Art, Advocacy and Critical Exploration of Content:

Reflections of Art and Literacy Teachers and a School Administrator

By

Jhanae E. Wingfield

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_____

Dr. Saundra M. Tomlinson-Clarke, Chair

_____

Dr. Carrie Lobman

_____

Dr. RoseAnn LaBrocca

New Brunswick, New Jersey

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Abstract

Over the last 30 years, the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of school-aged children in grades PK-12 has drastically changed in the United States. This demographic shift in the student population has prompted a concern among teacher educators about how to best prepare teachers to meet the needs of Black and Latino student populations in the classroom. Training teachers to be culturally responsive educators is an especially pressing need given that 86 percent of teachers (Kena et al., 2015) are White, and student demographics continue to become more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse.

With research revealing that racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse students, particularly those of African and Latino decent, continue to experience an inequitable education and show large discrepancies in academic achievement when compared to their White peers despite the availability of resources in their academic communities, alternatives have been explored to meet their needs, engage them further, encourage student advocacy, build critical consciousness and provide a more equitable education. One alternative to the traditional pedagogical practices of teachers is the integration of culturally relevant arts across content areas.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a notion of culturally relevant arts and compare how literacy and teachers of the arts from a district in "need of improvement" in New Jersey may integrate culturally relevant arts in their classrooms to create an environment that lends itself to student achievement, student advocacy and the critical exploration of content

for their students who are predominately Black and Latino. Specifically, I explored how an administrator, an English literature teacher and a teacher of the arts understood, defined and implemented culturally relevant practices across the curriculum.

Centered in arts and culturally relevant pedagogy, a major finding that emerged from the interviews was the importance of connecting with students. Being from the community, a similar community or having a deep understanding of the community; being someone that the students could identify with; building caring relationships with students; keeping content relevant and making connections to their lives, staying current with pop culture; ensuring that art and content areas are integrated; allowing students to question and think out of the box are examples of the ways in which teachers are able to make genuine connections with students. Through the use of educational strategies, teachers saw that they were able to engage and empower their students, even in an era when the district is undergoing a lot of change that makes it difficult to effectively educate students through the visual and performing arts and liberal arts ideology.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Deidra Peace and my nephew London McClain. It is with your unparalleled support, understanding and push that brought me to the end of this journey. Thanks for instilling in me the drive and confidence to seek out and accomplish any and everything that I've ever wanted. Most importantly, thank you for putting me back together on the days where I felt I could not do it! London, I admire how you admire me and hope to be able to continue to set an example for you. Your growth and eagerness to please your Ti Ti through reading and sharing your thinking about the world, continues to make me want to learn more to share with you and be able to always answer any question that you have. I am forever grateful for your presence in my life!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Over the last 30 years, the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of school-aged children in grades PK-12 has drastically changed in the United States. From 2001 to 2011, the percentage of White students decreased from 60 to 52 percent of the total PK-12 U.S. public school student population, while the number of Latino students increased from 17 to 24 percent during this same time period (Kena et al., 2014). The percentage of Black students enrolled in public schools has fluctuated between 5 and 24 percent depending on region (Kena et al., 2015). This demographic shift in the student population has prompted a concern among teacher educators about how to best prepare teachers to meet the needs of Black and Latino student populations in the classroom. Training teachers to be culturally responsive educators is an especially pressing need given that 86 percent of teachers (Kena et al., 2015) are White, and student demographics continue to become more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse. Culturally responsive teachers may be better prepared to provide students with learning opportunities that reduce achievement discrepancies between students of color and White students and between the affluent and the poor (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Research on White teachers and teachers from higher income backgrounds has shown that they often lack the cultural competencies needed to teach Black and Latino students who have historically been marginalized as a result of race and class (Deplit, 1990; Tatum, 1997). Delpit (1990) asserted that many educators believe they should see the school as a colorblind environment. Delpit (1990) argued further that colorblindness is problematic, however, because it ignores what is culturally significant for an individual

student and implies that the student's culture is irrelevant at best, or lacks value at worst. Studies of teachers who utilized culturally relevant actions, on the other hand, have found that those teachers are particularly effective in teaching Black and Latino students (Ladson- Billings, 2001). As a progenitor of culturally responsive teaching, Gay (2010) stated that the academic achievement of Black and Latino students is increased when educators draw on the cultural and linguistic strengths of students. Researchers have found that culturally relevant teaching empowers and challenges students to take a critical stance on societal "norms" while also reassuring them about the relevance of their own culture to society (Ladson- Billings, 2001).

Teachers identified a commonly shared feeling of unpreparedness when it comes to educating students who do not fit the notion of a traditional student (Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Nieto, 2009). The ideas of a traditional student are rooted in Euro- centric ways of thinking and being. Traditional students typically speak Standard English and exhibit behaviors that are aligned with the cultural traditions of the school. Therefore, as the student populations began to change, teachers experienced greater difficulty in successfully educating Black and Latino students, students exhibiting linguistic diversity and ELL students.

There have been a number of pedagogies used to improve the ways in which teachers interact with and support the learning of Black and Latino students. Some of these approaches are specific to Black and Latino students while the other approaches are applied in different settings among different populations of students. All of the approaches are intended to engage students more deeply in the curriculum. These approaches include but are not limited to Hip -Hop Education (Stovall, 2006), Project

Based Learning (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006), Reality Pedagogy (Emdin, 2009), Flipped

Classrooms (Tucker, 2012), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson- Billings, 1995) and

Art Integration (Silverstein & Layne, 2010).

Culturally relevant pedagogy, developed by Ladson-Billings (1995) is a

theoretical model intended to address student achievement while simultaneously

affirming students' cultural identity and developing " … critical perspectives that

challenge inequities that schools [and other institutions] perpetuate" (p. 469). Culturally

responsive teaching, developed by Gay (2000), on the other hand, utilizes the strengths of

diverse students cultural knowledge and prior experience to teach.

Although culturally relevant pedagogy is a philosophical approach that supports

the bridging of school and home cultures, teachers may experience challenges in

implementing it into their classrooms. Many teachers have difficulty addressing issues of

race and identity within the classroom, particularly if the teacher does not share the same

race/ethnicity as his or her students, despite the presence of children of color in their

classrooms (Deplit, 1990). However, research points to the importance of representing

students of color in school curricula and helping them feel empowered to participate in

thoughtful conversations regarding their representation or lack thereof in school curricula

(Gay, 2006; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a better fit for this study as I am interested in how

its intersection and/ or integration with the arts from the perspective of academic

achievement, cultural competence, and social political stances enhance the learning of

Black and Latino students. However, both terms culturally relevant and culturally

responsive will be used based on what is described in the related research and what is

observed among the teachers' practices. Ladson- Billings and Gay are the most commonly referenced researchers when discussing cultural strategies in the classroom, with Gay's focus being primarily teaching and influencing what the teacher should be doing with students in the classroom and Ladson Billings focus being primarily pedagogy and what attitudes and dispositions teachers should adopt in order to successfully teach (Aronson & Laughter, 2016).

Arts Integration as Cultural Relevant Pedagogy

Arts integration is also an approach to teaching that has been shown to increase students' engagement and motivation in their learning. Using visual and performing arts as pathways to construct and demonstrate meaning of content through a creative process, arts integration connects one subject to another subject and meets the objectives of both subjects (Silverstein & Layne, 2010). Educators have used arts integration in a culturally responsive way to improve the academic achievement of their students of color and ELL students (Reif & Grant , 2010). The integration of art has been proven to be beneficial for all students (Biscoe & Wilson, 2015; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). Biscoe and Wilson (2015) suggested that the integration of art across school curriculum can have an impact on school culture, the personal competencies of all students and be used as a strategy to engage any student who has shown a lack of engagement. The integration of the arts across the curriculum creates a community of learners that includes the active engagement of teachers, students, and artists when applicable while simultaneously affirming the lives, knowledge and abilities of the students (Deasy & Stevenson, 2005). However, as a result of the education debt between Black and White students and Latino and White students for many generations, it is critically important to examine the use of

culturally relevant strategies that may increase and improve the learning experience and engagement specifically for Black and Latino students. It is also important to explore how teachers and administrators understand and if they implement these strategies in their classroom.

Despite the research that suggests that the arts and its integration across the curriculum enhances learning for students, institutions' interpretations of the arts and their typically Western influences can also limit the creativity and full potential of their students through this process. Efland (1976) argued that this occurs in what is referred to as the school art form. The school art form, as Efland describes is, "an institutional art form in its own right" (p. 38), that reflects the school's traditional and societal interests and values such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Valentines day through traditional pieces such as masks, collages and mobiles. Furthermore, "[t]he school presumably exists to transmit a cultural heritage including the knowledge, beliefs, values, and patterns of behavior that are prized by the society that established the school" (Efland, 1976, p. 39). This is problematic. It imposes societal views on students and families and does not meet the standards for art integration, simply fitting with arts enhancement. If conducted through this narrow lens, art would not serve its full purpose in meeting the needs of all students, particularly those of Black and Latino descent. If the art in which the students engage in does not translate to the world in which they live or they simply do not have a point of reference for what is being explored, it will not support their learning. In some instances, it could be argued that while student populations have changed overtime, thus reflecting a new community and societal values, schools have remained the same and the idea of art within the schools have negated the

importance of having the curriculum which, includes the arts, reflect the change. However, when implemented in a way that supports and reflects the student population and/ or is culturally relevant, many benefits arise within art integration that include but are not limited to academic success and positive milestones in the process of human development (Catrell, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999). It is crucial that educators understand the difference between authentic art integration and school art form. If they subscribe to school art form, students' experiences and engagement in the process will be limited. Authentic art integration requires that educators approach teaching with the belief that teaching and learning is "…actively built, experiential, evolving, collaborative, problem solving and reflective" (Silverstein & Layne, 2010, p. 2), which school art form does not offer, over simplifying and diminishing the arts to sporadic opportunities that highlight what schools have deemed as culturally significant occasions.

Both culturally relevant pedagogy and arts integration are approaches to teaching that seek to encourage students to simultaneously question, explore, and learn while gaining a deeper understanding for the content that is being covered. The integration of the arts across content transforms teaching and learning, giving ownership and agency to the students (Stevenson & Deasey 2005) similar to culturally relevant pedagogy. It would be beneficial to look at ways in which culturally relevant teaching can be combined with art to improve the educational experience of Black and Latino students. When combined, the concept can be referred to as culturally relevant art integration. Culturally relevant art integration has not been coined or formally defined. However, for the purpose of this research study, it is being defined using the existing knowledge and foundations of culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally relevant teaching, and art integration,

highlighting the tenets and overlapping research. Culturally relevant art integration is students' authentic and critical experiences with art that challenges them to approach the curriculum with a greater sense of cultural identity and the ability to challenge the inaccuracies of cultural representations and the real world application of the content.

Problem of Practice

Historically, Black and Latino students have scored lower on standardized test when compared with White and Asian students. They have remained among the lowest ranking percentiles in the achievement distribution (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Noguera & Wing, 2006). The academic gaps experienced by Black and Latino students are as a result of the economic and political decisions of institutional stakeholders invested in educational settings (Anyon, 1997). The marginalization of these students has created what Ladson- Billings (2013) described as the "education debt". The education debt refers to the discrepancies in educational achievement between Black and White students, and Latino and White students. Terming these discrepancies the "education debt" vs. the "achievement gap" intends to create a new discourse around the challenges faced by Black and Latino students (Ladson- Billings, 2013).

Economically disadvantaged, urban communities are disproportionately made up of Black and Latino students. Although the discourse that surrounds the discrepancies in achievement that Black and Latino students face when compared to their White peers are often tied to where and how they live, it is actually the structure of the system in which they live (Anyon, 1997, 2014). To continuously point to family structure, a lack of role models among family members, or community influences implies that the achievement discrepancies faced by Black and Latino students are inherent and in direct correlation

with decisions that their families have made (Harper, 2010; Ladson- Billings, 2013). An anti-deficit framework, instead, shapes the discourse to examine how and what contributes to Black and Latino students' success (Harper, 2010). However, it is important to have an understanding of the institutional injustices faced by Black and Latino students who reside in urban communities in order to appropriately examine how the students are able to achieve despite circumstances of inequity and injustice. Public schools, for example, throughout the nation are reflective of the institutional injustices faced by the communities where they are located. A portion of property taxes fund public schools, therefore communities where the property is valued at a lower rate has less funding to offer the schools. These kinds of communities became flooded with Black residents, particularly, during what's known as the 'Great Migration', or the movement of more than 6 million Black residents from the south to the Northeast, Midwest, and Western states during the years of 1910- 1970 (Wilkerson, 2011). The lack of access to jobs, housing discrimination, and school zoning plummeted the value of the properties in the communities and created a number of social issues that have perpetuated a community of poverty and directly impacted the way the schools are run, funded, and the way that students learn (Patterson, 2001).

Anyon (1997, 2014) asserted and maintained through out years of research that there has been a lack of resources within urban schools. The limited resources within the schools and homes of urban students, who are mostly Black and Latino, limit the potential for an equitable education. Although the landscape of education has changed since Anyon's (1997) assertions, with many urban districts attracting charter schools with large corporate funding, huge discrepancies in the way Black and Latino students

experience school and academic achievement still exist (Frankenberg & Siegel-Hawley, 2011). In addition, despite the access to greater resources, Black and Latino students in well-resourced schools are also experiencing academic challenges, which include a lack of engagement and motivation that is visible in private, public and charter school institutions. One perennial concern is the teachers' ability to address inequity and meet the needs of diverse student populations in such schools (Donald, 2006). Yet the integration of Black and Latino students into predominately White schools continues to be a strategy to improve the educational experiences of students of color since the 1960s (Rothstein, 2013). This strategy has proven to be ineffective; instead increasing gaps in opportunity and achievement among students of color. The successful integration of Black and Latino students into predominately White schools requires structural reorganization and not simply the presence of more resources (Noguera, 2001).

With research revealing that racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse students, particularly those of Black and Latino descent, continue to experience an inequitable education and show large discrepancies in academic achievement when compared to their White peers despite the availability of resources in their academic communities, alternatives have been explored to meet their needs, engage them further, and provide a more equitable education. One alternative to the traditional pedagogical practices of teachers is a culturally responsive approach that integrates culturally relevant art across content areas.

With the integration of culturally relevant art across science, math, literacy, and history curricula, the teacher serves as a curator would in a museum. The teacher must have the cultural competencies to be able to discern how culturally relevant will best

challenge the student population to engage them in the curriculum in a more meaningful way and be able to identify the multiple literacies that each student already possesses as a way to build upon their knowledge and support their learning. It also assumes that teachers' possess the appropriate training and skills in the arts and in the content area in order to effectively integrate the subject areas. The integration of culturally relevant art within a science, math, literacy, or history curriculum allows students to make connections to the curriculum through experiencing and analyzing relevant art. An alluring and unique feature of culturally relevant art integration across science, math, literacy, and history curriculum is its ability to create concrete images, examples, and a linkage across curricula. Beneath is an example of an art integration approach.

As a school teacher, I have experienced a curriculum that has lent itself to being explored more in depth at the hands of the children and with art integration as a driving force in solidifying the content for the children who sat in the seats of my classrooms. The following vignette is an actual account of the way in which culturally relevant art has played out in my very own classroom.

Vignette: Romare Bearden, a renowned artist of the 20th century, held a deep understanding for educational, social, and artistic issues. His years as a social worker, historical, literary and musical sources all influenced his art. Bearden's background and influences alone made his artwork ideal as the center of focus within my curriculum, even for first graders.

When the students saw the image of Bearden's 1971 piece, The Block, appear on the screen in front of them, they asked questions like, " why we looking at a ghetto block, why you showing us liquor stores?" The final comment made was, "that remind me of

Newark, here where we live.'' Before being engaged in a facilitated conversation, the students had already asked questions, drawn conclusions, and began to think quite deeply about the image before them. As I planned for each lesson that followed, I considered the three tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy, academic achievement, cultural competency, and social political consciousness. These tenets and the conversation that followed the introduction of Bearden's, The Block, spawned a series of intentional lessons that opened up a new world for these first graders.

In science, technology, art, math, and literacy we were engaged in a number of activities that allowed us to look at the way that plants grew and asking ourselves 'how do fruits and vegetables go from being a seed to being apart of a meal on our dinner tables'. This included growing plants in our classrooms, visiting a farmers market in New York City, talking to farmers about transporting fruits and vegetables, cooking, creating clay models, graphing measurements and preferences, journaling experiences and observations, and examining the way that people were able to afford to pay for fruits and vegetables. They grew to deeply understand how plants grew and the roles of producers and consumers. The students also became more culturally competent as they interacted with a variety of people at the farmers market and learned how different fruits and vegetables come from different regions. Amongst them, I even observed the discussion of things like how bananas and plantains are different or alike, with some students identifying that their families' origins are from climates where plantain are grown and served.

I approached this unit of study with the knowledge that the socio- political component is often missed when attempting to engage in a culturally relevant pedagogy

but also that many are afraid to approach socio political issues with young students.

However, young students are already having these conversations based on their own

noticings of the communities where they reside. I pulled out Bearden's 'The Block' image

once more. With their newly gained knowledge of what other communities look like and

the different kinds of foods that should be available to them, the students drew more

comparisons of the artwork to their own blocks in Newark. They concluded that they did

not have access to all the foods that they had learned about. The students, feeling

empowered, created plans for advocating for better access to these fruits and vegetables

in our more immediate community. They began to look more critically at everything that

they approached that school year. The continued to identify how an artist's work like

Romare Bearden's mixed media art is reflective of some of their personal experiences

with the community in which they reside, often expressing it in detailed journal entries of

these experiences. The unit described in this vignette went beyond the superficial

examination of community and community helpers. The students were able to take a

stance on their access to food in their communities and develop an action plan to combat

it. These students were 1ˢᵗ graders but this is work that is also appropriate for students of

a much older age and who can potentially move their action plan to make a difference

not just within their immediate community but also their local government.

Sustaining the integration of culturally relevant art within a school can present its

challenges. Significant professional development, including but not limited to

"participatory workshops, courses and summer institutes, demonstration of teaching in

classrooms, arts coaching, and study groups/ professional learning communities" (Biscoe

& Wilson, p. 5) are needed to ensure that the implementation of the integration is done

successfully. Although there are many benefits to be gained from its implementation, there is also a lot of precursor work that is required.

Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to develop a notion of culturally relevant art and compare how literacy and teachers of the arts from a district in "need of improvement" in the northeast region may integrate culturally relevant art in their classrooms to increase engagement of the content, support student advocacy and critical stances on curriculum for their predominately Black and Latino student population. Districts in need of improvement are defined by the state's Department of Education as "schools that do not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for two consecutive years in the same content area (language arts literacy/mathematics)" (NJDOE, 2014). I explored how teachers in one of these districts define and understand culturally relevant art integration, examine their process for implementing culturally relevant art in their classrooms, if they do at all, and discuss teachers' perceptions of student engagement in their work resulting from art integration or the lack there of.

For the purpose of this study, the successful implementation of culturally relevant art across the curriculum is based on a detailed criteria outlined in the methodology. Art is defined as the inclusion of visual, performing and written pieces that expresses or applies human skill or imagination. Literacy can be considered an art, as literary pieces are often influenced by the imagination, social awareness and skill of the author, but for the purpose of this study, I explored the influence that the integration of other art forms within literacy has on the enhancement of learning for students. As to avoid insinuating that the student population in which the teachers work with have an inherit deficit in the

ability to learn science, math, literacy or history content, I used the term education debt instead of achievement gap when referring to the academic lag that exist among racial groups. Black and Latino in this study refers to all students of African, Central, and South American descent, including students who identify as Caribbean and/or Afro- Latin. The students' more specific and individual ethnicities were not disaggregated. The array of more specific ethnicities is important to the study, as the teachers explored how to meet the needs of all students through the integration of culturally relevant art and literacy in this study, however in discussing and analyzing the data the teachers focused on themselves and how they met the needs of all students in their classroom despite the array of backgrounds and learning skills. The participants in the study were an English Literature teacher, a theater teacher, and an administrator who was formerly an English Literature teacher at the school.

Arts Integration

The terms integration and interdisciplinary are often used interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, the term arts integration was intentionally chosen with the understanding that interdisciplinary held a distinctly different definition. Interdisciplinary, while still a curricular approach that connects subject areas, only connects those content areas through a similar theme (Smilan & Miraglia , 2009). In comparison, an authentic art integration approach to curricula "unites concepts and parallel skills, and employs real world-based organizing components related to the learner, thus authenticating each individual's experiences" (Smilan & Miraglia , p. 40). Furthermore, the authentic integration of the arts when related to connecting the cultures of the world or what has been coined as arts –cultra by J. Davis (1999) empowers and

encourages students to engage in real world, tangible work through critical thinking and a combination of art based and problem based methodologies (Gullatt, 2008; Miraglia & Smilan, 2009). Art- cultra is different from culturally relevant art integration because culturally relevant art integration, as the philosophical approach of culturally relevant pedagogy states, is specific to Black students but for the purpose of this study, the philosophical approach is extended to students in schools in need of improving, which are disproportionately made up of Black and Latino students.

Researchers have explored and defined art integration in three different ways; learning "through" and "with" the arts, as a curricular connections process, and as collaborative engagement (Burnaford, Brown, Doherty & McLaughlin, 2007). There have been many attempts to define what it means to learn through and with the arts. Burnaford et al., 2007 cites Catterall's (2005) definition as a reasonably and well-articulated argument for the process. Catterall (2005) thinks of this process in two pieces, conversation and silence. The conversational piece refers to the way that "students and teachers discuss a work of art, its symbols, its historical significance, and its importance to the current classroom discourse" (Burnaford et al., p. 11) and silence refers to the "internal conversation that occurs as student-artists wrestle with form, with ideas and meaning, and with how to execute ideas that are forming in their minds" (Burnaford et. al., p. 11).

Curricular connection is a second theory used to consider how art integration is defined. Both artists and researchers would argue that the process of drawing simplistic connections between art and curriculum and calling it integration minimizes the significance of an authentic integration. In an attempt to draw authentic connections and

experiences to curricula, mutual integrity should be held between the areas of study according to Nixon and Akerson (2004). Art integration with curricular links should make connections with real world content and application while linking curricular areas (Burnaford et al., 2002). This process can build students' language and vocabulary, which enhances genitive development (Burnaford et al., 2002).

Collaborative engagement is the third theory that examines the idea of art integration in relation to school settings. Collaboration is commonly mentioned as an element of effective art integration. What frequently comes up among participants however, is who should be the collaborators in this process, artists in residency, in school art educators, and/ or classroom teachers? Many researchers would argue that artists in residency or teaching artist should be at the center of this process as they are members of the community and support in drawing that connection between home and school (Booth, 2003). No matter who is at the forefront of this work, Burnaford et al., 2002, explain that it is important that parents of the community, teachers and artists of the community all engage in this work in order to better engage students. The collaborative team approach is also commonly believed to be ideal for inclusion classrooms and is being increasingly recognized as an approach that can address issues around student learning at the secondary school level, already being prevalent and more widely accepted within and among elementary schools and educators (Dieker & Murawski, 2003).

Research Questions:

In what ways do teachers, who have been deemed successful by their school administrators, believe that their use of cultural strategies across the curriculum, create an environment conducive to enhanced learning experiences that lend themselves to student

achievement, student advocacy and the critical exploration of content? Cultural strategies may include the use of culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration or culturally relevant art integration.

1. In what ways do teachers believe that their use of cultural strategies enhances student learning? Student advocacy?

2. How has teachers' use of culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration or culturally relevant art integration aided students in looking at content from a critical perspective?

3. How do teachers understand the use of cultural strategies and see it as valuable in their teaching practice?

Chapter II

Literature Review

This literature review encompasses three major themes. First, it explicitly defines culturally relevant pedagogy and details its major tenets. Next, it defines student engagement and discusses the benefits of "engaged students". Last, the literature review draws connections and identifies the overlaps in literature between culturally relevant pedagogy and the integration of art and how to use them collectively to enhance learning, engagement, student advocacy and critical thinking for Black and Latino students.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

A number of pedagogies have been developed to describe the attempt to connect school and classroom culture to the student population. Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson- Billings, 1990) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000) are two pedagogies that have been leading theories in how to accomplish that connection between school and home. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a pedagogy of opposition committed to the collective empowerment of Black students through academic achievement, cultural competence and critical consciousness (Ladson- Billings, 1990).

Cultural relevancy as described by Ladson-Billings (1990), "is designed to not merely 'fit' the school culture to the students' culture but also to use student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others" (p. 2). Cultural relevancy is a pedagogy that opposes the assimilation of Black students to mainstream culture. Teachers generally expect students to assimilate to the culture of the school without any input from the students on how the school meets their needs for learning and/or socializing. Culturally relevant teaching empowers and challenges students to take

a critical view of societal "norms" while also reassuring them about the relevance of their own culture to society (Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, on the other hand, is defined as, "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, p. 106). Culturally responsive pedagogy holds the core belief that the academic knowledge and skills of diverse students are rooted in their lived experiences. Proponents of culturally responsiveness and theories rooted in the idea of responsiveness argue that diverse students demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement when the content is framed in a manner relative to their lives (Gay, 2006; Irvine, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

As with culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy has three pillars that must be implemented in order to successfully apply the theory in the classroom. In order to effectively apply culturally responsive teaching, an educator must have an understanding of the cultural characteristics of different ethnic groups, go beyond general recognition of ethnic groups and develop a clear understanding of particular characteristics, customs and contributions of ethnic groups, and acquire a deep understanding of multicultural education theory, research, and scholarship (Gay, 2002). Both culturally relevant pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy are rooted in the idea that educators must have an understanding of the lives lived and experienced by the population of diverse students whom they teach. This understanding must extend beyond a general respect and recognition of the students' ethnicities. In addition, both Gay (2002) and Ladson -Billings (2006) acknowledge that their theories have been inconsistently applied in classrooms. This can be attributed to not just a lack of understanding for the

theories themselves but also for teachers' lack of understanding of how to apply these concepts across all content.

Ladson-Billings' definition of culturally relevant pedagogy builds more deeply upon earlier researchers who called upon educators to employ more culturally sensitive teaching within their classrooms (Howard, 2001). Ladson-Billings' theory of culturally relevant pedagogy best informs this literature review, which will elaborate on how having students see themselves within the curriculum is important to their level of engagement and success, as is looking more critically at the curriculum to ensure the students' culture is present and accurately presented. The three major tenets of culturally relevant pedagogy are defined as follows:

Academic Achievement

The term academic achievement is often associated with high stakes, rigorous testing. Despite its common association, academic achievement in the context of culturally relevant pedagogy refers to students' learning and the mastery of academic skills (Ladson- Billings, 1995). Students need to maintain a high level of academic competency in order to move through the world with a critical lens. Culturally relevant teaching requires that the academic needs of the students be met. Meeting the needs of all students often require supporting them in building their esteem. However, it should not be limited to making them feel good but also supporting them to the extent where they begin to choose academic excellence (Ladson- Billings, 2006). Steering students toward academic achievement can reign difficult if the teacher is unable to recognize achievement. Both individual schools and district wide curricula are deeply rooted in White upper middle class values and language. As noted by Carter (2006), it is important

for educators to have an understanding of students' multiple literacies to avoid the potential risk of dismissing their academic potential. Even in cases where the student and teacher come from the same community and share similar speech patterns, the students' inability to identify culturally with an aspect of the curriculum can create a hindrance, making it difficult to draw genuine connections and a deeper understanding for the content. An educator who understands the multiple literacies of their students will appropriately scaffold and create a platform that allow the students to ask questions in order to reach a place of not just understanding but being able to articulate their thinking around the content. Understanding and acknowledging the multiple literacies of students by teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy is not done with the intention to make them feel good about themselves but rather equip them with the skills to approach content with more confidence (Carter, 2006; Ladson- Billings, 2006).

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence, like academic achievement holds a different meaning when used in the context of culturally relevant pedagogy. Cultural competence is traditionally recognized as people's understanding and respect of cultural differences among people from different ethnic groups. Similar to cultural responsiveness, people who are typically identified as culturally competent acknowledge the differences among themselves and others by showing sensitivity to the behaviors of a particular group. An example would be a teacher showing understanding to a student who does not make eye contact when being spoken to because of cultural differences. Cultural competence within the frame of culturally relevant pedagogy scratches beyond the surface of recognition and requires that

the teacher helps the student to embrace their own culture but also acquire the kind of

knowledge that would gain them access to a wider culture (Ladson- Billings, 1995).

When a teacher is culturally relevant, they have an understanding for the life of

the student both at home and at school and draw the connection between the two worlds

(Ladson- Billings, 2006). In addition, the teacher is exposing the student to dominant

culture in an attempt to give them access to and be able to engage meaningfully in

dominant culture. In introducing students to dominant culture, the culturally relevant

teacher will also provide the students with the historical and cultural background of that

particular skill or habit to allow them to look at it through a more critical lens.

Understanding the role of cultural competency in enhancing student experiences

would allow schoolteachers to serve as capital brokers for students who participate within

their classrooms. Cultural competency supports students in gaining cultural capital.

However, it could also be argued that access to and the successful completion of school

does not offer students capital. At times, students of color are challenged with the task of

navigating and negotiating in seek of a quality education rather than being in class

engaging critically in content, which contributes to the academic gaps or education debt

experienced by students of color even in well resourced schools.

Cultural competency requires that one is knowledgeable of other cultures and has

the language and skills to access spaces that would not typically be open to them. The

gained access to these spaces through the use of acquired knowledge is cultural capital.

Cultural capital affords people the opportunity to engage within networks that may have

been previously inaccessible. The engagement in these spaces allow for the opportunity

to gain economic resources through networks of social relationships that traditionally

serve only those who have been historically advantaged. Without family networks and academic experiences, capital is not gained (Bourdieu,1979). As a result, many groups of students, particularly those of Black and Latino descent become silenced within institutions. It could be that their teachers have not given them the tools to be culturally competent or their families have not traditionally been in positions to acquire it from elder family members.

The drawback to the implementation of cultural competency within culturally relevant pedagogy is that students could potentially be silenced by the thought that they are not equipped enough to enter and engage in dominant culture. This in turn creates an environment of invisibility. Black girls and woman are an example of that. Their accessibility and understanding of entering the dominant culture has been that they should be "polite", "quieter", or more "agreeable". How do they remain themselves in dominant culture without reinforcing stereotypes and is that their job? In an attempt to be identified as successful, they must adjust who they are. Because they do not always fit into the confines of a traditional student or lack familiarity with dominant culture, Black girls are twice as likely to be excluded from school settings (Rollock, 2007). Fordham (1993) notes that invisibility is a learned behavior that many successful Black women have adopted. Invisibility happens through socialization, in settings not limited to school. However, invisibility can easily occur within these schools setting that do not allow for or accept the free expression of their students outside of the dominant culture and expectations, hence the importance for students, especially Black female students to be culturally competent. However, the development of cultural competency does not negate

the fact that educators must also acknowledge and respect the multiple literacies of their

students (Carter, 2006).

Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is a key pillar to culturally relevant pedagogy. It is not

enough for students to achieve academically and be grounded in their own culture. It is

also essential that the students be able to take a socio political stance on the norms of

dominant culture that they encounter (Ladson-Billings, 1995). If this component of

culturally relevant pedagogy is successfully implemented it could support countering

some of the concerns that arise with the cultural competency component.

Despite critical consciousness being the most important tenet of culturally

relevant pedagogy, it is also the one that teachers struggle with the most. The difficulties

of educators to implement critical consciousness led Ladson-Billings (2014) to re-

examine culturally relevant pedagogy and has since renamed and redefined the theory as

culturally sustaining pedagogy. However, critical consciousness has still been used to

inform this study, which looked at the ways in which each of these tenets may or may not

enhance the community of learning for students.

Critical consciousness as Ladson-Billings (2006) described, is most challenging

because teachers have not yet developed their own consciousness. They typically fail to

link the economic disparities faced by their students, " with issues of race, class, and

gender" (Ladson-Billings, p. 37). Even when an educator has a developed socio political

stance, critical consciousness is not suggesting that the teacher teach through a lens that

pushes their agenda on to their students. Instead, critical consciousness looks for

culturally relevant educators to equip their students to look at world and engage in a

critical way. Therefore, students who have been supported in developing their own critical consciousness would have the skills to understand their social role and standing in the community, look at and critique text books from different perspectives and identify inequitable systems.

It is the teachers' responsibility to be able to discern how their curricular choices (or those of the district) impact their teaching and ultimately and very importantly, their students. Within studies teachers have often expressed a concern about calling a red flag to the minority students and not knowing what to anticipate from the students who are always represented in texts. However, there are findings among studies (Carter, 2006) that demonstrate that students of color want to be acknowledged positively in texts as their White peers frequently are. Teachers can only discern the appropriateness of their actions with diverse students and the curriculum if they are provided the education and knowledge to recognize what's occurring during the interaction.

Teacher Education

Some of the challenges that students of color encounter with educators who do not practice culturally relevant pedagogy – regardless of the educator's race or ethnicity - are feelings of disconnection due to the educator's use of micro aggressions. "Racial micro aggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Equin, 2007, p. 271). Those who inflict racial microaggressions are often unaware that they have done anything to harm another person, thus validating the significance of the need for prior education, awareness, and cultural training.

White middle class values and language are deeply rooted in both individual classrooms and school and district-wide curricula (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Yet, in many classrooms, students come from backgrounds where their language is different from that promoted in schools. As noted by Carter (2006), educators risk dismissing a student's academic potential when they do not make an effort to understand the ways in which minority students use language. Although standard English may be the dominant language spoken in the classroom, there are many other ways to speak English. Even in cases where the student and teacher come from the same communities and share similar speech patterns, the students' inability to identify culturally with any aspect of the curriculum hinders the potential to create a genuine connection with the teacher and classroom community. As Delpit (1990, p. xv) described in *Other People's Children*, the perspective of the privileged takes precedence and is seen by the students and the community as the only reality while the perspective of the less privileged is consequentially dismissed by those deemed as authorities. While not all authorities will be dismissive of the less privileged, teachers, administrators, and other adults in the school community can be seen as an authority, so they must make an effort to include the perspectives of their students and equip their students with the skills to critically engage.

Knowledge is defined and given power based on who recognizes it as valuable (Carter, 2006). The way in which students use language or speak can strip them of the power within a school setting. African American students in particular, are often socialized to speak and carry themselves with a demeanor that some educators may view as loud and disrespectful, when in fact they may simply be demonstrating their passion for the topic being discussed (Carter, 2006). Furthermore, some African Americans are

accustomed to using a vernacular within the home and community that is not valued in the school context. Expressing themselves in this way can cause them to be viewed as unintelligent or force them to "code switch" in an attempt to reassure their teachers that they are capable learners with the skills to execute the same academic tasks just as well as their peers. Code switching is a term used to refer to the act of switching between languages or vernaculars depending on the context and participants of a conversation (Carter, 2006). It could be argued that code switching is beneficial to students in that it gives them access to the more dominant culture, however it is important that their customary ways of speaking are valued and acknowledged because it can then be used as a way to silence groups of students.

Considering the inequities that students face each day, research findings suggested the importance of teachers ensuring that the academic resources they use not only acknowledge and empower the "majority" but also includes others within their classroom. Understandably, who teachers are as people and the lives that they have led impacts the way in which they teach (Glazier, 2005); yet, it is teachers' responsibility to be able to discern how their curricular choices (or those of the district) impact their teaching and, ultimately and very importantly, their students. Upon recognizing the impact that the curriculum has on the classroom, the teacher should make adjustments that would best suit the needs of the students with culturally relevant pedagogy in mind.

Studies have shown that many teachers are concerned about singling out minority students and are apprehensive about addressing issues of race and inequities with White students for fear of instilling feelings of guilt or not knowing how they will respond. However, there are studies that demonstrate that students of color want to be

acknowledged positively in texts, just as their White peers frequently are (Carter, 2006).

Teachers may need education and knowledge to discern the appropriateness of their

actions with diverse students and the curriculum.

Approaches to preparing pre service teachers for diverse classroom settings have

been demonstrated in "add- on" courses, clinical pedagogy settings, urban education

programs, examinations of pop culture and inquiry based courses. However, there needs

to be a greater effort at infusing each of these pedagogies and concepts into a single

program that prepares pre service teachers to work with diverse student populations and

aims to create social and cultural competency. The diversity education of pre service

teachers is currently "fragmented and superficial" (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Though

individual courses contribute to the development of diversity education for pre service

teachers, there lacks the general understanding that cultural responsiveness and practices

are not an additional burden to teachers but rather a process that should be natural and

fluid in their experience with diverse students (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Due to

globalization it is necessary that all future teachers have access to programming that will

support their efforts of educating all learners.

Student Engagement in Urban Schools

Student engagement is difficult to conceptually define. Behaviors of students can

easily be misinterpreted, as Zyngier (2007, p. 1765) explained, "Schools are places where

boredom is often misinterpreted as studious commitment and frustration or enthusiasm

are viewed as hyper- activity." Despite the difficulty and possibility for misinterpretation

in student behaviors, many researchers have attempted to define and examine student

engagement. Earlier research on student engagement focused on tasks and how they

influenced the students' attention and learning (Bluemenfeld & Meece, 1988; Doyle, 1983; Eisner, 1972). Task oriented student engagement has been examined through a variety of lenses and of that examination came more ideals of quality learning. Several researchers came to identify student engagement as occurring in three forms, cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement.

Cognitive engagement refers to how much mental effort students exert when attending to a given task. An example would be students' effort to process information, draw conclusions, and make connections using prior knowledge. Students are identified as cognitively engaged when they are operating at a high level of comprehension or have taken a deep approach to learning (Carbone & Mitchell, 2011). Despite researchers belief that cognitive engagement can be measured, I would question the way in which measurement tools intended for engagement, like Blooms taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956) or Biggs' SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982), are applied to classroom settings and students despite variations in language and environment. Behavioral engagement refers to students' active responses during a learning task (Carbone & Mitchell, 2011). The identification of behavioral engagement seems more apparent than the identification of cognitive engagement. However, the lens that one uses to perceive particular behaviors can influence how they value and interpret the behavioral engagement of students. Traditional classrooms don't always provide students with the opportunity to share or discuss what they have learned. A student who calls out answers, talks with other students about the content, or questions the teacher beyond the content may be labeled as disruptive or disrespectful. Behavioral engagement may look different depending on the environment and culture of the school and thus not

align with the prescribed definition provided in this review of literature. Quality learning arguably involves the interaction of a participant with others; however, Carbone and Mitchell (2011) have found that that is not true. Although quality learning does not always involve the interaction of others, an environment where interaction is present usually is an indicator of quality learning. Affective engagement, also known as psychological or emotional engagement, refers to how invested the students are and their emotional responses to the learning.

As educators and researchers worldwide grow more interested in what impacts student achievement, they look more closely at student engagement and how it influences student outcomes. Academic achievement, graduation rates, and students' sense of belonging have all been connected to the research on student engagement. Even though student engagement is a global concern, much of the research is centered on a western perspective (Harris, 2010). Additionally, a great deal of the research looks primarily at behavioral engagement (Harris, 2010; Zyngier, 2008). The lens used to look at behavioral engagement is often problematic. The discourse used to describe student behaviors often speaks from a deficit perspective. Furthermore, students who don't closely resemble the dominant school culture have a difficult time engaging in what would be identified as positive school relationships (Zyngier, 2008). Because many schools, despite location, have curricula that is Euro- centric and teachers who don't resemble the students or who don't understand the community in which their students are from, their tends to be a disconnect between the student, the school's culture, and the student's home culture. A number of pedagogies have been developed in an attempt to bridge the gap between student's home and school. The disconnect that often exists between students' home and

school largely impact minority students, even if they are the majority in their school communities. These students cannot truly engage in a school community, in which they feel they do no fit in, thus impacting their academic performance. "…participation leads to academic success ''across diverse populations'' and that engagement has a ''consistent, strong correlation with academic performance'' and also race/ethnicity and socio- economic status (Zyngier, 2008, p. 1770).

It is commonly believed and supported by research, that student engagement leads to greater academic achievement. However, there is research that contradicts that argument. Wilms (2003) makes the argument that students, for a number of reasons, reject school culture but this rejection of school culture does not mean that those particular students will be low achieving. It has been recognized in other research that the rejection of school culture is not only a conscious decision but also a form of engagement (Schlechty, 2002).

The arguments that surround student engagement may counter each other but support what has been coined by Ladson- Billings (1994) as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Ladson -Billings research sought out teachers who were particularly successful with Black students. These teachers ensured that the students with whom they worked with had access to content in a way that was relevant to them which encouraged engagement, they ensured that the students had an understanding of the content in a way that gained them access into cultures unlike their own, but they also consciously empowered their students to take a stance on, reject, or question content that only portrayed a mainstream view or somehow misrepresented the information being presented.

Schools in urban communities are often scrutinized for the lack of engagement that exists within their buildings. Poverty, lack of parent involvement, or the cognitive abilities of the students are often at the center of the conversation when examining the engagement and student achievement, as they are often described as being in direct correlation with each other. As a solution to the lack of engagement believed to be an issue in urban schools, many researchers are suggesting that the relationship between the teacher and the student can improve the circumstances and levels of engagement in the classrooms (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007; Koomen, Spilt & Oort, 2011). In addition to shifting the conversation from what students were doing wrong to how can roles change and support teachers in doing right, schools also made efforts to make schools "developmentally appropriate for young adolescents and more caring, personalized, and supportive learning environments" (Balfanz et al., 2007, p. 223).

Enhancing Engagement Through Integration Across the Curriculum

Research shows that teachers commonly share a feeling of unpreparedness when it comes to educating students who deviate from the notion of a traditional student (ISCR, 2003; Nieto, 2009). The ideas of a traditional student are rooted in Euro- centric ways of thinking and being. Traditional students typically speak Standard English and exhibit behaviors that are aligned with the traditions of the school. Therefore, as the student populations begin to change, teachers are experiencing great difficulty in successfully educating students of color, students with language development challenges, and ELL students. When culturally relevant art and literacy is integrated across the curriculum, there is an increase in opportunities to use language which is beneficial for all students, particularly those who are developing their language skills (Brouillette, 2012). In order to

support the needs of diverse students, teachers must have a cultural understanding of the students and community and teachers must be effective in their practice.

Effective teaching is defined as generating student achievement gains while supporting the personal development of students in alignment with the curriculum (Louden et al., 2005). When effective teachers approach instruction, they have the ability to assess the individual needs of their students and guide them in enhancing their skills (Owocki, 2005). Although ineffective teachers may be aware of or use similar techniques with their students, "the climate in which they are undertaken [is] not characterized by the same levels of warmth, rapport, credibility, and independence" (Louden et al., 2005, p. 237). Teachers are considered successful if they employ a variety of learning strategies that ensure the building of confidence and competency for all of their students. When thoughtful, culturally responsive, art is included in this process, students begin to construct and translate meaning across the curriculum using semiotic representations (Albers & Cowan, 2006).

Ensuring that all students' needs are met requires that teachers' consider varying pedagogical practices in an attempt to prepare critical thinking, expressive, learners. Studies have shown (Ball, 2000) that teachers' initial impression of urban students is that they do not come equipped with the skills to engage in the curriculum in a meaningful way. Understanding that students approach learning and communicating using their prior knowledge and interactions with more knowledgeable others, supported the teachers in Ball's (2000) study in realizing that the students whom they teach, come to the table with more skills than initially perceived. The urban teachers who participated in Ball's (2000) study developed the belief that literate students could not just be defined by their ability

to speak standard English, read and write. Similarly, Eisner (1991) argued that literacy has a more expansive meaning than just the ability to read and write. It has also been acknowledged that the sharing of images, music, and movement are meaningful modes of communications and thus representative of the ways in which art is reflected as a form of literacy (Andrelchik, 2015). Providing opportunities for alternative ways of communicating is essential to students' development and engagement across the curriculum. Approaching instruction through the use of semiotics, or symbols and signs that are open to interpretation, exposes students to new perspectives on the world and supports them in developing a deeper, more complex and critical view of the images that they encounter daily, particularly those in popular culture (Cowan & Albers, 2006). The teacher participants in Ball's (2000) study became more interested in using their students and their students' environment as resources to make literacy more relevant, functional, and interesting in order to improve the students' literacy, critical thinking and expressive language skills.

When educators integrate art and literacy across their curriculum, it should be thoughtful and intentional. I have often witnessed teachers attempt to engage students in "crafty" activities that were unrelated to the curriculum, but that they believed were "cute". While the students may identify with these activities as entertaining, the activities did not enhance their learning in the necessary way that brings them greater and more critical understanding of the world around them. Teachers' avoidance of more engaging and thoughtful art integration in the classroom can be attributed to a feeling of unpreparedness that subsequently leads to formulaic holiday and icon based crafting sessions (Albers & Cowan, 2006). The same level of unpreparedness is felt when

teachers must begin to consider ways to enact culturally relevant pedagogy in their classrooms. Art, literacy, science, technology, engineering, and math are not isolated subjects but rather can come to full fruition and clearer understanding for students when integrated with one other in a culturally relevant way. Relying solely on traditional methods of instruction and content continuously and consistently creates trends of low engagement, low motivation, and low achievement among diverse student learners (Reif & Grant, 2010).

The arts and its many components of literacy support students in developing their oral and expressive language skills. Theater arts in particular provide students with the opportunities to use language and transfer their language skills to a new context and build on their vocabulary (Broullette, 2012). In addition, when students continue to struggle with language development, the arts provide them with alternative ways of expressing themselves. For example, drawing, which is frequently thought of as a passive luxury, takes the role of a "nonlinguistic representation as a strategy for helping language learners make sense of content" (Reif & Grant, p. 104, 2010). Engaging in the many other art forms also builds students' vocabulary and exposes them to varied perspectives on different social stances.

Engaging students in the arts and literacy also supports them in building their identity development. When students are engaged in a culturally relevant integrated curriculum they are encouraged to simultaneously explore and learn. In the course of this exploration students are actively participating and taking some ownership of their learning (Reif & Grant, 2010). As Purnell, Ali, Begum, & Carter (2007) explain, the participation of multicultural students is not always typical of traditional classrooms. In

fact, there are many instances that students never see their own life experiences reflected in the classroom curriculum and thus develop the idea that their way of being/ living is unusual. When culturally relevant art and literacy are integrated through out the curriculum, students are able to gain reflective opportunities to recontextualize and draw meaning on social images that are connected to their identity and supports them in making clearer sense of the academic content presented to them (Ryan, 2014).

Having a better sense of one's individual identity and the language to accompany an expression of that secure identity gives students the confidence to approach new tasks with greater assurance. In this process enacting culturally relevant art and literacy throughout the curriculum, teachers and students begin to see how classrooms, schools, and communities are linked. Arts and literacy should reflect a variety of the students' identities that make up the classroom to support them in building a schema for learning. Additionally, when students are empowered through practices that make them comfortable with their identity and that allow them to engage in curriculum in a critical way, their understanding about the way in which the schools and communities are linked, support them in becoming advocates for themselves and their peers.

Chapter III

Methodology

Research Plan

A qualitative collective case study design was selected for this study. Collective case studies allow for the examination of more than one entity at a single or multiple sites (Patton, 2011). Using the protocol of a collective case study, I gathered the experiences of one content area teacher, one arts teacher, and a school administrator, use of cultural strategies to support student achievement, student advocacy and the critical exploration of content. The participating teachers did not teach the literacy or arts courses as a combined focus. Documented are the successes and challenges that the teachers faced with implementing cultural strategies across their curriculum and how they believed it impacted their predominantly Black and Latino student population.

The philosophical worldview taken in this study required that discourses, theories and assumptions be examined in a way that constructs a picture of the issue (Creswell 2009). I wanted to know, in what ways do teachers and a school administrator, who have been deemed successful by school leaders and their peers, believe that their use of cultural strategies across the curriculum, create an environment conducive to enhanced learning experiences that lend themselves to student achievement, student advocacy and the critical exploration of content. Cultural strategies included the use of culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration or culturally relevant art integration. I have assessed the use of cultural strategies using a checklist that clearly defined and outlined the tenets of each cultural strategy.

Setting

This study explored an English Literature teacher, a theater teacher and a school administrator, who work with students in grades 9-12. The research study examined teachers' views on this topic in order to gain a better understanding for how their use of cultural strategies support student achievement, student advocacy and the critical exploration of content, with a specific focus on Black and Latino students.

This study took place in a 7-12th grade school located in the Northeast region of the United States. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants in the study, I used a pseudonym for the participating district and school. The district is referred to as New District and the school is referred to as The Artist High School. New Public school district is 1 of 31 former Abbott districts now referred to as "SDA" districts. SDA districts or School Development Authority deemed districts, are required to receive full funding for renovation projects under the supervision of the state's School Development Authority. New public school district was one of the state's lowest performing districts for many years. As a result, the state government intervened and took over the district in 1995. Recently, the State and city's government have negotiated the release of control of the district back into the hands of local leaders. The district's "District Factor Grouping", a set of ratings classified by the state's Department of Education, is an "A" rating, which is the lowest of eight ratings. The ratings are based on the socioeconomic status and characteristics of the city's residents. New public schools are overwhelmingly made up of Black and Latino students, at the rate of 91 percent as of August 2017 (District Summary, 2017). This is also reflected in the school where the study took place with 57.6

percent of students in the school identifying as Black and 34.4 percent of students identifying as Latino.

The Artist High School was founded in 1931 as the nations first visual and performing arts school. It originally served students in grades 9-12 and moved to serve 6-12th grade students in 2010- 2011 school year. The acceptance of 6th grade students was phased out in the following school year, 2011-2012, and the school became a 7th -12th grade school. The idea of phasing out the 7th and 8th grade students is now also being explored. Although not the original reasoning for accepting younger students, The Artist High School now accepts students as young as 7th grade as a way to grow their own talent.

The Artist High School was once described within the district as a "magnet school". Magnet schools screen the students who show an interest in attending and determine acceptance based on the results of an entrance exam/ and or audition when applicable and students' prior academic records. The Artist High School's students each have a visual or performance art area of focus. The areas of arts available to students are dance, drama, music, television production, and visual art. The current climate and reform of education in the district has caused this screening process to look significantly different than it has in years prior to 2010. Reformers and other stakeholders in the district touted the idea of school choice and created an algorithmic system, based on data inputted by families, that places students in through out district schools, including those formerly identified as magnets, instead.

The Artist High School houses approximately 685 students in grades 7th through 12th. On par with the city's averages, 73 percent of the students enrolled are economically

disadvantaged students. Yet, The Artist High School graduates about 90 percent of its students. Not including charter schools, the city of New is made up of five magnet or screen high schools, five district high schools and one vocational school. The average graduation rate among New Public District's screen schools are 92.6 percent, districts high schools are about 62 percent as of 2015, and the one vocational school graduates about 64 percent of its students. The students chosen to be apart of The Artist High School community are arguably those who have demonstrated, "the artistic talent and interest level, to "arm" them with the education and skills necessary to qualify each student to function creatively and successfully in choosing one of society's post-secondary offerings" (AHS, 2016). However with the change in selection, students chosen are from a wider range of talent and academic achievement within the city.

Participants

As I am interested in literacy teachers and teachers of the arts use of cultural strategies to support the notion of collaborative teaching and supports student achievement, student advocacy and the critical exploration of content, I chose two teachers and one school administrator from Artist high School, an urban school, to form the sample for this study. The selected teacher participants are teachers who work within a district deemed " in need of improving" based on state's DOE standards. A large percentage of the 200 schools that are currently on DOE's list for schools "in need of improving" are schools largely populated by Black and Latino students.

In recruiting participants for this study, I met with the school's principal and chief innovation officer, both of whom were former teachers at the school. It was explained that I am interested in speaking with and observing teachers who are implementing

cultural strategies in their classrooms. To determine what teachers fit these criteria, teachers were first identified and then if interested in participating, were asked to submit a lesson plan that they believed exhibited a culturally relevant and or arts integrated lesson. This study focused on looking at literacy and teachers of the arts who teach grades 9-12. It was explained to the teachers that participation in the study was voluntary and that there would not be any monetary reward for participation. I explained further to the teachers that the benefits of participating in the study were that they would have an opportunity to reflect on their practice and they could potentially gain a greater understanding of how to engage their students. Two teachers were chosen to participate in the study. It was decided to look at one content area teacher and one teacher of the arts to be able to look deeply at their reported practices, opposed to generally looking at more teachers. It was also important that the participating teachers supported the idea of team teaching. The two teachers who agreed to participate in the study are teachers who have been identified by school leaders as those who have been successful and effectively made academic gains, developed positive relationships, or allow for critical examination of content and/ or social issues with their largely Black and Latino population of students during the 2015-2016 school year or at the start of the 2016- 2017 school year. These determinations were based on the effective teacher evaluation rating and school leaders' informal observations of the classrooms. Teachers' prior knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration, or culturally relevant art integration was known based on the lesson plans that they submitted for participation and what the school leaders reported. We expected that their understanding would lend itself to the observation of an exemplar lesson

A chart details the characteristics of the participants. Pseudonyms were used in

order to protect their identity. Years teaching and subject areas taught are being asked for

to gain insight on how those characteristics may impact the way that the participants

approach teaching their students, if it impacts it at all. Lastly, I kept track of whether the

participants identified as those who use culturally relevant practices, art integration, or

the practice of culturally relevant art integration. Keeping track of their self-identification

of practices allowed me to cross check what they say they do in their classrooms with

what they actually do.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics and Cultural Strategy Identification

Name (Pseudonym)	Years Teaching	Subject Area	CRP	Art Integration	CRP Art Integration
Mr. JD	15	ELA/ Administration	X	X	X
Mr. G	33	Theater	X	X	
Ms. H	1	ELA	X	X	

Data Collection Methods

As part of the data collection process, I conducted one, one -on- one interview

with each of the participants. Data collection took place during the month of March 2017.

I purposely chose this month to be able to discuss with teachers their beliefs around their

use of cultural strategies across the curriculum, used to create an environment conducive

to enhanced learning experiences that lend themselves to student achievement, student

advocacy and the critical exploration of content. I expected that not all teachers would have ever engaged in culturally relevant art integration but that they would have some familiarity with culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration or culturally relevant art integration based on the process used to select them for the study. I used a checklist of behaviors to cross check what they say they do with what they actually do with their students. If they have not, their individual interviews were geared towards what their perspective and thoughts are on the approach of culturally relevant art integration. March is significant because it is a month that proceeds the months that represent the holiday season and is overwrought with testing, participating teachers can process how or if they maintain the belief of being intentional and thoughtful with the art integration in lieu of "cute" and "crafty" activities, even through the beginning of the year and "holiday months" and within the month of March, Women's history month, determine if their practices lend itself to the critical exploration of content and student advocacy.

      Interviews. Interviews were conducted with teacher participants in an attempt to gain an understanding of their experiences with their predominately Black and Latino students and how they believe they implement cultural strategies to support student achievement, student advocacy and critical exploration of content in their classrooms. The interview probed about the different cultural strategies that teachers used to engage their students. Cultural strategies included the use of culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration or culturally relevant art integration. I also looked at teachers' claims of art integration and see where they say they used art in the curriculum with and without culturally relevant teaching. Their use of culturally relevant art integration was determined by using a checklist against the actions that the teachers say that they do or do

not do in the interview. The interviews also served as an opportunity for teachers to

reflect on their practice and identify specifically what benefits or challenges they found

with the use of cultural strategies in their classrooms, and what impact it has had on their

students achievement, ability to advocate and their ability to look critically at content.

Each of the qualitative questions used within the standardized open-ended interview was

focused on the teachers' influences on practice, current practice, and the impact that the

use of cultural strategies has had on them as educators, as people, and how they think

their use of cultural strategies enhanced their student engagement. Patton (1990)

indicated that in order to understand how people have organized and attached meanings

to their experiences, researchers have to ask questions about them. He explains that "the

purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective,"

which is "meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 278). Interview

questions will also focus on teachers' perceptions of their comfort level in the classroom

with addressing issues of equity and diversity. Interviews were conducted via Google

hangout and within quiet spaces in the school to allow flexibility in scheduling. The

interviews lasted approximately 35- 50 minutes. The interviews were conducted once at

the start of the study to gain an understanding for what strategies teachers use to engage

their students and hear what impact they think their choice in pedagogy has on their

students.

Observations. I observed the participants with the intent to develop a better

understanding of the way in which they use cultural strategies in their classroom that does

not solely rely on the insights provided through interviews. Observation of classrooms

allowed me to provide the reader with an in depth and detailed description of the

environment. Observations were conducted following the interviews. Observations lasted

approximately the length of one period, which is about 45 minutes. I used field notes to

keep track of what was observed in the classroom. As suggested by Creswell (2009) I

formatted my field notes by using a page that clearly divides the behaviors observed and

the descriptive wording that elaborates on the observed behavior. The method of keeping

field notes was done using Google Docs. During this process, I accurately noted and

described the physical setting, social environment, the participants, and general ideas and

impressions that I got from the interviews that were conducted. I used the opportunity for

field notes to be descriptive and reflective. I used the chronologically listed observed

interactions to draw conclusions about the strategies that participants used to enhance

learning for their students.

Data Analysis

Interviews and observations were used as data in this study. The first step that I

took in analyzing the data collected is organizing the data records by teacher so that I

have a running record for each participant. Next, I began to look at each individual

teacher's interview to answer the research questions. Considering the tenets of culturally

relevant pedagogy, I also did some initial coding looking for evidence of if and how

culturally relevant pedagogy has been integrated through art, based on the claims made

by the participants. I coded my noticings in the data to begin to make sense of the raw

data. I used Dedoose to help to organize the patterns that I found within the data. After

coding I sorted by code, looked at the relationship between codes and within the codes to

examine the themes that began to emerge that answered the research questions about

cultural relevant pedagogy art integration, where art was integrated in the curriculum if

there is evidence that supports that culturally relevant pedagogy was used in that integration, and teachers' perception about students learning in the process of integration, if any.

I relied on member checking with the participants to ensure accuracy to the best of my ability. Rich, thick descriptions were used to clearly convey findings to the readers (Creswell 2009). Thick descriptions allow for the reader to be drawn into and better understand the case study that is being examined (Patton, 2001). To triangulate the data, I used a mix of analysis approaches. I first wrote a case study on each of the participating teachers based on their interviews, next I did a cross-case analysis of the participants. Triangulation is important because it can strengthen the study through gathering insight/ data through different lenses and coming to a clear understanding at the intersection (Patton, 2001). To protect the data, I backed up copies of the data on Google drive and an external hard drive.

Researcher Role and Trustworthiness

As a former student and former educator in the district, I have a pre-established relationship with the administrators of the school and some of the teachers. My personal experience with the performing arts and its role in encouraging student achievement, student advocacy, and the critical examination of content led to my interest in the topic. Additionally, as a long time resident of the city, I am familiar with the school and the city's historical influence on the arts movement through leaders and students in the city. As the school district transitions from 20+ years under state control to local control, I also seek to better understand what role I can play as a change agent and leader in supporting

this transition. I am no longer an educator in the district but I do have a vested interest in seeking to ensure that students of the community have access to a quality education.

My pre-established relationship with the administrators and teachers served as an advantage because they eagerly welcomed me and had a great willingness to share their thoughts on the topic. However, based on my relationship and connection to the school, I needed to take measures to avoid researcher bias. To avoid researcher bias I adopted a stance of neutrality. I entered the school without a focus on attacking on a particular stance or proving a theory, instead looking to see what works and does not work in the case of teaching to predominately Black and Latino students. Patton (2011) also explained that neutrality benefits researchers in that it can help build a rapport with participants because it disciplines the researcher to be nonjudgmental.

Chapter IV

Findings

As I walk through the front doors of the building, I am flooded with memories of hanging out in the black box theater listening to Amiri Baraka and Halim Suliman, leaders of the Black Arts Movement and some of Newark's most renowned revolutionaries, share stories and read poetry to a group of 14, 15, and 16 year old students. This building was the place where we performed "For Colored Girls" and grew fond of ourselves and embraced who we and our characters were on a stage in front of our families and Ntozake Shange, the playwright. This building is where trans, cis, and LGBQ students always shared a space, including bathrooms. I'm overjoyed by the magical feeling that revisits me in that moment as I make my way down to the theater, to check in with Mr. G, the drama teacher. As I get closer to his room I hear shouting voices dropping expletives, I'm not startled. They're likely working through a scene that calls for them to speak this way. I stand in the frame of the door. Mr. G is following along with the script as his students continue with their first read of the play. He glances up for a moment and is taken aback by my presence. He stops everything to introduce his current group of students to what he refers to as one of his "greatest alum from one of the greatest set of years that put on some of the greatest productions". Mr. G continues to state how those were the days of students who were explorers and how it was that very theater space that lended itself to support us as thinkers, as learners.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how a teacher of the arts, a literacy teacher and a school administrator believe that their use of cultural strategies across the curriculum, creates an environment conducive to enhanced learning experiences that

allow for student achievement, student advocacy and the critical exploration of content. Each of the participants believed that the arts and the weaving of culturally relevant practices have greatly impacted their work with students. Through the voices of the participants we will hear what specific components of those cultural strategies, they believed have been most beneficial to their practice and with their students. Throughout, I explained how the teachers' beliefs overlap with research that supports their practices.

Benefits of the Use of Cultural Strategies Within Your Curriculum

Among the participants, each of them expressed core and common beliefs about what they feel has contributed to the achievement, advocacy and critical thinking of their students. Centered in arts and culturally relevant pedagogy, they each and unknowingly shared many of the same thoughts that included: being from the community, a similar community or having a deep understanding of the community; being someone that the students could identify with; building caring relationships with students; keeping content relevant and making connections to their lives, staying current with pop culture; ensuring that art and content areas are integrated; allowing students to question and think out of the box. Through each of these strategies, teachers saw that they were able to engage and empower their students, even in an era when the district is undergoing a lot of change that makes it difficult to effectively educate students through the visual and performing arts and liberal arts ideology. Programs of this type have been cut dramatically. The findings are shared from the perspective of the individual participant, Theater, Literacy, and Administrative.

A Chilling Change, A View from the Theater

The chilly reaction also confirmed, Giroux's belief that dumbing down and

corporatization is now the centre of the US government's agenda for education.

Analyzing trends in education, the couple paints a dire picture of America's

future, which they say will give fewer students from lower and middle income

families the chance for higher education, and widen the cultural split between

rich and poor. Those who do get to university will have less exposure to liberal

arts and humanities. (Ward p.1)

Mr. G jumps feverishly into the conversation, expressing his immediate concerns

and noting how the system and society no longer allows for creatives to create but

assured me that one thing has stayed the same, " theater is a safe place to do unsafe

things," a line from the playwright John Patrick Shanley. The interview with Mr. G lasts

nearly two hours. "Students are trees not Buicks," he continues. " They need water, soil,

and air but charter schools and changes in other schools have messed that up. They put

that seed in a box and sent it out to the forest. That's too disparate of a journey to feel

connected. Those trees need the nurturing that happens through the root elements." Mr. G

is referring to the change in the school landscape that has happened in the city. The state

run district experienced a lot of change under the city's last administration and the

district's state appointed leaders. Charter schools were all the rage, funding was

redistributed or taken away all together, and the change to the school's admission process

meant that the school may or may not be receiving students who exhibited a passion

about the arts in which they may have a talent for. In 2002, I competed against 250 other

8th graders in the city for 1 of 20 spots in the theater program, by 2010 Mr. G explains,

there were only 40 students competing for 20 spots. Despite the circumstances of the community and the schools however, Mr. G is adamant that the theater has benefits for students. He explains that when the theater is culturally significant, there are even more benefits for the students to gain.

Research (Bogulski, Kraybill, Hitt, & Greene, 2015; Jeffries, 2013) revealed significant benefits for students who are exposed to and engage in culturally enriching activities like live theater, both as spectators and active participants. "…benefits in the form of knowledge, future cultural consumption, tolerance, historical empathy, and critical thinking for students" (Bogulski et al., 2015, p.1) have been exhibited as a result of student engagement in the theater arts. Students who have experienced live theater that was aligned with their literacy content studies have demonstrated having a better understanding of the characters and the plot, further supporting the idea that it serves content area teachers to integrate a form of the arts into their curriculum. Reading materials and /or watching movies only account for approximately 30 percent of the knowledge that students gain when learning new literacy content (Bogulski et al., 2015). It benefits students best to see the content as a live performance or to act it out. Additional benefits are found when the theater experience is culturally significant.

Jeffries (2013) explored the role of hair and its impact on Black girls and the curriculum through Readers Theater with young students. Readers Theater was used as a tool to enhance the engagement of the reader through this experience and create an active lesson. Readers Theater has been identified as a tool associated with the increased acquisition of the content (Jeffries, 2013). In this instance, the theatrical experience was culturally significant to the students who engaged in it and was also an opportunity for

them to address issues of race, identity, and society. Theater is a space where it is

acceptable to grapple with difficult societal issues. In the case of Jeffries' (2013) study

and often the case in Mr. G's classroom young, Black women perceive themselves in text

and in real life from a deficit perspective based on the biased media and societal norms

that they encounter from day to day. However, literary pieces can also help young and

adolescent students be able to view themselves in a more positive light if they have

access to texts that allow for it or if they have been equipped with the skills to look at the

content from a more critical lens. Ladson- Billings' (1995) 3rd tenet, *critical*

consciousness, is at play when students take a socio political stance on the norms of

dominant culture that they encounter. Mr. G pointed out that many of his female students

from cultures where women play a more submissive role in the family, would often take

on characters that are the heroines or at the center of resolving the conflict in the story.

This has become their way of taking a stance, even performing such roles with their

families as spectators.

As the years have changed, the experiences of students have changed, and the

way students learn has changed, Mr. G has decided to scrap the theater canon and open

up the space to allow students the choice of what they would like to perform. His

classroom, which is adjacent to a rehearsal space and the black box theater, is lined with

texts, those from the canon but also those that relate to and are more relevant to the

students that he works with each day. Most recently, the theater department put on a

production of *Dog Sees God*. *Dog Sees God*, a parody of the comic strip *Peanut*s, is a

play that addresses how children grow into teens who must learn to find their place in the

world while battling questions about their sexuality, drugs, identity, their perceived

images and religion. While Mr. G believed that students don't have the same "umph" to lead political movements that would sustain themselves overtime the way previous students have, due to the era of social media, the participating students unconsciously took a stand against societal norms and addressed issues that many adolescent students commonly experience, by actively engaging in the production of this play. By way of participating in the production of *Dog Sees God*, the students built tolerance and showed solidarity with other students; which is a form of advocacy. Putting on this production was also beneficial to the students who took on more passive roles as observers. Tolerance is one of the many benefits identified by researchers from engaging in live theater experiences (Bogulski et al., 2015). If students acting in the role of passive spectators felt empowered through other experiences that they have had either in their content studies or arts classes that could contribute to changing their social reality based on what they were able to gain from watching the live play. Inspired by Paulo Friere's *Pedagogy of the Opressed*, Augusto Boal challenged traditional theater techniques and sought to change the role of the spectator from a passive one to one that could serve as "a weapon for oppressed people to use toward changing their social reality - theatre for the people, by the people, 'a rehearsal of revolution" (Conrad, 2004, p. 14).

Students seem to have gotten away from questioning the system, being risk takers, and exploring new possibilities because of the way that the school system has changed and the experiences that they have, according to Mr. G "We're in the era of twitter kings instead of grassroots leaders," he continues. However, he and others remain optimistic as they start to see that the students are interested in learning and are using what they learn in their art spaces to question what happens in their content area courses around the

quality of texts that they have access to. Some faculty members believe that if students had a better understanding for the climate of the system and the district that they might be more inclined to act out against it. But the question remains, at what level can they sustain this work of advocacy and what role would art play in it?

A Literacy Teacher's View on the Role of the Arts

to the metaphor of treasure, which he applies indiscriminately to the 'community' and the individual: he speaks of 'inner treasure', of a 'treasure deposited by the practice of speech in subjects belonging to the same community', of 'the sum of individual treasures of language', and the sum of imprints deposited in each brain. (Bourdieu p.45)

Ms. H is surprised to know that I am visiting her this after noon. As a first year teacher, she can't believe that she has been identified as someone who has been successful with her predominately Black and Latino students. But it is immediately obvious that there is a shared admiration for this teacher among her students and that many students seek her out for additional support with their studies, college admission process and personal issues. Ms. H's interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and throughout many students unintentionally interrupted to just say hello or to follow up on an issue or to update her on something they had shared previously. Ms. H is also a former student of the school and explains that it is her relationship that she maintained with many of her former teachers that brought her back to the community to teach.

A trusting teacher-student relationship, a critical conscious purpose, commitment, and regard for students' real life experiences are all attributes displayed by teachers who enact culturally relevant practices (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). As apart of Ms. H's senior English Lit course, I was able to observe each of these attributes. Ms. H moves

with apprehension, however. As a first year teacher, she's not as willing to take as many risks. She seeks to ensure that she is meeting the needs of all of her students but within the tight confines of the curriculum. This observation does not strike me as coming from a place of fear or lack of understanding; instead I perceive it as Ms. H learning the "lay of the land" to soon determine the extent of risks she can take with her students. However, it is evident through the additions she has made to the curriculum that Ms. H intends on empowering her students daily.

Most recently, the class read *The Alchemist,* a required text. Ms. H felt that this text would allow for many opportunities for the students to make connections to their real lives. She often seeks out learning opportunities or opportunities to build on the curriculum in a culturally relevant way. Going a bit further, Ms. H felt that it would benefit the students to weave in poetry from Langston Hughes, *A Dream Deferred*. The students were responsible for doing a cross analysis of an excerpt from *The Alchemist* and *A Dream Deferred*. Here Ms. H saw an opportunity to expose the children to the genre of poetry, a notable African American writer, a well known text, and lastly facilitating conversations with students that would cause them to see how each of these literary pieces are applicable to their own lives. Ms. H's well-established relationship with the students, regard for their everyday experiences and her being from the same community allowed her to be able to anticipate and facilitate a conversation that challenged the students to go beyond the literal understanding of the text and draw connections to their own lives. Studies show that students are more engaged in lessons due to their relativity (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). The strategies that Ms. H uses here strives to ensure that

students are both culturally competent and successful with the mastery of the content, all the while empowering them through allowing them to share their story in the process.

Ms. H's high expectations through culminating writing assignments, and exposure to canon text through multiple lenses allow students to be culturally competent and change their common discourse or lack there of around required text. The exposure, and facilitated conversations around required texts provides students with the opportunity to play with language and build a deeper understanding for the content through questioning and drawing connections to their own experiences. At times, students demonstrate that they can think about text but may not be able to articulate their thinking around the text. This may place the students at a deficit when they enter the world outside of their school. Language is a mechanism of power. Linguistic interactions are manifestations of the participant's respective position in a social space and categories of understanding and thus tend to reproduce objective structures of the social field. This ultimately determines who should be listened to, interrupted, asked questions, lecture and to what degree. Often the acknowledged language of power is in the hands of the teacher. He/ She has been condemned as someone who encompasses the linguistic ability to convey a particular message that fits within the appropriateness of a particular discourse. It is also within the school system that languages are legitimized or not to be carried over into the work place. James Gee (1989) also makes a point in *What is Literacy* to point out that to be normative about ones own literacy means that you have established it as a norm. But it is a non-reflective idea that if you don't, teachers are given the power to make judgments on the discourses that we are not literate in, and more recently our federal government and policy makers who have not spent time in the communities or schools are making these

decisions. There is a privilege of knowledge happening here that only works in the favor of a particular kind of student.

Ms. H also understands that her students need skills that go beyond reading, speaking and listening. Ms. H, herself, was a music major at the school and understands the importance of allowing the students to bring an artistic form of expression to the classroom. Ms. H has used many occasions to give students the artistic freedom to show mastery of content through an art form and as a culminating project. While Ms. H's way of bringing art into the classroom may not truly serve as a full integration of the arts, she allows this freedom of expression through alternative module (film, writing, acting, visual) and believes that it truly impacts the way the students think, develop, and perceive themselves as members of the class community In fact, a study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts (2012), states that students who are deeply engaged in the arts show impressive indicators of academic achievement. They also cite claims of students being more civically engaged, being more avid readers, and taking trips to the library more frequently when deeply engrossed in art experiences (NEA, 2012). This demonstrates how the teacher's efforts at supporting the students human, emotional and soft skill building through including the arts leads back to student success. Positive development for youth, including youth identified as at risk, are seen for students who engage in the arts (Catterall, Chapleau & Iwanaga, 1999).

The interview really began to flow into a natural conversation, where Ms. H is reflecting on her practice. By the end of the interview Ms. H begins to think that there are opportunities in the curriculum where she could do more to build students critical consciousness. She advocates on behalf of her students to be able to explore more

relevant text but she starts to think of ways that she can have them do more of this work on their own behalf.

An Administrators Perspective; Arts and Academics

"The paradox of education is precisely this- that as one begins to become conscious one begins to examine the society in which he is being educated". ~ James Baldwin

It has been difficult to determine where the focus should be in this Artist High School. Administrators have come through and allowed for the full freedom of the arts to rule the school, only to have a change in leadership where the focus was more geared to the academics. What was learned was that being too heavy on either would do the school a disservice in this era of education, in this particular urban school district. Despite, students have had to persevere and exhibit mastery in their artistic major and show academic success in order to successfully complete their academic careers in this building. At what rate does the arts impact academics or the academics impact the arts and what are the implications for our students? It seems that the best response to this concern would be to integrate the study of the arts across the content areas.

This school has a strong community behind them. Members of the community still chatter about the school in the ways that they've always have. It was the home of great performers like Sarah Vaughn, Savion Glover, Wayne Shorter, Tisha Cambell, and Michael B. Jordan. Still current administration believes that there just had not been enough attention paid to the academics in the years that the district really began to require it. Chief Innovation Officer, Academics/ English, who also served in the same role over the arts in prior years, and as an English teacher, Mr. JD seeks to find that balance among

the programming to bring the school back to the high standard and quality that he believes it once had.

As the CIO, Mr. JD feels that it is important to bridge greater, stronger partnerships among arts and content area teachers, make greater attempts to integrate the studies, and include a variety of cultural strategies in classrooms to meet the needs of the students. When considering teaching candidates he has begun to look beyond their love of the arts or their strength in the content areas and asks more questions to gauge how they think about and understand the students and community in which they are seeking to work in. Beyond questioning, once they are hired, Mr. JD gives the teachers a tour of the community. Mr. JD explains that too few teachers are using cultural strategies in their classrooms, in some cases out of fear and in other cases from a lack of knowledge. Of the three participants in this study, each of them reported that either courses around culturally relevant practices did not exist or they were not required to take the courses. Their knowledge on what this study identifies as culturally relevant practices, the each state to have gained simply by living as people of color in urban environments.

At the university level there tends to be a relatively low response about the importance of infusing issues of diversity into individual courses. Donald (2006) found that the faculty members determined the importance of diversity based on their own life's experiences. The inconsistencies among faculty members at varying universities demonstrate that pre service teachers are not receiving significant or substantial diversity training before entering the increasingly diverse field of education. Commitment and understanding among faculty members regarding the importance of diversity programing is important as Lucas and Villegas (2011) described,

…benefits that can be derived from a framework such as this depends on the

extent to which those involved in preparing teachers at a given institution come to

share the vision of culturally responsive teaching inherent in that framework.

Such a vision cannot be imposed from the outside. It must grow out of the hard

work of ongoing dialogue and negotiation among colleagues. (p. 21)

Like university faculty, many pre-service teachers determine the significance of

diversity training based on their personal experiences. Many research studies have shown

that attitudes, limited knowledge of cultures and a negative self-efficacy demonstrated by

pre service teachers loomed over their clinical experiences with diverse students. In a

study conducted by Kweenge (2010), the pre-service teachers' wrote written responses

that showed a theme of a limited knowledge and understanding of other cultures. The

pre-service teachers expressed that their exposure to other cultures had been limited and

they were fearful of saying or doing the wrong thing if an issue of diversity were to arise.

There was a general sense of trepidation going into the project, even for the few pre

service teachers who stated that they had been exposed to other cultures. Through the

written responses it was revealed that some of the pre service teachers held assumptions

about their diverse student partners that affected their attitude and responses to the

diverse student during their meeting time.

Mr. JD has witnessed the affects of teachers feeling unprepared or uncomfortable

addressing issues of race, identity and inequities, play out in the school. He rolls through

a series of statements made about students and the community and the implications that

they have.

It's difficult for them to teach using culturally relevant practices because there is no comfort in doing it. They don't know our community and some don't want to know. Its just a job for them and that's not a bad thing per se but you wont know the community if you go straight from your car to the building everyday. You wont understand what the students endure each day. Then some [teachers] are afraid to. Its difficult in our society to teach using culturally relevant practices, how is it defined and what does it mean? One teacher is afraid to use the word Black and uses African American instead and students call her out on it because that's not how they all identify. I know that many colleges and universities are struggling with teaching culturally relevant pedagogy. So teachers are not getting it, they are scared or avoiding all together. Sometimes they say 'when I'm teaching I'm color blind'. They've been taught that colorblind is a good thing. And I tell them that that assumes the teacher's experience is a normal experience and dismisses the students' experiences. If you come to urban schools doing that it's a grave error, they were taught to make that error and they don't believe it to be an error. ~Mr. JD

The hiring of teachers that are unprepared to teach and to teach students of color in urban communities can lead to heavy reliance on scripted curricula "intended to compensate for their lack of skills" (Deplit, p. 38). Student needs are not being met in this instance and the teaching does not contribute to student growth and learning. Teachers have to be equipped with the knowledge and the skills to build relationships with students and understand the background of students in order to be able to best support them. Once teachers have a better understanding of the students, they will then be able to identify where in the curriculum it makes sense to address issues that concern students and to

what capacity they can integrate art in the content. Only then can the teachers support

student achievement and empower students to advocate and look critically at content. But

for as long as teachers see students from a deficit, the students wont have the space to

achieve at their highest rate. Once teachers have empowered students to be more critical

of content, provided them with alternative lenses to the curriculum and supported

students in drawing connections between home and community, it could support students

in becoming more conscious and willing to abandon the herd mentality and engage more

civically in the issues that exist in the community.

Where Their Worlds Collide

Despite each of the participants being of different backgrounds and having

different years of experience, it has been their experiences as people of color or people

from an urban community that has influenced the way that they understand, teach, and

interact with their students. Documented in the years significantly earlier than the notable

years of the 1960's civil rights movement and most known in the years following the

Brown vs. Board Education (1954) verdict, many community activists in urban

communities across the nation fought for local control of their schools and to have

educators and school leaders with shared identities or deep roots in actively working to

reduce the marginalization against students of color. But in a profession that is

predominately made up of White women, how do we stand to better educate them to

teach and enhance the learning of Black and Latino students including student

achievement, student advocacy, and students' critical stance on the curriculum. The

current political and educational climate of the United States of America, leave a lot at

risk for Black and Latino people and students. Denouncing White supremacy among

teachers and within school systems and curricula and equipping teachers with the skills to first build solid relationships that consider the circumstances of their students while simultaneously building cultural capital and holding high standards will be crucial in bringing Black and Latino students through their school experiences. Cultural strategies, including but not limited to culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration, and/ or culturally relevant art integration can aid in this process.

Chapter V

I choose to reflect the times and the situations in which I find myself. How can you be an

artist and not reflect the times? ~ Nina Simone

Throughout a series of chapters I have reported what I identified as best practices

stemming from culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration, and culturally relevant art

integration. The observations and analyzing of conversations that I have held with the

educators of the Artist High School have led to a better understanding of how each

practice can lead to student achievement, student advocacy, and students' critical stance

on the curriculum. The purpose of this chapter is to address teachers' responsibility in

creating an environment that lends itself to student achievement, student advocacy and

students' critical stance on the curriculum and how each can lead to activism through the

arts.

Taking the Lead

As a greater focus is given to quantitative data in school districts that serve

marginalized groups of students, the drive to produce outcomes that don't necessarily

meet the needs of students has increased. This increase becomes strenuous on school

schedules and encourages teachers and school leaders to teach to summative assessments

at the cost of students' authentic learning experiences. Despite the dilemma, teachers

have a responsibility to ensure that their unique group of students receives a quality

education. It is important that students are equipped with the skills to achieve, advocate

and question the curriculum. This may be difficult given that the teaching profession is a

nearly homogeneous demographic of middle class, white females. The way in which

teachers are prepared to teach and their understanding of the changing demographic of

students must be re-conceptualized as a result. Developing an understanding for the necessary shift in teacher education around teaching Black and Latino students will benefit all teachers committed to teaching strictly through Eurocentric curricula and negating the needs of their student body. The call for more minority teachers in the field can't be the only solution. Instead, teacher education programs must equip educators with a set of "must have" skills. Those skills are as follows:

Teachers must be able to construct relevant and meaningful pedagogical practices that have relevance to students' realities, which include their social and cultural realities with the understanding that there is also an expectation for academic achievement (Howard, 2003; Ladson- Billings, 1993). It is important to build bridges between students home and school lives in an attempt to engage them more purposefully in the content.

Teachers must be able to reflect on their own cultural identities and consider how they coexist with their students' racial and cultural identities (Howard, 2003). When teachers begin to consider how their identities coexist with that of their students, it is to be considered in what ways does ones racial identity conflict with or feels relevant to the students with whom the teacher works with. Race and culture matter in the classroom. Historically, Black and Latino students have been labeled in ways that indicate that they are incapable of learning. Therefore, a deeper understanding of the coexistence of the teacher and students racial identities can help one to reflect on whether or not they hold any preconceived notions or biases against their students, that limits them from providing them with a lively, rigorous and equitable education that lends itself to the questioning of systems that continue to marginalize this group of students.

Teachers must be able to teach without fear. Biased narratives have been created around students based on their appearance and particular behaviors. Often, Black and Latino students are criminalized based on behaviors that they may exhibit that break school rules or policies. When in fact, there may be a flaw in the school rule itself. I have often witnessed in urban school settings, comprised of predominately Black and Latino students, rules, policies and chants that implicate students as "prisoners" in the community, that need to be trained to act more "civilly". Burke and Chapman (2017) reported that 99 percent students handcuffed in NYC public schools for example are Black and Latino students. There is also often the reinforcement that an education is a privilege and not a right, with schools going as far as to making students earn their seat at a desk to start their school year. Adversely, in private and suburban school settings with a predominately White student population I have seen teachers reinforce to students that they are entitled to an education and that they should take advantage of the opportunities presented through the education that they will gain. As educators, we should encourage students to question school policies and curriculum. " I would teach him that he doesn't have to be bound to the expediencies of any given administration, any given policy, any given morality, that he has the right and the necessity to examine everything" explained Baldwin (1963). It is important to understand that in order to better equip Black and Latino students to work and live within a system that intends to limit their full potential they must be taught to achieve academically, advocate, and question curriculum and policies. The teachers in this study, all of whom were teachers of color and who grew up in the same neighborhood as the school or a similar neighborhood, may not have placed the same kind of stereotypes on certain students because they were, at one time or another

that student. However, there are teachers within the building that come with a fear and unintended bias against the students that often leads to a conversation of who is teachable and who is not?

When I mention eliminating fear when teaching, I am also speaking to opening up the classroom environment to have those difficult conversations. We are living in a time where even the President of our country is reinforcing hateful rhetoric. Often times, our students and the lives that they live are at the center of those conversations. They spend a great deal of the day in school, if what main stream media is portraying as and minimalizing the lives, race, and identity of our students than it is our duty to debunk those myths and empower students through the curriculum. More times than not, connections can be drawn and dialogue had with the existing curriculum and in this space students will learn to achieve, advocate, and question. It is as much a dangerous time for people of color in America as it was when James Baldwin (1963) wrote, " A Talk to Teachers" or when Nina Simone used the stage at the height of her career to speak out against the injustices faced by Blacks and in the same way whether through the arts, curriculum, or an integration of both students can take a stance.

The participants in this study did not engage in what would be defined as culturally relevant art integration or art integration, however their practices were still authentic and driven by their understandings and experiences of their children and cultural strategies. They looked at the specific needs and interests of their students and adapted the curriculum to target those needs through opportunities for art enhancement. The participants functioned operationally within the means of an under resourced school and based their strategies and practices on their experiences and understanding of

culturally relevant pedagogy, art integration, or culturally relevant art integration. The participants believed that the students daily engagement in the arts lended itself to developing the students as critical thinkers and learners. This engagement allowed content area teachers to find additional, relevant, and exciting avenues to introduce content. Both the content area teacher and the theater arts teacher built cultural competency for their students, increased student achievement, built student confidence and developed critical consciousness. Each of the teachers was able to successfully meet the needs of students under the frame of culturally relevant pedagogy. Cultural Relevant Pedagogy has three tiers, academic achievement, cultural competency, and critical consciousness, which both Ms. H and Mr. G successfully implemented in their classes. Cultural competency was evidenced in each of the classrooms, through the students' use of varied texts. Ms. H, as an English Literature teacher is required to use a specific curriculum that identifies the texts that she is allowed to use. Ms. H has some choice in what texts she uses from within that curriculum and built students cultural competency by selecting texts that would expose students to cultures from around the world and stories from various points of views. Mr. G has greater flexibility, as he sets his own curriculum, which allows him more say in what texts to which his students are exposed. He approached the development of his curriculum with the understanding that exposure to "canon" texts would build cultural capital in his students but he felt a greater priority and obligation to provide them with the autonomy to explore both canon and culturally relevant texts to express their acting. Both teachers sought to have their students be successful and demonstrate achievement in the areas that they taught and studied. Setting the students up to be successful required that the teachers in both classrooms scaffold and

build schema for the students through opportunities to discuss and research of the content. Critical consciousness was weaved through the teaching and the general engagement that the teachers shared with the students in their classrooms. Through their teaching, they supported students in developing a critical stance and ability to question how and why they were subject to the circumstances of their community, the texts that they were required to read and the access that they had to materials that would enhance their learning or arts instruction. Critical consciousness is often noted as the most difficult tier of culturally relevant pedagogy to carry out. However, it is also crucial to fully developing students who can advocate for themselves and successfully navigate a system that was created with the intent to marginalize them.

Although the participants did not engage in authentic art integration, their experiences with the arts were not any less authentic because it did not align with the definition of art integration. The setting of the school lends itself to doing art enhancement activities outside of the arts classroom. The school is under resourced and true art integration requires time, funds, restructuring and materials in order to be brought to full fruition. Despite, they still connected art to the real world experiences of their students. Art integration also calls for educators to unite concepts and parallel skills. The teachers held an interest in being able to do so but were not provided with the opportunities to execute. Opportunities would have included but not been limited to additional meeting and planning time and professional development. Teachers, like Mr. G and Ms. H who sought to collaborate with their peers had to seek them out on their own and ask for advice on how to make any enhancements to their curriculum with the intent to integrate an art and content area. The students, who displayed natural talents, now had

a platform outside of their arts classroom to express it. The attempt to integrate a content

area and an art required that the participants created a safe space for their students.

Creating safe spaces let students know that they can take risks, ask questions, and

challenge issues or perspectives as they arose.

Although the school administrator served as a reflective thought partner who

sought to allow for more opportunities of collaboration among the content area teachers

and arts teachers, he noted the difficulty in finding the time and the funds to fully support

the staff in a way that would extend their skills. The school administrator, who expressed

a deep commitment to using cultural strategies to support the students' learning and

experiences in their urban high poverty neighborhoods and schools, also pointed out that

teachers attracted to the school generally don't have the cultural skills to engage with the

students, as a majority are white middle class women. To use cultural strategies, one must

have the cultural competency needed to support their students.

Being able to create a school environment that authentically integrates the arts

across the curriculum in a culturally relevant way is not limited to developing teachers'

cultural competency. To fully integrate the curriculum the teachers in this school setting

should team-teach. Team teaching allows for the full immersion of both content areas on

a daily basis and identifies formative and summative assessment practices through the

content and arts. Having both teachers who are actively engaged and experts in the

content or arts area that is being taught would lend itself to maximizing the learning

experience for students. Team teaching can also be an opportunity for teachers to reflect

and provide feedback to one another to improve the teaching for students. In many

instances, students wont share an identity with their teacher however, teachers can

support each other in seeing the students as a whole and determining what content needs to be expanded upon, through what lens, and how.

Culturally relevant art integration assumes that teachers have cultural competency and know when and how to expand on learning opportunities that can be challenged and explored by students. The quality of teacher education programs and recruitment efforts of teachers has limited who enters the field with this knowledge. As a solution to improve schools in urban communities, organizations such as Teach for America and KIPP schools that have a huge presence in our communities, recruited teachers, who would be labeled as wealthy white ivy league students to teach in racially segregated, high poverty communities, exacerbating the issues. While perhaps well intended, the misunderstanding for the way in which members of the community live, low standards, and institutional structures have continued to perpetuate the concern of low performance amongst Black and Latino students in urban schools.

The participants of this study were teachers of color, from the community or a similar community who held high expectations for their students but still encountered challenges in implementing a curriculum that was truly integrated. Circumstances interfered in the ways that culturally relevant art integration could be carried out. Meeting time, planning, resources, administrative/ school/ district understanding and commitment are all factors that played a role. In the long term, restructuring, commitment, and appropriate planning would be necessary for all teachers to be effective in the implementation of culturally relevant art integration. From a shorter term perspective, teachers who come with the skills of cultural competency, high expectations for their students, the ability to identify learning opportunities, and initiative to find collaborative

planning time with colleagues who have different levels of expertise, will be successful in the minimal implementation which might result in simply art enhancement. In this instance culturally relevant art will not happen to its full potential but will still begin to expose students to skills that do not just engage them but allows them to achieve, question, and advocate.

How Students Benefit from the Use of Cultural Strategies

It was decided through the infamous Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) case that separate but equal laws that plagued the public schools of the nation were in fact unlawful and unequal. Cities throughout the nation began to undergo the difficult and harsh realities of integrating schools. It was widely believed that if Black students had greater access to resources that they would be more successful in schools. Sixty-three years later and with red lining laws that re-districted schools and impacted where and how Black families could live, Black students are again experiencing circumstances that limit their academic success. This limitation is often associated with the lack of resources that exist within schools made up of predominately Black and Latino students. Although a lack of resources is a contributing factor to student success, it does not explain how and why students of color in well-resourced schools experience a significant gap in achievement as well. As a result, in years as early as 1981 and motivated by the attempts to integrate schools in the 50s, 60s and 70s researchers began to explore cultural strategies to support the needs of Black and Latino students in schools.

Cultural strategies used to enhance practices in the classroom take into consideration the unique experiences and lives lived by the student population in which it will address. Black and Latino students in urban communities have often had experiences

with trauma or stressors that lead to long-term physical or emotional ailments, including racial injustices and discrimination (Silverstein, 2017). Each of the participants acknowledged that their students' experiences with trauma or stressors unique to students in low income and or single parent, grandparent, or independently run homes makes for one of the greatest challenges in educating the students. These circumstances which may be unusual to students of higher income family bases, has not limited, in some cases, the drive that the predominately Black and Latino students spoken of in this study have exhibited. However, Mr. G notes that often times by the time students reach their senior year of high school, they are simply exhausted and the drive decreases. Reiss, (2017) argues that disparities faced in neighborhoods of predominately Black families is one affect of exhaustion but that it is also deeply rooted in Black families historically having unequal access to reliable and comfortable sleep environments dating back centuries. These factors require an increased effort to keep students engaged in the learning. Cultural strategies lend themselves to being able to draw the bridge between home and school and providing a space where students can address some of the concerns that are most relevant to their everyday lives, through the curriculum. The following are the benefits that the participants in this study believed that their students experienced through the implementation of cultural strategies and that contributed to their students' success.

As previously explained, keeping motivated can present itself as a challenge for students. However, each participant of the study identified it as a contributing factor for those students who do well. Keeping students motivated requires creating a safe environment in which they can release some of the stressors they experience and make connections to the lives that they live through the curriculum. In both content and art

areas and opportunities where these pieces are integrated students should be able to feel and see themselves, according to the participants. In the instances that they cant it is the responsibility of the educator to see where and how to fit it in. When students feel that the curriculum that they are working with is relevant they are more eager to be engaged and motivated to complete the tasks associated with it.

Student advocacy is another benefit of including cultural strategies in the classroom. In a city where the landscape of education is changing, the participants believe that it is important for students to understand the extent to which they are impacted by this change. Setting students up to understand how to begin to advocate for themselves requires creating an environment where the students can question and express what they believe would best suit their needs. The participants of this study believe that there could be a greater effort among those in the school community to better support students in understanding how to advocate for themselves. Where they may encounter an issue in this process, is that some of the adults too, may not be able to identify what some of the issues and concerns are that impact the students. However, as Mr. G explains, self-advocacy can happen in many forms. The act of his students getting on the stage and taking on roles that empower them and support them in expressing how they feel is just one way to show students how to self advocate.

The participants also believe that the implementation of cultural strategies and creating an environment that feels like a safe space for students has aided them in increasing students' level of critical consciousness. Students have begun to speak out on the disconnect that they feel from the curriculum. There is some apprehension and some feelings of unpreparedness that comes with being a newer teacher who aims to support

students in becoming more conscious. Ms. H, a novice teacher did express some concerns about how far and in depth she could go with students in examining the curriculum. Mr. G, a veteran teacher decided to come away from the canon texts to explore texts more relevant to student lives. Despite each teacher's level of expertise, the both expressed the importance in supporting students' thoughts about the content that should be covered. Students have identified that something is wrong with the required texts. With the help of Ms. H students have requested changes to the text they are required to read. The participants in the study noted that students are not necessarily drawing connection to Whiteness or inequity in the text; most students simply state that they can't identify with the texts. Culturally responsive teaching would immediately address this issue. An educator could seek to fill or supplement the curriculum with material that is more relatable to the lives and experiences of the students. However, Ladson- Billings' (1995) notion of culturally relevant pedagogy would engage Ms. H's students in having a more critical approach to their understanding of the narrative being formed around the curriculum that they engage in. Those students who have been able to identify what makes the text unrelatable are also among a group of students who have recently sought out to create a group for Black students where they can talk about the injustices faced by Black students and people in the community.

Art as Activism

Literary and performance experiences have the ability to transform students, communities and experiences. Art as activism would be the appropriate next step for the participants in the study and has already began to take form in some cases. Each of the educators have expressed their firm beliefs in ensuring the students achieve academically,

advocate for themselves and critically examine the curriculum that they work with each day. Each of these experiences goes hand and hand and support students in being able to think critically and draw connections in all of their experiences as students and as Black and Latino youth.

Using art as a form to enhance students' achievement, advocacy, and critical examination of content can be challenging for educators who have not been properly trained. Educators should learn as part of their training, " … the diverse social, political and historical conditions of the community, learn to foster community, gain exposure to hardships and realities faced by families, problematize the inaccuracies and omissions, and articulate the challenges of teaching and learning in the community," (Wellman & Bey, 2015). Once trained and successfully implemented, students stand to gain many benefits from this process. Benefits including access to a platform that allows for students to develop life skills appropriate for in school and out of school stand to be gained by participating students (Wellman & Bey, 2015).

Using art as a form of activism is a cultural strategy that has been specifically identified as one that helps students who have undergone traumatic experiences (Wellman & Bey, 2015). Because the act of art based activism requires self-advocacy work, students learn to take a stance on or negotiate their environments. This benefits students in the classroom by giving them the lens and the confidence to look at and question curriculum that has implicit biases while simultaneously understanding the importance of academic achievement in a system that defines who they can be or what they can achieve in their adulthood based on what they accomplished as students.

Limitations

The limitations to this study were that the sample size was small, the school is undergoing changes that does not allow for the kinds of change and risk taking that some teachers are open to and the study sought teachers who worked collaboratively but not many teachers in the building have the opportunity to accomplish collaborative meeting time. While each of these elements limited the extent to which I could delve into perspectives and develop next steps for teachers school wide based on their understanding of cultural strategies I was able to gain great insight on the way teachers, who themselves identify as people of color from low income communities, believe that their use of cultural strategies push their students to achieve, advocate, and question. Additionally, all of the participants have been involved with the school for more than ten years in some capacity. Each of them are invested in seeing the school be the way it once was, which may have influenced their perspectives and beliefs around the importance of cultural strategies.

Conclusion

This qualitative study allowed for me to examine the reflections of teachers from the Artist High School and how they used cultural strategies to aid their students in achieving, advocating, and examining the curriculum in a critical way. For the purpose of this study we looked specifically at the arts and literacy. However outcomes in research show that the integration of art and cultural strategies benefits marginalized groups of students across content areas (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Wellman & Bey, 2015). We learned that there is a strong belief among researchers and participants of the study, that it would benefit teachers schoolwide to explore cultural strategies, as a way to support the

students of the community who may have or may currently be experiencing high stress or
traumatic life experiences. Equipping teachers in the school with the skills and strategies
to integrate art and content area studies and create environments that allow for art as
activism would be a logical next step at the Artist High School.

Teachers should consider based on the suggestions of the participants and key
research stated throughout the study the following in an attempt to create environments
that lend themselves to leading students to academic achievement, student advocacy, and
questioning of the curriculum.

1. Being from the community, a similar community or having a deep understanding of

    the community. Many teachers come to education for different reasons and may not

    have experienced the neighborhood that they teach in outside of the classroom. As

    effective educators have identified, it is necessary to have a greater understanding of

    the context in which your students live in. In developing that understanding,

    educators will also have to acknowledge how the system of education that has

    brought them to teaching, too, disenfranchises the students with whom they will

    interact with each day. When there is a lack of understanding, stereotypes and the

    marginalization of Black and Latino students are reinforced in their classrooms. Chris

    Emdin, (2017) explains further the importance of having an understanding of the

    community:

    > I argue that if aspiring teachers from these programs were challenged to teach

    > with an acknowledgment of, and respect for, the local knowledge of urban

    > communities, and were made aware of how the models for teaching and

    > recruitment they are a part of reinforce a tradition that does not do right by

students, they could be strong assets for urban communities. However, because of their unwillingness to challenge the traditions and structures from which they were borne, efforts that recruit teachers for urban schools ensure that Carlisle-type practices continue to exist. (p.7)

2. Being someone to whom students can identify.Teaching remains an overwhelmingly White female dominated profession despite the changes in student populations. Teacher preparation programs, school districts, and school administrators should make a greater effort to ensure that the make up of educators includes people that their students can identify with. Shared identities can support the identity development of young students and build confidence for when they enter spaces where they cannot identify with others. Racial and linguistic developments are unavoidable in students and should be supported for healthy development (Mena & Tobinson, 1999).

3. Building caring relationships with students. Research (Rimm-Kaufman, 2011) suggests that students who have positive and supportive relationships with their teachers have greater academic achievement. As students develop and build confidence they need supportive and caring educators who will create environments where they feel safe take risks. Caring for students should not be limited to passive gestures and kind words. Maintaining high standards and rigor and providing students with the skills that they need to think critically about the world, also shows caring and supportive relationships between educators and students. Building caring relationships are not limited to the classroom. Family engagement, acknowledgement

of culture and community, and a general interest in students' well-being are other

forms of care and support.

4. Keeping content relevant, making connections to their lives and staying current with

   pop culture. While building cultural capital for students remains important both

   educators and researchers suggest that drawing in students by making reference to

   cultural elements that they are familiar with will build engagement and

   understanding.

5. Ensuring that art and content areas are integrated. Many research studies

   acknowledge the benefits of art integration for all students. However, it should be

   noted its particularly impactful benefits for Black and Latino students in communities

   that have circumstances that, at times, limit the full potential of the students that

   reside in the community. As outlined by the participants of the study, students in the

   school community were more engaged, had an outlet for their feelings, and were

   developing skills to be more critical thinkers when engaged in art integration.

6. Allowing students to question and think out of the box. If we seek for students to be

   citizens of the world who have cultural capital, can advocate for themselves and think

   critically about the curriculum that they engage in then there must be safe spaces and

   opportunity for them to question.

   However, we know that not all teachers will meet this standard. Further research

could look at the ways that universities, individual schools, and school districts can

allocate funds to support teachers in being better educated on how to teach to their Black

and Latino students. The implementation of cultural strategies has implications for

teacher education. It benefitted the participants that, through experience, they had a deep

understanding of the community and students that they served. Therefore, the participants were able to identify teachable moments and support the needs of their students through the implementation of cultural strategies. Many teachers who enter schools, occupied by marginalized groups of students and families, often enter these schools and communities without any prior knowledge of the social, political and historical background of the community. Teacher education programs have to be restructured in a way that gives teachers, who do not hold knowledge of the community and the students and families, a practical education that allows them to experience the community and gain deeper understanding for the social, political, and historical background of the community. Teachers can then identify teachable moments and better connect home to school. Having teachers understand how to prompt advocacy and critical consciousness among students, will lead teachers and students to understanding the importance of academic achievement because they all will have a greater understanding of the connections to the students' home and school.

Art and literacy integration within school settings has been a topic of research for the past three decades. In that time, the way in which literacy is defined and its relationship to art has evolved. Many researchers have celebrated the positive impact that art and literacy integration has on student learning. However, not many researchers have looked at how culturally relevant art and literacy supports the learning of Black and Latino students in science, math, literacy, and history courses. It is often suggested, through school, district and federal policies, that urban students receive instruction that does not include opportunities for building language, exploration, and art but instead a more "structured" environment of pen and paper. It is my hope that this qualitative study

provided insight on how the integration of culturally relevant art across the curriculum

can also support the learning of Black and Latino students as well.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

(This consent form is for Confidential Data Collection. This form is provided to the investigator as a guide. Instructions and sample language are noted in boldfaced italics within the brackets [ ]. Sample language should be removed).

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Jhanae E. Wingfield, who is a student at the Graduate School of Education in the department of Teaching and Learning at Rutgers University. Ms. Wingfield can be reached at jhanae.wingfield@gmail.com.The purpose of this research is to determine how successful teachers' use cultural strategies to enhance the community of learning for their Black and Latino students. Ms Wingfield is supervised by Dr. Tomlinson-Clarke, who is her dissertation advisor.

Your participation will involve one-on-one interviews, which will last approximately 35- 50 min. The purpose of the interviews is to discuss your successful teaching practices with your students. I hope to gather data that supports the use of innovative practices in the classroom.

The study procedures include 2 interviews and 1 classroom observation that will last the length of one period or 45 min.

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes the subject that you teach, the amount of years you have taught and your knowledge on cultural strategies. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. This information will be kept on a password-protected computer.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept until publication and destroyed upon publication of study results.

There are no foreseeable risks that come with the participation of this study.

You have been told that the benefits of taking part in this study may be the opportunity to reflect and enhance your practice**.** However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the study procedures without any penalty to you. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact myself at:
Email: jhanae.wingfield@gmail.com
Phone: 862-438-1526
You may also contact my faculty advisor :
Dr. Saundra Tomlinson Clarke
Email: saundra.tomlinson-clarke@gse.rutgers.edu
Phone: 848-932-0815
If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact an IRB Administrator at the Rutgers University, Arts and Sciences IRB:

Institutional Review Board
Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Liberty Plaza / Suite 3200
335 George Street, 3rd Floor
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
Phone: 732-235-9806
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B

Audio/Visual Addendum to Consent Form

Audio/Visual Addendum to Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: Teacher as Curator: Teachers' Integration conducted by Jhanae Wingfield. We are asking for your permission to allow us to *audiotape the interviews* as part of that research study.   You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used solely for analysis by the researcher.

The recording(s) will include *a description of your role within the school as an identifier.* If you say anything that you believe at a later point may be hurtful and/or damage your reputation, then you can ask the interviewer to rewind the recording and record over such information OR you can ask that certain text be removed from the dataset/transcripts.

The recording(s) will be stored *in a locked file cabinet with no link to subjects' identity.* The recordings will be kept for up to 1 year *and destroyed upon publication of study results.*

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Subject (Print) _____

Subject Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C

Teacher Interview Protocol

Project Title: Teacher as Curator: Teachers' Integration of Culturally Relevant Art Across the Curriculum

Principal Investigator: Jhanae E. Wingfield

Co- Principal Investigator: Dr. Saundra M. Tomlinson- Clarke

Introduction: As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in one interview that will last approximately 35- 50 min. The questions asked in this interview will cover questions on your background information, your instructional practices and your beliefs and attitudes around your practice. The questions in this interview will be open-ended and may lead to additional questions. You may stop that interview at anytime, as the interview is voluntary. The data collected in this interview is confidential.

You have been chosen to participate in this interview because your principal identified you as a highly effective teacher. Your principal has stated the you have consistently demonstrated a commitment to your students, a high level of teacher efficacy, and a large percentage of the students who take your section of courses perform proficiently on standardized tests.

Background Information

1. What was your motivation for becoming a teacher?

2. Why did you choose to teach in an urban setting?

3. How many years have you taught in an urban setting? How would you describe that experience?

4. Have you taught in any other districts? If yes, did you use similar approaches- why or why not?

5. How do you believe your background has influenced your teaching in an urban setting? If at all. If not, why?

6. Did you receive any multicultural or diversity training as part of a pre service teaching program? If so, briefly describe your experience.

7. Do you have any experience with the integration of art across the curriculum? If so, briefly describe.

Instructional Practices

8. In what ways do you believe students learn best?

9. How do your beliefs about your students guide your lesson planning?

10. What skills do you believe your students need to be successful?

11. Do you give your students opportunities to take risks, explore, or address misconceptions in content? If so, please describe that experience.

12. How do you build on student's prior knowledge, experiences, and/ or cultural backgrounds in your teaching?

13. Have you ever heard of CRP? If not can you take a guess at what you think it means?

14. Have you heard of art integration? If not can you take a guess at what you think it means?

15. How do you define culturally relevant pedagogy? (If they know what it is)

    a. Do you use CRP as part of your teaching practice? If so, briefly describe experience.

16. How do you define art integration? (If they know what it is)

    a. Do you use art integration as part of your teaching practice? If so, briefly describe experience.

17. What knowledge or skills do you possess as a teacher that has supported you in successfully teaching predominately Black and Latino students

Beliefs and Attitudes

18. What have you gained from teaching your students? (Knowledge, experience, insight, etc.)

19. What strategies do you believe best engaged/ supported their learning?

20. What kinds of professional development have you received to support your teaching, [of Black and Latino students, of culturally relevant pedagogy, of art integration]? Please describe.

21. What challenges have you faced teaching [Black and Latino students, culturally relevant pedagogy, with the integration of art integration]? Please describe.

22. What role do you believe the arts have in schools, particularly urban schools, in the era of accountability?

23. Did you address issues of race, identity, and/ or community in your classroom/ as part of the content? If so, please describe how it contributed to the community of learning.

24. In What ways do you believe you motivated your students to engage/ learn?

25. How often was lesson planning or cumulating projects influenced by student interest? Engagement? Rigor?

Appendix D

Culturally Relevant Checklist

Category 1: Culturally Relevant Curriculum and Materials		
Strategy	Teacher	Reported
Selecting culturally relevant curriculum materials from and containing all cultural groups		
Selecting and using culturally relevant books, pictures, and bulletin boards		
Recognizing culturally relevant events		
Understanding/use speech and expressions familiar to students		
Using manipulatives, models, artifacts, and concrete representations of concepts		
Using curriculum materials that describe historical, economic, social, political events from a wide variety of different racial, ethnic, cultural, and language perspectives		
Providing factual information to refute misconceptions and prejudices about ethnic group members		
Understanding and using information about students' families, cultures, and		

communities to connect to learning activities		
Encouraging mutual sharing of personal and expressive stories related to content		
Helping each student understand how personal and cultural experiences influence how they and others construct knowledge		

Reported = What strategies teachers say they use

Note. Adapted from "Culturally Responsive Teaching: An Investigation of Effective Practices for African American Learners"(p.90) by Antonia L. Hill (Ed.D), 2012, Loyola University, Chicago. Retrieved September 16, 2016, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text.

Appendix E

Arts Integration Checklist

Category 2: Art Integration Curriculum and Materials		
Strategy	Teacher	Reported
Selecting art content that is accessible to students and has a clear relationship to content		
Drawing on students prior		

knowledge		
Providing active hands-on learning with authentic problems for students to solve in divergent ways		
Arranging opportunities for students to learn from each other to enrich their understandings		
Using manipulatives, models, artifacts, and concrete representations of concepts		
Using curriculum materials to support natural connection between content and art form		
Engaging students in reflection about what they learned, how they learned it, and what it means to them		
Using student assessment of their own and peers' work as part of the learning experience		
Providing opportunities for students to revise and improve their work and share it with others.		
Building a positive classroom environment where students are encouraged and supported to take risks, explore		

possibilities, and where a social, cooperative learning community is created and nurtured		

Reported = What strategies teachers say they use

Note. Adapted from "Culturally Responsive Teaching: An Investigation of Effective Practices for African American Learners"(p.90) by Antonia L. Hill (Ed.D), 2012, Loyola University, Chicago. Retrieved September 16, 2016, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text.

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