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**USING A CULTURAL RESPONSE TO SELECT MULTICULTURAL SOCIAL
STUDIES READ ALOUDS IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM**

by

Meredith Shockley

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Language, Literacy, and Sociocultural Education
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Reading Education
at
Rowan University
June 30, 2022

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all the students I have been so fortunate to work with thus far in my career, and to all the future students I have yet to encounter. Without you, I would not have pursued this path.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my husband Nigel Shockley for all the ways in which you filled your own shoes as well as mine so that I could complete this process.

Thank you to the best parents and in-laws; Herbert Lokan, Donna Lokan, Jeffery Shockley, and Mary-Lou Shockley for the weekly sleepovers and extra time with Brant so I could work on my thesis.

Abstract

Meredith Shockley

USING A CULTURAL RESPONSE TO SELECT MULTICULTURAL SOCIAL
STUDIES READ ALOUDS IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM
2021-2022

Valarie G. Lee, Ed.D.

Master of Arts in Reading Education

The purpose of this research study was to examine student interactions before, during, and after the reading of multicultural literature in kindergarten during the science and social studies instruction. The texts selected were picked based on information about the students' Funds of Knowledge, family make-up, and culture within the particular classroom. Over the course of two months, five multicultural texts were read aloud and discussed. Recorded book discussions, student drawings, and one-on-one interview questions were used to gather data. After all the data was collected, the following themes became apparent: family connections, diversity, and student engagement. Based on the data, the integration of multicultural literature proved to be a beneficial addition to the kindergarten classroom setting as engaged students, strengthened reading/literacy skills, and fostered acceptance of others. An implication that became apparent after conducting this study was a need for more easily-accessible multicultural books and resources for teachers.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract..... | v |
| Chapter I: Scope of the Study | 1 |
| Purpose Statement..... | 2 |
| Statement of Research Problem and Question..... | 5 |
| Story of the Question | 6 |
| Organization of the Paper | 8 |
| Chapter II: Review of the Literature | 9 |
| Defining Multicultural Literature | 9 |
| Why Multicultural Education?..... | 9 |
| Multicultural Literature Influences Student Performance | 12 |
| Multicultural Literature Influences Teacher Practices..... | 13 |
| Defining Funds of Knowledge..... | 14 |
| Selection of Multicultural Texts | 15 |
| Mirror Books..... | 15 |
| Window Books..... | 15 |
| Authenticity..... | 16 |
| Stereotypes | 17 |
| Study Outcomes | 18 |
| Empathy | 18 |
| Teacher Autonomy..... | 19 |
| Conclusion | 20 |
| Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology | 21 |

Table of Contents (Continued)

| | |
|--|----|
| Procedure of the Study | 21 |
| Data Sources | 24 |
| Data Analysis | 25 |
| Context | 25 |
| Community | 25 |
| Classroom | 27 |
| Students | 28 |
| Chapter IV: Data Analysis | 31 |
| Family | 31 |
| Getting Familiar with Families | 32 |
| “Some People Say I’m Cute, and Some People Say I Look Like My Dad” | 33 |
| Scary Basements | 34 |
| Diversity | 36 |
| “It’s Got Pictures of Me With My Dad” | 37 |
| “I Don’t Know What Her Saying” | 42 |
| Engagement | 44 |
| Thief Bag | 45 |
| “Are We Doing a Book Today?” | 48 |
| “Thank You When We Need to Say ‘Gracias’” | 49 |
| Conclusion | 51 |
| Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications for the Field | 52 |
| Summary | 52 |

Table of Contents (Continued)

Conclusions.....53

Implications for Teaching.....55

Implications for Future Research.....57

Limitations58

Conclusion59

References.....60

Chapter I

Scope of the Study

I am an avid news consumer. I watch the news on TV in the morning in order to properly prepare my outfit for the impending weather, and be ready for any impending traffic issues I may encounter on my 50 minute commute to work. I listen to a news podcast produced by the New York Times called “The Daily”, as I drive into work. After work hours, I settle in to watch the local news reports as well as the world news broadcast that immediately follows. It is a running joke between my husband and I that I consume too much news. While that may be true, it is a habit I have yet to change.

During one of my daily nighttime news binges, I came across a story that struck a chord with me in many ways. It struck the teacher chord, the mom chord, and the diversity advocate chord all at once. The story was about a two-year old boy from New York who had been watching Encanto and saw a Hispanic character who looked exactly like him.

”I truly believe that he thought it was him...he kept staring at the screen and looking back at us smiling,” his mom relayed to the virtual reporter.

“Just to see how ecstatic he was, you know he clapped, you know, like he was just like excited. He was able to see someone that looks like him, and I know growing up for me, you know, that wasn’t necessarily something...you often see. For me it did make me feel a little bit emotional just to think that my son was able to see this and have this experience and just for so many other black and brown boys and girls to be able to have that same experience now, I think that was amazing,” gushed his father.

I felt my eyes welling up as I thought about my own child connecting to characters in books that we read or in shows that we watch. I also thought about my students and how there is a lack of character diversity in the reading curriculum that we use in my district. I felt sorry for those kids who have never experienced that type of connection to literature. I began wondering if this could be a cause for less interest and engagement in reading from the diverse groups of students in my classroom and even my district.

This night was the moment I realized what I would spend my time doing my teacher research on this year. Not only would I be able to use the information to write a teacher researcher thesis to fulfill the requirements to finish my master's degree to become a reading specialist, I would also be hopefully striking the match that would light a similar fire in the minds and hearts of my students, just like in the heart and mind of the young boy from New York in the news story.

Purpose Statement

It is the year 2021. As I look around my classroom, I see bright masks stretched over the noses and mouths of seventeen students. Above those masks I see seventeen sets of eyes staring back at me, hanging on my every word. I am their teacher who is in charge of enriching their minds with reading, writing, math, the sciences, and social studies. I am the one reminding them to raise their hand, push in their chair, clean up after themselves, help their friend, and wait their turn. When I draw, they watch and listen. When I write, they watch and listen. When I add, they watch and listen. When I pull a book off of the shelf to read, they watch and listen. Over the years, my book selection has grown to include a wide variety of books surrounding various cultures and diversities.

Moon Cakes by Loretta Seto; Fry Bread by Kevin Noble Maillard; A Family is a Family is a Family by Sara O’Leary; Julian is a Mermaid by Jessica Love are just a few of the many books I have picked up along the way to diversify my whole group read-alouds. However, these books are barely tattered or worn because they are new to my collection. It was not until my time in graduate school that I began to realize the importance of reading culturally diverse books aloud to my students, and the many benefits it would have on my class.

There is a definite lack of texts and media that showcase people and children of marginalized groups in classroom libraries. This may be due to a lack of available text on the market. In an article published in 2019 by Education Week, data was taken from the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (a library at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education) who has been tracking children’s book diversity since the 1980s. In 2018, 11% of children’s books published in the United States featured main characters who were African or African American; 9% were about Asian-Americans or Pacific Islanders; 7% had Latino main characters; 1% were about native peoples (Schwartz, 2019). While talking to the elementary teachers in my district they have expressed this concern for the lack of diversity in their own classroom book collection. The reading curriculum in my classroom, the Tools of the Mind Program, involves reading the Magic Tree House Series. The series follows two White children who live in suburban Pennsylvania, and the wild magical adventures they take. Also, a lot of books in my classroom library are hand-me-downs from retired teachers and picture White families both in the fiction and nonfiction texts.

Unfortunately, just placing literature in a classroom library for students does not change the attitudes of students' thoughts about multicultural literature or the people that are showcased in multicultural literature. Children are like untouched pieces of paper to an artist. They are a fresh palette whose minds are quick to soak up, like a sponge, and new information that comes their way. Kim, Wee, and Lee (2016) found out first hand that students tend to have preconceived misconceptions about various cultures based on their background knowledge. They found that even students as young as kindergarten-age had assumed a race was poor without any supporting background to this claim. After reading texts to their population about that culture, students began to change their attitudes and perceptions. Liaw (1995) emphasized the importance of taking the time to select texts that are authentic about a culture. There are times that a text may seem like a good reflection of a culture, but can lead to more prejudices. DeNicolo and Franquiz (2006) encourage educators to facilitate literature discussions during which children can relate the literature to their own life experiences in order to better help them understand the literature more deeply. Students who engage in read-alouds from various cultures can develop empathy and make connections to their own lives (Rouse, 2018). To foster awareness of other cultures, the teacher researcher must first develop an understanding of the cultures of the students in the classroom. Using multicultural literature, as Bishop (2019) described, “transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience” (n.p). Teachers are always wanting and hoping that students will make text to self-connections to classroom literature, so by integrating multicultural literature into the classroom, teachers can be sure that every student is given a fair chance to make those

connections. Rochman (1993) stated that, “The best books break down borders. They surprise us - whether they are set close to home or abroad. They change our view of ourselves; they extend that phrase ‘like me’ to include what we thought was foreign and strange” (Rochman, 1993, p. 9).

By finding out more about my students using the theory of Funds of Knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) and their own background, I planned to pick out texts that will become mirrors to them and that they can make connections to, just like the boy I spoke about in my introduction did. I hope that my research will show how integrating multicultural text, especially based on a class’ personal population, would only bring positive effects and outcomes. These outcomes may be small, like a classroom library of multicultural books provided to all the elementary teachers in my school. The outcome may be of a mid-level caliber, like the integration of mandated texts and lessons for my whole district. The outcome may be, as one could hope, of high-level caliber. For example; a flood of multicultural based changes to schools’ policies, standards, curriculums, and classroom libraries nationwide.

Statement of Research Problem and Question

The focus of my research is to select texts to read aloud to students which are reflections of their own culture and/or cultures of their peers. I will be using information based on my own informal observations as well as a questionnaire that the parents will fill out to help me better understand students’ cultural backgrounds. The reason behind this question is that there is a lack of diverse literature in our current reading curriculum. With that being said, these read alouds will be conducted during the social studies reading block, as to not interfere with the already existing reading curriculum.

Story of the Question

In the beginning of the summer, my thesis professor began to plant the seed of “start thinking about what your thesis topic will be...” I began to feel overwhelmed by all of the things I could possibly research in my classroom. Should it be something to do with sight words, guided reading groups, parental involvement, virtual learning, teaching in a pandemic, ELL readers, non-ELL readers. My mind was swirling like my kindergarteners swirl their paint brushes in water while painting. Except this time, instead of the feeling of “how cool is that (like my students exclaim), I felt stressed and like I needed a nap. As our conversations in our final course continued, my professor reiterated that we were not trying to “prove” anything during our research study, but the purpose was to observe and collect data on something we were interested in. I began to think about the many struggles I may encounter trying to do research based off of parental involvement when my school district and student population is so transient. I crossed that idea off of my list. Then I thought about the conversation I had with the master teacher at my school district about how we were going to stick to our new curriculum to teach sight words, instead of how we had been doing it for years. I crossed the ideas of sight words off my list. The uncertainty of a continuation of the pandemic and/or virtual learning made it pretty clear that I may hit more bumps in the road, then actual research allowed me to cross those two ideas off my list as well. Finally, I was left with my ELL students. In September when I got my student list I found out that I would have three Spanish speaking students as well as two Portuguese speaking students in my class. This was the most ELL students I had ever taught before. Also, because my school *is* so transient, the likelihood that I could acquire even more ELL students throughout the year was very

high. It was then I narrowed down the beginning of where I would focus my research. However, I was not quite sure what exactly I would be researching at this point.

During my graduate studies course in order to become a reading specialist, I began to notice a trend of the lack of multicultural literature in our country's education system. Not only were our courses geared towards the study of multicultural diversity in the classroom, but our graduate coursework also exposed my colleagues and I to multiculturally infused theorists such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Sonia Nieto, and Lisa Delpit. It was apparent that Rowan University's standards were geared toward opening our eyes to a piece of the puzzle that had been missing all long. As my colleagues and I worked on group projects together, we swapped stories from our own experiences working with diverse groups of students. Many of us began to commiserate that the needs of all of our students were not being met in a number of ways, including support in regards to proper funding, lack of ELL teachers and resources, and the increased probability of those students not staying in the same district for extended periods of time. Many of these issues were and still are out of our "teacher control." However, the one thing that we did have the power to change was the connection that our students could and should feel to literature within their classroom setting and overall school experience.

As the summer began to dwindle to a close I had not yet settled on a research question. I began meeting with my grade level partner and the master teacher to go over our curriculum. Every subject was ironed out and set in stone with a planned curriculum. Every subject that is, except for social studies. It was our job as kindergarten teachers to decide how much we would integrate various parts of the standards as well as the curriculums from the rest of the day, into this block of time. Some weeks we decided to

pack with lessons and conversations about various holidays such as Veteran's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Indigenous People's Day. Other weeks we would take time to study about all holiday traditions, allowing our students and their families to write books that would be shared about their own holiday traditions and celebrations. Other than that, we were out of ideas. It was then that I realized how I could connect with my ELL students and the rest of the student population during this time period by integrating their Funds of Knowledge and backgrounds to influence book choice for read alouds. I would be able to specifically find texts that would relate to 1 or more of my students. I felt myself giddy with excitement that this idea would solve so many of my problems. First and foremost, it would give my kindergarten partner and I a lesson plan to teach. Secondly, it would engage and hopefully allow my minority students to feel connected and find literature that acts like a mirror for them. Finally, I would be able to use the information I garnered from the study to conduct my final research project to complete my master's degree.

Organization of the Paper

Chapter two provides a review of the literature surrounding the effects of integrating multicultural literature into the classroom, as well as the reasons for doing so. Chapter three describes the design and context of the study, which includes how I will implement the read alouds during the Social Studies time period and which methods I will use to collect data. Chapter four reviews and analyzes the data and research and discusses the findings of the study. Chapter five presents the conclusions to the study as well as implications for teaching. This chapter will also outline suggestions for further research regarding the use of multicultural texts in the kindergarten classroom.

Chapter II

Review of the Literature

“Our lessons from our lives should not be separated from the curriculum.”

(Christensen, 2017, p. 33)

Defining Multicultural Literature

Broadly defined, multicultural literature includes literature about people who are considered outside of the mainstream of society and have been in some manner marginalized. This definition would include people from diverse cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds. In addition, it encompasses issues on gender, sexual orientation and disabilities (Yokoto, 2001; Canales, 2002) Multicultural literature consists of “mirror” and “window” books (Bishop, 1990). Mirror books reflect and expand the culture of the child reading the books as a means of reinforcing the child’s background. Window books offer a child an opportunity to learn about other cultures (Bishop, 1997). Multicultural literature is a small piece of what multicultural education is as a whole. The integration of multicultural literature is a way to challenge and reject racism and discrimination by accepting and affirming diversity in many forms. As educators we must allow multicultural literature to permeate the education in as many avenues and subject areas as possible.

Why Multicultural Education?

“Not only must teachers encourage academic success and cultural competence, they must help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities. This notion presumes that teachers themselves recognize social inequities and their causes.” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 476-477). In order for students to be aware of

the world around them and the injustices their people or other people face, they must be exposed to these types of inequities by means of diverse literature. Teachers must take into consideration this idea when selecting text to use in the classroom setting.

Lewis and Doorlag (1991) cite the following motivations behind the development and implementation of multicultural education:

1. Commonalities among people cannot be recognized unless differences are acknowledged.
2. A society that interweaves the best of all of its cultures reflects a truly mosaic image.
3. Multicultural education can restore cultural rights by emphasizing cultural equality and respect.
4. Students can learn basic skills while also learning to respect cultures; multicultural education need not detract from basic education.
5. Multicultural education enhances the self concepts of all students because it provides a more balanced view of U.S. society.
6. Students must learn to respect others. (as cited in Norton, 2013, p. 1-2)

These six ideas can serve as reasons behind the need for implementation of multicultural literature in the classroom setting. Multicultural literature does not need to cause a complete upheaval of practices and curriculums already in place. Instead, it should be interwoven into these already existing programs as a way to enlighten, invoke reflection, and enhance all student engagement.

“Unfortunately, national policies have led to language arts programs where discrete skills and scripted instructional strategies all too often take precedence over

literacy program designs that are more sensitive to local histories, teacher knowledge, and students' full participation in learning.” (DeNicolo, 2006, p. 158-159) Curriculums are manufactured by big companies and then solicited to schools all over the country, which leaves little room for the addition of location specific topics and/or cultural themes within these curricula. However, the integration of multicultural literature can help readers to understand various cultures and sociological change. This genre of literature can also develop a student's imagination and creativity as well as raise aspirations all while teaching a student to respect other cultures (Norton, 2013). Implementing multicultural literature could create a more connected classroom environment, one in which students truly understand their community, their peers, and the world around them. In choosing books that are of interest to readers or about the readers themselves we can begin to delve into the idea of “identifies and literacy” (Buehl, 2011, p. 7). Teachers can establish the identities of their student population when students are in the grade level below, over the summer, or at the start of the school year. “Clearly, students' academic identities matter a great deal when we consider students' abilities and willingness to meet the literacy demands inherent in learning within content disciplines” (p. 7). Many scholarly articles and research studies have investigated the benefits of integrating multicultural text into all classrooms. Ford, Walters, Byrd, and Harris (2019) speak to the practice of integrating multicultural texts that are reflections of a students' own culture and in doing so, texts act as therapy, or “bibliotherapy” to help students adjust to/better understand their own problems. Furthermore, integrating multicultural texts can impact students by allowing them to see their worth and importance in the world and society. “When Black girls in gifted programs read multicultural literature reflective of their everyday life and

connecting them with their culture, self-efficacy increases their motivation, and their engagement with learning remains high across the board” (Ford, et al, 2019, p. 56). Our underlying goal as teachers is to develop not only capable readers, but also readers who are engaged and excited about what they are reading. If we can do the latter, we know that our former students will be more successful throughout the remainder of their reading careers.

Multicultural Literature Influences Student Performance

Besides the impact on engagement and self-efficacy, multicultural literature can also impact a student’s success as a writer. Although it is not always at the forefront of teaching writing, narrative writing can become a snapshot into a student’s culture as well as their understanding of other cultures. Christensen (2017) states, “Narrative writing is the center of a social justice classroom. These snapshots from students’ lives build classroom community and connect their home worlds to the curriculum” (p. 31). The more text about a child’s culture or community a teacher reads, the more comfortable he/she will feel to speak and write freely about themselves. “The exclusion of narrative from the curriculum also silences students, erasing the political connections created by paralleling their own oppression, struggle, and joy to the curriculum and the reading. Our students’ stories about their lives provide the bedrock that my curriculum rests on” (Christensen, 2011, p. 32). If students are afforded the freedom to express themselves through writing, “diversity of style” in their writing should be a consideration too. Delpit (1988, p. 292) states, “I believe in a diversity of style, and I believe the world will be diminished if cultural diversity is ever obliterated. Further, I believe strongly, as do my

liberal colleagues, that each cultural group should have the right to maintain its own language style” (p. 292).

Multicultural Literature Influences Teacher Practices

When teachers make a conscious effort to select multicultural education, they are choosing to teach with equity versus teaching with equality, which is an idea Sonia Nieto discusses in her works as not always being easy. “I often taught about politically contentious topics in education, having to do with race, language, equity... and I encouraged my students to have honest discussions and debates about these things, so some days were hard and intense.” (Heller, 2020, p. 36) When teachers teach with equality, they provide the same resources and opportunities to all students. However, when teachers teach with *equity*, they modify their instruction based on the needs and cultures of all students. This type of teaching practice is reflective of Gloria Ladson-Billings and Kathryn H. Au’s Culturally Responsive Teaching model ideas and practices.

“Our findings also suggest that multicultural programs should be integrated into overall school curricula on a long-term, ongoing basis. Such integration can provide children with opportunities to explore their own racial and cultural identity, which leads to acquiring compassion, forming perspectives, gaining understanding, and learning cooperation with people different from themselves.” (DeNicolo, 2006, p. 158-159)

In an interview on Larry Ferlazzo’s *Edublog*, Zaretta Hammond, a former writing teacher turned education consultant, provides a clear and concise definition of culturally responsive teaching. “Culturally responsive teaching is about helping culturally and linguistically diverse students who have been marginalized in schools build their skill and

capacity to do rigorous work” (Ferlazzo, 2015). By integrating culturally responsive practices into the classroom, educators can help close the opportunity gap that exists between culturally and linguistically diverse students and their peers.

Defining Funds of Knowledge

In order for teachers to begin to integrate multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching into their daily practice, they must first take into account their students’ backgrounds or Funds of Knowledge. Funds of Knowledge is rooted in the idea that the one instruction students take into account and acknowledge the prior knowledge of students. This idea forces teachers to really ‘see’ the children within the walls of their classroom instead of blindly teaching to the masses (Hogg, 2012). Some major components of the Funds of Knowledge, or FoK for short are the following:

- Families have abundant knowledge that programs can learn and use in their family engagement efforts.
- Students bring with them funds of knowledge from their homes and communities that can be used for concept and skill development.
- Classroom practices sometimes underestimate and constrain what children are able to display intellectually.
- Teachers should focus on helping students find meaning in activities rather than learn rules and facts.
- Group discussions around race and class should promote trust and encourage dialogue. (Moll, 1992; Gonzalez, 2005, p.1)

Once established, the Funds of Knowledge of a unique group of students can help inform a teacher’s selection of multicultural literature and best practices. The teacher will be able

to decide if he/she needs to select texts that serve as mirrors for his/her student population, windows, or a combination of both.

Selection of Multicultural Texts

Mirror Books

Oftentimes students connect with a book and specifically a character just based on the way the character looks. For example, Liaw (1995), found that most students did not connect with the book *I Hate English*; however, one student expressed that she identified with one of the characters in the story because she had long hair. Mrs. Lynn, the teacher in DeNicolo's (2006) study, was faced with strict district guidelines of selected texts about people of color. However, these texts were reflective of the races'/cultures' of the students in her classroom. Mrs. Lynn found texts that were more reflective of her students, who were mostly Spanish speakers, to integrate into their literature circle discussions. Some books were even available in Spanish, the students' native language. The integration of these texts allowed for students to "use their life experiences as linguistic and cultural tools for personal understanding" (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006, p. 163).

Window Books

When students read or listen to window books, they often experience critical encounters. "Critical encounters emerge when a word, concept, or event in a story surprises, shocks, or frightens the reader or readers to such a degree that they seek to inquire further about the vocabulary or event selected by the author" (DeNicolo & Franquiz, 2006, p. 157). A critical encounter is clearly evident in DeNicolo's opening story about students reading a text in Mrs. Lynn's 4th grade English language arts class.

The students come across a derogatory name used to speak about a culture other than some of their own. The young ladies rushed to their teacher in shock and in awe of the word. “Through our work, we have found that these encounters are pivotal moments that have transformative possibilities for student discussion and learning” (DeNicolo, 2006, p. 157).

Authenticity

In order to connect with students within the window and mirror realm, books must be authentic to those students in that specific setting. Teachers should take the time to make sure a book that they select does not perpetuate any stereotypes (Strickland, 1994). Teachers must also make sure that their own biases do not influence the book selection process (Sleeter, 1992). It is important to understand that there are various types of multicultural literature. Bishop (1992) cites these three types of multicultural books: culturally neutral books, culturally generic books, and culturally specific books. Culturally neutral books simply showcase characters of color but contain no cultural content. Culturally generic books showcase characters of a cultural group by referencing them in name, a location, or language native to that culture. Finally, culturally specific books incorporate details that help define a main character’s cultural group. When selecting texts to use in the classroom setting, it is important to take into account the audience and the intended message that a teacher wants to get across. The book used in DeNicolo’s (2006) study, *Felita*, is steeped in Puerto Rican culture based on the author Nicholasa Mohr’s own life experiences, making it an authentic culturally specific book. In Liaw’s study (1995), the teacher read the text *I Hate English* to native Chinese students. Most students expressed that they were turned off by the book because they

liked English and had an easy time learning it. One very dismayed student, in a written response, changed the name of the book to “*I Like English*” (Liaw, 1995, p. 1992).

Although students from Liaw’s study shared the same cultural background as this character, they could not relate.

Stereotypes

Kim, Wee, and Lee (2016) found out first hand that students as young as kindergarten age already have formulated opinions about race. Korean kindergarten children in Ms. Moon’s class shared that they had only seen/learned about African-American people through TV and movies. Before multicultural read alouds began in this study, Ms. Moon’s students expressed that “Africans are poor”. The study indicates that this stereotype may be due to a few factors including media presence, as well as at home discussions with family members about Africans. A student’s mother in the study expressed the following in an interview with researchers, “Yes, I had a chance to read my kid a book about Africa and the book about adopted children from different cultures. I remember that, when reading those books, we talked about why it is important that we help Africans. Well, in fact, whenever we talked about Africans, we always focused on poverty, and I think it could influence her attitudes toward Africans” (Kim, 2016, p. 409). Here it can be seen that stereotypes are not only at risk at school, but also in the home setting. This study indicates that students are influenced by what they see, hear, and discuss especially when it is coming from the adults within their lives. If stereotypes are what adults portray or do not take the opportunity to correct, then those are the things that children may deem to be true.

Kim (2016) explains the shift from thinking stereotypically regarding the students in her study:

When I asked my students about their perceptions of Africans at the beginning of the semester, the students seemed to think that Africans don't wear clothes. It appears that they got this idea from the media...But I noticed a lot of changes in terms of their attitudes toward Africans/African Americans as the project unfolded. For example, some students began to draw Africans as people who wear nice clothes or have a big car. I had never seen this before. (p. 413-414)

Kim's study showcased the transition that can occur when stereotypes are addressed and not reaffirmed and/or swept under the rug. The study can also be used to connect with families the importance of teaching authentic facts and information about various cultures at home as well.

Study Outcomes

Empathy

After reading *Amazing Grace*, the students in Ms. Moon's kindergarten class had a discussion about why the students' in Grace's (a little black girl) class told her that she could not play the role of Peter Pan (Lee, 2016). The students were able to see that even though Grace was a girl and was black (different from Peter Pan), that this was unfair to allow her to not play that role. The students noticed this same unfairness during a read-aloud about a book on slavery. They recognized that freedom should not be taken away from any one race. The four students in DeNicolò's (2006) study, gather in their discussion circle to talk about their feelings after reading a section of a text that contained

two derogatory names. One student stated, “I would feel bad, ‘cause they are talking about talking down Black people and Puerto Ricans and Mexicans like that and I feel bad for Black people or American People, or Black people or Puerto Rican or other people like that, they’re talking down about them” (p. 164). It can be seen here that students were able to feel empathy towards characters within texts regardless of their similarities or differences to themselves. When injustice is present, students express their disdain for people being treated differently. Avoiding reading books that may invoke these feelings is only robbing students from developing empathy for others, especially those that are minorities.

Teacher Autonomy

In DeNicolò’s (2006) study that focused on a fourth grade classroom, the teacher, Mrs. Lynn was the driving force behind the study. At the time, her school district’s focus was heavily laden on the need to focus on very scripted programs, including the language arts program. However, Mrs. Lynn noticed that her class, mostly Spanish ELL students, were not forming relationships across languages in regards to learning, and with peers who differed from themselves. It was her idea to begin discussion groups anchored in multicultural literature in order to begin to break down these barriers with her students. Mrs. Lynn also took the time to investigate texts that were not in the required curriculum, but were mirrors to her students in order to better engage them. When teachers are mindful of their students’ Funds of Knowledge, feelings, needs, and culture, they become supportive teachers.

Reeve’s (2006) study on teacher autonomy highlights the benefits of being aware and supportive as a teacher:

Supportiveness is important to students' school success because the more supportive teachers are, the more competent students feel, the more creative they are, the greater they feel in control of their learning, and the more engaged they are during learning activities. (p. 233)

Although teachers' hands may be tied due to the need to follow national or state standards, curriculum, or grade-level goals, new laws regarding inclusion can be used as a basis to be more autonomous and integrate multicultural literacy into their daily practice.

Conclusion

It can be seen from the studies discussed above that there is a need for multicultural education because it has a profound impact on all students. Students as young as the kindergartners already show signs of stereotyping other cultures due to what they had seen or heard elsewhere. When teachers take the step to advocate by integrating authentic literature into their classrooms, their students have the opportunity to become more empathetic towards all people. Teachers using a Funds of Knowledge approach to research each group of students they come into contact with provides an opportunity to connect with diverse cultures. Once they have established the cultural diversity of their student group, they can integrate those cultures into the literature they select.

Chapter three details the research study and its design, methodology, and procedures. The chapter will present how data was collected as well as analyzed. Chapter three also gives a detailed description of the students, community, and district involved in the study.

Chapter III

Research Design and Methodology

For this study the qualitative research design was used to collect data about students' interactions with the selected multicultural text. Due to the age group, (kindergarten) the data from this research was heavily laden with informal observation, student discussion, and student drawings. Shagoury and Power (2012) found this type of research methodology to be extremely common in teacher research inquiries. "...because much teacher research is rich in classroom anecdotes and personal stories. Although all methodologies are used for teacher inquiry, it is dominated by qualitative inquiry" (p. 131) I found that I was able to collect rich data from all of the qualitative methodologies I implemented during the duration of this study.

Procedure of Study

During the first week of school I sent home a questionnaire to all families asking a little bit more about their child, the family make-up, and culture (see Appendix A). After receiving the questionnaires back, and taking into consideration the conversations I had with parents at the open house, I came up with a list of the following themes or cultures that were present within my student population: Portuguese (Brazil) speakers, Spanish speakers, adoption, two-household families, African-American or Black families, German families, and Irish families. I then used the "Ask a Librarian" feature on my local library's website to ask for some assistance in finding books that would hit those topics. The children's librarian was extremely helpful and sent back an extensive list of book titles. Using the list that was sent to me, I decided to select the following books based on the librarian's list as well as my student population: *A Family, Is a Family, Is a Family* by

Sara O’Leary; *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall; *The Sock Thief* by Ana Crespo; *Isabel and her Colores go to School* by Alexandra Alessandri; *Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend* by Karen Stanton. Over the course of my research time, I read one book a week, and completed either one or a combination of the following; individual student interviews, informal classroom discussions, observations, and student drawings. The read alouds took place during the science/social studies period which is the last period block of the day.

For the first read aloud, I read *A Family, Is a Family, Is a Family* by Sara O’Leary which focuses on varying types of family make-ups. I prompted students to reflect and discuss the families in the book before, during, and after reading. I recorded those conversations to be reviewed at a later time. After reading, students all returned to their desks to draw pictures of their families. During that time, I also interviewed three students using a general questionnaire about their connections to the book. The questionnaire consisted of the following questions:

How did this book make you feel?

Did this book remind you of anything?

Did any characters in the book remind you of yourself?

Did any characters in the book remind you of your family?

Did any characters in the book remind you of your friends?

Did you like this book? Why? Why not?

If I went to your house and read this book to your family, do you think they would like it? Who? Why or why not?

For the second read aloud, I read *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall. This story follows the bravery that an African-American young boy must exhibit in order to jump off of the

diving board. Again, I prompted students to reflect and discuss the boy and his family in the book before, during, and after reading. After reading, students all returned to their desks to draw pictures of a time that they felt scared. During that time, I also interviewed two students using the same general questionnaire I used for the first book.

For the third read aloud, I read *The Sock Thief* by Ana Crespo. This story takes place in Brazil and focuses on a young Portuguese speaking boy who steals his neighbors' drying socks in exchange for a mango. He uses the socks to make a soccer ball to play with his friends at school. I encouraged students to reflect and discuss the boy's actions in the book before, during, and after reading. After reading, I interviewed two students using the book questionnaire.

For the fourth read aloud, I read *Isabel and her Colores go to School* by Alexandra Alessandri. This story is written in both English and Spanish. I read the English portions while my Spanish-speaking paraprofessional read the Spanish portions. The story is about a young Spanish speaking girl on her first day of school in an English dominated classroom. I asked the students to reflect and discuss the main character Isabel and her feelings before, during, and after reading. Upon completion of the text, the students returned to their desks to draw how they felt on the first day of school.

For the fifth and final read aloud, I read *Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend* by Karen Stanton. This story was about a boy and his dog who spent varying days at the little boy's dad's house and the other days at his mom's house. The story takes a turn when the dog goes missing, only to end up at the house that the family used to live in all together.

Data Sources

I used many resources to collect data for my qualitative research study. First, I began by informally talking to parents at our open house before school began to get to know a little more about their child and family. Not all of the families showed up and some families were not as forthcoming with information, so data from this portion was limited. Next, I sent home a questionnaire containing questions that explored more about the child's likes and dislikes as well as some information about the family's make-up and cultural background. The family questionnaire's responses were used to pick the books and be the determining factor in who was chosen to complete the 1-on-1 interview questions after the read-aloud. Throughout the study I used a cellular phone to record, in real time, our discussions before, during and after the five read-alouds. I also collected student artifacts in the form of drawings to showcase students' responses, connections, and feelings in regards to a particular read aloud. The drawings after listening to a text were used to get a reader's response to the text from all students, regardless of if the text was directly connected to their own life or not. Finally, I conducted 1-on-1 interviews using the aforementioned questionnaire after most of the read-alouds. The questionnaire was originally designed to be given to all students at the end of a read aloud, but after time constraints became an issue, the book questionnaire was used to only target students whose lives pertained to reading.

The data collected from this study was to help understand the impact of the inclusion of multicultural texts in a kindergarten classroom. The careful selection of multicultural text that pertained to students within my classroom was in an effort to see if

those texts changed their engagement in listening to a text, involvement/response to a text, and overall feel/attitude in the classroom setting.

Data Analysis

“Paying attention to what children say and do allows me to uncover what my students need next as learners, and helps me make sense of my work as a teacher. Observations are particle assessments that teachers know how to use to improve instruction” (Shagoury & Power, 2012) I used the data to reflect and understand how students could be benefitting from the integration of these read-alouds during the social studies block. All of the analysis of what was occurring in the classroom during this research study was qualitative in nature as I used the information from the read-aloud recordings and the students' artifacts.

Using an inductive approach, I used a table to organize verbal and written connections students made in regards to the read alouds to allow themes to emerge. In a table, I noted various themes that were prevalent during the discussions and student artifacts. Using a deductive approach, I then looked carefully to note whether or not the students were making mirror or window type observations about the text. I scanned their drawings and written work for the same themes and noted my findings in the table as well.

Context

Community

Beverly City School is located in Beverly City, New Jersey. The city covers .785 square miles and has an estimated population of 2,513 people as of 2016. The city is considered to be a suburban city. According to the 2010 census, the median household

income was \$49,519. Also, 11.5% of the population fell below the poverty line. Beverly City contains one school that services preschool to 8th grade students. The school's population this year is 310 students. The YMCA offers after-school care for parents who are employed beyond school hours.

Based on a mini-ethnography study I completed for another course I learned that Beverly's population, especially the population with school-aged children, is very transient. Families are continuously moving in and out of the city. The rest of the population is generally comprised of people who have lived in Beverly for many years. Some of the students' parents attended school at Beverly as well. The community still holds true to some traditions like an annual parade, and an annual tree-lighting ceremony. However, there are no town sports teams or after school programs for the students (other than the YMCA after-care program).

The daily average attendance for Beverly City School is 94.9% for students in Pre-K through 8th grade. Currently, the school contains 140 female students and 170 male students. The breakdown by race is as follows: .006% Alaskan Native/American Indian, 31% African American, 27% Hispanic, and 32% Caucasian. As far as being economically disadvantaged, 202 out of 310 fit into that category. Also, 20.65% of students receive special education services. The population consists of 3.87% English language learners. For the 2017-2018 LAL PARCC assessment, 50% of students at Beverly City School scored proficient. 38.5% of African American students scored proficient, whereas 68.6% of Caucasian students scored proficient. There may be an opportunity gap coming into play here. For the 2017-2018 Math PARCC assessment 30%

of students scored proficient. For the past few years all Beverly City School students have qualified for free lunch and breakfast.

Classroom

My classroom was composed of 17 kindergarten students ages 5-6. Out of those 17 students 10 were males and seven were females. The class consisted of 5 ELL students. Two students spoke Portuguese and three students spoke Spanish. Racially speaking 9 out of 17 students were either Black or bi-racial, five were Hispanic, and three were Caucasian.

The school day began at 8:15 am and ended at 3:00 pm. The students' schedule consisted of eight forty-two minute periods. First period was reading followed by second period writing which both followed the Tools of the Mind Curriculum. This time frame was very versatile and focused on a lot of guided practice and modeling in the beginning of the year, which then morphed into more independent and student driven procedures beginning mid-year. Third period was the students' specials (music, art, computers, physical education, and library). Next students went to lunch and recess. During 5th period the students learned phonics using a mix of the *Foundations* curriculum as well as the Tools of the Mind phonics components. During 6th period the students learned math using the *Envisions* curriculum, followed by a math extension period. The math extension block was used to allow students to work on math skills at various centers. It was also during this time that one of the Title I teachers would pull three to four students out of the classroom three days a week to work on gaps in reading and phonics. Finally, 8th period was the science/social studies block. During this period my class as well as the other Kindergarten teacher pulled from various sources and curriculum materials to create

meaningful lessons regarding science, social studies, social emotional, and cultural topics.

Students

It is important to note that in the previous year (2020-2021) students received atypical schooling due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the Beverly City School district, parents were given the option to send their students in person, or complete school virtually for the duration of the year. Students that were in-person were spaced three to six feet apart and were wearing masks for the duration of the school year. Group activities, centers, and social interaction were limited. Students and staff were also held to very strict guidelines regarding COVID-19 symptoms and quarantining for an extended period of time if symptoms arose or if they were exposed to a positive COVID-19 individual. Also, during the 2019-2020 school year, when some of these students were in their first year of the district's two year preschool program, the school district was forced to completely shut down in March of 2020 due to the start of the pandemic. From March 2020-June 2020 students were completing activities both independently and with the facilitation of their teacher virtually. As of September 2021, the beginning of the school year during this study, students were no longer allowed to attend school virtually. Students started the school year masked and following social distancing protocols. In March of 2022, Governor Phil Murphy announced that the mask mandate for children and staff would be lifted, although still highly recommended for unvaccinated persons. Within Mrs. Shockley's classroom, roughly two-thirds of the students began showing up unmasked at this time.

In regards to academics, two out of the 17 students were students who were retained in Kindergarten from last year. Jose was a repeat Kindergarten student who was in my class the year before, and Yolanda was in the other Kindergarten classroom the year before. Both were retained for academic reasons. Of the 17 students, 11 were previously enrolled in either preschool or Kindergarten within the district the year before and six are students who were new to the district in the 2021-2022 school year.

At the beginning of the year, it was clear to see there was a wide range of academic abilities within the classroom. Some students knew all/most of their letters and letter sounds (the students who had spent two years in the district's preschool program). These same students showcased basic kindergarten skills like one-to-one correspondence, counting to 20, sight word recognition, and number recognition. These students were also proficient in holding a pencil, writing their own name, and drawing basic pictures and/or lines for words in a sentence during writing. It was noted that students who were new to the district struggled behaviorally to follow directions, sit on the rug/in a chair for an appropriate amount of time, and socialize appropriately with their peers. These students also struggled to write their name, identify letters and numbers, count to 20, and draw discernable pictures.

As far as receiving services not provided in the general classroom setting, the five ELL students were the only ones to be pulled from the classroom two days a week for 40 minutes to work with the district's only ELL teacher. However, it should be noted that I began the process of referring various students to the I&RS team in hopes to obtain services for them. Kwamaine was the first student I referred for behavior and academics. He was defiant and uncooperative for most of the school day. He was unable to write his

name, identify any numbers or letters, or draw legible pictures. I began the process of getting him referred in September, but unfortunately his mother decided to unenroll him in November. Adam was another student that I began the referral process for in early October following his enrollment at the end of September. He was unable to hold a pencil, follow basic classroom procedures like unpacking, picking his lunch on the smartboard, and putting on a jacket. The most concerning was his inability to use the restroom independently, and that he was still wearing a pull up. It was also difficult to understand him as his speech was delayed and he spoke in one to two word phrases. He also struggled with frequent illnesses which left him absent for a majority of the time he was enrolled. Again, unfortunately, his mother decided to unenroll him in mid-January.

Chapter four discusses the student data and results from the duration of this study. Chapter five presents the implications and conclusions, as well as suggestions for future research surrounding the topic of this study.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

Chapter four discusses the findings of my study with the goal to observe the outcomes of the following questions:

- How can teachers use cultural information about their students to select appropriate multicultural text for read-alouds?
- How do students respond to various multicultural texts during oral discussions, in writing or drawing, and during a one-on-one interview?
- What components of the curriculum can be adjusted to foster an inclusive learning environment for all students based on their Funds of Knowledge?

Analysis of the data derived from the recorded read-alouds, student artifacts, and one-on-one interview responses, revealed clear trends involving family, diversity, and student engagement.

Family

“We started talking about families at school...I went last because I wasn’t sure what to say. My family is not like everybody else’s.” - *A Family, is a Family, is a Family* by Sara O’Leary (2016). This quote was from the first book that I chose to read aloud to my students. I selected this book because it talks about all different types of families including large families, small families, split families, same-sex couples, foster families, and more. I wanted to ignite the family conversation and see students' reactions to families that looked like their own and families that were different.

Getting Familiar with Families

The idea of family began on day one, eighteen seconds into the first read aloud. As I read the book *A Family, is Family, is a Family*, Jose, one of the Spanish-speaking students, blurts out “family.” This may seem typical for a kindergarten classroom read aloud, an eager student blurts the first thing that comes to mind or a word they have just heard. However, in this circumstance I viewed it as a little more than that. Jose was the student who was repeating kindergarten due to behavior and academic difficulties in the 2020-2021 school year. I was shocked to find that he was actually paying attention to the story. As I continued to read the story which discusses various family make-ups, students chimed in to share about what their family was like. A student named Alyssa who I know lives with her mom and aunt raised her hand and said that she has one brother, two sisters, and an aunt. Audrina said that she has two brothers and then another brother that lives with her dad. Nick, who is adopted, described that his family consists of a baby brother, two older brothers, and a mom, and dad. After the reading of the text, I handed out blank sheets of paper and asked students to draw a picture of their family. As the students worked at their desks in groups of two to four, they talked with their peers about who was in their family. I heard questions like, “Well who is that?” and “Where is your dad?”

Later on, during the read aloud of *The Sock Thief* by Ana Crespo, students eagerly raised their hands or even called out when I got to a portion of the story that spoke about the family having a little dog. The same thing happened when I read *Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend* by Karen Stanton. In that story the little dog Pomegranate runs away from home. Thomas, who has a dog of his own, wanted to talk

about all of the things that his dog does. It was clear to see that students were beginning to discover how the word family could mean or represent something different to them than their peers. Some families had dads, some did not. Some families had dogs. Others did not. Some families lived within the same house. Others did not.

“Some People Say I’m Cute, and Some People Say I Look Like My Dad”

The discussions surrounding families continued to grow deeper as the read alouds continued. Students really began to take notice of the appearance factor surrounding their families or their peers’ families. During the first read aloud of *A Family, is a Family, is a Family*, there was a page that stated, “Some people say I look like my dad and some people say I look like my mom. I think I look like myself” (O’Leary, 2016, p. 17). Cole immediately shouted out, “Some people say I’m cute and some people say I look like my dad.” This triggered two other students to mumble, “or like grandparents,” and “I look like my dad.” After reading, when students were instructed to draw pictures of their families, they began asking their peers for various skin colors from the crayon bin. During those exchanges for colors, there was never any negative talk, only questions about why. Thomas asked one of his peers for the color tan. When the other student questioned his need, he said, “Because I need it for my mom.” Later on, when I read the book *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall, Cole blurted out, “This is me [Jabari] - this is my baby sister and this is my dad.” He immediately connected the main character and his family to his own family. Later on, during the interview questionnaire portion of the book, I asked Cole if he liked the story and his response was, “Yeah, because it’s got pictures of me with my dad.”

Before the reading of the text *The Sock Thief* by Ana Crespo, Sofia exclaimed that the character on the cover of the book looked like her. After reading, I questioned the two students who speak Portuguese figuring they would relate most to this book, because the book is based in Brazil and follows a Portuguese child's journey to make a soccer ball. During that time, Melanie said that the girl on the back cover of the book looked like her. When I asked Yolanda if any of the characters in the book reminded her of herself she had me flip to a page in the middle of the book and said, "Her hair is like mine." As she continued to flip through the pages she found a picture of an older woman and said, "This is like my mom."

Scary Basements

Throughout the entirety of my research study, one theme always emerged during almost every activity and read aloud: connections to family activities. Students always wanted to divulge stories about their families as it related to the text, discussion, or activity. They sometimes were even so eager to just talk about their own families that sometimes the stories would have nothing to do with what was happening/being discussed in the classroom. After the read aloud, *A Family, is a Family, is a Family* I asked three students the questions from the book questionnaire. When I asked Alyssa if the story reminded her of her family, she said that the page where the family is at a baseball game made her think of her family because they "like to go to baseball games." She also pointed to the picture of the woman grocery shopping and said "My aunt does that." When I asked Nate if any of the characters in the book reminded him of his family, he said, "No, but I like my family." His comment goes to show that even though he did not connect with any of the characters, he still felt the need to say something about his

family. The story that seemed to influence my students the most to talk about their families was *Jabari Jumps*. Before reading, I prefaced the story by telling the students that it was going to be about a little boy who is scared to do something. I had asked students to talk about a time they were scared. Hands shot up immediately. Zane raised his hand and said, “I did not like to fold clothes.” Nick said, “The basement.”

Audrina: Since my brother was scared, I wasn’t scared, I was a big girl. And I went downstairs to help him and I got him, and picked him, and put him on my neck, and do-do-do-do (walking down steps) and go down the stairs.

Myself: Wait, you were the brave one?

Audrina: Yea

Myself: You were the brave girl?

Audrina: Yea and I put my baby brother on my neck...

After Audrina’s story I watched as more hands began to raise, clearly her story had triggered more students to think about when they were scared. Next, Thomas raised his hand to talk about a time he was scared.

Thomas: Well, well when I was scared, when I was ‘free’.

Myself: When you were three years old?

Thomas: Yea, and I was scared of a monster in the basement. His name is called Matthew. (Two other students could be heard saying, “Called Matthew? Called Matthew?”) And he eats little kids that don’t listen. But I am brave now because I don’t see Matthew when I go down, but then when I go up, I just don’t see him, I just don’t see him when I go up.

During the reading of *Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend*, when I read the part of the story where the little boy dances with his dad, students began linking

their pointer fingers together, which is a silent signal that means they are making a connection with that part of the book. When I asked students to give me a silent thumbs up if they also liked dancing with their family, all but a few students did. Also, in the book the little boy's dad plays the piano in the story and they perform a concert. This triggered the following connection story:

Nick: I've got a concert today. At night.

Myself: Good connection! The concert today. Are you going to see your brother in the concert?

Nick: (Nods his head up and down.)

Myself: Cool!

Nick: With my mommy and daddy.

Myself: They are going to sing music just like the boy and his papa.

Cole then raised his hand to make a connection about the impending, but much further away, kindergarten concert he was going to be participating in:

Um, so, my auntie said that she's coming to the concert and I'm gonna tell my mom that she wanna come to the concert at the school, and my auntie coming and my cousin's coming, everybody coming from my home.

It was great to hear these family connections in the text begin to trigger students to think about their own families and things that they did as a whole family, or with individual members of their family.

Diversity

One of the main reasons behind my research study was to integrate more diverse books. As I have written about earlier in the paper, the reading curriculum that is utilized within my district lacks character diversity. I set out to make the read alouds involve

characters that looked like my students. The selection of texts became very diverse to reflect the students. Analysis of the data revealed how students saw themselves in text (mirror books) and how they saw others in the text (window books).

“It’s Got Pictures of Me With My Dad”

During the activity completed after the reading of *A Family, Is a Family, Is a Family*, when students were instructed to draw a picture of their own families, was the beginning of students recognizing the mirror connection. As students drew at their tables with their peers, I overheard them explaining to their peers who made up their family. Thomas and Alyssa were excited when they realized that they both had dogs in their families. Alex and Jose both spoke in Spanish about their “papas” or dads. Ethan and Nick showed each other their drawings of their little brothers. After the students were finished drawing, they gathered on the rug so that everyone could show their picture of their family under the document camera. As students shared one at a time, their peers raised their hands to exclaim that they had a dog, an older brother, a little brother, or a little sister too! When I spoke with Alyssa about the story *A Family, Is a Family, Is a Family* she had made connections to her family’s activities regarding her aunt shopping and her family attending baseball games. It was clear that students were beginning to see themselves in the book we had read and compared to their peers’ lives.

Next I read the book *Jabari Jumps*. Cole’s connection to the immediately seeing himself, his dad, and his little sister as the characters in the book was the most pronounced example of the mirror connection. After I had finished reading the text Cole said again, “and Mrs. Shockley my daddy looks like that too, and I look like that, and I got a baby sister and she looks like that too - so that’s me!” After reading, I had given the

students a blank piece of paper to draw a time when they were scared. Nick drew a picture of himself surrounded by the color black which he explained to be him in the dark basement. Sam drew a picture in which she depicted her, her mom, and her grandmother with sad faces on. There is also a fourth person in the picture that she said was her dad who had an angry look and red lines coming from his eyes. She explained to me that this was the time her dad was mad and was yelling at her mom. Nate drew a picture of him and who he described as his dad and his brother atop a diving board by a pool. Melanie drew a picture of herself going down a tall sliding board. Cole drew a picture of himself hiding behind a door from a clown wearing a yellow hat with some red on its face. Finally, Elaine drew a picture of two small people with an even smaller door up above them and wrote the following sentence on the other side of the paper, “Dis is the tim wen my dad lev me nin the bsmt,” she read to me as, “This is the time when my dad leaved me in the basement”. The students had connected so much to the story that they were able to depict a time when they felt as the character had - scared. After reading, I asked two students the questionnaire questions regarding the text. When I asked Elaine how this book made her feel, it said it made her feel “still brave,” relating to the time that her dad had shut her and her brother in the basement. When I questioned Cole whether or not he liked the book he said, “Yea, because it’s got pictures of me with my dad.”

During the reading of *The Sock Thief* a little girl blurted out that she looked like the character on the cover. As I read the story, the two Portuguese students in the classroom lit up as I tried my best to pronounce words in Portuguese. On the first few pages the book describes the setting as being Brazil. As soon as the word Brazil left my mouth, I heard Melanie mumble something about Brazil in Portuguese. A few pages later

a dog barks in Portuguese, “Au, au, au!” Melanie and Yolanda, the two Portuguese students bark right back in the same manner while the rest of the students sit quietly. Clearly the girls recognized that bark, whereas the non-Portuguese speaking students may have expected to hear “Ruff, ruff, ruff”, so they did not recognize the “Au” as a bark. This same circumstance happened again later in the book when a rooster crowed, “Coo-coo-ri-coo.” This time Yolanda was the only one to mimic the noise. Next, when a parrot chirped, “Abrigado, abrigado, abrigado,” Yolanda repeated those words back and Melanie raised her hand to say, “That means thank you.” Once she did that, the other students practiced repeating, “Abrigado.” I had noticed how engaged Melanie and Yolanda had become and how comfortable they were at speaking their native language. After reading, “Abrigado,” I turned to Melanie and Yolanda and said, “Did I do a good job?” They both smiled at me and said yes. I finished reading the book and Yolanda clapped excitedly. I then asked her, “Did you like that book Yolanda?” and she shook her head up and down as if to say, “Yes.” At the very back of the book there was a glossary of Portuguese words and their meanings in English. I began reading the words for dog, mango, rooster, and soccer in English and in Portuguese, Yolanda and Melanie nodded their heads as I did this. Then, as I got to the words “friends” and “school” I asked Yolanda and Melanie if they knew how to say them in Portuguese. They both chimed in, “Amigos” and “Escola”. After reading when I questioned Yolanda and Melanie about their connections to the book, they both connected to characters in the text looking like themselves. Yolanda also said that the woman on the back of the book looked like her mom. When I asked Yolanda, “Do any of the characters in the book remind you of your friends?” She said, “Yes Nicolý.” Overall, I had never seen this much engagement from

either student. Melanie usually sits quietly and does not raise her hand at all during read-alouds. I typically would have to call on her just to check in and make sure she is following along. More notably they seemed to smile more and be overall in a good mood after hearing this book that had words from their native language.

Next I read *Isabel and Her Colores Go to School*. This book also was a bilingual book, this time having the text fully in English on one page and then translated to Spanish on the opposite page. As soon as I read the title, Yolanda, a Portuguese speaking student raised her hand and said, “Like Isabely,” making the connection to the name of the main character and her friend at school. For this read aloud, I read the English page, while my paraprofessional, who is bilingual, read the text in Spanish. When I began reading the first page the English portion was peppered with some Spanish words as well, “rojo, verde, azul, morado, rosado...”. As I read those words Jose, a Spanish speaking student, echoed me. After I read the first page in English, I passed the book to my paraprofessional who was sitting right next to me. As she began reading in her graceful Spanish, all three Spanish speaking students looked up and made eye contact with her. It was as if they were entranced. As myself and my paraprofessional continued to read the text Jose remained engaged and was even mumbling indiscernible things in Spanish to himself. Halfway through the book the non-Spanish speaking students began seeing mirror images of themselves in relation to how the main character was feeling scared on the first day of school. Without being prompted the following conversation began:

Audrina: So, when my first day of school I was a little bit scared, but I was brave.

Myself: Oh wow, you’re making a connection to this story. Did you guys hear what Audrina said? She said, on the first day of school she was a little bit scared, but then she was brave, right? Good

connection! Does anybody else want to make a connection to Isabel and how she is feeling? Cole?

Cole: Um so when I was at, when I was starting to go to this new school, I was a little bit scared because I thought that there was big kids in this school and they would be mean to me. But, then I got happy because then I saw my friends and they was kids.

Myself: And were they nice to you?

Cole: Shakes his head in agreement

Myself: Sam, what about you, how were you feeling?

Sam: I felt the same way, a little worried.

Myself: A little worried and scared? Okay good connection. Alex, how did you feel on the first day of school?

Alex: Happy

Myself: Happy? You were ready to come? Listo? (Which means “ready”) Ready? Yea?

Alex: Shakes his head in agreement

My paraprofessional and myself continued to read the book. At one point the English portion infused the word “bienvendio”, which translates to English as “welcome.” As I read that, Jose shouted out, “Wow!” After reading, the students were asked to draw pictures of themselves on the first day of school. My paraprofessional and I meandered around the room asking students about their drawings and writing and key feeling words down on their paper. Cole drew his picture with two people smiling and one person who he reported to be him with a frown on. Audrina also drew a picture of one person who she said was herself and she wanted me to write the word “sad” next to it. Nick decided to draw a picture of himself from what he reported was the first day of

preschool. I asked him why there were little blue circles by his face, to which he responded that he was crying.

Finally, during the read aloud of *Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend*, students saw mirror type connections in the family make-up involving dogs and activities. They shared eagerly about their dogs as I read about the little boy's dog named Pomegranate who traveled from house to house. They linked their fingers together to connect to the activity of dancing with people in their family as the little boy danced with his father. Finally, Nick and Cole connected to the portion of the story when the boy and his dad are singing and playing the piano. This triggered them to think about how their family members or they themselves would be involved in a concert too.

Overall, during these read-alouds I saw my students liven up if the book centered around something that reminded them of themselves, their culture, or their family. Across the board I had more students engaging than they would during a daily read-aloud lesson. Jose, who really struggles to pay attention, was interjecting and mumbling during the book that related most to his culture. Although as teachers, being disrupted is a major pet-peeve, when it is happening with a student who rarely engages, it is worth it.

“I Don't Know What Her Saying”

While many students were able to connect with the text, sometimes during and after the read alouds, students realized how they differed from the text or the people in it. During the read-aloud *A Family, is a Family, is a Family*, students began noticing that the families were different from their own. As I read pages about looking like parents, students connected. However, when reading about same-sex couples no students raised their hand to make a connection or even mumbled to themselves. Afterwards, during the

drawing activity, students had informal conversations about the members of their families at their desk. I overheard students talking about differences in skin color, number of siblings, lack of siblings, size, height, and number of people in total. When sharing these drawings under the document camera as a whole class, students asked questions like, “You don’t have any brothers or sisters?” to Sofia who is an only child. Also, someone asked Yolanda where her dad was, to which she responded, “I don’t have a dad.” When asking questions to students about the book, I asked three students, to which one student (Nick) answered most of my questions with a no, meaning he made no connections to the text. When this happened I immediately felt like I had failed in choosing this book. Then, however, I remembered that there were two purposes behind choosing these books, to have students make connections and to learn about others and their cultures and families.

After reading the book *Jabari Jumps*, I asked Elaine the questions from the questionnaire about the book. I chose her because she has dark skin like the characters in the book. She answered “No” or “Nope” for all of the questions pertaining to making connections to herself, her friends, and her family. Also, unlike Jabari’s family who was cheering him on and supporting him to jump, Elaine said that if I read this book to her family that they would not like it because, “No, they don’t want me to jump.”

At the end of the reading of *The Sock Thief*, when I got to the glossary where there were words in both Portuguese and English, I said, “Let me read some more Portuguese words and see if our friends that speak Portuguese can help,” Sam shouted out, “Melanie speaks Portuguese!” She had made the connection that although she herself did not speak Portuguese, a student in her class did know the language. At the bottom of the list was the word for thank you, which in Portuguese is “obrigado.” After I read that

aloud to the class, Ethan, one of the Spanish speaking students said, “Gracias, gracias, gracias, thank you when we need to say gracias.” He was able to understand that the word was different in Portuguese from his native language.

When I pulled out the book *Isabel and Her Colores Go to School*, I began by asking who in the classroom speaks Spanish like the one character in the text. Cole can then be heard calling out, “Alex.” Another student can be heard in the audio recording saying “Ethan” as I also name Jose since he is raising his hand to signal that he speaks Spanish. Again, the students had learned about/know that some of their peers speak a different language. When my paraprofessional took over reading the first page in Spanish, I watched as the non-Spanish speaking students looked up in awe as they heard a language they did not know or understand. It was so quiet in my classroom for the first time in a while as all my students became fully immersed in the text. However, that silence is broken a few seconds later when Sofia, an English speaking student says, “I don’t know what her saying.” I took a moment and responded by saying, “That’s okay just listen, look at the picture and you know what I said, she just said the same thing that I did, but in Spanish.”

In all the moments where students did not connect to the book, draw the same thing, or respond with anything other than no to the questions, those were signs that students did not see themselves in the text. These texts, to them, became windows that they could see through into someone else’s life.

Engagement

Regardless of whether or not students saw a piece of themselves or their peers in a text, I noticed that overall students were much more engaged during the course of the

research study. As a teacher, and someone who is completing this research study in order to become a Reading Specialist, of course I am always teaching and looking for students to practice reading skills. It warmed my heart to list as students made unprompted inferences and connections during the read alouds. It melted my heart to have them ask, “Are we doing a book today?” Clearly this research study was lighting the fire of the enjoyment of reading fire.

Thief Bag

The first sign that my students were beginning to make inferences was during the read-aloud of *Jabari Jumps*. After reading that Jabari had passed his swim test, a requirement in order to be allowed to jump off the diving board. Jabari exclaims that he is a great jumper and that he is not scared to jump at all. Thomas raised his hand and said, “I think he’s scared I know.” This was a great inference as it was clear by Jabari’s facial expressions, and hesitation when walking up the steps and to the end of the diving board. When Jabari was waiting his turn to climb the slide’s ladder, he squeezed his dad’s hand and his dad squeezed Jabari’s hand back. I asked Elaine, “Elaine, why do you think that Jabari squeezed his dad’s hand?” She responded with, “It’s because he’s...SCARED! I know!” I continued to read about how Jabari kept stalling and let all of the kids jump off the diving board before him because he needed to think of what kind of jump he wanted to do. I then asked the class, “Why do you think he let all of the other kids go in front of him?” Alyssa said, “Because he is scared.” Next Jabari’s dad checked on him as he waited on the concrete below. He offered the suggestion for Jabari to come down and take a rest. Jabari thought this sounded like a good idea. When I read that Jabari liked that idea, Thomas said, “He didn’t want to,” implying that he did not want to jump.

Eventually Jabari decides that he is not going to jump today, but tomorrow. I then asked, “Wait, Audrina, why is he saying he is going to do it tomorrow?” She responded, “Cause he’s scared.”

During the reading of *The Sock Thief* the main character stated that he needed socks but he does not have any of his own. When he sees socks on a windowsill, I ask, “Sam what do you think he is going to do?” She responded, “He’s going to steal the socks!” Later on, when he takes socks and a newspaper, I asked the students:

Myself: Jose, what do you think he is doing?

Jose: Make the socks.

Myself: He’s making the socks? Okay - but he’s putting paper inside of them. Sofia, what do you think he is making?

Sofia: Maybe he is making a rainbow sock.

Myself: He is making a rainbow sock? Alyssa, what do you think?

Alyssa: It’s probably, it’s probably a note for somebody.

Myself: He’s shoving a note in there? Okay...Cole, do you think something different?

Cole: Yea, you know the thief has that black bag where they put the stuff in it, trying to steal it?

Myself: Yea...

Cole: That’s they secret.

Myself: Ohhh it’s going to be his thief bag where he steals stuff and puts it in there.

Cole: Yea.

Although some student’s inferences and predictions for that portion of the story were not close at all to what was actually happening, the discussion was fruitful in many

ways. First, and foremost Jose, who does not often participate, was the first to raise his hand. Sofia, who has a hard time staying on topic raised her hand and did relate her response to something that was occurring in the text. Alyssa and Cole used context clues such as the newspaper possibly being a note, and the word “thief” in the title of the book to make their predictions.

During the reading of *Isabel and Her Colores Go to School*, there comes a point in time where Isabel is embarrassed and her cheeks become ‘tomato red’. I asked the students, “What do you think she is feeling right now? Her cheeks got all red.” Jose raised his hand and said, “Umm.” My paraprofessional then asked in Spanish how he thought Isabel was feeling. She also assured him that he could answer to her in Spanish or in English. She gives him some feeling suggestions in Spanish. He then says, “Estaba pena,” to which my para translated meant that ‘she was shy’. This triggered Alex, another Spanish speaking student like Jose, to say, “Estaba hap-sad.” Alyssa continued to describe how Isabel was feeling by looking at the picture. She said, “She was nervous because her friends were smiling at her.” At the end of the story, Isabel drew two faces on the page. When I asked students who they think the other face belonged to, Alyssa raised her hand and explained that she thought it was the other little girl in the story named Sarah who was being nice to Isabel throughout the book. She was right.

Finally, during the reading of the book *Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend* my students began making inferences about the little boy and his family. After I read about how the little boy spends time with his mom on Mondays, Wednesdays, and every other weekend, I asked students the following question:

Myself: So, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and then like every other weekend, the boy and his dog live with the mom, in this house. I wonder

where he lives the other days? What do you guys think? Raise your hand. Where is he going to live on Tuesday, and Thursday, and Friday and the other weekends? Sam?

Sam: Um, I think he lives with his dad.

Myself: You think he is going to live with his dad? In a different house? Who agrees with Sam? Nate, Cole, Thomas, Jose, Melanie, Yolanda, Nick. Okay! Let's see if Sam is right!

I had only read a few pages into the book but already Sam had begun to infer that the little boy would live with his dad on the other days that he was not with his mom. At the end of the story the dog, Pomegranate runs back to a third home, which turns out to be the family home that everyone used to live in together; the mom, dad, little boy, and dog. Pomegranate the dog dug up a bone that was buried in the front yard of the house. Thomas said, "Oh so that's why he wanted to go to their old house, because he left a bone there!"

Although some of the student inferences were not correct, it was hopeful as a teacher to see them attempting to use what they knew or saw in the text to talk about a prediction or inference. I also noticed that the ELL students struggled more with this skill, whereas the non-ELL students seemed to have a better grasp of the concept.

"Are We Doing a Book Today?"

Although I have no tangible evidence of this part of engagement, I informally observed an overall change in my students' attitudes about the end of day period of science and social studies. Five and six year olds are pretty spent, and their "focus tanks" are empty by 2:10 on a school day. Some days, during this final block students would fall asleep, show little interest, and sometimes flat out defiance to sit up, pay attention, and participate. However, on days that I had one of the books from the study in hand, they

eagerly came to the rug, were very attentive, and engaged orally in the discussion. I also noticed a trend that on the day following a read-aloud from this study, I would get asked by one or multiple students, “Are we doing a book today?” Much to my dismay, I had to tell them, “No, sorry, not today” as I was spacing the read-alouds out over an extended period of time.

Also, it is important to note that due to the sake of time and trying to stick to fidelity across grade levels, my kindergarten partner who teaches in the room next-door, also read the stories from my study aloud to her students. I made it a point to tell her that she did not have to read them if she did not want to, but she expressed excitement in adding some diversity to our curriculum as well. I did not collect any formal data from her or her students, but I would always check in to see how it went. She also expressed her students’ engagement and enjoyment during the read-aloud stories. As a teacher who also works with ELL students, she noted that during the bilingual books she saw an increase in engagement from her ELL students.

“Thank You When We Need to Say ‘Gracias’”

Typically, when ELL students come into kindergarten they are very quiet, and shy, not saying much at all. Ethan was this way when entering kindergarten, having only spent a few months in one of the preschool classrooms within the district. Alex entered kindergarten with no school experience and very little English. He was very shy and withdrawn for the first few months of school. Melanie was very quiet, but compliant, when she first started kindergarten this past year. Jose, was not very quiet last year when he was in my kindergarten classroom, however he would try to speak to me in fluent Spanish often. Having only basic Spanish knowledge, I would speak back as much as I

could, but sometimes I would say, “Lo siento, no se” which translates to “Sorry, I don’t know.” During this past year his English had gotten better, and he definitely did not lack any confidence when speaking. Finally, Yolanda who was also in her second year of kindergarten, was a lot more confident in her English having spent a full year speaking English in the other kindergarten classroom the year before.

As noted in the above paragraphs describing the dialogue during the read alouds, Yolanda and Jose’s names cropped up the most in terms of participation in the classroom discussions. This was typical, but I did notice that their participation increased during their native language read aloud. Jose, a Spanish speaker, was non-stop mumbling or raising his hand to participate during the Spanish text *Isabel and Her Colores Go to School*. Although Alex and Ethan did not participate as much as Jose during that book, they also were more attentive and contributed to the conversation more than they usually do. Yolanda’s name popped up a lot in my notes and data during the read aloud of *The Sock Thief*, which was based in her native language of Portuguese. Melanie’s demeanor changed during this read aloud too. She was more attentive, smiling, and even laughing at me as I tried to pronounce the Portuguese words.

To me this was one of the most exciting observations of my study. I always feel a sense of sadness when thinking about how these ELL students may feel when entering such a foreign environment. To see that they were feeling confident enough to participate and even laugh at their teacher made me feel as if I was making a good teaching choice by integrating these books associated with my study into our curriculum.

Conclusion

Overall, the students in my classroom showcased their interest in books and engaging in texts about family. They felt comfortable sharing about their families as well as their experiences and emotions surrounding those experiences. There was an emergence of language, reading skills, and connections during the study. Chapter 5 will outline a summary, conclusions, limitations, and implications for the field.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications for the Field

Summary

I watched as my reading rug, during a somewhat difficult time of day to ‘reach and teach’ students, come alive with excitement from my students. They were so excited to listen to new stories about new people that they begged for more books, or accidentally called out when they were ignited by something in the text or a story that their peer had shared. The typically shy ELL students wanted to help translate or explain words to myself and their peers. There was a sense of calm and light heartedness in the classroom during the story times. Personally being laughed at for mispronouncing words in Spanish or Portuguese was alright with me, because I knew that meant that they were engaged, and listening, and that is what matters.

The purpose of this study was to see how the integration of multicultural text in a kindergarten class would affect students. I chose to select books that mirrored the students in my class. Due to the variety of family make-ups and cultural differences amongst the students, some books also became window books in which students learned and saw things about different cultures and families.

In summary, it appears this research study benefited everyone in the classroom in some way. The ELL students became a lot more vocal during the read alouds that were about their culture. They felt comfortable sharing about their families, experiences, and their knowledge of their native language. The non-ELL students also felt comfortable talking about their families, making inferences, and they began to notice the cultures of their ELL peers. There were also important yet informal discussions between students

about family similarities and differences. Personally, I learned a lot more about my students. I learned about their families, their fears, their understanding of their peers, the meanings of words in another language, and their abilities in regards to reading strategies.

Conclusions

I use to feel uncomfortable to read or talk to my students about a culture, a family dynamic, sexual preference, etc. that was different from my own. Now, I find it more uncomfortable to ***not*** talk about these differences with my students. To just ignore that these differences and diversities are out there is embarrassing and ignorant. Walls of protection, because a student is scared, unsure, or feeling ostracized, can be broken down if a student feels like you “get” him/her. The best way we can reach our students is to connect with them, and the first step to do that is to find out who they are and then begin to talk/read about people like themselves.

After analyzing the data from the study, I was able to draw out the following themes that emerged throughout the duration of the study. First, the theme of ‘family’ with the underlying sub themes of recognizing appearance and drawing on similarities between families was apparent during most activities. The students began to talk more about their families and to take notice of their peers’ families. Next, the theme of ‘diversity’ with the sub themes of mirror experiences and window experiences was apparent due to the nature of multicultural books that were selected. The students claimed that the characters looked like them, their friends, or their family in certain texts. While at other times, students noticed that the words in the text were from languages that their peers speak. Finally, the theme of ‘engagement’ became apparent when I noticed that

students were asking for me to read the books more frequently, engaging in the text both when being prompted and unprompted, and the ELL students participated more when the book involved words in their native language. This engagement showcased that my students were enjoying and eager to partake in reading activities.

Educators can use the new laws requiring multicultural and inclusive education to benefit their students. Specifically the state of New Jersey has included standards to New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion. These legislative requirements, adopted in 2019, fall under the History and Contributions of Individuals with Disabilities and LGBT and the Diversity and Inclusion statutes. Districts, schools, and teachers are held accountable to address the topics found under these standards. Unfortunately,....

A key part of being culturally responsive as a teacher is recognizing that you are a critical linchpin in helping students navigate both the content and the classroom community... Too often, implicit bias leads teachers to not see the cultural and linguistic assets and skills diverse students use to navigate the content... The remedy is to help teachers expand their ability to recognize different ways of making meaning and engaging socially. (Ferlazzo, 2015)

Teachers can allow their students to flourish if they take the time to recognize their students' assets and skills as well as their deficits and challenges and gear their instructional practices with both of those ideas in mind.

Implications for Teaching

One of the major findings of this study is that students will engage more when a text has characters that they can make connections to regarding their own lives or their peers'. This makes evident how important it is for teachers to take the time to consider all learners, their families, cultures, and languages, when selecting text to use as mentor texts in the classroom. I encourage teachers to reach out to their school librarian or local librarian to obtain books and/or other media that can be used in their classroom. Teachers can also check out websites such as; LittleFreeLibrary.org, Scholastic.com, and EmbraceRace.org for book lists and more resources regarding teaching about multicultural topics.

Students in this study were clearly more engaged when encouraged to use their first languages. Teachers can use the idea of translanguaging to support their research approach. "Translanguaging pedagogies should also be understood as enriching learning across all of the languages in a student's repertoire, creating spaces for students to make connections across languages and deepening student understanding of content knowledge" (Hamman, Beck, & Donaldson, 2018). It is important to not dismiss the languages of all of our learners and to do our best to integrate all native languages into the classroom setting. When a classroom does not seem diverse, teachers need to dig deeper and talk to families and students about their backgrounds. They may find out something that was not apparent at first glance. If a teacher's search still yields no diversity amongst the students, teachers should teach about other cultures and languages. Even though some areas of our nation are predominantly one race or culture, once our students step out of their "area" they will be exposed to a variety of people, cultures and

settings. It is our job as educators to foster the idea of acceptance, kindness, and understanding of other cultures.

Furthermore, teachers should continue to use the Funds of Knowledge or another means to gather information about their specific students prior to making book selections. Every class is different, so the same books that work in one classroom, school, or geographic location, may not yield the same results in another.

When children come to us in schools, they are already living multiple identities: as a grandchild, a daughter or son, a sister or brother, a nephew or a niece; as orphaned, detained, or wards of the system; as situated in neighborhoods, reserves, on the streets, or in other geographical locations; as members of racial cultural, religious, or economic groups; and as members of other chosen communities...In both direct and indirect ways, they bring their families and communities with them. It is our role as educators to make space in our classrooms and schools for all those who accompany them. (Pushor, 2010, p. 7)

Although there has been a lot of pushback regarding CRT (Culturally Responsive Teaching), and more specifically the Critical Race Theory, it is ignorant and irresponsible to leave out discussions surrounding our own students' lives. Taking into consideration information from families, surveys, and students' stories will help a teacher gather relevant information that will help him/her in book selection. As teachers, we can begin to feel more comfortable in taking on this important task by becoming familiar with all of the multicultural literature that is out there. Forming reading groups amongst fellow colleagues where teachers go out and find books about multicultural topics to share and

discuss in a book study type setting would cut down on research time, and benefit all involved.

Finally, teachers should strive to make multicultural read alouds a more frequent practice. Due to the nature of my research, I only implemented five texts over the course of a few months. However, the integration of more texts could yield a lot more information and data related to this topic.

Implications for Future Research

After careful consideration of the data presented by this study, I believe there are many areas in which future teacher researchers can conduct similar research in their own classrooms. Specifically I noticed a lot of engagement and growth in my ELL students throughout the course of the study. A future teacher researcher could plan to focus specifically on ELL students. They could track students' engagement and progress and overall feelings at school when integrating text specific to their individual cultures. This study could also be conducted by an ELL teacher who works with these students in a small group setting.

The questions behind this research study could also be applied to other grade levels outside of kindergarten. A future researcher would be able to gather other sources of data from older students, such as writing samples or more in depth conversations. These data points may uncover new themes that did not surface due to the age and capabilities of the kindergarten students in my study.

Another implication is the need for easy access to multicultural literature. As I will talk about in my limitations section, I experienced difficulty with finding multicultural literature that was organized by genre to use for this study. My school's

library was in disarray, and the librarian had a limited knowledge of multicultural literature written about each topic I wanted to address. I had to send an email to my local children's librarian and hope that she would have more knowledge on the topic. Luckily she did, and was extremely informative and helpful. However, if that were not the case, I would have spent a lot of time researching and pre-reading books to find exactly what I was looking for. Unfortunately, teachers have limited time during the school day to work on a project such as finding books and checking them out, so this is something that could hinder future researchers.

Limitations

The major limitation of this study was the time constraint due to the period of the day during which the study was being conducted. As previously mentioned, the study was conducted during the 42 minute science and social studies period at the end of the day. Due to COVID-19 protocols set in place regarding dismissal, the period was actually only about 30 minutes long to allow for time to pack up and for students to be dismissed in small groups. Therefore, it left little time to read, discuss, complete an activity, and conduct the interview questions. I soon realized that I could only ask a few students the questions each time. I then began to specifically focus on students' who I had in mind when I selected that particular book. If there was more time, I would have liked to have asked the questions to all/most of the students and dissect all of that data.

The other, much smaller limitation, was our school library not being functional. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic our library was converted and separated into three different classrooms. Our librarian spent her time pushing into each classroom for their library period. When it came time for me to select books, I had to visit the library near

my home. Due to general library guidelines involving time limits on borrowing books, I would constantly have to renew or wait for a book to become available in order to borrow it. There were books I had wanted to read, but they were not available from my local library during the time in which I needed them.

Conclusion

The motivation behind this study was to see if integrating multicultural text would be beneficial in the kindergarten classroom. I learned a lot about my students' lives, understanding of their peers, and reading skills. I also watched as my students opened up like little flowers on a Spring day, sharing their stories and making connections to the selected texts. Going forward, I will continue to integrate multicultural literature into my classroom.

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