth. She and her team teacher are called the “dynamic duo” and it would be difficult to “get along without him.” She understood early on that sometimes the principal and Administration must make unpopular decisions, but at the Blue School, teachers always had the opportunity to give input.

Ms. Azul confided that her values in education are reflected in those of her principal. She said “we are often on the same page.” The District Administration “called the shots” in that they mandated the curriculum, what was being taught, and how it was being taught. However, because the teachers play an important role in curriculum planning, they feel as though they have some influence on District decisions. Ms. Azul said that she not “only” worked on curriculum, but that she is also the Coordinator of Senior Institute and an Advisory Preparatory teacher, so she has a great deal of interaction and potential influence with the District Administration.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower and Ms. Azul reported on their use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy and illuminated the similarities and differences in their usage. Ms. Royal explained that she used a culturally relevant pedagogy in curriculum planning and lesson delivery when she consistently used African American texts, poems, short stories, plays, and magazines due to her perceived underrepresentation of African Americans in the curriculum mandated texts. She also infused African American history into her delivery. She addressed African American contributions to literature in her lessons. She made a conscious effort to focus

lesson planning on African American life themes. She consistently introduced emotions, affects, and feelings related to African American life into her lessons. Ms. Royal encouraged students to write from an African American perspective and reminded students that they represented African American communities.

Ms. Cornflower reported that she, similarly, used a culturally relevant pedagogy by using diverse resources and including culturally relevant literature. She also engaged the students in culturally relevant issues, much like Ms. Royal. She used African American texts, short stories, poems, and cultural artifacts in her lessons. Unlike Ms. Royal, she connected the classics to African American experiences. Like Ms. Royal, she used personal resources, texts, materials, and African American history in her lessons. Similarly, to Ms. Royal, she taught from an African American perspective and was also attentive to Standards and Benchmarks. She described her pedagogy as one which spoke to the human experience of African Americans.

Ms. Azul was quite different from Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower in her teaching pedagogy. She said that she did not use a culturally relevant teaching pedagogy, except when teaching African American issues related to slaves. She did not use a culturally relevant pedagogy in lesson planning. Unlike Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower, Ms. Azul used this pedagogy when making comparisons between Greek slaves and African slaves. Similarly to Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower, Ms. Azul attempted to reflect upon a culturally relevant pedagogy when she brought in culturally relevant books and magazines from home, discussed culturally relevant issues with students, assigned students reading and writing related to culturally relevant articles, and assigned students in Senior Institute the novels *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *Superman* and *The Help*, for college readiness.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

There were distinct similarities and differences among the three teachers in their use and extent of use of culturally relevant literature. Ms. Royal used culturally relevant literature during her lesson when teaching the short story *Marigolds* by Eugenia Collier. She focused on characterization, language, and theme in the observed lesson. She also taught a lesson using an article about Lil' Wayne, a prominent rapper, in which her focus was on the influence which rappers may exert on young fans. In addition, she reported that she used articles related to issues such as hip-hop and neighborhood crime. She also used culturally relevant books, magazines, trade books, poems, short stories, novels, and plays in her lesson plans. Ms. Royal was consistently conscious of the need for culturally relevant literature, to the extent of using it with graphic novels. In the students' assigned journal writing, she used culturally relevant selections for writing topics.

Ms. Cornflower expressed that she "loved" teaching with culturally relevant materials. She was observed discussing an article related to Lil' Wayne's release from prison. She used African American history, when appropriate, in her lessons and looked, constantly, for graphic novels with African American characters. She discussed contemporary plays such as *Madea* by Tyler Perry. Similarly to Ms. Royal, she used magazines such as *Ebony*, *Black Enterprise*, and *Vibe* with her students, and also articles related to *hip-hop* culture. She also encouraged students to bring in articles for discussion.

Recurrent sources, themes, and materials emerged from the comparisons, such as *Lil' Wayne*, *hip-hop culture*, *culturally relevant books*, *magazines*, *short stories*, *graphic novels*, *African American history*, and *current articles*. Recurrent patterns of usage, such as *journal writing*, *discussion*, and *African American characterization*, also emerged from the teacher comparisons.

Ms. Azul reported using culturally relevant literature when teaching creative writing, but not consistently. She explained that she might use African American history when her lesson “called for it.” She noted that she has used culturally relevant inferences when she compared tragic Greek characters to African Americans, and if she connected, informally, with students, she might “mention a piece.” When teaching the Sky Curriculum, she made connections with African American heroes to those cited within the Sky content. Ms. Azul used culturally relevant magazines and articles which addressed social issues related to African Americans and used the students’ prior knowledge in order to “tap into” culturally relevant literature when that literature was taught.

Ms. Azul’s use of culturally relevant literature differed from that of Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower in that she reported that she seldom used it and then only in specific instances such as drawing connections within characterizations. She did, however, illustrate common usage patterns when she identified *articles, magazines, and African American history* in her lesson plans.

#### *Extent of Use of Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Comparisons were also made in the use of strategies from African American familial culture. Ms. Royal responded in interview that she assigned journal writing about African American traditions, family experiences, special occasions, and events. She also assigned essays about familial traditions, events and/or experiences in class and engaged the students in discussions related to those experiences. Ms. Royal was observed making comparisons to the familial experiences in the short story *Marigolds* to the students’ familial etiquette, training, and behavior when dispatching students to their job shadowing assignments.

Ms. Cornflower, similarly to Ms. Royal, assigned essays in her lessons related to family trips, holiday celebrations, vacations, and other special events. She also engaged the students in discussions concerning holiday traditions, trips, and special events. She also encouraged students to value their culture. In contrast to Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower assigned the collection, description and presentation of cultural artifacts.

Ms. Azul incorporated strategies from African American familial culture by inviting students to bring art and music from home. She also engaged students in discussions related to familial holiday celebrations. She allowed students to use the language of home and neighborhood in discussions and permitted code switching. In contrast to both Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower, Ms. Azul reported that she used limited cultural referents in her lessons. However, she did report, in interview, that she exposed students to “new cultural ideas” and compared those ideas to what students already knew. She did encourage students to relate their cultural experiences to short stories in her lessons.

In reference to item and pattern analysis, journal writing, essays, and discussions related to *holiday traditions, celebrations, special occasions and events, trips, vacations, and family experiences* were recurrent in the case studies of Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower. Respect and value of the students’ culture were common themes between Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower. The comparison of *cultural characteristics* of story characters to those of the students and their families was a common strategy used by Ms. Royal and Ms. Azul. Sharing cultural artifacts was a common strategy used by Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower. In contrast to both Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower, Ms. Azul used home language and code switching, as a strategy in her lessons.

#### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Comparisons were made in the use of cultural modeling among the three teachers at the Blue School. Ms. Royal was observed using cultural modeling when she dramatized the character *Lizabeth* in the story *Marigolds* and when she was observed singing *I'm Bad* from the Michael Jackson repertoire. She further modeled the tone and dialect of southern characters in the short story *Marigolds*. She reported that she infused characters, songs and music, artwork, and posters from the students into her lesson plans. She modeled contrasting appropriate and inappropriate behaviors in order to identify which behaviors were to be displayed during the students' job shadowing experiences. She counseled students regarding impression management in the workplace including dress, grooming, and personal hygiene.

Ms. Cornflower, in contrast to Ms. Royal, used the students' home language in her lesson plans. She also taught students how to code switch from African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to Standard English. It should be noted that this modeling was similar to the familial strategy reported by Ms. Azul on an earlier construct, which indicated that overlapping of cultural elements was plausible in the study. Ms. Cornflower, like Ms. Royal, encouraged students to bring songs, music, books, and art to share with the class. She used visual aids when she taught stories, poems, and plays, and used dramatization when she taught characterization. Ms. Cornflower modeled questions concerning characterization when she taught the poem *The Weary Blues* by Langston Hughes. Much like Ms. Azul's use of a strategy from familial culture, Ms. Cornflower modeled presentation of cultural artifacts.

Ms. Azul was very similar to Ms. Royal on the construct of cultural modeling. She *acted out* characteristics during a lesson and provided students' the opportunity to do so with stories from their religious cultures. Like Ms. Cornflower, she assigned essays about hip-hop artists and allowed students to role play their "favorite" hip-hop artists. Like Ms. Royal, she also displayed

posters which illustrated hip-hop and pop artists from the students' culture. Ms. Azul reported that although she permitted the students to use their home language and (AAVE), she corrected them when they did. This was very similar to Ms. Cornflower who taught students how to code switch between (AAVE) and Standard English. Lastly, Ms. Azul was observed modeling the characteristics of heroes and villains when she assigned students to create, characterize, and blog about a hero and villain of choice in Creative Writing class. This was similar to Ms. Royal who modeled appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for the students engaged in job shadowing.

A recursive analysis was acknowledged in that analysis moved back and forth between inductive analysis and deductive analysis. Specific items were used to build more general explanatory statements and general explanatory statements were applied to groups of specific items. This resulted in what LeCompte and Schensul (1999) termed a process of developing item, pattern, and interpretive levels of analysis. In the investigation of item and pattern analysis, recurrent words and phrases emerged among the three teachers at the Urban/Blue School, which included *acting out, dramatization, code switching, Lil' Wayne, AAVE, bringing materials from home, culturally relevant books, plays, poems, magazines, stories, visual aids, posters, use of songs, music and art, and presentation of artifacts, holiday traditions, special occasions, language of the home, and African American history*. These recurrent themes, among the Blue School teachers, were interpreted to mean that a pattern of culturally relevant elements, based upon the conceptual framework of the study, was established. Although Ms. Azul reported, in an interview, that she did not use many African American cultural referents in her classes, there was evidence, in the study, that within the construct of cultural modeling, she frequently modeled, and encouraged students to model, a variety of behaviors related to culturally relevant literature.

## Findings

### Metro-City English Language Arts Teachers

#### *Metro-City District/Yellow School Portrait*

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright were high school English Language Arts teachers in the Metro-City District which included two elementary schools, one high school, and one online adult education school. The district states that its mission is to create and maintain an environment that ensures through high expectations, maximum professional commitment, and concerted effort by every member of the school community, that every student reaches a high level of academic achievement as determined by State and National *Standards*. They commit to a comprehensive system of effort to ensure this outcome. The high school, under study, in the district, reported a 38% graduation rate for students and a 26.5% dropout rate. More than 50% of students receive free lunch. The three teachers, under study, taught in the Metro-City high school/or Yellow School.

The District administers revenues, expenditures, and curriculum for the Yellow school, which serviced 1385 students in grades nine through twelve in 2010-2011 school year, all of whom were African American. The high school received an overall rating which showed that students performed on average much worse than most other schools across the state on the MEAP and MME state exams in the following subjects: English Language Arts, Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Writing.

The teacher to student ratio is 1:34. The Yellow School, constructed in 1977, has three floors, a garage and shop area, on site police mini station, and is surrounded by parking facilities from an old Ford factory. The Yellow School and its District were located near a large Metropolitan City.

The three English Language Arts teachers in the Metro-City/ or Yellow School, within this District have, combined, sixty four years of teaching experience. One of the teachers, under study, attended the Yellow School. The following information, used to construct the teacher profiles and case studies, was gleaned from the Interview Guide and the participant observations.

#### Ms. Canary Case Study #4

##### *Teacher Profile*

Teacher number four, Ms. Canary, from the Yellow School, was an African American female who had been teaching in secondary education for twenty four years in English Language Arts. She taught grades nine through twelve. Her principle responsibilities included chairing The Homecoming Committee, teaching English Literature, teaching English Literature Arts, and mentoring younger teachers. Her philosophy of teaching Language Arts was to help younger teachers and mentor the students. She reached each student on an individual bases and told the students that no one is treated the same. She attended the Yellow School “back in the day.” She said her teaching style can be described as “hyper.” She was not used to sitting down, and walked around constantly.

Ms. Canary said the curriculum that she has embraced is the Maize Curriculum along with Michigan *Standards*. She liked this curriculum because it included reading readiness and writing. She explained that the content that she teaches comes from the Maize Curriculum, selected literature texts, and Michigan Benchmarks that allowed her to address the State requirements. Her greatest challenge was the fact that over the past seven years, the school had eight principals. She added that neither the principals, nor the District administration were aware that students have changed. She stated, “This generation has changed and we have to change with them. The first thing the District wants to do is suspend students. I don’t suspend students.

I got my own way of dealing with students. If they go home, they're going to hang out in the streets. Students need to stay right here in school. Their attention spans are shorter and they don't have role models. That is why they need to stay in school." Ms. Canary said that when she was going to school, she had a totally different experience. Her teacher education taught her that the kids also need life skills.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Canary's use of culturally relevant pedagogy was investigated. Her teaching pedagogy was originated from Maize Curriculum. She stated that the Maize Curriculum mandated what she must teach and the pedagogy that she used. She was taught from a relevant pedagogy. She taught the students about Black role models, and took the freedom to teach them as African American students. She used culturally relevant materials and their culture to empower the students. She said she makes the students feel proud to be Black. Culturally relevant posters were displayed. She also provided schemas about famous African Americans. Ms. Canary went on to explain that because the Yellow School had adopted the Maize Curriculum, that it was very difficult to teach from a Black pedagogy. She said the students learning styles were very diverse and she was constantly talking to them about this issue. She said she explained to the kids, that because of diverse learning styles some students hadn't learned the same things as others. Some students will go to college and some are not college material. Some of students have to be taught manners and rules of courtesy. She informed the students that everybody is not college material and that some of them will be going to work straight from high school. She said that this is her way of supporting the students.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Canary's teaching pedagogy in her instruction of twelfth grade English Literature, her lesson plan included writing definitions of thirty literary

terms and the completion of the Comprehensive Check from the *Language of Literature* textbook. The lesson also included writing the definitions for six additional terms, the completion of Vocabulary Action, and the writing exercise from their *Language of Literature* textbook, as well. In her examples for the definitions, Ms. Canary referenced African American examples.

During the second participant observation, which was Ms. Canary's instruction of tenth grade English Literature, she introduced the lesson by having the students take turns reading aloud. The story they read was *Two Friends* by Guy De Maupassant. Following the reading, Ms. Canary explained that this was a multicultural story and that whenever the students read a story from another culture, they should try to put themselves in that character's shoes. She also told the students that the backdrop of the story was during the French and Prussian war and that *irony*, one of their literary terms, played a part in the story. She told the students that needed to answer the questions at the end of the story. Before the students began the assignment, Ms. Canary drew upon the students' prior knowledge as she discussed with them how it would be, if a person was a close friend with a person from a different culture. She asked the students if they had friends from other races and cultures. She then asked the students why people tended not to have friends from other races and cultures.

During the third participant observation, which was Ms. Canary's instruction of eleventh grade English Literature, she introduced the lesson by having the students write the definition of five parts of speech. Prior to students beginning their assignments, she informed the students that during tomorrow's class that they would be downstairs in the school garage, working on the Homecoming float. She instructed the students to be creative when designing the float and to

allow the float to be reflective of their school and home lives by giving it their own flavor. In the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Canary added nothing further in regards to pedagogy.

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Canary discussed her use of culturally relevant literature. Her methodologies, learning activities, and specific strategies evolved, based upon the curriculum content from Maize Curriculum. She noted that she always constructed an African American book list for the students and used African American magazines such as *Ebony* and *Jet* in the classroom. She used newspaper articles about African American people and African American texts, stories, and poems. She used units from the Maize Curriculum, but substituted Black people for many of the characters. In addition, she discussed African American poets and their poems and showed African American videos.

In the initial participant observation of Ms. Canary in her instruction of grade twelve in English Literature, she was observed to use culturally relevant examples for several literary terms, including drama, analogy, and anecdote. These examples included Morgan Freeman, who is well known for drama, starring in the movie *The Bucket List*, which illustrated the term *analogy*. She said that the jokes which Morgan Freeman made were examples of *anecdotes*. In the second observation of Ms. Canary in her instruction of grade ten in English Literature, she taught a multicultural story, *Two Friends*. She encouraged students to draw connections between the two friends in the story and their own friends. In the final observation of Ms. Canary in her instruction of grade eleven in English Literature, she instructed the students to brainstorm about ethnic and cultural ideas that they would actually incorporate into the building of their Homecoming float. She encouraged students to use words and pictures on the float in order to give it the “flavor” of their school culture. Ms. Canary did not further address the use of

culturally relevant literature in the Conclusion Interview. However, she did invite the investigator to peruse her collection of artifacts.

*Extent of Use of Teaching Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

In addition to the investigation of the use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant literature, the extent to which Ms. Canary used teaching strategies from African American familial culture was investigated. Ms. Canary informed about using activities and strategies from African American familial culture (Hale-Benson, 1986) by saying that she assigned journal writing about the family life of students. She also assigned essays wherein students wrote about trips and vacations which they have taken, or which they would like to take. In addition, she assigned journal writing about special events which the students have attended or awards which the students have received. She assigned poetry writing, which could be related to a member of their family or the family pet and projects which were related to holiday celebrations. She also instructed the students on collage construction from photographs which focused on family members.

In the initial participant observation of Ms. Canary's instruction of grade twelve in English Literature, she told students to write the definitions of their literary terms along with examples, for each, of which they were familiar. She noted that the examples could be friends, celebrities, or family members. In the second observation, Ms. Canary instructed the grade ten English students to write a reflection about the short story *Two Friends*, using themselves and their friends as the focus. In the third observation, Ms. Canary instructed the grade eleven English Literature students to brainstorm ideas for the Homecoming float based upon their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Ms. Canary did not further address the use of teaching strategies from African American familial culture in her Conclusion Interview.

*Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	Culturally Relevant Literature	Strategies from African American Familial Culture	Cultural Modeling
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Ms. Canary said she used cultural modeling when she often modeled a mother figure for the students, in that some of the students needed her to be “momma” some of the time. She also allowed students to use Ebonics. She modeled using good manners with the students. She explained that she used hip-hop music to get their attention and rap music to empower them. She assigned journal writing related to musical artists and role plays and characterizations of musical artists which students identified as their favorites.

During the first participant observation, in grade twelve English Language Arts, Ms. Canary used cultural modeling when she dramatized examples of the literary terms using celebrity Morgan Freeman for *drama* and later using Beyonce’ for *expression*. She also used cultural modeling when she dramatized the relationship between the two friends in the story, *Two Friends*, by role playing the difficulty involved in having a friend of another race or culture. She quipped, “You know how people talk.” She used cultural modeling again during her instruction, when she gave examples of favorite items which the students could bring from home, and place on the Homecoming float. She suggested CD’s, pictures, words, and slogans from their culture. In her responses to the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Canary did not further address cultural modeling.

Taught about Black Role Models	Created African American book list	Assigned journal writing about family life	She modeled mother figures
Took the freedom to teach them as African Americans	Used Black magazines i.e. Ebony and Jet	Assigned essays about holidays	Allowed students to use Ebonics
Used culturally relevant materials	Used articles about Black people	Assigned essays about trips and vacations	She modeled using good manners
Displayed culturally relevant posters	Used African American texts, stories and poems	Assigned journal writing about special events and awards	Used hip-hop music to get their attention
Used their culture to empower them	Used units from Maize Curriculum but substituted Black people	Assigned poetry writings about pets	Used rap music to empower them
Made them feel proud to be Black	Discussed African American poetry	Assigned projects related to holidays	Assigned writing related to musical artists
Provided schemas about African Americans	Showed African American videos	Assigned collages about family	Assigned role plays and characterizations of favorite artists

Table 10: Ms. Canary: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

## Ms. Coward Case Study #5

*Teacher Profile*

Teacher number five, Ms. Coward, the Yellow School, was an African American female who had been teaching in secondary education for ten years. She taught grades nine and ten. Her principle responsibilities included teaching English Language Arts and English Literature. Her overriding philosophy of teaching was to “just teach them, wherever you reach them”, or from a “get in where you fit in” approach. Once she observed where the student was academically, she moved forward from that point to address the student’s educational needs. Ms. Coward described herself as a teacher who is basically laid back, and who used “freestyle” in her teaching methodologies. Her style evolved from her teaching experiences.

Ms. Coward revealed that her English Language Arts teaching experience was mixed. Her undergraduate degree is in English. In high school she had “two good teachers and two bad ones.” In college she had some “bad ones and some good ones.” She said this affected her teacher education. Language Arts was an important area of study, according to Ms. Coward, because you cannot do anything if you cannot read, write, or think critically. She said it was needed for college and work, although she felt that many of her students would not go on to college. She also said that students needed reading and writing skills in order to complete employment applications. For many students, she said “everything begins and ends at school.”

Ms. Coward was very adamant concerning the curriculum in the Yellow School. The school administration adopted the Maize Curriculum. However, it was too advanced for the students. Therefore, Ms. Coward provided the students with her own supplemental materials which she aligned to the stories from the curriculum. She noted that her curriculum varied greatly from the

curriculum which the teachers were “made to follow.” The reason her curriculum varied was because she made decisions about student needs.

She noted that her teacher education did not influence her curriculum choices or the content which she taught the students. She said her personal opinions governed her choice in selecting supplemental materials. Although the District administration selected the Maize Curriculum, according to Ms. Coward, they did not enforce it. “Teachers are left to their own devices here and teachers are not systematically evaluated.” For this reason, Ms. Coward stated, “You are on your own and you make your own decisions.”

Ms. Coward appeared to reflect momentarily and then explained that Michigan Curriculum *Standards* and Benchmarks must be addressed. The Maize Curriculum, along with the Reading Program, was intended to address student achievement in *Standards* and Benchmarks. However, the school had no working computers with which to facilitate the Reading Program.

Despite the challenges, Ms. Coward liked the school in which she taught. She confided that she feels she is not that “far removed from the hood.” She got along well with the other teachers who she refers to as her “partners in crime.” She also had a great deal of freedom in deciding the content which she taught.

#### *Extent of Use of Cultural Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Coward’s use of culturally relevant pedagogy was examined. Her teaching pedagogy sprung from her teaching style and her philosophy of teaching. She used a “freestyle” teaching pedagogy. She made content decisions regarding what students needed based upon her perceptions and used culturally relevant materials whenever possible. She used her own materials to supplement the Maize Curriculum. She believed in teaching Black kids to think critically, and above all, to be able to read.

Ms. Coward was very sensitive to certain aspects concerning her students, especially their socioeconomic conditions. She was sensitive to things that went on inside of their homes. It troubled her when her students had exhausted funds on the family Bridge Card. For instance, she tried to engage her students in relevant discussions pertaining to what was going on in their lives. She used their prior knowledge when she taught. If the story she taught was emotional, then she would attempt to render some emotional issues which they may have dealt with in the past. If the story she taught was related to some current issue, then she would try to use the student's prior knowledge regarding these issues. Some of the topics which she discussed with students included eviction, assistance from Social Services, unplanned pregnancies, incarcerations, drugs, and gang membership.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Coward's teaching pedagogy in English Language Arts instruction of grade nine in English Literature, her lesson plan included a lecture on how the brain functions and how people may develop mental illness. She noted that mental illness runs in families and initiated a discussion regarding how to care for mentally challenged family members. Following the lecture and discussion she instructed students to turn to the play *Romeo and Juliet*. She assigned the students a reflection essay which focused on the mental health of Romeo and Juliet. After the reflections were written, Ms. Coward asked the students to share examples of mental health challenges, of which they had knowledge. She made the students aware that mental illness was not uncommon among African Americans, but it was a topic which African Americans rarely discussed because it was too embarrassing.

During the second observation of Ms. Coward's instruction of grade ten in English Literature, she introduced the lesson by instructing students to copy four movie categories from the board, along with a list of current movies. She instructed the students to place each movie

under its correct category. The categories were horror, comedy, drama, and family. She then repeated the exercise using music. She continued a similar format with additional exercises using food, clothes, and shoes. During her categorization, she noted that there existed Black comedy, drama, family movies, and music which were more familiar to African American culture. She said that specific foods were common to African American culture such as greens, macaroni and cheese, and chitterlings. Prior to completing the lesson, Ms. Coward noted that these categories existed for other groups, as well. She also explained that there are specific styles of clothes and shoes of which African Americans might be more familiar.

During the final observation of Ms. Coward's instruction of grade ten in English Literature, Ms. Coward instructed the students to gather around the computers in order to watch an episode of the show *Survivor*. She explained that thus far, there were several Caucasians, one African American female, and one African American male attempting to survive in the rugged outdoors. After viewing the episode, Ms. Coward instructed the students to write a reflection on what they would do if they were alone in the rugged outdoors, in order to survive. She asked the students to think about relationships they might form with the Caucasian survivors and to imagine what those relationships might be like. In the Conclusion Interview, Ms. Coward did not further address pedagogy.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Coward elaborated on her use of culturally relevant literature. Her methodologies, learning activities and specific strategies were based upon the Maize Curriculum and augmented by her own materials. She used an abundance of culturally relevant materials including culturally relevant books. She also uses articles from newspapers and magazines, which were related to African American life and life styles. She had a bevy of articles related to hip-hop and

rap culture, and the artists within these genres. She used articles and pictures from culturally relevant magazines such as *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Oprah*, and *Black Enterprise*, for the purpose of student reflections and collage construction.

Ms. Coward attempted to use culturally relevant literature, when possible. She used a lot of rap music because she listens to it herself. She liked Kanye West because he had a book of lyrics. She reported that the students liked him, as well. She used African American history, when appropriate, in her lesson plans. According to Ms. Coward, the students responded very positively to culturally relevant materials. Responses to the Conclusion Interviews did not include further information regarding culturally relevant literature.

Ms. Coward was also observed to use culturally relevant literature in her initial participant observation of her instruction of grade nine in English Literature, as she distributed a magazine article to the students which focused on mental illness. The article remarked that mental illnesses often have genetic causes and that many African Americans have mental diseases, but refrain from recognizing the diseases due to lack of education and embarrassment. Ms. Coward discussed the article with the students and later assigned a reflection essay related to the issue of mental illness in the characters of Romeo and Juliet and African Americans whom the students knew.

In the second participation observation, Ms. Coward used culturally relevant literature on the blackboard medium as she had students categorize movies, music, food, clothes, and shoes into specific genre/varieties in order to illustrate to students that in African American culture there are categories into which these items can be placed which are peculiar to that culture. Students were instructed to name specific movies, music, foods, clothing, and shoes, categorize them, and justify their categorization.

In the final participant observation of Ms. Coward in her instruction of grade ten in English Literature, she was observed to use the computer in order to facilitate the viewing of the television series *Survivor*. During the episode, she explained to the students that there was one Black male and one Black female among the other White survivors. After the episode was viewed, she instructed the students to write a reflection about the challenges of forming relationships with people of other races.

*Extent of Use of Teaching Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

In addition to the investigation of the use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally relevant literature, the extent to which Ms. Coward used teaching strategies from African American familial culture was investigated. Ms. Coward assigned journal writing related to sensitive issues such as the necessity of funding on one's Bridge Card. Journal writing was assigned regarding family conflicts and unplanned pregnancies. Ms. Coward assigned reflection papers related to family issues such as evictions, relocations, and foreclosures. She engaged students in discussions about holiday plans, and special events such as prom and Homecoming.

In the participant observations, Ms. Coward instructed students to write a reflection paper related to mental illness within their family dynamic. She further instructed students to engage in a categorization exercise in which the students identified movies, food, music, clothing, and shoes peculiar to African American culture. Finally, Ms. Coward instructed the students to write a reflection essay on how they would survive if they were alone facing the challenges of the rugged outdoors and were forced to form a relationship with a white person. Ms. Coward did not expound on the use of teaching strategies from African American culture in her Conclusion Interview.

*Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Ms. Coward used cultural modeling (Lee, 1993) when she played rap and hip-hop music to which students related. She shared stories about her childhood with the students. She used Ebonics when the students used Ebonics. She incorporated African American artwork into her lesson plans. She displayed hip-hop posters and used magazines in order to construct collages related to the stories which she taught.

During the participant observations, Ms. Coward used cultural modeling in her discussion of the incidence of mental illness within African American culture and the rarity of dialogue and treatment in regards to the illness. She explained that through the discussion of mental illness and other sensitive topics, she hoped to model how important these issues were to African Americans. She also used cultural modeling when she identified specific items peculiar to African American culture during her lesson on categorizing. Finally, Ms. Coward used cultural modeling, during the presentation of the *Survivor* episode, when she instructed the students to put themselves in the place of a lone African American attempting to survive among several Caucasians in the rugged outdoors. She asked them to imagine and then to write a reflection related to the challenges of forging a relationship with a person of another race.

Table 11: Ms. Coward: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Strategies from African American Familial Culture</b>	<b>Cultural Modeling</b>
Taught students where they are academically	Used culturally relevant materials	Assigned journal writing about sensitive issues i.e. not having Bridge Card	Used rap music
Used freestyle teaching pedagogy	Used culturally relevant books	Assigned journal writing about family conflicts	Used hip-hop songs
Made decisions about what students need	Used cultural relevant articles from newspapers	Assigned journal writing about unplanned pregnancies	Shared stories from her childhood
Used cultural relevant materials when possible	Used articles about hip-hop culture	Assigned journal writing about family moving to new location	Used Ebonics when students uses Ebonics
Used materials to supplement Maize Curriculum	Used articles about rap artists	Discussed the students' holiday plans	Used African art work
Taught Black kids to think critically	Used articles from cultural relevant magazines i.e. Ebony	Discussed the students' summer plans	Used hip-hop posters
Taught Black kids to read	Occasionally used articles from Black Enterprise	Discussed prom or Homecoming	Used magazines to construct collages related to stories

## Ms. Bright Case Study #6

*Teacher Profile*

Teacher number six, Ms. Bright, from the Yellow School, was an African American female who had been teaching in secondary education for thirty years in English Language Arts. She taught grades nine through twelve. She began her teaching career in Adult Education. She taught for several years in a shelter and had also taught under Title I legislation at a school. She taught at one school for twelve years and at another school for nine years. She has taught at her present location for the past eight years. Her principle responsibilities included teaching English Language Arts and the Reading Program; she also counseled students. The Reading Program was a novel program which combined English Language Arts with enriched reading instructions. Ms. Bright said that she did not have all of her materials, even though the District wanted her to begin the Program. Reading Program, she said, was evidently some new program that the District wanted to try out on the teachers. She was also responsible for working with students on the Homecoming float.

Ms. Bright said that her philosophy of teaching was really a personal perspective that says reading and writing should go together and that teachers shouldn't try to do everything separately. Kids do a better job when they can read and write together. She explained that they had embraced the Maize Curriculum and the Reading Program in the high school this year and were in the process of trying to align it. She said that in the curriculum, there is, for example, the play *Romeo and Juliet*, and that after the students read the play they write a reflection about the play. The students also had a grammar book and a literature book which were used in the curriculum. Her teaching style complemented her philosophy of teaching in that it is based on doing a combination of things. She tried hard to address the different learning styles of the

students, while keeping the lessons highly structured. She also integrated technology because “It’s very difficult to currently teach without including it,” although they had none at the school.

Ms. Bright elaborated on her motivation to become a teacher by revealing that her experiences in elementary, middle and high school were very different than the experiences of the students today. During her school career she was exposed to a lot of African American literature. One of the things she regretted was that they do not have a lot of those materials here in her present school. She said the students don’t have materials and those which they do have, she has brought from home. She focused a lot on writing because Language Arts is the most important subject for students to learn because it integrated all subjects. When one investigates math, social studies, and science, one finds that he/she cannot pass any of these subjects without the ability to read. With letters of recommendations, completing job applications, or taking tests for a job, one has to know how to read and write.

On the other hand, Ms. Bright said that her teacher education probably affected her thinking about how she will educate her students. Some of the students enjoyed working in groups. At first, when she asked them to get into groups they did not want to. They wanted to be alone and go online. Her Master’s work focused on cooperative education. Therefore, her emphasis was on group work. Many of the students did not know how to socialize and that was very sad. She kept modeling for them, how to socialize by making a good first impression, and having respect for one another. She taught the students to think critically in groups and to also brainstorm with one another.

Ms. Bright elaborated on the content which she taught by saying that it all came from the Maize Curriculum. The curriculum was selected for the school, but she had her own materials. She said if she had been the one selecting it, she would have selected curriculum content for the

urban child, but she wasn't the one who selected it. Much like the Reading Program, an individual selected it. According to Ms. Bright, "Everyone should have had the opportunity to decide on the curriculum, as well as the Reading Program. That way, the teachers could have selected it. But, they [District] just went ahead and selected it without consulting us. That's the way it is around here. The District motivated us to teach the Maize Curriculum, because they were the ones who selected it." Her curriculum varied from the Maize Curriculum because she brought in "my own stuff." She also waited for the students to comprehend the lesson. Some of the things in the Maize Curriculum the students couldn't do, so she embraced some of the things that she knew they could do. The students couldn't relate to many of the stories in the Maize Curriculum. These stories talked about skiing and all kinds of stuff that the students didn't know anything about. Therefore, she tried to include stories to which the students could relate.

Ms. Bright commented on State and National requirements by saying that she tries to align what she teaches to State requirements and National *Standards* while teaching the curriculum. Because teachers may never know where the student is going, in life, she wanted to make sure that the students got the information they needed. She attempted to make sure that she got all the *Standards* and the Benchmarks in during the semester. In deciding what content to teach, she first looked at the curriculum from Maize. Then she added her own materials which she perceived will make them successful in completing their assignments. She always took into consideration the preparation and set up time required for the lesson. She was always organizing and planning because she wants to be a model for her students and relied greatly on the opinions and collaborations of her colleagues. She had a lot of freedom in deciding what content to teach and to explore content options.

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Bright's use of culturally relevant pedagogy was questioned. Her teaching pedagogy sprung from her philosophy and perspective of teaching. A large part of her teaching pedagogy involved engaging the students in discussions about cultural issues that were important to them. The students talked about hip-hop, crime, what they're going to do on a certain day, or where they may be going to do it. She also addressed the learning styles of her students who were African American.

Ms. Bright went on to explain that the Yellow school had adopted the Maize Curriculum which impacted her teaching pedagogy. She reiterated that although they used that curriculum, she had to bring a lot of books and other materials from home. She did not use text books alone, but in addition, used other culturally relevant materials. Using the cultural materials helped the students to talk and write. She taught reading and writing together and addressed African American learning styles. She integrated English Language Arts with other subjects and exercised patience with her African American students. She taught positive stories which African American students could relate to as she supplemented the Reading Program with culturally relevant texts which she provided.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Bright's teaching pedagogy in English Language Arts instruction of grade nine in English Language Arts she was found teaching a lesson on the theme of courage and self concept. She modeled courage by posing specific questions about situations to the students such as bullying and intimidation. She then asked the students what they had been taught to do in situations like these. She lectured on the value of building a strong self identity in order to be courageous, fearless, and rational under frightening circumstances. During the second part of the lesson Ms. Bright elicited prior knowledge from the

students' related to job loss. She explained that in the short story *Marigolds*, a strong Black man had lost his job and worried that he could no longer support his family. Ms. Bright posed questions to the students about job loss, and asked them to put themselves in the "shoes of the father" in the story. She then assigned a reflection on the culturally relevant story which focused on families who faced difficult challenges.

Ms. Bright was also observed teaching grades nine through twelve in Speech Communication. She assigned the students an essay which focused on building the self concept and how building a strong positive self would lead to future success. She instructed the students to use their prior knowledge from their Student Interest Surveys in order to list qualities, interests, and characteristics about themselves, which would help to describe themselves. Ms. Bright stressed that this was a meaningful assignment which would illustrate values, likes, dislikes, and aspirations. Examples from the Student Interest Survey included favorite music, sports, activities, movies, books, wishes, and dreams.

Ms. Bright was observed a third time in grade nine English Literature. Her lesson focused on young love and parental reactions to premature love and dating relationships. She discussed the rules and traditions of contemporary culture, as they concerned dating and young love. She discussed forbidden love and connected her lecture to *Romeo and Juliet*. Following the discussion related to the cultural practices of dating, she assigned the students a reflection paper on forbidden love.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Bright elaborated on her use of culturally relevant literature. Her methodologies, learning activities, and specific strategies were based upon the curriculum content from the Maize Curriculum and her own materials. She emphasized that she brought her own culturally

relevant materials from home. She used African American history books, culturally relevant magazines, books, stories, and poems. She also used culturally relevant stories that dealt with contemporary topics such as strippers, pimps, and drug dealers, and used graphic novels, wherein she inserted African American characters. Finally, she showed culturally relevant videos and movies.

In the first participant observation of Ms. Bright in grade nine English Language Arts, she taught a lesson on the culturally relevant story *Marigolds*, by Eugenia Collier. She assigned the students silent reading of the story and explained that the story was about the courage people must have when they have suffered an adversity such as the loss of one's job. She then asked several questions regarding the story, using the student's prior knowledge. "This story is about a strong Black man who loses his job. So, how is he going to take care of his family? Can you imagine what it feels like to lose your job? Maybe someone close to you has lost their job. So start thinking about what you will write. What did they do? How did they react? Did they feel scared, hopeless, or helpless? What about their kids? How do you think they felt? What would you do? How would you feel if you lost your job? How do you think that you would take care of your family? What would you tell your kids? How do you think they would feel?" After providing time for the students to reflect on the questions, Ms. Bright assigned the students a journal writing in which they would respond to her questions.

In the second participant observation of Ms. Bright with grades nine through twelve in Speech Communication, she delivered a lesson on the cultural influences which create one's self concept. She explained the lesson by saying that, "Your culture which surrounds you, your parents, teachers, peers, and the media teach you values, attitudes, and beliefs. Most people compare themselves to these cultural standards. The cultural standards also include ideas and

notions about how you should look, dress, speak, and structure your life. Whether or not you accept or reject certain cultural standards or evaluate yourself by your own subjective standards, these experiences help to build your self-concept.” After explaining the lesson, Ms. Bright assigned the students an essay in which they were to write about what they aspired to be once school was completed. She instructed the students to use their prior knowledge about the job, career, or field of work that they wished to enter. It appeared that Ms. Bright introduced cultural referents in order to build a foundation for the self concept essay.

In the final participant observation of Ms. Bright with grade nine in English Literature, she tapped the students’ prior knowledge by asking them if they had ever been in love and if so, how did it feel. She asked the students whether or not their parents approved of the relationship. She then assigned oral reading of *Romeo and Juliet*. Following the oral reading, Ms. Bright assigned a written journal reflection. It did not appear that Ms. Bright presented *Romeo and Juliet* as a culturally relevant selection. Ms. Bright did not expand on culturally relevant literature in her Conclusion Interview.

#### *Extent of Use of Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Ms. Bright elaborated on her use of strategies from African American familial culture by noting that she engaged students in a variety of discussions related to their favorite foods, holidays, clothing, and activities. She also permitted students to use their home language in discussions and in their journal writing. She infused the home language into lesson plans and assigned essays on special events, such as prom and Homecoming. Ms. Bright also assigned journal writing related to family outings, trips, and vacations.

During the first participant observation, Ms. Bright used strategies from familial culture when she connected themes in the short story *Marigolds* to events in the lives of the students. In

the second observation, Ms. Bright implored the students to use their prior knowledge of their culture, parents, peers, and family members in order to identify cultural standards which the students have used to build their self concepts. In the third observation, Ms. Bright instructed the students to write a reflection related to a “love relationship” which their parents had forbidden. She drew connections from the theme of *Romeo and Juliet* to the possible love relationships in which the students had been involved. Ms. Bright did not expand on familial strategies in her Conclusion Interview.

### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

In interviews, Ms. Bright described her use of cultural modeling in discussions about African American art, rap music, and crime in the neighborhoods. She also modeled when she engaged the students in discussion focused on the “relevant nature” of Troy Davis’ execution. She used cultural modeling again when she permitted students to discuss hip-hop and rap artists and when she used the stories in hip-hop songs in order to connect the short stories she taught to real life situations. She used music, such as jazz and fusion in her lessons. She also used hip-hop songs and stories within the songs in order to draw connections to real life situations. Ms. Bright also spoke in Ebonics in order to “connect” with the students.

During the first participant observation, Ms. Bright was observed to use strategies from familial culture when she asked the students to reflect on “how the strong Black man” in *Marigolds* felt when he lost his job, and then to draw connections to their own family members and how they might feel if they experienced a job loss. She used cultural modeling in the second observation when she instructed students to “think of how they received their identities from their parents and siblings.” In the final observation, Ms. Bright assigned students roles and oral reading from the play *Romeo and Juliet*, in order to dramatize the gravity of forbidden love.

Table 12: Ms. Bright: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Strategies from African American Familial Culture</b>	<b>Cultural Modeling</b>
Taught reading and writing together	Brought materials from home	Discussed the students' favorite foods	Discussed art
Taught to address Black learning styles	Used African American history books	Discussed students' clothing selections	Discussed Troy Davis execution
Integrated English Language Arts with other subjects	Used culturally relevant magazines	Allowed students to use home language	Discussed rap artists
Used her own culturally relevant materials	Used culturally relevant books, stories, and poems	Allowed students to write using their home language in their journals	Used hip-hop to connect stories to real life
Had patience with Black students	Used culturally relevant stories i.e. about strippers, pimps, and drug dealers	Infused home language into lesson plans	Used music in the lessons i.e. Jazz
Taught positive stories which the Black kids can relate to	Used graphic novels and puts in Black characters	Assigned essays on special events i.e. prom and Homecoming	Discussed crime in the "hood"
Used supplemental Reading Program with culturally relevant texts	Showed culturally relevant videos	Assigned journal writing about vacations and trips	She spoke in Ebonics

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright: Similarities and Differences Among  
Metro-City/ Yellow School Teachers

*Teacher Biographies*

There were similarities and differences in the teacher biographies, use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant literature, activities and strategies from African American familial culture, and cultural modeling among Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright, the three urban high school English Language Arts teachers in the Yellow School. Ms. Canary had twenty four years of teaching experience with the most of those years at the Yellow School. Ms. Coward had ten years of teaching experience in the Yellow School. Ms. Bright had thirty years of teaching experience, which included teaching in a girl's shelter for nine years, Title I education for twelve years, and nine years at the Yellow School.

All three of the teachers were certified in English Language Arts. At least one collaborated with one of the other teachers, under study. Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward served on the Homecoming Committee. All three of the teachers indicated that their students at the Yellow School came from "at risk" populations and that the students were primarily, being prepared to enter the workforce. All three teachers indicated frustration and dissatisfaction with the District, in that, needed materials were not provided in order to meet the adopted curriculum, especially the Reading Program, and that the transition of eight principals in seven years affected their ability to provide effective instruction.

Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward held Master's degrees in English. Ms. Bright held a Master's in Speech Communication. All attended State Universities. Ms. Canary and Ms. Bright indicated a "devotion" to their students although they were not satisfied with the current District and School Administration. Ms. Coward indicated that teachers, such as herself, were often subject to

“burnout,” especially since the teacher salaries at the Yellow School were in jeopardy. Ms. Canary also indicated displeasure regarding the “payday situation,” but said that she remained at the Yellow School because the students needed her. Both Ms. Canary and Ms. Bright indicated that they did have a desire to retire from their professions in the “not too distant future.”

All three teachers taught English Language Arts; however, Ms. Canary instructed grades nine through twelve in English Literature. Ms. Bright instructed grades nine and twelve in English Literature, Speech, and Creative Writing. Ms. Coward instructed grades nine and ten and some Special Education classes, in English, English Literature, and Reading. All of the teachers used Maize Curriculum which had been adopted by the District and all of the teachers expressed frustration in their inability to instruct the Reading Program portion of the curriculum, which was an integral part, due to the lack of functioning computers in the Yellow School.

Neither of the three teachers had previously taught in elementary, middle, or post secondary education. However, their philosophies of teaching English Language Arts varied. Ms. Canary’s philosophy included a return to the basics such as grammar, English Literature, learning literary terms, and applying terms to stories. She believed strongly in reading aloud to students and having them read aloud as well. She also encouraged independent reading in order to improve comprehension and attention to individual student learning styles. She championed mentoring because she was mentored and allowed students to be “heard.”

Ms. Coward differed in her philosophy in that she just took the students from where they were academically and “went from there.” Her teaching style was very individualized. She “read” the moods of students in order to deliver the lesson effectively. Ms. Bright differed from both Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward in that her philosophy suggested that reading and writing should always go together and that skills should not be taught separately. Her teaching style

addressed individual student learning styles, but was highly structured, with integrated technology when it was possible. All agreed that their mission was to prepare students for the “world of work.”

All three of the teachers at the Yellow School taught from the Maize Curriculum which was adopted by the Yellow School District. All three also expressed dissatisfaction with the Maize Curriculum but for varied reasons. Ms. Canary disliked the curriculum choice because the District had “gone back to slavery” in that there were only “outdated books” and “no materials” with which to carry out the curriculum. Ms. Coward explained her dissatisfaction by explaining that many of the books which were included in the curriculum were not supplied by the District. Therefore if the teachers don’t purchase the books, the students would not have them. She also explained that although the District wanted teachers to focus on the Reading Program curriculum, which is delivered primarily via computer, there are no working computers or printers in the school. Because the materials needed to teach the curriculum were not supplied, the teachers had to supplement materials and “fill in the gaps.” Ms. Coward was also unable to access Reading Program from home. Therefore, the District had mandated a curriculum which could not actually be taught. Ms. Bright was dissatisfied with the Maize Curriculum because it was “not relevant to the urban child.”

The Maize Curriculum was touted to address National and State *Standards* and Benchmarks; however, the curriculum Ms. Canary addressed focused on the MEAP test, life skills, available materials in school, and “stuff she brought from home.” Ms. Coward indicated that the *Standards* and Benchmarks were addressed in the Maize Curriculum, as well as teacher accountability, but there were no books to read in order to prepare to meet *Standards* and Benchmarks. Although, the Maize Curriculum provided a list of fiction and non-fiction, plays, and poems, the District

did not provide them. Ms. Bright divulged that although materials were not available, she knew “what the students needed” based upon years of teaching experience. She tried to meet the *Standards* and Benchmarks by bringing her own materials or getting them from the library.

The teaching styles of the three teachers were similar in that each collected their own materials in order to teach a viable curriculum. Ms. Canary described her style as motivational. Ms. Coward’s style was individualized and geared toward special education. Ms. Bright’s style was a combination of structure, individualized teaching, and infusion of technology.

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright had distinct opinions regarding their working relationships with their principals. Ms. Canary said that having eight different principals over the course of seven years made working at the school “very impersonal.” She did not believe that the principals had worked “hard enough” to keep the students in school. The excessive transition of principals made for “too many changes around the students,” and that the students needed more positive role models. Ms. Canary referred to the principals and District Administration as “crooks.”

Ms. Coward described the “disconnect” of the transition in principals by saying that whatever the principal tells her to teach, she teaches that. As far as support in the Yellow School, she said teachers are “on their own here.” She stated that she worked very hard, but never “got recognized.” She believed that teachers are “not evaluated” at the Yellow School. Ms. Bright explained that her principal “didn’t even know what she taught” because she had only talked to him a couple of times. Once she had a previous principal whom Ms. Bright wanted to review her lesson plans, and the principal had “gone into a big to do” about what every teacher needs to do before coming to see the principal. Thus, Ms. Bright expressed frustration and stated, “Nobody

has time for all that.” It appeared that the teacher/principal relationships were strained among all three teachers.

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright differed in their beliefs about how teacher education prepared them for the classroom. Ms. Canary’s teacher education focused on teaching students life skills, by mentoring students, and affirmed for her that English Language Arts was vital for all communication. Ms. Coward’s teacher education did not relate to “anything that she did currently.” She learned a lot from both the two colleges she attended, but she made her style her own. She thought Language Arts was important because students needed to know how to write, even in the informational age. She had grade twelve students who did not know how to write. Ms. Coward’s belief was that many of the students would be functional illiterates, because they were unable to read “simple information.” Reading in the content areas was an important focus for Ms. Coward. She’d had a very “mixed” experience in Language Arts when she was a child, and could remember only one good experience. Ms. Coward did not want that for her students.

Ms. Bright’s teacher education differed from that of Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward in that her Master’s degree focused on group work, and affected the way in which she taught her students and her total thinking process about education. She confided that her experiences in teacher education might irritate some students, because many of the students disliked working in groups. Ms. Bright’s graduate education also emphasized critical thinking and the use of taxonomies, which she passed on to her students.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright reported on their use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy and revealed similarities and difference. Ms. Canary’s pedagogy

was guided by State requirements, National *Standards*, and MEAP skills. Also guiding her was the Maize Curriculum and the “little few supplies that they give us.” Ms. Canary taught about black role models and took freedom in teaching the students from an African American perspective. She used culturally relevant posters and pictures. She remarked that she “used their culture in order to empower them.” She provided schemas which focused on the famous African Americans and attempted to instill pride in the students based upon their African American heritage.

Ms. Coward differed from Ms. Canary in her teaching pedagogy in that she described her style as “free.” She made decisions regarding lesson and curriculum planning based upon the needs of her students, and taught them from the point at which they were in their academic progress. Similar to Ms. Canary, she used culturally relevant materials when possible. She used supplemental materials with the Maize Curriculum. She believed that it was important to teach Black students to think critically and to teach them literacy skills.

Ms. Bright’s teaching pedagogy was similar to Ms. Coward’s in that she believed it was vital to teach students how to read. However, she stressed that reading and writing should be taught together. She taught in a manner which addressed the learning styles of African American students, as she integrated English Language Arts with the other subjects which she taught, which were Speech Communications and Literature. Like Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward, she used her own culturally relevant materials. She taught with patience and focused on positive short stories and articles to which the students could relate. Like Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward, she used supplemental culturally relevant texts and materials in order to teach the Reading Program.

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright demonstrated similarities and differences in their use of culturally relevant literature. Ms. Canary used culturally relevant literature when she established a book list with African American authors and titles, and used African American magazines such as Ebony and Jet. She used articles about Black people in her lessons and used African American texts, stories, and poems. When she taught units from the Maize Curriculum she substituted Black characters for those depicted in the units of the curriculum. Ms. Canary discussed African American poetry and showed African American videos.

Ms. Coward was much like Ms. Canary in her use of culturally relevant literature. She used culturally relevant materials such as books, articles from newspapers, articles from magazines such as Ebony and Jet, and occasionally from Black Enterprise. She differed from Ms. Canary in that she used articles about hip-hop and rap in her lessons.

Ms. Bright was very similar to both Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward in that she also used culturally relevant materials which she brought from home. She used culturally relevant magazines, books, short stories, and poems. She differed from Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward in that she used culturally relevant stories which focused on contemporary subjects such as strippers, pimps, and drug dealers. She taught African American history and showed African American videos, similarly to Ms. Canary.

*Extent of Use of Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright had differences and similarities in their use of strategies from African American familial culture. Ms. Canary assigned journal writing about the family lives of the students and essays about holidays, family trips, and family vacations. She

assigned journal writing about special event and awards. She assigned poetry writing related to pets, projects related to holidays, and family related collages.

Ms. Coward was similar to Ms. Canary in that she assigned journal writing as a strategy from familial culture; however, she encouraged students to write about sensitive issues such as lack of funds on the Bridge Card, being evicted, or having ones utilities disconnected. She also assigned students journal writing related to family conflicts, unplanned pregnancies, and family relocations. Ms. Coward differed from Ms. Canary in that she engaged the students in discussions related to holiday plans and celebrations, summer plans and vacations, prom, and Homecoming.

Ms. Bright differed from Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward in her strategies from familial culture. She engaged the students in discussions about favorite foods and wardrobe selection. She allowed students to use their home language in their journals. Ms. Bright also differed from Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward in that she infused the home language into her lesson plans. Similar to Ms. Coward, Ms. Bright assigned essays about special events such as prom and Homecoming and journal writings about family trips and vacations.

#### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright had similarities and differences in their use of cultural modeling. Ms. Canary reported that she used cultural modeling when she modeled a mother figure to the students because some of the students “need a momma.” She also modeled the use of appropriate manners and courtesies. She allowed the students to use Ebonics in class and used hip-hop music in order to “get their attention” and rap music to “empower them.” Ms. Canary assigned essays on musical artists and assigned role plays and characterizations of the students’ “favorite artists.”

Much like Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward used rap and hip-hop music and displayed posters of hip-hop artists. She also shared stories with the students which related to her childhood. Similar to Ms. Canary, she used Ebonics when the students used it. She displayed hip-hop posters and used culturally relevant magazines when she assigned students collages which were related to the short stories she taught.

Ms. Bright was very similar to Ms. Coward in her use of cultural modeling in that she engaged in discussions about artwork with the students she engaged the students in discussions about relevant issues such as the Troy Davis execution. Similar to Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward, she discussed rap music with the students and used lyrics from hip-hop songs in order to connect the short stories which she taught to real life. Ms. Bright used music such as jazz in her lesson plans, which was a departure from both Ms. Canary's and Ms. Coward's utilization of music. Similar to Ms. Coward and Ms. Canary, she spoke in Ebonics in the classroom. She also engaged students in discussions related to crime in the "hood."

An additional recursive analysis (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) was recognized in the comparisons of the teachers at the Metro-City/Yellow School. Specific items, groups of items, and interpretations were recurrent. This resulted in a pattern analysis of the culturally relevant elements. These included *black role models, culturally relevant materials, empowering students, hip-hop music, rap music, holiday traditions and celebrations, Ebonics, prom and Homecoming, hip-hop posters, use their own culturally relevant materials, use of home language, and African American history*. Identification of these items, groups of items, and interpretation of these groups of items, resulted in the documentation that the culturally relevant elements, illustrated in the conceptual framework of the study, were evident.

## Chapter 6

## Findings

*Suburban/Green School English Language Arts Teachers**Suburban District/Green School Portrait*

Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter and Ms. Forest were high school English Language Arts teachers in this suburban District which included three elementary schools, one preparatory school which serviced grades seven through nine, one Freshman Institute which serviced grade nine, and one high school, the Green School, which serviced grades ten through twelve, and one Alternative Education School which serviced children age 16 through 19. The district stated that its mission was: To provide quality education in which we respect students' individual and cultural differences, educate all students to meet or exceed the district's academic standards, and ensure that they possess the life skills necessary to become lifelong learners and productive citizens.

The high school/Green School, in the District, reported a 93% graduation rate and 41% of students received free lunch. The three teachers under study taught in the suburban high school/Green School. The District Administration's Board of Education, comprised of seven members, oversaw the revenues, expenditures, and curriculum guidelines for the Green School, which serviced 1623 students in the 2010/2011 school year. The district had assigned a Curriculum Consultant to the Green School, due to its AYP rating as a failing school. The Green School received an overall rating that showed it performed, on average, much worse than the other schools across the state on Michigan Merit Examinations in the subjects of English Language Arts, Math, Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Writing.

The teacher to student ratio in the Green School was 1:21 and the student population was 99% African American. The Green School was originally founded in the early 1800's and has

since been rebuilt and relocated to the high school it is today servicing a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and reporting that more than two-thirds of its graduates attended institutions of higher learning all over the nation.

The three English Language Arts teachers in the Suburban/ Green School, within this District had, combined, thirty seven years of teaching experience. Two of the teachers under study resided in the neighborhood of the District. The following information, used to construct the teacher profiles and case studies, was gleaned from the Interview Guide and the participant observations.

#### Ms. Verde Case Study #7

##### *Teacher Profile*

Teacher number seven, Ms. Verde, from the Green school, was a Caucasian female who had been teaching in secondary education for thirteen years in English Language Arts. She taught grades ten through twelve. Her principle responsibilities included teaching English Language Arts and interfacing with the curriculum consultant. She immediately mentioned that her teaching philosophy encompassed more than teaching day to day. She felt that all children could learn and succeed and that the only thing keeping them from doing so was an unfair educational system and that inequality in education was setting students up for failure. She said that the powers that be, effected class size, so the students didn't learn as much as they could. That is why her philosophy involved more than just teaching. She bought her own chalk, tissue, cups, and other supplies for the classroom. She tried to show the students that she is very passionate about equal and quality education.

Ms. Verde explained her teaching style, which she said was very strict in some areas, but very laid back in others. She liked to build a relationship with students, then, she is more able to

teach them. She had to be the “momma,” so she gives them love. The students also craved structure. Therefore, she built a relationship first, taught second, and loved them always. She said her Language Arts experience affected how she taught. Before college it was unremarkable, in that there was formal rote memorization. However, in college her teachers were really exceptional, she took creative writing which really opened her eyes and built her confidence to write positive things. She built relationships because they worked in small groups, and after each assignment the students would write something positive on individual index cards. The students were always writing positive things and it felt great to Ms. Verde. She said that the B\_\_\_\_\_ School District prepared her for college and that sometimes she feels she should be doing more to prepare her students for college. Her teacher education experience greatly affected her thinking and decisions about curriculum content. At her university she had Dr. T\_\_\_\_\_, who made her feel like she was going to be the best teacher ever. Dr. T\_\_\_\_\_ always said good teachers should have lots of stuff.

Ms. Verde explained that students need to be taught how to think and that current teaching taught students more about life skills and how to make decisions. She wanted to model that for the students, because English Language Arts was very important in helping the students to learn life skills, decision making, how to communicate, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. She also said that the District administration is very supportive and they also affected what is taught. The District made sure that all teachers were aligned in the curriculum and they had to abide by their directives. They had to abide by them because they had been doing “their own thing” for so long, that now they were “under the gun” to teach uniformly. The District strategies had to be supported because they have been proven to be successful.

In addition, Ms. Verde explained that she taught from the Lime Curriculum and that the school had a curriculum consultant who “called all the shots” on their curriculum. The lessons aligned with the State and National *Standards and Cores*. The curriculum included lessons that must align with the National *Cores* in order to meet standards for reading and writing and had been modified for the high school students. The curriculum was adopted in order to raise student achievement and the Curriculum Consultant was responsible for writing the specific curriculum, lessons, and strategies for the high school students. The teachers could provide input, but the curriculum did not vary. All the teachers had to teach the very same lessons in a specific grade and course.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Verde’s use of culturally relevant pedagogy was explained. Her teaching pedagogy originated from her philosophy of teaching which was to provide all students an equal and quality education via a passionate delivery. In her teaching pedagogy, she was attentive to fairness and equality. She taught in a manner which motivated students to achieve success in an unfair system. She believed in being a mentor to kids and was sometimes very strict like a “momma”. She strongly believed in building relationships with students and giving the students an abundance of love. She used culturally relevant materials in her teaching pedagogy.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Verde’s teaching pedagogy in Creative Writing with grades ten, eleven, and twelve, she taught a unit on *Freedom Writers*. Using excerpts from the novel, Ms. Verde presented the students with a characterization of the teacher in the book, as well as character sketches of some of the students in the novel. She explained to the students that *Freedom Writers* was a novel to which the students could really relate, because it was about urban culture, an inner city high school, and students including African Americans,

who faced challenges on a daily basis. She further explained to students that the novel was written in the form of a diary or a journal of their school experiences, as well. She then assigned a journal reflection about the novel.

During the second observation of Ms. Verde's teaching pedagogy in English Language Arts with grade ten, she taught a poem from the Monthly Unit entitled *Blues for All the Changes* by Nikki Giovanni. She explained to the students that in each Unit there were African American and multicultural authors whom the students would write about. After reading the poem aloud, Ms. Verde instructed the students to write a poem called *One Year Ago* which would explain what they were doing one year ago. She posed questions which the students could respond to in order to write their poems. These questions included, what was going on with you, your family, or in your neighborhood? Were you living in a different place? What kind of music were you listening to? Were attending a different school? Were you doing something with your brothers and sisters? Were you o.k.? If not, what happened? Try to remember that friend you were hanging out with. What were you doing? Were you getting ready for Halloween?

In the third observation of Ms. Verde in English Language Arts with grade ten, she had assigned students three poems by African American authors. During this lesson, the students were to write a brief reflection, in their journals, about each poem. Students would then present their poems. Ms. Verde reminded the students to speak clearly, be respectful, and give lots of "sparkles" (praise by finger snaps) to each other.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Verde elaborated on her use of culturally relevant literature. Her methodologies, learning activities and specific strategies were based upon the curriculum content from the Lime Curriculum. She used culturally relevant literature in her lessons, in the form of books,

magazines, poems, graphic novels, plays, and videos. She said although they did not decide the content to teach, there was a degree of freedom in teaching from a culturally relevant perspective. Students were allowed to infuse the language of home at school, in that code switching was used, however, she taught them when to use it. Some cultural referents were used at school when the students brought materials from home. Using the referents appeared to empower the students.

During the first participant observations, Ms. Verde was observed to use the novel *Freedom Writers* in which several of the characters were African American students. In the second observation, Ms. Verde used the poem *Blues for All the Changes* by African American author Nikki Giovanni. In the third observation, Ms. Verde used a variety of poems from African American authors as a foundation for student journal reflections.

#### *Extent of Use of Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Ms. Verde reported that she used strategies from African American familial culture when she infused the home language of the students into her lesson plans. She also allowed student to use their home language in their writing assignments. Ms. Verde assigned essays related to holidays, celebrations, and traditions, and journal writing about their family members. She assigned essays about special events such as Homecoming and prom. She also engaged the students in discussions about family history and assigned journal writing about family issues and challenges.

During the first participant observations, Ms. Verde drew connections from the fear and violence in *Freedom Writers* to the potential fear and violence in the homes and neighborhoods of the students. In the second observation, Ms. Verde instructed the students to write a poem called *One Year Ago* which would describe and/or illustrate what the student, their parents, and siblings were doing at that time. In the final observation, Ms. Verde instructed the students to go

to a cousin, someone else in the family, or some other family which the student knew, in order to word process their poems for the Poetry Packet assignment, if the students did not own their own computer. She stated, “Make it a computer party night!”

### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Ms. Verde reported that she used cultural modeling when she engaged in code switching. She also used African American art and music in her lessons. She used African American poetry in “step dancing,” and often used materials that the students thought were “cool.” She used poetry readings from authors such as Langston Hughes and she used hip-hop and rap music in order to “tap” the prior knowledge of the students.

During the first participant observation, Ms. Verde was observed acting out a characterization of one of the boys in the novel *Freedom Writers*. In the second observation, she modeled questions for the students which they could reflect upon, in order to write their *One Year Ago* poems. In the final observation, Ms. Verde instructed the students to be respectful and give lots of “sparkles” to those students who were presenting their poems. She demonstrated by snapping her fingers repeatedly.

Table 13: Ms. Verde: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Strategies from African American Familial Culture</b>	<b>Cultural Modeling</b>
Ms. Verde was passionate about equal quality education	Used culturally relevant books	Infused the home language into lesson plans	Modeled code switching
She taught to make children successful in an unfair system	Used culturally relevant magazines	Allowed students to write using the language of home	Used art
She was a mentor to the kids	Used culturally relevant poems	Assigned essays about holidays	Used music
She was very strict like their “momma”	Used culturally relevant graphic novels	Assigned journal writing about family members	Used African American poetry to step dance
She gave students love	Infused African American history	Assigned essays about special events i.e. Homecoming	Used what students think “is cool”
She built relationships with students	Used culturally relevant plays	Discussed family history	Used poetry readings i.e. Langston Hughes
Used culturally relevant materials to teach	Used culturally relevant videos	Assigned journal writing about family issues	Used hip-hop and rap to tap prior knowledge

## Ms. Hunter Case Study #8

*Teacher Profile*

Teacher number eight, Ms. Hunter, from the Green School, was a Caucasian female who had been teaching in secondary education for thirteen years in English Language Arts. She taught grades eleven and twelve. Her principle responsibilities included teaching English Language Arts and interacting with the Curriculum Consultant. Her teaching philosophy was the belief that “Every student can do the work. It’s just about figuring out how to get the information over to them.” Her teaching style was entertaining, active, energetic, and fun. She frequently moved around the room. She established good rapport with the students and believed in making the students feel important.

Ms. Hunter’s English Language Arts experiences in school were primarily parochial in that she attended Catholic school. Her mother read to her. She was “pulled out of class” to do enrichment and advanced work. Sister Rita, her most inspirational teacher, was from Brooklyn and she used to rap to Ms. Hunter. Sister Rita tried hard to fit in and she did. She was very inspirational in Ms. Hunter’s decision to teach because Sister Rita taught that Language Arts was most important, in that, it can be used to make connections and teach critical thinking. The students should be thinking while reading, writing, and before speaking. The students should also be thinking in order to make decisions in everyday life and make real world connections. Her teacher education was a model for teaching but in the final analysis every teacher “has to make it their own.” Students will hate it if you don’t. She used the *Standards* along with her own materials and advised other teachers to embrace the curriculum, and then, add to it. She said when she attended college, there was no one teacher who had all the answers, but she was advised to make the experience her own. She has, since, made teaching decisions on her own.

Ms. Hunter explained that the curriculum content from Lime Curriculum is very different this year. She used a lot of poetry and a variety of authors. She will use Methods of Curriculum for AP [Advanced Placement] literature, which will include *Common Sense* (a paperback anthology of poetry), *Death of a Salesman*, *The Great Gatsby*, and two or three plays. She was motivated to teach by what she could accomplish with a particular book, especially in the element of character analysis. She gave the students specific lines in the book and they explained the meaning of the lines. She tried to use scaffolding in order to build meaning. The *Common Sense* text assisted students with reading and analysis, because “the sooner they learn how to build meaning, the better.” The book can also help students to create theories and it connected English and grammar work. The Curriculum Consultant from Lime drove the curriculum here, except in AP. In AP, Ms. Hunter drove her own curriculum content based upon the College Board. In AP, Ms. Hunter could do almost anything related to college work. She used specific poetry, both classic and contemporary. In the eleventh grades she taught *A Lesson Before Dying*, *This I Believe*, and *The Sun Also Rises*.

Ms. Hunter expanded on content by disclosing that all of the teachers in the high school engaged in collaboration when making content decisions. These decisions were based upon the achievement levels of the students, in addition to what could be taught in order to help them improve their achievement. Substantial time was devoted to her preparation and setup. She always wanted her instructions to be visual as well as verbal. She spent substantial time making sure that the lesson was presented and that the students understood it, in a variety of ways.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Hunter’s use of culturally relevant pedagogy was investigated. Her teaching pedagogy originated from her teaching philosophy which was based on social justice and took the

perspective that every student could learn the material. Her style of teaching was entertaining, energetic, and fun in that she moved around the room frequently. She established positive rapport with the students and ensured that an instruction was relevant to students.

Ms. Hunter's teaching pedagogy was also documented during the participant observations, with grade twelve, in Advanced Placement Literature, with her lesson on *Death of a Salesman*. She connected the universal themes in the play, such as dishonesty, hypocrisy, boredom, anger, and frustration, to the life themes of the students by asking them if they knew anyone who was like Willie. Following the illustration of these themes which she said could be seen in the lives of all people, Ms. Hunter asked the students to place themselves in Willie's position. She then instructed them to write a character analysis containing some of the traits that the students or Willie might have.

In the second observation, of Ms. Hunter with grade eleven in English Language Arts, she used the prior knowledge of the students' experiences with texting, in order to present a lesson on the negative influences and consequences of texting. According to Ms. Hunter, texting had seriously affected young people's lives over the past decade. She asked the students questions such as, "What is texting doing to us? What are the consequences? Do we do it too much? How much texting is being done? Does that surprise you? What are people texting about?" following the discussion about texting, Ms. Hunter distributed an article from the *New York Times* entitled *Texting May Be Taking a Toll*. She instructed the students to read the article silently in order to build on their knowledge of texting. She then summarized the negative consequences of texting and informed the students that the consequences affected almost everyone in every aspect of life, in that the consequences were common to everyone.

In the final observation of Ms. Hunter with grade eleven in English Language Arts, she instructed a lesson on imagery, by providing the students a definition of the literary term. She then instructed the students to create five columns on their papers. The column headings reflected the five senses. Ms. Hunter then instructed the students to find examples of imagery in the poem she had taught on the previous day. After finding examples of imagery, Ms. Hunter instructed the students to place each of their examples in the appropriate sensory column.

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Hunter elaborated on her use of culturally relevant literature. Her methodologies, learning activities, and specific strategies were steeped in the curriculum content from the Lime Curriculum. She used trade books in which she substituted African American characters, culturally relevant poetry, African American history, African American novels, culturally relevant plays, free reading materials, and magazines. She noted that when the students responded to culturally relevant literature some of them could relate to it really well if they had prior knowledge. With some students, it didn't matter if the material was culturally relevant or not, because many of them would still engage in the lesson. Sometimes she used culturally relevant literature as a "hook", so that some of the students would do the work. How students responded to culturally relevant literature, was somewhat individualized and different for each of the students.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Hunter's lesson on the play *Death of a Salesman*, she was not observed to use culturally relevant literature. However, she connected the themes in the play to issues with which the students may be confronted. In the second observation of Ms. Hunter's lesson on *Texting May Be Taking a Toll*, she was not observed to use culturally relevant literature, but she did connect texting issues to the parental reactions

which the students might have experienced. In the third observation of Ms. Hunter's lesson on categorizing examples of imagery, she did not use a culturally relevant poem, but she did instruct the students to glean examples of sensory images from their homes, families, and schools.

*Extent of Use of Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Ms. Hunter reported that she used strategies from African American familial culture when she assigned journal writing related to the social and family lives of the students. She used the home language of the students in order to "reach them." She allowed students to be social creatures in much the same way that they were at home. Ms. Hunter also used the students' cultures in order to empower them. She incorporated African American contributions into her lessons. She assigned journal writing related to holidays and cultural traditions, and she assigned essays related to special events and occasions.

During the first participant observation, Ms Hunter was observed to use strategies from African American familial culture when she instructed the students to write a character analysis, of someone in their family or neighborhood, in which the students described the ways in which the person was managing the issues and challenges they faced in contemporary society. In the second observation, she assigned the students written reflections on the texting article in which they were to address whether or not excessive texting was being done and parental reactions to the issue of excessive texting. In the third observation, Ms. Hunter, instructed the students to brainstorm, identify, categorize, and write examples of imagery, based upon their sensory experiences. She explained that the experiences would come from their home, family, school, and neighborhood.

*Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Ms. Hunter reported that she used cultural modeling in her lessons when she modeled texting behavior. She also showed culturally relevant movies and videos. She engaged the students in discussions about culturally relevant issues such as crime in the neighborhood. Ms. Hunter showed hip-hop videos and used rap songs, music, and posters in order to initiate the students' prior knowledge.

During the initial participant observation, Ms. Hunter engaged in cultural modeling with the students when she instructed them to imagine how they, their families, or their friends might handle issues such as jealousy, insecurity, embarrassment, or anger as a result of their social or financial situations. In the second observation, Ms. Hunter modeled texting behavior among students in current society. In the final observation, Ms. Hunter modeled examples of sensory imagery that might come from the students' homes, school, or neighborhoods. Examples included smells, tastes, and sounds of which the students could identify and categorize.

Table 14: Ms. Hunter: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

<b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</b>	<b>Culturally Relevant Literature</b>	<b>Strategies from African American Familial Culture</b>	<b>Cultural Modeling</b>
Taught from perspectives that everyone can learn	Used trade books and substitutes African Americans	Assigned journal writings about student lives	Modeled texting
Her style of teaching was entertaining	Used culturally relevant poetry	Used the language students use at home to reach them	Discussed culturally relevant issues
Addressed social justice	Used African American history	Allowed students to be social creatures the way they are at home	Showed culturally relevant movies
Her style of teaching was fun and energetic	Taught African American novels	Used students' culture to empower them	Showed culturally relevant videos
Established positive rapport with students	Used culturally relevant plays	Incorporated African American contributions into all lessons	Showed hip-hop videos
Moved around the room frequently	Used culturally relevant free reading materials	Assigned journal writings about cultural traditions	Used rap songs to initiate prior knowledge
Made instruction relevant to students	Used culturally relevant magazines	Assigned writing about special occasions	Used culturally relevant posters to initiate prior knowledge

## Ms. Forest Case Study #9

*Teacher Profile*

Teacher number nine, Ms. Forest, from the Green School was an African American female who had been teaching in secondary education for eleven years in English Language Arts. She taught grades ten through twelve. Her principle responsibilities included teaching English Language Arts, Mass Media Communication, and Speech. She also served as an advisor in the Freshman Institute, wherein ninth graders were prepared, socially and academically, for high school. Her philosophy of teaching was that teaching should be fun. She felt that the students would perceive more value in learning if they had fun. Her classes were somewhat unconventional in that the students all engaged in group work. She encouraged the students to shout out the answers, which she said “would cause some teachers to cringe,” but she wanted to “get the wheels going” and shouting out was okay for her. She described herself as being very flexible.

Her teaching style was also rooted in fun. She told the kids that there was a difference between being mean and being strict. She was strict because she meant what she said. She taught outside of the box, where she met the kids where they were, academically, and then she attempted to raise their academic levels. Once she knew the kids needs, she was able to adjust her teaching style. She had overheard students say, more than once, “I want Ms. Forest because she’ll work with you.” She always kept this point in mind during instruction. She liked to rearrange the students' desk so that she could be at eye level with them. She found this worked best with her style of teaching.

Ms. Forest’s English Language Arts experience was very much regimented in the Catholic elementary school she attended. She did a lot of sentence diagramming and phonics which

provided a good background in the fundamentals of Language Arts. In junior high she had a very strict English teacher who instructed Ms. Forest on the right way to write. The teacher would put red ink all over her paper and she would have to do it over and over again until she got it right. This built additional fundamentals which she was able to take on to high school, wherein, English classes became extremely easy for her. In college she had a fantastic professor who was instrumental in influencing Ms. Forest to major in American English Language and Literature. The college professor “sort of opened the door and the excitement just poured on me and I knew I wanted to be just like her.” Her college professor was a wonderful motivator and Ms. Forest was very satisfied that she had done her undergraduate work at a college nearby her residence and her masters work, online.

Ms. Forest’s philosophy of teaching was based upon her belief that English Language Arts was important because students needed to learn how to communicate effectively through the spoken and written word. Students needed to be able to write, speak, and put words in sentences in order to make sense, complete job applications, and connect to other subjects. Other teachers may have thought that their subjects were important but none were more important than English. She said that English made the world go around and that it was the common thread of everything in life. Reading was also important for gaining more knowledge. It’s about the past and the present and she hoped that she could make kids more excited about reading and writing.

Ms. Forest discussed content in the curriculum by acknowledging that she used the same curriculum content as the other teachers. The Curriculum Consultant motivated her to teach the content that she does. She said the Curriculum Consultant knew her craft, in that it was a process that had to be learned and adopted. She stated, “It’s one of those things. When my boss says this is what you need to do, I do it.” Because she described herself as flexible, she engaged

herself with the Curriculum Consultant. Ms. Forest's curriculum did not vary and was totally in line with the curriculum that the consultant, the school, and the District had adopted. All of the students in the twelfth grade used the same text book, but each teacher could use a wide variety of supplemental books. She chose her own novels for grade ten and used a specific book for her Mass Media Communication/Broadcast Arts class.

Ms. Forest divulged that her teacher education was very helpful to her in the areas of theory, principles, and teaching strategies. She said that in the area of instruction, it was the teaching itself that taught her more about teaching. She learned by doing and by experience. In college everything she learned about Special Education and what the students needed, she learned from theory. The theory aspect of teaching was great, but as far as getting the job of teaching done, she learned that from experience and by trial and error.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

Ms. Forest's use of culturally relevant pedagogy was aligned with her teaching philosophy and her teaching style which was fun and innovative. She used cooperative group work consistently and encouraged students to "shout out" answers. Her teaching style was flexible and outside of the box. She emphasized reading instruction while using culturally relevant materials. She described her pedagogy as strict and supportive.

During the first participant observation of Ms. Forest with grades ten through twelve in Mass Media Communication, Ms. Forest instructed the students to obtain their magazines from the crates in order to construct collages that would represent contemporary mass media. She told the students that they could get pictures, words, and phrases from the magazines, or write messages, words, and phrases onto the collages. Ms. Forest also instructed the students to search for and obtain famous African Americans in media, in order to create their collages.

In the second observation of Ms. Forest with grades ten through twelve in Mass Media Communication, she instructed the students to arrange themselves in cooperative groups of five. She then instructed the students to brainstorm, collaborate, and use teamwork in order to plan and create a commercial about a product of their choice. She informed them that the commercial could be humorous and/or be about a product which they already used. She told the students that after the commercials were written the groups would present them to the class. In the final observation of Ms. Forest with grade twelve in English Language Arts, she instructed the students to write a reflection on the article *The Afghan War*, which she had distributed on the previous day. She explained to them the reflection should be focused on their reactions to the events which transpired in the war zone, according to the article. Ms. Forest informed the students that this was the kind of work that the students would encounter on the ACT. Therefore, it would be good practice for them.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Forest elaborated on her use of culturally relevant literature. Her methodologies, learning activities and specific strategies were based upon the curriculum content from the Lime Curriculum. She said that she used culturally relevant pedagogy and literature in her lesson plans. She also used African American history when it was appropriate. She used culturally relevant books, fiction and nonfiction, poems, magazines, plays, newspapers, documentaries, and posters.

During the initial participant observation of Ms. Forest's instruction of grades ten through twelve in Mass Media Communication, she utilized culturally relevant magazines in her lesson. The lesson focused on the creation of collages which featured famous African Americans in media. In the second observation of Ms. Forest with grades ten through twelve in another class of

Mass Media Communication, she was not observed to use culturally relevant literature. In the third observation of Ms. Forest with grade twelve in English Language Arts, she was observed using a multicultural article which focused on the Afghan war. She instructed the students to write a reflection paper on their reactions to the suffering of the Afghan people, the violence, and the rationale of war.

*Extent of use of Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Ms. Forest used strategies from African American familial culture when she assigned essays which were related to family activities and celebrations, and essays related to family issues and challenges. She also assigned essays related to holiday traditions and celebrations. She assigned journal writing which focused on holiday traditions and the Jewish neighbors in the community. She encouraged the students to write about special occasions such as prom and Homecoming. Ms. Forest also assigned essays related to potential college visits and/or aspirations.

During the initial participant observation of Ms. Forest in Mass Media Communication, she infused activities and strategies from African American familial culture in that she asked students to create collages of famous African American journalists based upon their family's exposure, as well as the students' exposure, to these journalists in print, in radio, and/or television.

In the second observation of Ms. Forest in Mass Media Communication, she used activities and strategies from African American familial culture when she instructed students to create a commercial related to a product they used. She explained that this could be a product they used at home and that the commercial could be humorous. Ms. Forest was not observed to use activities and strategies from African American familial culture in her third observation with grade twelve in English Language Arts.

*Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	Culturally Relevant Literature	Strategies from African American Familial Culture	Cultural Modeling
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Ms. Forest indicated that she used cultural modeling when she dramatized African American celebrities, journalists, and heroes. She used hip-hop and rap songs in her lesson plans. She used the home language of the students and referred to the students as “Dr. So and So,” in class, in order to model their potential for successes.

In the first participant observation of Ms. Forest with grades ten through twelve in Mass Media Communication, she used cultural modeling when she described the assigned collages, by instructing the students to look for words and phrases to accompany the pictures, in order to explain the Black journalists’ significance. In the second observation, Ms. Forest used cultural modeling in demonstrating the creation of a commercial by using the example of hair grease. Ms. Forest was not observed to use cultural modeling in her final observation.

Her teaching style was fun	Used African American history	Assigned essays related to family activities	Dramatized African American celebrities
She used cooperative group work	Used culturally relevant books that are fiction and nonfiction	Assigned essays related to family issues	Dramatized African American journalists
She encouraged students to “shout out” answers	Used culturally relevant poems	Assigned essays related to holidays and celebrations	Dramatized African American heroes
Her teaching style was flexible	Used culturally relevant magazines	Assigned journal writing about holiday celebrations	Used hip-hop songs in lessons
Her teaching style was “outside the box”	Used culturally relevant plays	Assigned journal writing related to Jewish neighbors	Used rap songs in lessons
Her emphasis was on reading instruction	Used culturally relevant media i.e. newspapers and documentaries	Assigned journal writing about Homecoming	Used language from home
Her teaching style was strict but supportive	Used culturally relevant posters	Assigned essays about potential college visits	Referred to students as “Doctor so and so”

Table 15: Ms. Forest: Culturally Relevant Elements Results

*Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter, and Ms. Forest: Similarities and  
Differences among Suburban/Green School Teachers  
Teacher Biographies*

There were similarities and differences in the teacher biographies, use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant literature, activities and strategies from African American familial culture, and cultural modeling among Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter, and Ms. Forest, the three urban high school English Language Arts teachers in the Green School. Ms. Verde had twelve years of teaching experience, Ms. Hunter had thirteen years of teaching experience, and Ms. Forest had eleven years of teaching experience.

All three of the teachers had all of their teaching experience in the Green School. Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter were certified in English Language Arts. Ms. Forest was not. The three teachers described the school climate as collaborative. They collaborated with each other, fellow teachers in the Department, and the Curriculum Consultant. Although the Green School was touted as an excellent suburban school the three teachers explained that the Green School was a “failing school” and that it had not met its AYP. All three teachers worked closely with the Curriculum Consultant who had been hired by the District to get the teachers “on the ball.” The three teachers each expressed a myriad of emotions concerning the intervention of the Curriculum Consultant. These emotions included relief, gratitude, joy, enthusiasm, and acceptance. The three teachers expressed regret that the Green School had not met its AYP, but simultaneously, expressed satisfaction that the District had taken measures to correct the AYP status of the school.

Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter, and Ms. Forest all held Master’s degrees from state universities. Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter held degrees in English Language Arts. Ms. Forest held a degree in Mass

Media Communications which she earned online. Each teacher reported that she was very happy in her current teaching location.

All three of the teachers taught in the Language Arts Department; however, they instructed a diverse range of grades and subjects. Ms. Verde taught English Language Arts and Creative Writing to grades ten, eleven, and twelve. Ms. Hunter taught Advance Placement (AP) Literature to grade twelve, Literature and Composition to grade eleven and English Language Arts to grade eleven, Literacy Lab to grade eleven, and English Language Arts to grade twelve. Ms. Forest taught grades ten, eleven, and twelve in the subject areas of Speech, Mass Media Communications, English Language Arts, English Literature and Composition, and Creative writing. All three teachers, under study, had a co-teacher, as well. The co-teacher served as a support in the classroom in the areas of classroom management, distribution of materials, and checking for understanding.

Although the three teachers had, approximately, the same number of years of teaching experience, their philosophies and teaching styles differed. Ms. Verde described her belief that all children can learn and be successful, but that powerful decision makers, in education, have created an “unequal” system of education which placed students at disadvantages. She was strict in her lessons, but laid back in her style of delivery. She addressed student learning styles and strove to equalize the educational opportunities for her students. She said her focus was “to prepare them for college and the working world.”

Ms. Hunter’s teaching philosophy and style differed from Ms. Verde’s in that she described her philosophy as one in which she believed that all students could do the assigned work, and that teaching was a vehicle for “getting students where they needed to be.” She said that in her attempts to reach students she was energetic and fun and that she “moved around the room a lot.”

Establishing rapport was important, as well, in order to reach individual students. Like Ms. Verde, she was attentive to learning styles, in that she presented the lesson in a variety of ways.

Ms. Forest's teaching philosophies focused on facilitating learning through group work. She described herself as flexible and one who liked "outside of the box learning." She differed from Ms. Verde whose beliefs were that unequal education led to poor student achievement. She also differed from Ms. Hunter in that she did not mobilize herself, but kept the students at "eye level." She was similar to Ms. Verde in that she "met the students where they were and brought them up." Similar to Ms. Hunter, she also established rapport with students who, according to Ms. Forest, "liked her because she worked with them."

The three teachers also differed in their early educational, and teacher education experiences. Ms. Verde reported that she did not like the rote memorization in her early school years, but in college she was able to build relationships with her teachers, especially in Creative Writing. This gave her a love for learning and language arts. She believed that language arts were important for students to communicate effectively in every form, including listening and speaking skills.

Ms. Hunter's early school years differed from Ms. Verde in that she had positive experiences in school and excelled tremendously. She was similar to Ms. Verde in that in college she continued to excel due to one specific teacher who inspired her to teach. She believed that language arts were important in order to teach students how to make everyday life decisions. Ms. Forest was similar to Ms. Verde in that her early education included rote exercises such as sentence diagramming. However, she enjoyed these exercises and viewed them as good preparation for college. She was similar to both Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter, in that, in college she had a fantastic professor who led her to teaching. She believed that teaching language arts was important for effective communication and other "walks of life."

All three teachers taught from the Lime Curriculum which was adopted by the Green School's District. The three teachers also agreed that each followed the curriculum "to the letter" because the curriculum was adopted in order to raise the AYP status of the Green School. Ms. Verde reported that her lessons aligned "perfectly" with the Lime Curriculum and that the curriculum addressed the National *Standards* and *Cores* in the areas of reading and writing. Ms. Hunter reported that her lessons were as close to "scripted" as one could get. The materials, outcomes, procedural strategies, assignments, novels, and individual handouts were specified in the Lime Curriculum. She said that there was no specified text, which she favored, because a text should be a reference, rather than a guide to instruction.

Ms. Forest was identical to Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter in regard to the utilization of the Lime Curriculum. She reported that she abided by the curriculum which was specified by the school, District, and the Curriculum Consultant, and that her lessons were aligned with those specifications. She further indicated that the curriculum was designed to meet State and National Educational *Standards*, as well as, "teaching to the test."

Ms. Verde's relationship with her principal and District Administration was described as very supportive in regard to the current curriculum, because they were all mandated to be aligned with State and National *Standards* in order to raise student achievement. She explained that the strategies which had been adopted in the Lime Curriculum had been used elsewhere and had proven to be successful. There was very little freedom in what could be taught, but the principal did allow teacher input during the curriculum meetings.

Ms. Hunter stated that her principal "has never disagreed with me on English Language Arts content." She reported that the principal had the vision to put someone in place [the lead teacher] who reflected the adopted curriculum. She explained that the District affected what she taught

“only to the point of adopting the curriculum from Lime and installing the curriculum consultant. (She smiled wryly as she spoke). The mandates of the principal reflected the mandates of the District and they had to be followed.

Ms. Forest said that the English teachers in the Department “pretty much” do what the principal said to do. They did have the option of getting together, as a Department, in order to make decisions to go “in a different direction.” If this happened, they usually felt comfortable “going to the principal,” especially if the decision would affect the students. She said that there was no “wiggle room” with the District Administration in that the teachers taught “what is handed down to them.”

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

There were similarities and differences among the three teachers at the Green School in their use of culturally relevant pedagogy. Ms. Verde was passionate about equal quality education. She taught to insure that kids would be successful despite, what she referred to as an unfair system. She was a mentor to her students. She believed in being strict and modeled a “mama” figure to the kids, while giving them love. She built relationships and rapport with students and used culturally relevant materials in her lessons.

Ms. Hunter differed from Ms. Verde in that she taught from the perspective that all students could learn. Her teaching style was entertaining and energetic. Similarly to Ms. Verde, she addressed social justice, and established positive rapport with students. She moved about the classroom frequently and attempted to make instruction relevant to students.

Ms. Forest was similar to Ms. Hunter in that her teaching was fun. She differed from both Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter in that she used cooperative group work with the students, and encouraged students to “shout out” their answers. She described her teaching style as flexible

and “outside the box.” Her emphasis was on reading instruction. Similarly to Ms. Verde, Ms. Forest’s style was strict, but supportive.

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

Ms. Verde expressed that she used culturally relevant books, magazines, poems, plays, videos, and graphic novels. She also infused African American history when appropriate. Similar to Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter used culturally relevant poetry, novels, plays, and magazines and infused African American history into her lessons. She differed from Ms. Verde in that she used trade books in which she substituted African American characters for those which were presented in the text. She also used culturally relevant free reading materials.

Ms. Forest was similar to both Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter in that she used culturally relevant books, fiction and nonfiction, poems, magazines, and plays. She also infused African American history, when appropriate. She differed from both Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter in that she used culturally relevant newspapers and documentaries, as well as, posters in her lessons.

*Extent of Use of Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

Comparisons were also made in the use of strategies from African American familial culture. Ms. Verde responded in the interview that she infused the home language of the students into her lessons and allowed the students to write using the language of home. She assigned essays related to holiday traditions and celebrations. She assigned journal writing related to family members and essays related to special events in the students’ lives such as Homecoming and prom. She engaged the students in discussions related to their family histories and assigned journal writing about family issues and challenges.

Ms. Hunter was similar to Ms. Verde in her use of strategies in that she also assigned journal writing related to the students’ lives. She also used the students’ home language to “reach them.”

She also assigned journal writing related to cultural traditions such as holidays and celebrations, and assigned writing related to special events and occasions. She differed from Ms. Verde in that she allowed the students to be “social creatures” much like they were at home. She used the students’ cultures to “empower” them. She also incorporated African American contributions into “all of her lessons.”

Ms. Forest was similar to Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter in that she assigned essays related to family activities and family issues and challenges. She assigned journal writing and essays related to holiday celebrations and special events such as Homecoming. She differed from both Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter in that she assigned journal writing about relationships with Jewish neighbors in the community and essays related to potential college visits.

#### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

Comparisons were made in the use of cultural modeling among the three teachers at the Green School. Ms. Verde was observed using cultural modeling when she engaged in code-switching with the students. She also used art, music, and poetry readings from authors such as Langston Hughes in her lessons. She used African American poetry and allowed students to “step dance” to it. She explained that she used materials which the students thought were “cool.” She also used hip-hop and rap, in order to tap into the students’ prior knowledge related to the lesson.

In contrast to Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter was observed to model texting during the lesson. She held discussions about culturally relevant issues such as racism and crime. She used scaffolding with examples from the students’ culture in order to increase knowledge and comprehension. She showed hip-hop videos. Similar to Ms. Verde, she used rap music to initiate prior knowledge. In

contrast to Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter used culturally relevant posters to initiate prior knowledge as well.

Ms. Forest differed from both Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter in her use of cultural modeling. She dramatized African American celebrities, African American journalists, and African American heroes. Similar to Ms. Verde and Ms. Hunter, she used hip-hop and rap music in her lessons. She used the language of the students' homes in her classroom, and she modeled future success for students by referring to them as "Dr. So and So."

A final recursive analysis (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) was facilitated in the comparison of the teachers at the Suburban/Green School. Specific items, groups of items, and interpretation of these groups of items, were recurrent. This resulted in a pattern analysis of the culturally relevant elements. These included *rapport, relationship building, culturally relevant materials, home language, African American history, cultural traditions, rap, hip-hop, prior knowledge, being strict, holiday celebrations, essays, journal writing, equality, and social justice*. Observation of these items, groups of items, and interpretation of these groups of items, resulted in the documentation that the culturally relevant elements, illustrated in the conceptual framework of the study, were manifest. It was plausible that this repetition of words, phrases, and themes was a result of the "scripted" lessons plans which emerged from Lime Curriculum.

## Chapter 7

### Findings

#### Findings Across Urban, Metro-City, and Suburban English Language Arts Teachers

##### *Introduction*

The current chapter presented findings across Urban/Blue School, Metro-City/Yellow School, and Suburban/Green School English Language Arts teachers in order to compare and contrast similarities and differences among schools/Districts, in addition to the comparison and contrasts of the individual teachers which were presented in Chapter 4,5,and 6. The information used for comparisons was gleaned from the Interview Guides and the participant observations conducted with the nine teachers at the three schools, and subsequently structured into nine teacher profiles and nine case studies. The teacher profiles and case studies were recursively subjected to item and pattern analysis, in that, recurrent items, groups of items, and interpretations of these groups of items were documented in order to establish that the culturally relevant elements, which were diagrammed in the conceptual framework of the study, were being used. Consequently, the comparisons and contrasts across the schools focused on the four culturally relevant elements, which included Extent of Use of culturally relevant pedagogy, Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature, Extent of Use of Activities and Strategies from African American Familial Culture, and Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling. The pattern analysis which emerged from the comparisons of individual teachers was interpreted, summaries, were written and case studies were developed which illustrated how each of the cultural elements varied across the three schools/Districts.

*Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*

The teaching philosophies and teaching styles of the Urban/Blue School English Language Arts teachers were very similar in that all three teachers had adopted and taught from the same Sky Curriculum, and expressed satisfaction in the curriculum choice. All three teachers brought culturally relevant materials from home, which were used in the Sky Curriculum. All three teachers incorporated culturally relevant books, magazines, poems, plays, stories, videos, graphic novels, and African American history to a great degree, into their pedagogies. Although Ms. Azul reported that she infused limited culturally relevant literature into her pedagogy, except where the lessons focused on slavery, she was observed, in her pedagogy, to draw connections between her lessons and the experiences of her African American students. The teaching styles of the three teachers were similar in that they were energetic, passionate, and prepared in their lesson deliveries.

In their teacher education experiences, Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower, and Ms. Azul, all expressed that their Master's level education provided the most benefit for classroom teaching. Their teacher education was similar in that they all attended State Universities. All three had approximately equal teaching experience. All agreed that within their Master's level education, the importance of teaching and learning English Language Arts emerged. The three teachers also agreed on the reasons for importance of teaching and learning English Language Arts which included communication, life skills, and college preparation. Contrasts in the importance of teaching and learning English Language Arts were seen in Ms. Royal, who focused on authorship, and Ms. Azul who focused on college readiness. All three teachers expressed satisfaction with their current school assignment.

Ms. Royal, Ms. Cornflower, and Ms. Azul agreed that the content which they taught was specified in the Sky Curriculum which had been adopted by the Charter District the previous year. All three teachers agreed that the curriculum addressed National and State *Standards* and was focused on the achievement of specific benchmarks. All three teachers reported that they taught in order to reach specific benchmarks with the students and to prepare them for the Michigan Merit Examination (MME).

All three teachers adamantly agreed that they liked having the District Administration situated on the school campus and that the District Superintendent was accessible and knowledgeable about the day to day functions and activities within the school. The three teachers also reported that they worked well with their school principal and pointed out that there was room to “agree to disagree.”

Although, the three teachers taught within the high school, they taught different grades and held different roles of responsibility in the high school. All had served on the Curriculum Committee. However, Ms. Royal functioned as Lead Teacher in the English Language Arts Department and Advisory Placement teacher for grades eleven and twelve. In the latter role she prepared students for job shadowing. Ms. Azul served as Senior Institute Coordinator, wherein, her role of responsibility was to prepare all seniors for college application. Ms. Cornflower, served as Chairperson of the school affiliated club, which focused on sending a student abroad each year, and she engaged in community service. All three teachers served on the Prom and Homecoming Committees.

Ms. Canary, Ms. Coward, and Ms. Bright, the three teachers at the Metro-City/Yellow School, all differed in their philosophies and teaching styles from each other and from the teachers at the Blue School. Ms. Canary’s philosophy and style was described as “back to

basics.” Ms. Coward’s philosophy and style was focused on developing a “love for literature” within the students. Ms. Bright’s philosophy and style of teaching involved the instruction of “reading and writing together.” Similar to the Urban/Blue School, all three teachers reported that they brought culturally relevant materials from home, which were used in their pedagogies.

All three teachers, much like the Urban/Blue School, taught from the same curriculum, the Maize Curriculum and the Reading Program. The three teachers reported that they did not like the Maize Curriculum, because, “it was not relevant to the students,” the “District had not provided the books, materials, and technology needed to carry out the curriculum,” and that, “There were no working computers in the school with which to facilitate the Reading Program.” All three teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the District’s choice of curriculum because they had no input in the decision to adopt it, the District decided to “try” something new, and there was no printer or copy machine in the school on which assignments and tests could be duplicated.

All three attempted to use culturally relevant literature and materials in their pedagogies. However, because the school and District supplied no materials, the teachers were “forced to use what we can get our hands on.” The lack of books and materials needed for content in the curriculum and the lack of input in curriculum planning, contrasted with the Blue School and the Green School. Texts within the Yellow School were limited to one set, per grade, of *Literature Anthologies*. The three teachers at the Yellow School collected, copied, and brought into class the culturally relevant articles which were used in the curriculum and in their pedagogies.

All three teachers at the Yellow School expressed limited communication and accessibility to the District Administration, although their offices were “right across the street.” All three also indicated a lack of communication with and support from the school principal who was “the

eighth principal in seven years.” This contrasted with the views and opinions of the teachers at the Blue School regarding their principal and District Administration.

Similar to the Blue School, all three teachers at the Yellow School taught different grades in the high school. In contrast to the Blue School, their roles and responsibilities were different. Neither of the teachers at the Yellow School had input in curriculum decisions. One teacher, Ms. Canary, served on the Prom and Homecoming Committees. Neither of the other two teachers held roles of responsibility, outside of instruction, within the school.

All three teachers at the Yellow school agreed that the importance of learning English Language Arts was related to literacy skills needed to complete a job application. This contrasted with the Blue School whose focus was on “work experience” and “college readiness.” Neither teacher at the Yellow School aligned her content to the curriculum. The content was primarily provided by the resources of each teacher. This contrasted with the Blue School wherein their books, materials, and resources were provided by the District and the content, in concert with the Sky Curriculum, was also provided. All three teachers in the Yellow School agreed that the Maize Curriculum was purported to address National and State *Standards*; however, they were unable to carry out the curriculum. Ms. Canary divulged that her students were barely ready for the MEAP Test. Ms. Coward explained that the students were “exceptional” in many regards, and that they struggled to learn the basics. Ms. Bright described her focus as “teaching life skills so that they could make it out of here.” Neither teacher at the Yellow School addressed Benchmarks or standardized test preparation.

Two teachers at the Yellow School had more than twenty years of teaching experience each, and one had ten years of experience. By contrast, the Blue School teacher’s experience ranged from four to twelve years. The teacher education experiences of the two teachers in the Yellow

School emphasized Black pride, African American Literature, and civil rights advances. Ms. Canary was a graduate of the Yellow School. All three teachers attended an urban state funded university for their teacher education. Neither of the teachers in the Yellow School indicated that she was highly qualified. All three teachers held Master's degrees in English, but neither specified her certification. By contrast, the three teachers in the Blue School were all highly qualified and certified in English Language Arts.

The Yellow School teachers described themes in their pedagogies which recurred in *obtaining supplemental culturally relevant materials to use with the Maize Curriculum, using stories about African Americans, efforts to locate and use culturally relevant materials, and teaching reading and writing*. In comparison, the Blue School teacher's pedagogies reflected recurrent themes of *supplemental culturally relevant materials, the inclusion of African American contributions, and teaching stories that Black students can relate to*. In contrast to the Yellow School, recurrent themes in the teaching pedagogies of the Blue School were *college readiness, use of African American history, discussions about culturally relevant issues, and attention to Standards and Benchmarks*.

The teaching pedagogies and styles of Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter, and Ms. Forest, the three teachers in the Suburban/Green School were similar to those in the Urban/Blue School and the Metro-City/Yellow School in that all three supplemented the Lime Curriculum with culturally relevant materials which they brought from home. They were similar to the Blue School teachers in that they described their teaching styles as "energetic, entertaining, flexible, and fun." Also, like the Blue School, they described mentoring and building relationships with students, as being important. In contrast to the Yellow School, but similar to the Blue School, the pedagogic focus at the Green School was to prepare students for college. Like the Blue School, all of the teachers

in the Green School incorporated culturally relevant books, magazines, poems, plays, stories, videos, posters, and African American history into their pedagogies.

In their teacher education experiences, all three teachers in the Green School described their graduate school education as being beneficial to classroom teaching, much like the Blue School teachers. The Green School teachers also resonated that English Language Arts was important for communication, practical life skills, and college readiness, like the Blue School, but in contrast to the Yellow School. All the teachers at the Green School had been there for the duration of their careers and expressed satisfaction in their school assignment much like the Blue School teachers, and in contrast to the Yellow School teachers.

Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter, and Ms. Forest agreed that the curriculum and its content, which they taught, were specifically aligned with the Lime Curriculum, and that the alignment was enforced by the Curriculum Consultant, whom the District had hired. The curriculum at the Green School was aligned with National and State *Standards*, and focused on the attainment of Benchmarks and preparation for the MEAP Test. This was similar to the Blue School's rationale for choice of curriculum, but in contrast to the Yellow School's curriculum choice.

All three of the Green School teachers expressed satisfaction that the District Administration offices were located directly across the street from the school. They described the Administration as supportive, accessible, and concerned for both the students and teachers, these sentiments regarding the District Administration were echoed by the Blue School but not by the Yellow School. Like the Blue School, all three teachers at the Green School expressed admiration, respect, and confidence in their school principal, in that he was accessible and supportive. These views of the principal differed greatly from those of the Yellow School. Although the three teachers taught within the high school, they taught different grades, as did the teachers in both

the Blue and Yellow School. The teachers in the Green School explained their roles and responsibilities differently from those at both the Blue School and the Yellow School. Ms. Verde's primary responsibility was to teach the core curriculum *Standards*. Ms. Hunter was responsible for teaching reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Ms. Forest described her responsibilities as teaching core curriculum *Standards*. All three of the teachers met weekly with the Curriculum Consultant who had been hired by the District due to the school's AYP status of "failing school."

The AYP status of the Green School was similar to that of the Yellow School, which had an AYP status of "failing school." However, the Green School differed from the Yellow School in that their District had hired a Curriculum Consultant in order to improve their AYP status, while the Yellow School District had not hired outside support. Both the Green School and the Yellow School differed from the Blue School in that the Blue School was not subject to AYP status because it was a charter school.

Ms. Verde, Ms. Hunter, and Ms. Forest, the three teachers in the Green School, all differed in their philosophies from each other, and from the Blue School and the Yellow School. Ms. Verde believed that all students could learn and succeed, but that an unfair and unequal educational system kept them from doing so. Ms. Hunter believed that all students could do the work, but the teacher had to discover a way to "get the information over to them." Ms. Forest felt that learning should be fun and when it was, the students would "see more value in it."

There were contrasts in the teacher education experiences of the teachers in the Suburban/Green School. Ms. Verde attended a suburban high school and an urban state university. Ms. Hunter attended a Catholic high school and a state university. Ms. Forest attended a public high school and completed her college education online. These experiences

differed from the Urban/Blue School teachers who all attended public high schools and state universities. Neither teacher did online work. These differed from the Metro-City/Yellow School, as well, wherein, Ms. Canary attended the Yellow School in high school and the other two teachers attended other public schools. All three teachers in the Metro-City/Yellow School attended the same urban university.

Consequently, the preparation for classroom teaching differed as a result of their teacher education. The Urban/Blue School teachers all agreed that their Master's level work did not prepare them for classroom teaching experiences. It was in the classroom, that they "made teaching their own." Two of the Metro-City/Yellow School teachers reported that their teaching preparation had "nothing to do" with what they were doing now. Ms. Canary had regrets that there was no longer an emphasis on the study of Black literature. She noted that one of the teachers who taught her when she attended the Yellow School still taught at the Yellow School. The Suburban/Green School teachers each reported that there was one significant professor in each of their college experiences who had "tremendous impact" and who, "was inspirational," in their decisions related to becoming classroom teachers. All the teachers at the Green School agreed that once a teacher entered the classroom, they had to make the experience their own.

The teaching styles across the three schools/Districts shared similar characteristics. The Urban/Blue School teachers emphasized a strict, supportive, energetic, dynamic, visual, unconventional, loving, and fun approach to lesson delivery. The Metro-City/Yellow School emphasized these characteristics, but also included mentoring, individualized teaching, and teaching of reading and writing in a synthesized manner. The Suburban/Green School teachers shared as many of the aforementioned characteristics, but included team teaching, flexibility in

teaching, raising test scores, assurance of student graduation, and attention to state *Standards* in the Lime Curriculum.

Across the Schools/Districts there was emphasis on a culturally relevant pedagogy; however, the ways in which it was achieved varied. The Urban/Blue School teachers reported a high degree of freedom in their selection of content in the curriculum and brought many of their culturally relevant materials from home. The Metro-City/Yellow School teachers were unable to teach the Maize Curriculum, because there were no books, materials, supplies, equipment, and technology provided in order to do so. It was reported that they “scrambled to get their hands on any materials.” The Suburban/Green School teachers had little freedom in content and curriculum decisions because lessons were designed and mandated by the Curriculum Consultant. However, they were permitted to include culturally relevant materials, which they all brought from home, to be included in the lessons. Across the schools and Districts, all teachers, within their pedagogies, made connections between curriculum content in their lessons and the cultural experiences of their students.

#### *Extent of Use of Culturally Relevant Literature*

There were comparisons and contrasts identified in the extent of use of culturally relevant literature across the schools/Districts in the current study. The Blue School teachers, Ms. Royal and Ms. Cornflower, used culturally relevant short stories, contemporary articles about rappers, articles related to culturally relevant issues such as hip-hop and crime, culturally relevant books, magazines, graphic novels, trade books, poems, and plays in their lessons. They were consistently conscious of the need to use culturally relevant texts and materials and utilized these texts and materials as subjects for the student’s journal reflections. Although Ms. Azul taught British Literature, she utilized culturally relevant books such as *Their Eyes Were Watching God*,

*The Help*, and *Superman*. Ms. Azul also made connections, when she taught about Greek slavery and Epic heroes, to the history of slavery in the United States and African American heroes. All teachers brought culturally relevant texts and materials from home and all reported that they used African American history as a backdrop for their lessons.

When compared to the Blue School teachers, the Yellow School teachers were found to use culturally relevant books, magazines, and articles related to African Americans, stories, poems, videos, articles related to hip-hop culture and rap artists, and graphic novels, as the Blue School did. Ms. Canary included an African American book list in her lesson planning, and made a practice of substituting Black people for characters presented in the units of the Maize Curriculum. Ms. Bright included articles which related to contemporary issues, such as strippers, pimps, and drug dealers. All of the teachers at the Yellow School, much like the Blue School, infused African American history into their lessons. All of the teachers at the Yellow School obtained all of the culturally relevant texts and materials, by their own efforts, because the District did not provide them. This was a stark departure from the Blue School, which had their texts and materials provided by the District. The Blue School teachers' decisions to bring culturally relevant texts and materials from home were based upon the desire to supplement the District provisions.

The Green School teachers, much like those in the Blue School, used culturally relevant texts, books, magazines, graphic novels, poetry, plays, videos, trade books, novels, free reading materials, newspaper articles, and documentaries in their lesson plans. All of the teachers infused African American history into their lessons, as both the Blue and Yellow Schools did. All of the teachers at the Green School reported that the District provided the texts, materials, technology, and equipment necessary for instruction. However, they were free to bring culturally relevant

materials from home for use in their lesson plans. This practice was similar to that of the Blue School and differed from the Yellow School whose District had provided no text and materials. All the teachers at the Green School, Yellow School, and Blue School reported that they connect the literature to the experiences and events in the lives of the students.

*Extent of Use of Activities and Strategies from African American Familial Culture*

The extent of use of activities and strategies from African American familial culture was compared across the three schools/Districts. All of the teachers at the Blue School reported using activities and strategies which included student journal writing related to holiday traditions and celebrations, family experiences, special occasions and events, trips and vacations, and cultural artifacts. They also assigned essays related to similar topics. In addition, the teachers engaged the students in discussions about these same topics. Ms. Royal connected family experiences in the story *Marigolds* to the students' family experiences. In her role of advisory and preparation teacher she also discussed, with students, positive African American etiquette, dress, and behavior on the jobsite. Ms. Cornflower taught her students to value their cultures and afforded them the opportunity to present cultural artifacts to the class.

Although Ms. Azul reported that she did not use many referents to African American culture in class, she said that she did allow students to bring art and music from their homes, use home and neighborhood language in classroom discussions, code switch, and relate their cultural experiences to the stories she taught.

The teachers in the Yellow School all reported that they used activities and strategies from African American familial culture which were similar to those of the Blue School. The Yellow School teachers assigned essays and journal writing about family experience, holiday celebrations, trips and vacations, special occasions, events and awards, prom, and Homecoming.

Ms. Canary assigned writing about pets, and collage projects featuring family members. Ms. Coward included topics in her writing assignments which related to family conflicts, loss of Bridge Cards, eviction, and unplanned pregnancies. Ms. Bright included topics in her writing assignments related to the students' favorite foods, clothing, and music. She also allowed students to use their home language in class, as well as in their journal and essay assignments, which was similar to Ms. Azul's practice at the Blue School. All teachers at the Yellow School engaged in discussions with the students regarding the aforementioned topics, as the teachers did in the Blue School.

All of the teachers at the Green School used activities and strategies from African American familial culture, which was similar to the Blue School and the Yellow School. They assigned essays and journal writing on holiday traditions and celebrations, special occasions and events, such as Homecoming, and family histories, issues, and experiences. Ms. Verde also infused the students' home language into her lesson plans and allowed the students to use their home language in class, much like the Blue and Yellow School teachers. Ms. Hunter used the home language of the students to "reach them" and included the cultural contributions of African Americans in her lessons. Ms. Forest, similar to Ms. Canary and Ms. Coward, used collage creation as an activity, but diversely assigned essays related to the Jewish population in the school neighborhood, and essays related to college visits.

#### *Extent of Use of Cultural Modeling*

All of the teachers in the Blue School informed that they used a wide variety of cultural modeling in their lesson plans and classroom behaviors. Examples of cultural modeling included dramatization of characters, using dialect, singing songs which came from the students' pop culture, using music, modeling appropriate students behaviors, infusing artwork and posters,

identification of inappropriate student behaviors and dress, using the language of home, code switching, allowing students to bring songs, music, and art from their cultures, using visual aids, and presentation of cultural artifacts. Other examples included using hip-hop and rap, role playing, introduction and discussion of African American heroes, and the introduction of stories related to the students' religious cultures.

The teachers in the Yellow School were quite similar to the Blue School in their uses of examples of cultural modeling. Examples from the Yellow School included modeling good manners, using hip-hop and rap music, role plays, characterizations, dramatizations of famous musical artists, hip-hop posters, using Ebonics in classroom discussions, using artwork, and infusing jazz music into the lessons. In contrast to the Blue School and the Green School, Ms. Canary modeled the "mother figure" and assigned journal writing related to musical artists. Ms. Coward shared stories from her childhood with the students and used culturally relevant magazines in order to construct collages related to the stories she taught. Ms. Bright engaged the students in discussions about art, rap artists, Troy Davis' execution, crime in the neighborhood, and life experiences of the students.

The teachers at the Green School were very similar to both the Blue School and the Yellow School in their use of cultural modeling. Examples of their cultural modeling included code switching, using art, music, dance, hip-hop, and rap music, discussions about culturally relevant issues, showing Black movies and hip-hop videos, and displaying culturally relevant posters. Other examples included dramatizing African American celebrities, journalists, and heroes, using hip-hop and rap songs in the lessons, and incorporation of the home language into classroom discussions. In contrast to the Blue and Yellow Schools, Ms. Verde modeled what the students "thought was cool" and introduced "step dancing" into her lessons. Ms. Hunter modeled

technological behaviors such as texting and used rap songs and hip-hop posters in order to initiate the students' prior knowledge. Ms. Forest modeled future success for the students by referring to them as Doctor.

## Chapter 8

## Discussion of Findings

*Introduction**Research Questions Revisited*

Three initial research questions, augmented by the Theoretical Conceptual Framework, guided this ethnographic investigation and were discussed individually. In addition comparisons, contrasts and parallels to existing research were related to the findings.

1. Among *urban high school English Language Arts classroom teachers*, are methodologies included which use culturally relevant literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994a)?

- A. The variety of methodologies which included culturally relevant literature were queried and observed.

Data analysis from this ethnographic study indicated that all of the English Language Arts teachers under investigation utilized culturally relevant literature in their teaching methodologies. Although their methodologies were varied in that nine teachers were investigated who taught a diversity of courses within their disciplines, seven were found to have utilized culturally relevant literature to a great degree. The courses taught were English Language Arts, Literacy Lab, English Composition, English Literature, British Literature, Speech, Advisory Preparation, Creative Writing, African American Literature, Journalism, and Mass Media Communication.

Inclusion of these courses within the English Language Arts curriculum appeared to indicate a desire by each District and school to further multicultural education, which according to Nieto (1992), permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize

the nature of teaching and learning. Because it used critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focused on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education furthered the democratic principles of social justice (1992, p. 208). The desire for a multicultural approach may have explicated and justified the utilization of culturally relevant literature among the teachers under investigation. However, Bennett de Marrais and LeCompte (1999) argued that curricula today were still most strongly influenced by social efficiency theorists, and that administrators were still taught to be scientific managers in their schools.

In the spirit of Bennett de Marrais and LeCompte, Ladson-Billings (1994a) argued for curriculum which is both culturally relevant and culturally sensitive to the students for which the curriculum was designed, written, and taught. Ladson-Billings (2000) further argued that in order for African American students to raise achievement levels in Reading and English Language Arts, the curriculum must be culturally responsive and include constructs which were relevant to these students.

Hence, Table 6 expressed that among the nine teachers under investigation, seven frequently used examples of culturally relevant literature in their methodologies and that two teachers used examples occasionally. The frequency of usage addressed the Conceptual Framework of the study in that it demonstrated conformity among teachers for the theoretical importance of culturally relevant literature.

Additional evidence of the perceived significance of using culturally relevant literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994 a) was documented in the responses to the Interview Guide on the conceptual constructs of usage of culturally relevant literature and pedagogy. Among responses to the constructs related to the use of culturally relevant literature, seven of the nine teachers

reported that they “always” used, incorporated, and chose it for their students. These seven teachers responded that they also used a varied and robust collection of culturally relevant literature which included books, fiction and nonfiction, poetry, plays, trade books, film, documentaries, and magazines. Other culturally relevant media such as art, music, audio books, and video were also reportedly used by the teacher participants.

Further evidence of the perceived value of the use of culturally relevant literature was illustrated in the case studies of the teach observations in which ten of the twenty seven observations focused on a culturally relevant piece of African American literature. It was also observed that in instances in which the focus of the lesson was not a culturally relevant piece of literature, the teacher participant would incorporate culturally relevant aspects of the students’ lives by asking students to “put themselves, families, friends, or their neighborhoods” into the action or praxis of the lesson. When African American children encountered literature that offered messages about them, their culture, and their roles in society, they had enhanced opportunities to reflect upon their own development and upon themselves as people. Culturally sensitive stories, views, and insights could allow children to realize that literature had value for them as individuals (Mason & Schumm, 2003).

Additional evidence of the significance of the use of culturally relevant literature was observed in the comparisons across the schools/Districts, wherein, the schools/Districts were similar in the teacher attitudes and beliefs concerning the use of culturally relevant literature. The types and variety of culturally relevant texts and materials were similar, as well. Teachers in the Yellow School informed that they had a strong positive influence of Black literature in their high school and college experiences which they desired to pass on to their students. All teachers, across all schools/Districts, described that they brought a collection of African American texts,

literature, and materials from home. All teachers, across all schools/Districts, further described their infusion of African American history as a consistent backdrop for their lessons. Ms. Royal's rationale for doing so was because of underrepresentation of African Americans, their culture, and literary contributions within the school Sky Curriculum.

Despite the literature supporting the need for inclusion of culturally relevant literature in the curriculum, traditional teacher centered classrooms, which enforced a conservative view of lesson delivery, persisted. According to Cuban (1984), teachers were socialized to be conservative and resistant to change. Often, their teaching was modeled on that of the teachers they had in school and on the teachers who supervised their student teaching. This modeling perpetuated standard methods of instruction and exclusion of curriculum, texts, and materials which might facilitate learning in English Language Arts education. Delpit (1995a) argued that there existed issues of power in the classroom and that dominated children must be taught, or prepared for access to power, by direct instruction in linguistics and presentation of self, including ways of talking, writing, dressing, and interacting.

Finally, the artifact collection phase of the investigation gave strength to both the conceptual framework and the theoretical constructs of the study. Multicultural education should pervade the curriculum and be included in all aspects of the curriculum and in the general life of the school, including bulletin boards and assemblies. Nine collections of classroom artifacts were documented in this study. These artifacts included a vast and extensive repertoire of African American literature, art, posters, bulletin boards, assignments, and handouts. These collections indicated material emphasis on the use of culturally relevant literature. Artifacts were free listed in Appendix A.

2. Among *urban high school English Language Arts classroom teachers*, are methodologies included that use culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a)?

A. The variety of teaching pedagogies was queried and observed.

Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1994a) urged that teachers of African American students adopt a culturally relevant pedagogy that would empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Almost all of the English Language Arts teachers in the current study responded in interviews that they used cultural referents in their teaching methodologies. These referents encompassed languages, traditions, celebrations, art, and music from the students' culture. All of the teacher participants reported that the use of cultural referents in their pedagogies empowered the students and increased student engagement. When culturally relevant pedagogy was modeled, whether in discussions with students or in formal lesson instruction, all of the teacher participants responded that it evoked positive responses from students.

The use of a culturally relevant pedagogy was documented in twenty of the twenty seven teacher observations, which advanced credibility in its use, and affirmed recognition of the theoretical conceptual framework. The notion of *cultural relevance* moved beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. Thus, culturally relevant teaching used student culture in order to sustain culture and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture. The negative effects were brought about, for example, by not seeing one's history, culture or background represented in the textbook or curriculum, or by seeing that history, culture, or background distorted. Negative effects resulted from the tracking of African American students into the lowest performing classes. The primary aim of culturally relevant

teaching was to assist in the development of a “relevant black personality” that allowed African American students to choose academic excellence, yet still identify with African American culture (Boykin, 1994a).

The use of culturally relevant pedagogy among the teachers under investigation was well established in the theoretical constructs of the Interview Guide and Conclusion Interview, by virtue of their responses. Under constructs related to pedagogy, Ms. Cornflower noted that she gave the teaching “her own flavor.” Ms. Azul stated that she “used their experiences to pull the students up.” Ms. Canary noted the need to “use their personal experiences, so that they could be heard.” Ms. Coward advised “teaching the students from where they’re at, whether it’s the Bridge Card or the Credit Card.” Ms. Bright stated “I talk about stories they can relate to.” Ms. Verde addressed the inequalities that set them up for failure by stating, “I try to tell them that they can all succeed.” Ms. Forest pointed to her posters and bulletin boards; “That says it all. Love You. Respect You. Be Proud of You.”

Culturally relevant pedagogy, which evolved from culturally relevant traditions, often evoked responses of this nature, owing to, the voice of empowerment and instructional perspective which the teachers modeled for students. Evidence of the use of culturally relevant pedagogies among teachers was documented in the comparisons across the school/Districts, of its use.

The nine teachers in the study focused their pedagogies on culturally relevant methodologies, texts, and materials. Comparisons indicated that their teacher education experiences impacted their teaching philosophies, styles, and choices of pedagogies. Teachers at the Urban/Blue School and the Suburban/Green School accentuated the need for teaching National and State *Standards* and Benchmarks, and college readiness, in concert with a culturally relevant perspective.

The relationships experienced by the teachers, the District, and the school principals also influenced pedagogical decisions. The teachers in both the Blue School and the Green School enjoyed a positive relationship with both their District Administrations and their principals. However, the Yellow School reported that they experienced frustration with both the District and the principal. The District's choice of curriculum was compared across schools, and it was found that the Blue School and the Green School teachers accepted and supported the curriculum choice, while the Yellow School teachers were unable to access or carry out the Maize Curriculum, and were not supportive of the Curriculum.

The availability and access to culturally relevant books and materials affected the chosen pedagogy. Comparisons across schools illustrated that the Blue School and the Green School had books, materials, supplies, and technology supplied by the District. The Yellow School District had not availed the teachers of books, materials, supplies, and/or technology, except for one set of *Literature Anthology* books for each grade level.

Recently, African American scholars have begun to look at specific cultural strengths of African American students and the ways that some teachers leverage these strengths effectively in order to enhance academic and social achievement. Scholars like Hale-Benson (1993) and Taylor & Dorsey-Gaines (1998) identified cultural strengths that African American children bring with them to the classroom that are rarely capitalized on by teachers (Ladson-Billings, 1994a). Irvine (1990) suggested that what happens between African American students and their teachers represented a lack of "cultural synchronization" that related to other factors which inhibited African American students' school achievement, including the "prescriptive ideologies and prescriptive structures that were premised on normative belief systems." Ladson-Billings (1994b) purported that specifically, culturally relevant teaching was a pedagogy that empowered

students intellectually socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Furthermore, this investigation sought to address:

3. Among *urban high school English Language Arts classroom teachers* do methodologies include the use of lesson activities and strategies from African American familial culture (Hale-Benson, 1986)?

A. The variety of methodologies which included lesson activities and strategies from African American familial culture were queried and observed.

Thusly, Table 6 expressed and findings indicated that among the nine teachers, in the current study, five responded in the Interview Guide on the conceptual construct of usage of cultural referents that they frequently used strategies from African American familial culture (Hale-Benson 1986). These cultural referents were not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining the dominant culture. They were aspects of the curriculum in their own right (Ladson-Billings, 1994b).

Teachers who affirmed this conceptual construct included Ms. Cornflower who stated “I definitely infuse the language of home and school in my lesson plans. We code-switch and I tell them when certain language is appropriate. We share cultural referents holiday traditions, art, and music. I use all of these in my lesson plans.” Ms Canary stated, “Yes, I use the language of home and school. Everyone is not raised the same. I want them to see that. We write in our journals and give presentations about holiday traditions. I use art and music in my lesson plans. We have been to the museum. We interpret lyrics in class. They really enjoy it.” Ms. Coward stated, “Yes, I use their home language in my methodologies. I’m not that far removed from the hood myself. They share stories about their lives and I share with them too. Cultural referents

are important. We share holiday plans and experiences. I use art and music, especially rap.” Ms. Bright explained “I try very hard to infuse the language of their homes into my lessons. Using cultural referents empowers them. In my lessons, I always ask them to share examples of art, music, food, clothes, and other things from their culture in class.”

Ms. Verde stated, “Yes, we definitely use cultural referents. They are always code-switching.” Ms. Hunter agreed that “code-switching” is a part of her lessons and that “Because I grew up in an African American neighborhood, I’m very familiar with the culture. We write in our journals about holidays and share experiences.” Ms. Forest affirmed that she used referents, art, and music from the students’ culture “all the time.”

Responses gleaned from the Interview Guide addressed the weight of the theoretical conceptual framework related to Hale-Benson (1986). The participant observations of the teachers reaffirmed the use of teaching activities and strategies from African American familial culture. With the exception of three, out of the twenty seven documented observations, cultural referents, traditions, culture of home, neighborhood or community, art, or music was infused into the lesson and/or methodology.

In addition, comparisons across the three schools/Districts illuminated the use of activities and strategies from African American familial culture. All of the teachers in all of the three schools/Districts were similar in that they used a variety of activities and strategies which included journal and essay writing about family experiences, holiday celebrations and traditions, special events and occasions, and pets. Class discussions were facilitated around similar topics. Presentations of cultural artifacts were included. All teachers in all of the schools also entertained Ebonics, or use of the home language in their lesson plans, classroom discussions, and/or student writing assignments.

Therefore, the English Language Arts teachers inquired consistently about the home, family, school, and community cultures of their students. Teachers were observed to “take a teaching moment,” as Ms. Cornflower referred to these instances, in which they would ask questions such as, “What would you do in this situation? What would your family do? Do you know anyone who lost their job? What do you do to celebrate holidays? What is your favorite food? Do you date? What kind of music do you like? What do you do for fun in your neighborhood?” Questions, such as these, afforded students opportunities to share their cultural referents, family traditions and practices, likes and dislikes related to art and music, as well as cultural constructs which provided pride and contentment for them.

In conjunction with culturally relevant pedagogy, specific teaching strategies derived from African American culture were investigated. J. Baratz, S. Baratz and Shuy (1969) focused their research upon the area of reading instruction with Black children. They supported the position that Black children grew up in a distinct culture that gave rise to a distinct language system, in addition to distinct behavioral characteristics, that are often ignored in the educative process. Baratz and Shuy charged that most educational programs were not innovative but offered smaller classes doing the same thing that large classes had been doing. These researchers said that what Black children needed most was an educational system that first recognized that their abilities and their culture, and then drew upon these strengths and infused them into the teaching process.

In contrast, what is often actually taught in today’s schools, known as the formal curriculum, does not reflect inclusion of cultural referents, language, traditions, art, and music from African American familial culture, especially as it relates to texts. Today, many interest groups compete to influence what knowledge is transmitted in schools and how this transmission takes place. Spring’s (1988a) discussion of the textbook publishing industry provided an excellent

examination of the conflicting interest groups and their effects on educational policy and practice. He described how the particular textbooks chosen determined what curricula will dominate in a school system. Because textbooks often served as the curriculum, these choices were powerfully influenced by negotiations among the interest groups, which included policy makers, corporations, and school administrators (Bennett de Marrais & LeCompte 1999).

In addition, this study sought to determine:

4. Among *urban high school English Language Arts classroom teachers* are teaching strategies of “cultural modeling” (Lee 1993) applied?

A. The variety of teaching strategies which included in cultural modeling were queried and observed.

Accordingly, Table 6 illustrated findings that among the nine teachers, under study, six reported, in the Interview Guide on the conceptual construct of application of cultural modeling (Lee 1993), that they applied cultural modeling strategies in their lesson plans and methodologies. In attending to cultural modeling, teachers Cornflower, Azul, Coward, Bright, Verde, and Forest used culturally relevant literature and pedagogy, addressed African American learning styles, used prior knowledge, incorporated African American history, used cultural referents such as art and music, and encouraged students to infuse their own examples of language and traditions. This conceptualizing of a productive relationship between learning and culture encompassed cultural modeling (Lee 1993) and encouraged activities and strategies in which it would be promoted.

In cultural modeling, students’ knowledge was the center of pedagogy and practice. Students took the lead and were asked to model the strategies that they used to understand texts. Lee (1993) suggested that for students to gain broad knowledge about “character types, plot

configurations, archetypal themes, and interpretive text” (p.48), the high school curriculum must have a coherent sequence of cognitive activity and expectations around learning. Students were encouraged to use drama, improvisation, song, including hip-hop and rap, language from home, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), and interpretation in order to understand texts (Lee 1993).

5. How do these matters of interest vary across Urban, Metro-City, and Suburban school Districts?

A. These matters of interest were compared and contrasted across the three schools/Districts under study.

Compatible with the strategy of cultural modeling was the aesthetic stance to reading, which Rosenblat (1978) argued was highly conducive to reading comprehension. The aesthetic stance welcomed attention to matters that went beyond the text and its immediate utility, and the reader who adopted this stance could find himself attending to the music of the language, reflecting on memories of personal experience, and even telling his own stories. Aesthetic reading was exploratory and responsive, alert to unforeseen possibilities, curious about detours and digressions, playful and experimental, and above all, it acknowledged the uniqueness of the reader. It respected the fact that each reader brought to the text an unduplicated history and the unique perspective that is the result. The experience of the text, consequently, was unique for each reader.

In contrast to cultural modeling, which Lee (1993) purported was a teaching strategy designed to “student center” lessons and activities, Spring (2002) argued that competency based instruction replaced the open classroom movement. In the framework of competency-based instruction, teachers developed specific instructional objectives, developed methods to achieve

those objectives, and measured the achievement of those objectives. Students learned discrete skills in incremental steps using preplanned instructional packages. The emphasis on measurement contributed to the rise of the importance of standardized testing. Often, this meant the standardized test had a controlling influence over the actions of the teacher and students.

Additionally, comparisons across the three schools/Districts demonstrated the use of cultural modeling. All of the teachers in all three schools/Districts were similar in that they used cultural modeling often with their students. Examples of cultural modeling included dramatization of characters, singing songs, using music, infusing artwork and posters, identification of both appropriate and inappropriate student behaviors, using the language of home, code switching, and using visual aids. Other examples included using hip-hop and rap, role playing, introducing African American heroes and stories related to the students' religious cultures, showing Black movies and hip-hop videos, and using Ebonics and the home language.

Hence, the utilization indicators (figure 1.1) were used as Benchmarks to determine the extent of use of culturally relevant literature, culturally relevant pedagogy, lesson activities from African American familial culture, and cultural modeling. The aforementioned findings illustrated the extent of use of each theoretical concept among the nine teachers under study. Extent of use of each concept ranged from occasional to frequent, and was displayed in Table 6. Sources used to determine the extent of use included the teacher responses on the Interview Guide and the Participant Observations.

### *Artifact Collection*

In addition to administration of the Interview Guide and Participant Observations, the collection of artifacts provided evidence of the use of culturally relevant literature (see Data Collection). More than two thirds of the posters, bulletin boards, handouts, assignments, books,

magazines, poems, videos, and plays had African American or multicultural themes. Each of the nine research sites was saturated with Artifacts which reflected the teacher's use of culturally relevant materials. The artifacts were free listed in Appendix A.

### *Implications and Potential Contribution to Research*

Findings in the current study pointed to implications that extended beyond the nine teachers of focus and the three schools in which they taught. The existing literature, bolstered by the teacher responses and observations, argued for the use of culturally relevant literature, pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), lessons activities from African American familial culture (Hale-Benson, 1986), and teaching strategies of cultural modeling (Lee 1993). The self reporting of use, as well as the documentation of use from the participant observations might augment existing literature and increase the robustness of the existing body of literature. These findings strengthened the theoretical conceptual framework, which bound the current study, and indicated which variables and relationships were most meaningful (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this study, it appeared that using culturally relevant literature and pedagogy in their teaching methodologies and curriculum planning, held great significance for the teachers.

In responses to the Interview Guide and the participant observations, teachers were afforded opportunities to describe their teaching pedagogies, use of culturally relevant literature, use of activities and strategies from African American familial culture, and cultural modeling. The commonalities in their usage were documented in the pattern analyses established following the comparisons made across the schools, and were presented below.

The repetition of specific items, groups of items, and interpretations emerged from the investigation of the use of culturally relevant pedagogy in the teachers' lessons across the three schools, which illustrated a pattern analysis. Examples of culturally relevant pedagogy included

bringing culturally relevant materials from home to be used in the lessons, using African American history, focusing lessons on African American themes, engaging students in culturally relevant issues, teaching from an African American perspective, writing about culturally relevant issues in essays and journals, addressing African American student learning styles, attention to social justice and equality education, being strict, giving students love, mentoring students, building rapport and relationships with students, and being energetic and fun. The use of culturally relevant pedagogy was common among the three schools/Districts, with the exception of Ms. Azul in the Blue School and Ms. Hunter in the Green School.

This conformity was observed in the two Caucasian teachers in the study who reported that they did not use culturally relevant literature consistently in their lessons. Interestingly, those teachers, Ms. Azul and Ms. Hunter had, through their pedagogies, deliveries, and styles of teaching established an influxion of the culturally relevant elements identified in the study.

Ms. Azul drew important connections and comparisons to African American life when she taught the Greek tragedies. She compared the historical relevance of the Greek slaves to the conditions and circumstances of African American slaves in this country. During her lectures related to Greek mythology, she used African American Vernacular English and contemporary home language of the students in order to create relevance for the students.

Furthermore, Ms. Azul bolstered her teaching pedagogy and delivery by bringing culturally relevant books, magazines, music, and poems from home which she used in her lessons. She engaged the students in discussions about culturally relevant issues, in order to tap their prior knowledge, and then encouraged the students to write about these issues in their journals. She infused African American history and connected tragic Greek characters to African Americans, especially heroes, who were noted in the literature.

Ms. Azul encouraged the students to bring in art and music from home. She engaged in discussions about African American holiday traditions and celebrations. She facilitated the usage of the students' home language in that she identified appropriate times and situations for code-switching. She exposed the students to new cultural artifacts and ideas and then encouraged them to compare and contrast these to their existing cultural knowledge. She emphasized this practice when she encouraged the students to relate their cultural experiences to the stories which she taught in lessons.

Ms. Azul "acted out" and dramatized characterizations in stories. She assigned essays related to hip-hop in which the students could connect prior knowledge, affects, and experiences in their writing. She was firm in correcting the use of home language in the student essays. Ms. Azul encouraged journal writing related to African American heroes. She displayed posters which depicted pop-artists from African American culture. In her lessons, she included stories from African American religious culture.

Although, Ms. Azul, in the Blue School, reported that she "did not use many cultural referents in class" and that she did not use culturally relevant literature consistently except in Creative Writing, the findings in the current study attested to her infusion of a great many culturally relevant elements into her lessons, although the usage was, perhaps, unintentional. According to Hale-Benson (1986), the inclusion of these activities, strategies, and methodologies addressed the social, historical, and cultural forces that affected the development of learning styles in the Black community.

Ms. Hunter in the Green school reported that she did not specifically teach from a culturally relevant pedagogy; however, findings spoke to the evidence that she included a great many culturally relevant characteristics in her pedagogy. She taught from an individualized perspective

and felt that all students could learn. Her teaching style was energetic, fun, and designed to make instruction relevant to the students. She strove to establish positive rapport with the students. She addressed social justice in her teaching which mirrored the thoughts of Giroux (1986), Freire (1970a), and Delpit (1996a) who spoke of the importance of the appreciation for the manifestation of values and power in students' learning.

Ms. Hunter also brought culturally relevant books, magazines, and free reading materials from home. She connected African American history and African American contributions to each lesson and in her use of trade books; she often substituted African Americans for the characters which were presented. Much like Ms. Azul, who reported that she used minimal cultural referents in the classroom, Ms. Hunter encouraged a significant and fundamental referent, which was the home language of the students. She encouraged them to be "social creatures" and used the students' language in order to "reach them", and their cultural contributions in order to "empower them."

Ms. Hunter assigned journal writing about their cultural traditions, celebrations, special occasions, and other aspects of their lives. She modeled current trends such as *texting*, engaged the students in discussions related to culturally relevant issues, and used rap, hip-hop, and related posters in order to initiate students' prior knowledge. When appropriate, Ms. Hunter also showed culturally relevant movies and hip-hop videos.

Comparable to Ms. Azul, Ms. Hunter reported that she did not teach from a foundation of culturally relevant pedagogy. Findings in the study, however, indicated that she also included a wide variety of activities, strategies, and culturally relevant elements into her lessons, although the inclusion might have been unintentional. The educational experiences, especially in the area of teacher education, may have contributed to the teaching styles, and ultimately the teaching

pedagogies, of Ms. Azul and Ms. Hunter. Both teachers indicated that during their teacher education they were able to talk about stories and texts, and this was an important component. Each of the teachers identified one particular professor who had made an impression in the area of English Language Arts importance.

Hence, it appeared that these facets of teacher education had been suffused into the teaching styles of both Ms. Azul and Ms. Hunter. The styles of teaching ultimately afforded an appreciation for and utilization of culturally relevant elements which underscored their pedagogies. Ms. Azul noted that she “might have five different graphic organizers going at one time.” Ms. Hunter noted that she was “fun and energetic.” Both teachers focused on drawing connections between what the text taught and the experiences of their African American students. These styles addressed specific learning characteristics of African American children in which *vervistic* (Boykin & Toms, 1985) learning experiences are preferred. Commonalities in these teaching styles were compatible with the use of the culturally relevant elements identified in the study.

The findings related to teaching style might mitigate the notion that Caucasian teachers cannot adequately deliver a culturally relevant pedagogy to their African American students, or that they may not effectively teach culturally relevant literature. In the current study, both Ms. Azul and Ms. Hunter were equally effective in their deliveries of cultural pedagogy, their inclusion of culturally relevant literature, their use of activities and strategies related to African American familial culture, and their displays of cultural modeling. It appeared that through creativity, effort, and style of delivery, both were able to “find a way” to utilize culturally relevant elements in their lessons.

The repetition of specific items, groups of items, and interpretations emerged from the investigation of the use of culturally relevant literature in the teachers' lessons across the three schools, which illustrated a pattern analysis. Examples of culturally relevant literature included texts, books, magazines, graphic novels, poetry, plays, videos, trade books, novels, free reading materials, newspaper articles, documentaries, and the infusion of African American history. Connections from the text to student experiences were pronounced. The types of literature and materials were also common among the three schools/Districts. The practice of teachers bringing culturally relevant texts and materials from home was common among all the schools/Districts, although, not by choice in the Yellow School.

All of the teachers in the Yellow School expressed a strong desire to teach from culturally relevant pedagogies using culturally relevant literature and materials, because of their educational backgrounds which were immersed in the study of African American literature. All of the teachers expressed, however, that they were unable to do so, in great part, due to the constraints placed upon them by their Yellow School District. The District failed to provide the teachers books, texts, materials, supplies, and technology necessary to carry out the Maize Curriculum. Therefore, the teachers were "forced to scramble" for "anything they could get their hands on" in order to provide lessons and lesson content for the students. Furthermore, inaccessibility to the District and the principal, as well as nonexistent communication between and among these academic stakeholders, also thwarted their abilities to teach the Maize Curriculum. Finally, the lack of teacher evaluations and support placed the teachers in the Yellow School in a deficit in the area of instructional pedagogy.

Repetition of specific items, groups of items, and interpretations emerged from the inquiry of the use of activities and strategies from African American familial culture in the teachers'

lessons, across the three schools, which demonstrated a pattern analysis. Examples included writing assignments, in both essays and journal, about family culture, experiences, issues, and traditions were common practices. Classroom discussions about these topics were a repetitive theme. Attention to and recognition of the home language of the students was infused into lesson plans, used in students' writing, and used in class in order to connect to students.

The repetition of specific items, groups of items, and interpretations emanated from the investigation of the use of cultural modeling in the teachers' lessons and classroom behaviors across the three schools, which resulted in a pattern analysis. Examples of cultural modeling included the use of dramatization, role play, use of rap and hip-hop music, modeling appropriate student behaviors, infusion of artwork and posters, code switching, use of home language, and the introduction of African American heroes.

Hence, a significant theme which emerged from the pattern analyses in the study spoke to the evolution of a caring teaching pedagogy (Noddings, 2005). Changes in the structure of schooling, and especially the curriculum, that will provide a climate in which caring relationships might flourish, are warranted. The emphasis was on the relation containing carer and cared-for. Both carer and cared-for contributed to this relation. Schools, like homes, were special places in the lives of the students. They should be centers of stability and community.

Several teachers in the current study exemplified a "caring pedagogy." It was first observed in Ms. Royal as she discussed with the students the importance of proper grooming, hygiene, etiquette, and dress for their jobs. She also reminded them that they represented their communities. She also introduced emotions, affects, and feelings into the lessons. Ms. Canary and Ms. Verde modeled being a "momma," which included being "loving and strict." Ms. Coward advised educators to "Love them!" Finally, Ms. Forest reported that students said often

“I want to work with Ms. Forest, because she will work with you.” These examples of caring pedagogy were evident across schools/Districts and reflected the research of Foster and Delpit (1997) and Ladson-Billings (1995a) in which “good teachers” were described as those who were concerned “not only with the students’ cognitive development, but also with their affective, social, and emotional development.”

The documentation of these similarities and differences gave voice and credibility to their pedagogies, teaching styles, activities, strategies, and modeling experiences. Their voices should be heard by other teachers and administrators in order to share their experiences, both positive and negative, related to using culturally relevant literature. In sharing their experiences, other teachers may benefit. The documentation of successful use of culturally relevant literature might address the mandates of current curriculum *Standards and Benchmarks* (NCTE 2011).

#### *Remaining Questions and the Need for Further Research*

1. *One question which evolved from this research and which needs to be addressed is: Does the inclusion of culturally relevant literature and pedagogy raise achievement in African American Students?*

Ladson-Billings (1995a) argued that it does, in fact, raise student achievement among African American students. Student achievement, however, was not addressed in this study.

2. *A second question which arises is: How much culturally relevant literature, or to what extent of use of culturally relevant literature is appropriate, in order to raise achievement levels?*

Boykins (1984) concluded that in regard to the current research on African American education, there were some rather clear implications for the schooling of African American children. Current arguments contended that significant progress in schooling African American children

could be made if teachers: (1) acknowledged the cultural fabric of the schooling process and the issues of power contained therein, (2) acknowledged the social cultural integrity of the African American experience, (3) created greater home-school cultural continuity, and (4) predicated the mainstream socialization on these preceding considerations. The considerations which Boykin argued constituted an extremely “tall order” which would conflict mightily with many current school district curriculum policies. The current study did not address possible curriculum transformation.

3. *A third question to be pondered is: Who will decide what culturally relevant texts and materials will be utilized? What will be the criteria for their selection?*

Current curriculum *Standards* which emerged from the Guided Visions of NCTE/IRA mandated that students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts were fiction and nonfiction, classic, and contemporary works. Students were also required to read a wide range of literature from many periods, in many genres, to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience. The reality is that these mandates do not perfectly align with the desire for a curriculum which is specifically African American in orientation. Nor do they specify texts and materials. The current study did not address specific texts and criteria for usage. Further research, in order to investigate these questions, is warranted.

### *Conclusion*

The reading achievement gap between African American and White students had remained relatively constant over a nine-year period. It was further established that, nationally, 75% of

African American students in public schools are poor readers, confirming that accepted teaching methodologies failed to address the literacy needs of urban African American students. Two goals established in the current legislation remain unfulfilled. African American students in high poverty area schools required teaching methodologies which addressed their demographic, cultural, and social needs. Students of low socioeconomic status learned English language skills more effectively via multifarious teaching methodologies in curriculum and instruction (Cochran-Smith 1984). In forming an articulate and coherent philosophy of education, teacher methodologies in curriculum and instruction must be addressed which uniquely promote student academic achievement in literacy education among urban African American students.

Ladson-Billings (1994a), Hale-Benson (1986), and Lee (1993) asserted that curriculum and instruction must be uniquely tailored to address the literacy achievement in urban African American students. Although there was not an extensive body of literature, an overarching finding in the current study was that, Caucasian teachers were found to use culturally relevant literature effectively with African American students. Curriculum and instruction must be culturally relevant, inclusive of familial culture, and cultural modeling. In coordination, these may produce higher achievement levels. With further research in this area, higher achievement levels in English Language Arts among urban African American students might be realized.

## APPENDIX A: ARTIFACTS

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #1:Ms. Royal  
Blue School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Books*

- *Pearson, Elements of Literature* (one unit on African American Literature)
- *Springboard Level 4* (units on African American Literature)
- *Prentice Hall Literature: Authors*
  1. *Charles Johnson 1948*
  2. *Nell Irvin*
  3. *Ashanti*
  4. *African Proverbs*
  5. *James Baldwin*
  6. *Gwendolyn Brooks*
- *Paul Lawrence Dunbar, The Corn Planting*
- *Frederick Douglass, Everyday Use*
- *Frederick Douglass, We Wear the Mask*
- *Langston Hughes, The Harlem Renaissance*
- *Leonard Pitts Jr., Lesson Learned on the Road*
- *Frederick Douglass, My Bondage and my Freedom*
- *Frederick Douglass, The Negro Speaks of Rivers*
- *Frederick Douglass, Heyday in Harlem*
- *Go Down Moses- Spiritual*
- *Swing Low Sweet Chariot- Spiritual*
- *Sojourner Truth, Nell Irvin Painter- An Account of an Experience with Discrimination*
- *Mary Chesnut, From Civil War*
- *Holt Rinehardt Winston Elements of Literature-5<sup>th</sup> course* (unit of African American Literature)
- *Holt Rinehardt Winston Elements of Literature-6<sup>th</sup> course* (unit on African American Literature)
- *Holt Rinehardt Winston Essentials of British and World Literature* (unit on African American Proverbs)
  1. *The African Tradition- Unit 2*
  2. *African Proverbs*
  3. *Chinua Achebe, Marriage is a Private Affair*

*Novels/Poems*

- *Race Politics*
- *Essex Hemphill, American Hero*
- *Nikki Giovanni, Nikki Rosa*
- *Nikki Giovanni, Ego Tripping The Bleep Bleep Poem*
- *Eugenia Collier, Marigolds*
- *Gwendolyn Brooks, We Were Cool*
- *Fast Break In Memory of Dennis Turner 1946-1984*
- *Audre Lorde, Hanging Fire*
- *Langston Hughes, Harlem Renaissance*
- *Paul Lawrence Dunbar, We Wear the Mask*
- *Rick Edmonds, Jim Crow: Shorthand for Separation*
- *Harper Lee, To Kill a Mocking Bird*
- *James Baldwin, The Rockpile*
- *Gwendolyn Brooks, The Explorer*
- *Robert Hayden, Frederick Douglass*
- *Paul Lawrence Dunbar, We Wear the Mask*
- *Harriet A Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- *Sojourner Truth, Ain't I a Woman*
- *Richard Wright, Black Boy*
- *Alice Walker, In Search of Our Mother's Garden*
- *Gwendolyn Brooks, The Bean Eaters*
- *Noami Shihab Nye, Trying to Name What Doesn't Change*
- *Toni Morrison, The Reader as Artist*
- *Langston Hughes, The Weary Blues*
- *Louise Clifton, At the Cemetery Walnut Grove Plantation South Carolina*
- *Follow the Drinking Gourd*
- *Arna Bontemps, A Black Man Talks of Reaping*
- *Langston Hughes, Harlem*
- *Langston Hughes, Heyday in Harlem*

*Posters*

- *Pronunciation*
- *Comprehension*
- *Word Meaning*
- *Word Associations*
- *Enriching the Vocabulary*

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #2: Ms. Cornflower  
Blue School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Novels/Poems*

- *Langston Hughes, Theme for English B*
- *George Ella Lyon, Where I'm From*
- *Alice Walker, Everyday use*
- *Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart*
- *Leopold Sedar Senghor, Prayer to the Masks*

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #3: Ms. Azul  
Blue School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Books*

- *Holt Rinehardt Winston-6<sup>th</sup> course Essentials of British and World Literature (unit on African American Proverbs)*
- *Holt Rinehardt Winston-5<sup>th</sup> course Essentials of American Literature and World Literature (unit on African American Proverbs)*

*Novels/Poems*

- *Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God*

*DVD*

- *The Civil War*

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #4  
Yellow School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Books*

- *Holt Rinehardt Winston, African American Literature (unit on African American Literature)*
- *Nexttext, Multicultural America*
- *Nexttext, Slavery in America*

- *J. Clark, American Negro Short Stories*
- *Civil Rights- The African American Struggle for Equality*
- *Joan W. Gartland, African American Booklist*
- *Ginn and Company, Voices from the Black Experience- African and Afro American Literature*
- *Moraga & Anzaldua, This Bridge Called my Black Writings*
- *Jerry Herron, After Culture-Detroit and the Humiliation of History*
- *The Prentice Hall Anthology of African American Literature*
- *Davis & Donaldson, Blacks in the United States-A Geographic Perspective*
- *Chinn & Gollnick, Multicultural Education in A Pluralistic Society*
- *Foster, Aint No River*
- *Langston Hughes, City*
- *Tony Morrison, The Bluest Eyes*
- *Maya Angelou, I know Why the Caged Bird Sings*
- *Sharon G. Flake, The Skin I'm In*
- *Black Power- Definition and History*
- *Elridge Cleaver, The Black Panther Party*
- *Toni Morrison, Beloved*
- *Richard Wright, Black Boy*

#### *Magazines*

- *Vogue*
- *Black Enterprise*
- *O The Oprah Magazine*
- *Ebony*
- *Essence*
- *Parenting*

#### *Posters*

- *Michigan Content Standards*
- *Small posters that address qualities/characteristics in:*  
*Learning*  
*Achievement*  
*Success*  
*Teamwork*

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #5:Ms. Coward  
Yellow School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Books*

- *McDougall Littell, The Language of Literature* (unit on African American Literature)
- *Coretta Scott King, Montgomery Boycott*
- *Chinua Achebe, Marriage As A Private Affair*
- *Eugenia Collier, Sweet Potatoe Pie*
- *Nikki Giovanni, Woman*
- *Bill Cosby, Love and Marriage*
- *Maya Angelou, Getting A Job*
- *Langston Hughes, Afro-American Fragment*
- *Alice Walker, Everyday Use*
- *Alice Walker, Women*
- *Alice Walker, Poem at Thirty Nine*
- *Alice Walker, In Search of our Mother's Gardens*
- *Lorraine Hansbury, On Summer*
- *Harper Lee, To Kill A Mockingbird*
- *Macomb Curriculum-9<sup>th</sup> Grade*  
     *Unit 10.4 Harlem Renaissance and Post World War II*
- *Kanye West, Book of Lyrics*
- *Emmett Till*
- *Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun*
- *Eugenia Collier, Breeder and Other Stories*
- *Langston Hughes, The Weary Blues*
- *Langston Hughes, The Big Sea: An Autobiography*
- *Langston Hughes, The Best of Simple*
- *Eugenia Collier, Marigolds*
- *Nikki Giovanni, Luxury*
- *Martin Luther King Jr., I have a Dream*
- *Langston Hughes, Theme for English B*
- *Maya Angelou, I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*
- *New Directions, Encounter with Martin Luther King Jr.*

*Poems*

- *Ishmael Reed, Beware: Do Not Read This Poem*
- *Caged Bird*

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #6: Ms. Bright  
Yellow School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Books*

- *Margaret Walker, Prophets for A New Day*
- *Margaret Walker, How I Wrote Jobilee*
- *Margaret Walker, This is my Century: New and Collected Poems*
- *Richard Wright, Black Boy*
- *Electronic Library/Langston Hughes, Harlem*
- *Holt Rinehardt Winston, African American Literature* (unit on African American Literature)
- *McDougall Littell, The Language of Literature* (unit on African American Literature)
- *Toni Morrison, Remember*
- *Duke Ellington*
- *Our People*
- *Langston Hughes, Harlem*
- *Rap aTap Tap*
- *Martin Luther King Jr., I Have A Dream*
- *Nelson Mandela, Glory and Hope*
- *Richard Wright, Black Boy*
- *Eugenia Collier, Marigolds*
- *Maya Angelou, Why The Caged Bird Sings*
- *Jawanza Kunjufu, Motivating and Preparing Youth to Work*
- *Spotlight on Literature Series/2-6- Remedial Series* (unit on African American Literature)
- *Jamestown Publishers, Best Short Stories*
- *Jamestown Publishes, African American Voices*
- *Clayborne Carson (editor), Eyes on the Prize- Civil Rights Reader, 1954-1990*
- *Nexttext, A Nation Dividing, 1800-1860*
- *Sylviane A. Diouf, Growing Up in Slavery*
- *Deborah Gillan Straub (editor), African American Voices*
- *Johnson McLaughlin, Civil War Battles*
- *Scott Nearing, Black America*
- *Corwin Press Inc., Urban Education*
- *Herbert G. Gutman, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*
- *Angela Johnson, Maniac Monkeys on Magnolia Street*
- *Walter Mosley, Fortunate Son*
- *Chris Crowe, Mississippi Trial 1955*
- *Angela Johnson, When Mules Flew on Magnolia Street*
- *Candy Dawson Boyd, Circle of Gold*
- *Angela Johnson, The First Part Last*
- *Charlie Pippin, Candy*

### *Posters*

- *Huge room size poster of President Obama constructed from historical moments in his life and campaign information*

### *Magazines*

- *Jet Magazine*

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #7: Ms. Verde  
Green School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

### *Books*

- *Alice Walker, The Color Purple*

### *Novels/Poems*

- *Poetry Book Black American Authors*
- *Maya Angelou, The Complete Collected Poems*
- *Nikki Giovanni, The Collected Poetry 1968-1998*
- *Rita Dove, On the Bus with Rosa Parks*
- *Gwendolyn Brooks, Selected Poems*
- *Nikki Giovanni, Blues for all the Changes*
- *David Roessel (editor), The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*
- *Nikki Giovanni, And How Could I live on (for Betty Shabazz)*
- *Nikki Giovanni, The Wrong Kitchen*
- *Nikki Giovanni, Mixed Media*

### *Posters*

- *Exploring Black History Through Stamps.*

### *Magazines*

- *Jet*
- *Ebony*

*Artifacts Collection/Teacher #8: Ms. Hunter  
Green School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Books*

- *McDougall & Littell, The Language of Literature* (unit on African American Literature)
- *Chinua Achebe, Things Fall Apart*
- *James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain*
- *Earnest J. Gaines, A Gathering of Old Men*
- *Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man*
- *Eric Jerome Dickey, Sister Sister*
- *Eric Jerome Dickey, Milk in My Coffee*
- *Manthia Dawara, Black American Cinema*
- *Christopher Paul Curtis, The Watsons Go To Birmingham*
- *Julius Lester, To Be A Slave*
- *Ursula K. LeGuin, The Dispossessed*
- *Zora Neale Hurston, Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- *Lorraine Hansberry, A Raisin in the Sun*
- *Lorraine Hansberry, To Be Young Gifted and Black*
- *Alex Haley, The Autobiography of Malcolm X – As Told to Alex Haley*
- *Ed Guerrero, Framing Blackness*
- *August Wilson, Joe Turner's Come and Gone*
- *Alice Walker, The Temple of My Familiar*
- *Richard Wright, Native Son*
- *Arthur Miller, Death of A Salesman*
- *Toni Morrison, Song of Solomon*
- *Toni Morrison, Beloved*
- *Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eyes*
- *Gloria Naylor, – The Women of Brewster Place*
- *Tim O'Brien, The Things They Carried*
- *Gordon Parks, The Learning Tree*
- *Mark Reid, Redefining Black Film*
- *Alice Walker, Color Purple*
- *Betty Smith, A Tree Grows In Brooklyn*
- *Harriet Beecher Stowe, The Minister's Wooing*
- *Trisha R. Thomas, Nappily Ever After*
- *Iyanla Vanzant, One Day My Soul Just Opened Up*
- *McDougall & Little, The Language of Literature* (unit on African American Literature)
- *Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman*
- *Spencer Kagan, Cooperative Learning*

*Artifact Collection/Teacher #9: Ms. Forest  
Green School*

*Culturally relevant materials to be used during the semester:*

*Books*

- *Mark Bielak, Television Production Today 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition* (unit on African American Literature)
- *William Jarvitz, Understanding Mass Media 5<sup>th</sup> edition* (unit on African American contributions in Media)
- *McGraw Hill-Glencoe, Television Production Today* (unit on African American contributions in Media)
  1. *Building Vocabulary*
  2. *Critical Reading, Thinking and Writing*

*Posters*

- *Writing Sessions:*
  1. *Writers pay attention to the world around them.*
  2. *The class is a community of writers.*
  3. *Writers record memories from their past with as much detail as possible to use for the basis of their writing.*
  4. *Writers often reread to discover the significance of their stories so that they can expand their writing by exploring their thoughts.*
  5. *Writers reveal characters.*
  6. *Writers reveal their characters by describing the physical characteristics.*
  7. *Writers share their writing with others.*
  8. *Writers give their work clarity by using proper conventions.*
  9. *Writers celebrate their stories by sharing them with others.*

- *Poster of Influential African Americans in Media:*

*Roland Martin – Multimedia voice in journalism.*

*Cathy Hughes – Founder of Radio One.*

*Clarence Page – Prize winning Columnist.*

*Pam Oliver – Sports reporter*

*Robin Roberts – 2009 Ford Freedom Award Honoree.*

*Susan Taylor – Leader of Essence.*

*Juan Williams – Radio Forum Leader and Author.*

- *African American Entrepreneurs:*

*Oprah Winfrey, Usher Raymond IV, Madam C.J. Walker, Sheila C. Johnson, Lonnie Johnson, Henry Parks Jr., John Johnson, James Forten, Bridget “Biddy” Mason, Russell Simmons.*

## APPENDIX B: CORRESPONDENCE

May 12, 2011

Superintendent/Administrator:  
School District:  
Address:  
City, State Zip

To Whom It May Concern:  
School Superintendent:

I am a doctoral candidate at Wayne State University in the Curriculum and Instruction Program. I am currently working on my dissertation proposal entitled "Toward Affective Language Arts Teaching: The Utilization of Culturally Relevant Literature on Urban African American High School Students". I am writing to you in order to secure a Letter of Support. This Letter of Support should be written to me on District letterhead stating that you give support to the research and that you give me permission to contact one school principal in your district.

After receiving your Letter of Support, which will permit me to contact the Principal of \_\_\_\_\_ High School in order to obtain his/her permission to attend an English Language Arts teachers' meeting, I will introduce myself to the teachers. After meeting and recruiting the teachers, I will coordinate a meeting with them in order to administer the Interview Guide. I will also coordinate two (2) meetings in each of their classrooms in order to observe the teachers, and only the teachers, as they present information, instruction, and materials to the students. No students will be observed and no data will be collected on students. All responses will be confidential and results will be presented in aggregate, with no individual principal, teacher, or school district identifiable in the final report.

The significance of this study is that there exists an abundance of research regarding effective methodologies for engaging urban high school learners in reading. However, few studies have addressed the incorporation of culturally relevant literature in teaching methodologies. This project examines the use and extent of use of culturally relevant literature by teachers. The results might augment the current research and provide valuable information for all stakeholders to consider.

Should you agree, please forward this Letter of Support to me on District letterhead, which states that you will allow me to contact the Principal. The Human Investigation Committee (HIC) at Wayne State University requires this before I can proceed. For your convenience, I have enclosed a preaddressed postage paid envelope for your response. I have also attached a letter from Major Faculty Advisor acknowledging this project.

Should you need additional information to process this request or about this project, please contact me at 313.863.0298 or by email at bcrafbt @ Comcast.net

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Barbara-Benita Craft  
Doctoral Candidate/Wayne State University

To: Principal  
 School:  
 From: Barbara-Benita Craft  
 Re: Permission to interview and observe teachers  
 Date:

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral candidate at Wayne State University in the Curriculum and Instruction Program. I am currently working on my dissertation proposal entitled "Toward Affective Language Arts Teaching: The Utilization of Culturally Relevant Literature on Urban African American High School Students".

I have received a Letter of Support from the Superintendent of \_\_\_\_\_ Schools. I am writing to request your permission to come on site at \_\_\_\_\_ School and attend a Language Arts Teachers' meeting in order to recruit three (3) Language Arts teachers to participate in my study. The study will include one Interview and three (3) observation sessions of the three (3) Language Arts teachers, and only the teachers, in their classrooms. No students will be observed and no data will be observed and/or collected on the students. I have attached a copy of the Interview Guide for your review.

Once I have recruited the teachers, I would like to coordinate three (3) observation sessions with each teacher. I will observe each teacher on three (3) days for two (2) hours each day. The schedule of these sessions will be at the convenience of the selected teachers. Once the Language Arts teachers have been selected, each teacher will be given an Information Sheet for Teachers and complete a Letter of Research Informed Consent.

The significance of this study is that there exists an abundance of research regarding effective methodologies for engaging urban high school learners in reading. However, few studies have addressed the incorporation of culturally relevant literature in teaching methodologies. Existing research in this area includes the use of culturally relevant pedagogy, cultural modeling and strategies from familial culture. This project examines the effects of using culturally relevant literature in order to observe student responses. The results will augment the current research and provide valuable information for all stakeholders to consider.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. Should you need additional information in order to process this request or about this project please contact me at 313.863.0298 or by email at [bcraftb@comcast.net](mailto:bcraftb@comcast.net).

I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Sincerely,

Barbara-Benita Craft  
 Doctoral Candidate/Wayne State University

## APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

### TOWARD AFFECTIVE LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHING: The Utilization of Culturally Relevant Literature on Urban African American High School Students

Principal Investigator (PI): Barbara-Benita Craft  
College of Education/Curriculum and Instruction  
(313) 863-0298

#### **Purpose:**

You are being asked to be in a research study of the use of culturally relevant literature among teachers of urban high school students because you are a high school English Language Arts teacher who may use culturally relevant literature, you are eligible to participate. This study is being conducted solely at Wayne State University by the Principal Investigator, Barbara-Benita Craft.

#### **Study Procedures:**

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to:

- Meet with the Principal Investigator for two (2) Interviews. You will also be asked to allow the Principle Investigator to observe your instruction, and only your instruction in the classroom. No information on the students will be observed or collected.
- You will be asked to complete a thirty five (35) question Interview at the first meeting. You will be asked to complete a four (4) question Interview at the last meeting. You will be asked to schedule two (2) observation sessions with the Principal Investigator.
- The questions in the first interview will relate to your use of culturally relevant literature. The questions on the last interview will relate to any additional information you may require related to the research project. You may opt to decline to answer some of the questions and you may opt to remain in the study.
- The research project should be completed within three (3) weeks. There will be a total of three (3) visits. Your active participation will comprise a total of five (5) hours and fifteen (15) minutes over the three week period. The first Interview will take approximately one (1) hour. The two (2) classroom observation sessions will each be two (2) hours in duration. The final Interview will take fifteen (15) minutes.

#### **Benefits:**

- As a participant in this research study, there may be no direct benefit for you. However, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

#### **Risks:**

By taking part in this study, you may experience the following risks: Social risks: The Principal Investigator might potentially observe unprofessional behavior by the teacher. Observations of teacher behavior will be limited to the use of culturally relevant literature by teachers.

**Costs:**

- There will be no costs to you for participation in this research study.

**Compensation:**

- You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

- All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept without any identifiers.

**Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal:**

- Taking part in this study is voluntary.

**Questions:**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Barbara-Benita Craft or one of her research team members at the following phone number (313) 863-0298. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Human Investigation Committee can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

**Participation:**

By completing the questionnaire you are agreeing to participate in this study.

Participant Initials \_\_\_\_\_

## Letter of Research Informed Consent

### TOWARD AFFECTIVE LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHING: The Utilization of Culturally Relevant Literature on Urban African American High School Students

Principal Investigator (PI): Barbara-Benita Craft  
College of Education/Curriculum and Instruction  
(313) 863-0298

#### **Purpose**

You are being asked to be in a research study of the use of culturally relevant literature among teachers of high school students because you are a high school English Language Arts teacher who may use culturally relevant literature, and you are eligible to participate. This study is being conducted solely at Wayne State University by the Principal Investigator, Barbara-Benita Craft. **Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.**

In this research study, the Principal Investigator will attempt to determine the use and the extent of use of culturally relevant literature among English Language Arts teachers with high school students.

#### **Study Procedures**

If you agree to take part in this research study, you will be asked to:

- Meet with the Principal Investigator for two (2) Interviews. You will also be asked to allow the Principal Investigator to observe your instruction, and only your instruction, in the classroom. No information about the students will be observed or collected.
- You will be asked to complete a thirty five (35) question interview at the first meeting. You will be asked to complete a four (4) question interview at the last meeting. You will be asked to schedule two (2) observations sessions with the Principal Investigator.
- The questions in the first interview will relate to your use of culturally relevant literature. The questions on the last interview will relate to any additional information you may require related to the research project. You may opt to decline to answer some of the questions and you may opt to remain in the study.
- The research project should be completed within three (3) weeks. There will be a total of three (3) visits. Your active participation will comprise a total of five (5) hours and fifteen (15), or 315 minutes over the three week period. The first interview will take approximately one (1) hour. The two (2) classroom observation sessions will each be two (2) hours in duration. The final interview will take fifteen (15) minutes.

1. Once the teachers have agreed to participate in the study, the Principal Investigator will collect the Letter of Research Informed Consent. Then the PI will coordinate a time to

meet with the teacher participant in order to complete the Interview Guide. After the Interview Guide is completed and collected, the PI will coordinate with the teacher participant two (2) scheduled sessions to observe the teacher participants, and only the teachers, in their classroom. After the last observation session, the PI will complete a Conclusion Interview with the teacher.

2. The first visit will take one hour. The two observation sessions will take two (2) hours each. The final interview will be administered to the teacher participant after the last observation session, and will take fifteen (15) minutes. This will comprise a total of three (3) visits, which will total 315 minutes or, five hours and fifteen minutes with each teacher participant. The research will span a period of three weeks.
3. The questions that will be asked in the first interview will relate to the use and extent of the use of culturally relevant literature in your classroom. The questions that will be asked in the final interview will relate to whether or not you require additional information related to the study
4. The identity of the teacher participant will be protected by the PI, who will initially meet with the teacher participants in a private room, collect the signed Letter of Research Informed Consent and secure the Letter in a safe deposit box. The only record of the of the participant's name is the Consent. Pseudonyms will be used to identify the teacher participants for the duration of the study. Eventual disposal of the data will be conducted by shredding.

## **Benefits**

As a participant in this research study, there may be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may benefit other people now or in the future.

## **Risks**

By taking part in this study, you may experience the following risks: Social risk: The Principal Investigator might potentially observe unprofessional behavior by the teacher. The PI will mitigate this risk by stating that the observations of teacher behavior will be limited to the use of culturally relevant literature.

The following information must be released/reported to the appropriate authorities if at any time during the study there is concern that:

- child abuse or elder abuse has possibly occurred
- you disclose illegal criminal activities, illegal substance abuse or violence

There may also be risks involved from taking part in this study that are not known to researchers at this time.

**Study Costs**

- Participation in this study will be of no cost to you.

**Compensation**

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality**

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. You will be identified in the research records by a code name or number. Information that identifies you personally will not be released without your written permission. However, the study sponsor, the Human Investigation Committee (HIC) at Wayne State University, or federal agencies with appropriate regulatory oversight [e.g., Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), etc.] may review your records.

When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal your identity.

**Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal**

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part in the study you can later change your mind and withdraw from the study. You are free to only answer questions that you want to answer. You are free to withdraw from participation in this study at any time. Your decisions will not change any present or future relationship with Wayne State University or its affiliates, or other services you are entitled to receive.

The PI may stop your participation in this study without your consent. The PI will make the decision and let you know if it is not possible for you to continue. The decision that is made is to protect your health and safety, or because you did not follow the instructions to take part in the study

**Questions**

If you have any questions about this study now or in the future, you may contact Barbara-Benita Craft or one of her research team members at the following phone number (313) 863-0298. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, the Chair of the Human Investigation Committee can be contacted at (313) 577-1628. If you are unable to contact the research staff, or if you want to talk to someone other than the research staff, you may also call (313) 577-1628 to ask questions or voice concerns or complaints.

### Consent to Participate in a Research Study

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read, or had read to you, this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered. You will be given a copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of participant \*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of witness\*\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed of witness\*\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of person obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of person obtaining consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time

## APPENDIX C: HUMAN INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE (HIC) APPROVAL LETTER



IRB Administration Office  
87 East Canfield, Second Floor  
Detroit, Michigan 48201  
Phone: (313) 577-1628  
FAX: (313) 993-7122  
<http://irb.wayne.edu>



## NOTICE OF EXPEDITED APPROVAL

To: Barbara-Benita Craft  
College of Education

From: Dr. Scott Millis *D. Nahan*  
Chairperson, Behavioral Institutional Review Board (B3) *[Signature]*

Date: May 19, 2011

RE: IRB #: 033911B3E

Protocol Title: Toward Affective Language Arts Teaching: The Effects of Culturally Relevant Literature on Urban African American High School Students

Funding Source:

Protocol #: 1103009507

Expiration Date: May 18, 2012

Risk Level / Category: 45 CFR 46.404 - Research not involving greater than minimal risk

The above-referenced protocol and items listed below (if applicable) were **APPROVED** following *Expedited Review* Category (#7)\* by the Chairperson/designee for the Wayne State University Institutional Review Board (B3) for the period of 05/19/2011 through 05/18/2012. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required.

- Letters to the Superintendents (revision dated 05-08-11)
- Advisor Letter
- Letter to Principals.
- Interview Guide
- Protocol Summary Form, revised
- Research Proposal (revised) and received 05-18-11

- \* Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. You may receive a "Continuation Renewal Reminder" approximately two months prior to the expiration date; however, it is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval **before** the expiration date. Data collected during a period of lapsed approval is unapproved research and can never be reported or published as research data.
- \* All changes or amendments to the above-referenced protocol require review and approval by the IRB **BEFORE** implementation.
- \* Adverse Reactions/Unexpected Events (AR/UE) must be submitted on the appropriate form within the timeframe specified in the IRB Administration Office Policy (<http://www.irb.wayne.edu/policies-human-research.php>).

## NOTE:

1. Upon notification of an impending regulatory site visit, hold notification, and/or external audit the IRB Administration Office must be contacted immediately.
2. Forms should be downloaded from the IRB website at each use.

\*Based on the Expedited Review List, revised November 1998

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Introduction:

I'm visiting you in order to learn about the ways in which you use cultural pedagogy in your lesson plan and teaching methodologies. I'm interested in observing how you use culturally relevant literature in your methodologies. I also wish to learn if you use lesson activities and strategies from African American familial culture and for cultural modeling strategies (songs, language and/or games). I also want to learn how African American language arts students respond to the use of these strategies. I suspect that there are some interesting things you have to say about the use of these strategies and why and when you use them.

### Background:

Initially, I would like to ask you some background questions:

1. How long have you been teaching Language Arts?
2. What grades do you teach?
3. In Language Arts, what are your principal responsibilities?
4. Do you have an overriding philosophy in teaching Language Arts? If so, what is it?
5. Have you embraced a specific curriculum here?
6. What does the curriculum include?
7. How would you describe your teaching style?
8. What was your Language Arts experience like? In Elementary? In Middle? In High School? In College?
9. Why is Language Arts an important subject for students to learn?

### Content Questions:

10. What content do you use in the curriculum?
11. What motivated you to teach this content?
12. Does your curriculum vary from the curriculum adopted by the school? In what ways?
13. How does your teacher education experience affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach your students?
14. Do the views and opinions of your school principal affect your decisions about the content you teach? In what ways?
15. Does your district administration affect what you teach in Language Arts? In what ways?

### State and National Education/ Standards:

16. Do state requirements and National Standards affect what you teach?
17. What specific content is required to be taught?

### Language Art/Strategies:

18. How do you decide what content to teach in Language Arts?
19. Do any instructional considerations, such as preparation and/or set-up affect the content you teach?
20. Do the opinions of your Language Arts colleagues, in regard to content in the Language Arts curriculum, affect your thinking and decisions about what content to teach? In what ways?

21. How much freedom do you perceive you have to teach what content you want to teach?
22. Do you use culturally relevant pedagogy/literature when planning your lessons?
23. Do you infuse the language of home and school into your lesson plans?
24. Do you perceive that the use of cultural referents, language and traditions empower your students? In what ways?
25. In your Language Arts lesson plans do you invite the students to share examples of art and music from their cultures? Which ones?
26. Do you address the learning styles of the students in your Language Arts lesson plans? In what ways?
27. Do you include African American history in your Language Arts lesson plans? In what ways?
28. Do you utilize culturally relevant books, magazines, trade books, poems and plays in your Language Arts lesson plans? Which ones?
29. How do the students respond to the use of culturally relevant literature/referents in Language Arts lessons?
30. How would you characterize the ethnic background of your students?
31. Does the socioeconomic status of your students affect your Language Arts teaching methodologies? In what ways?
32. Do you engage the students in discussions about culturally relevant issues (i.e., hip hop, crime, holiday celebrations)?
33. Do you utilize the students' prior knowledge in Language Arts lessons?
34. In any and all of the above strategies, do you use culturally relevant literature? In which ones?

Thank you very much for your time.

## APPENDIX E: OBSERVATION GUIDE AND CONCLUSION INTERVIEW

### Observation Guide

Date:

School:

Time:

Teacher:

Class:

Focus of Lesson:

Teacher presentation of lesson/content:

Prior knowledge presented:

Description of teacher instruction, activities, strategies and/or materials:

Descriptions and interpretations of other relevant observations of instruction by the Language Arts teacher:

### Conclusion Interview

1. Having read the transcripts of the Guiding Interview, is this accurate of what your responses were?
2. Would you like to change any of your responses?
3. Would you like to add any additional information?
4. Do you have any thoughts and/or responses regarding the research process?
5. Should you need to contact me or the Human Investigation Committee (HIC), these are the contact telephone numbers:
  - i. Barbara-Benita Craft 313.863.0298
  - ii. HIC 313.577.1968

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## ABSTRACT

**TOWARD AFFECTIVE LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHING:  
THE UTILIZATION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT LITERATURE ON URBAN  
AFRICAN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

by

**BARBARA-BENITA CRAFT**

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**Advisor:** Dr. Monte Piliawsky**Major:** Curriculum and Instruction**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

Data collected and analyzed from English Language Arts teachers in urban, metro-city, and suburban school districts related to the use and extent of use of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), culturally relevant literature (Ladson-Billings, 1994a), activities and strategies from African American familial culture (Hale-Benson, 1986), and cultural modeling (Lee, 1993), showed similarities and differences in the pedagogical practices and methodologies among the three teachers in the three school districts. Three teachers from each respective district, urban, metro-city, and suburban, were interviewed once, at the initiation of the study and again prior to exit, on their perspectives of teacher education, relationships with principals and Districts, teaching philosophies and styles, teaching pedagogies, curriculum and content, State and National Benchmarks and *Standards*, and their inclusion of culturally relevant elements in their lessons. The nine teachers, from the three school Districts were also observed in their classrooms during three separate observation periods. No students were observed or had data collected on them. Analysis of interview and observation content showed that of the nine

teachers, seven used culturally relevant pedagogy and literature to a great extent and that two used these elements to some extent. In the metro-city school district the relationships between the teachers and the District impacted the teacher's abilities to use culturally relevant pedagogy and literature, and administer the adopted curriculum. It was also found that the three Caucasian teachers in the study were observed to use culturally relevant pedagogy and literature, although their usage was unintentional. This was shown to be attributed to teaching styles. The similarities in the utilization of culturally relevant pedagogy, literature, activities and strategies from African American familial culture, and cultural modeling, among the teachers, were attributed to the teaching styles, the practice of providing supplemental culturally relevant materials, caring and affective pedagogies (Noddings, 2005), and positive relationships among the teachers, principals, and Districts.

### AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Barbara-Benita Craft earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Wayne State University in Liberal Arts, with majors in Sociology and English. Barbara-Benita began her teaching career in Detroit Public Schools and taught grades nine through twelve. Barbara-Benita earned a Master of Arts degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology with double major in Statistics and Business Management from the University of Detroit Mercy. Barbara-Benita earned a second Master of Arts degree in Secondary Education and with secondary teaching certification in English and Psychology from the University of Detroit Mercy. For the past fifteen years, Barbara-Benita has taught English and Sociology at Wayne County Community College District, and Psychology and Leadership Development at Charles S. Mott Community College.

From 1998 to 2006, Barbara-Benita worked in the position of Education and Training Coordinator for the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 3000 at Ford Motor Company, wherein she had oversight of the Employee Tuition Assistance Plans for 3200 represented employees, in addition to establishing on site college credit and personal development classes for employees. In 1996, Barbara-Benita created Craft Consulting which endeavors to meet the challenges of businesses and schools in the areas of job motivation, absenteeism, and curriculum planning, respectively.

Barbara-Benita resides in Northwest Detroit with her son William. She enjoys theatre, reading, dance, lecture, and gardening. Barbara-Benita is passionate about family and literacy education.