POEMS OF PRACTICE: AN ARTS-BASED STUDY OF PROFESSIONAL

DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BOOK STUDIES WITH

ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS

by

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(Under the Direction of BETTY BISPLINGHOFF)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is designed as an arts-based qualitative case study examining what seven 5th grade teachers and the principal learn when they engage in a job-embedded book study on culturally relevant pedagogy while reading *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children.* Research questions also explore what teachers and administrators learn and share about their professional practices as a result of participating together in the book study.

With the use of poetic transcription, the teachers' and the principal's voices are re-presented as data through poetic forms such found poetry, I-poems, Haiku, Pantoun, and free verse. Broad themes are developed to organize the poems into a suite of poems for analysis. Poetry evokes the emotions and language from participants that may have otherwise gone unnoticed employing traditional qualitative methods.

Exploring culturally relevant pedagogy through the book study, teachers learn to create knowledge construction zones for themselves, each other, and their students. They acknowledge the value of being more reflective about their practices, and often share

their reflections through stories allowing the principal to learn more about the teachers beyond their pedagogical lives. Book studies are a viable means of professional development for studying the impact of sensitive issues such as culture. Scheduling sessions and establishing trust among the teachers and administrators significantly impact book studies as professional development.

This study connects to a second research study of *Dreamkeepers* at the same research site with kindergarten teachers as book study participants. The researcher for the second study, (*Faculty Book Clubs in an Urban Elementary School: Exploring the Power of Text, Conversations, and Stories to Support the Learning Needs of Teachers and Administrators*) is the assistant principal who employs narrative storytelling as the method of analysis. The principal and the assistant principal as participant researchers for their individual studies utilize a convergence of analysis to report combined research findings.

INDEX WORDS: Book clubs, Book groups, Constructivism, Culturally relevant pedagogy, Poetic inquiry, Poetic transcription, Poetry, Professional development, Study groups, Research poetry

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Samuel and Frances Thornton. My mother was seven months pregnant with me in January of 1961 when Charlayne Hunter integrated The University of Georgia. Because of Ms. Hunter's boldness and bravery, after my birth, my daddy had the unmitigated audacity and fearlessness to not only dream, but speak for the remainder of his life, that I would attend The University of Georgia. His dream was manifested as reality when I earned my bachelor's degree and now my doctorate degree from The University of Georgia. My only regret is that he did not live to see his dream transition to reality.

My mother remains the inspiration for my life's aspirations and endeavors. She ensured that my daddy's dream would become a reality, and as a result, I was the first college graduate on both sides of our family. Her encouragement, wisdom, and support has been the bedrock of my success. She is my personal hero!

I dedicate this dissertation to my sister, Kathy, who interjected laughter throughout my journey when I did not want to laugh, but needed to release long, hearty belts of laughter. Her special brand of humor allowed me to relinquish anxiety to regain my focus and persevere. When faith in my ability began to waver, she repeatedly told me "You can do this. Yes, you can."

I dedicated the dissertation to my children, Phillip and Phillia for their mature understanding as they transitioned from elementary school to high school. During this process they have been my most devoted and unrelenting cheerleaders even when I had to

forego my presence at some of their events. I hope and pray that my focus on scholarship and my absence exemplified the importance of education and that huge goals are achievable with determination, tenacity, hard work, reasonable sacrifice, family support, and love.

Lastly, I dedicate my dissertation to my husband, Phillip. Completing this process from coursework to dissertation defense would have been impossible without his overwhelming love and support. He unselfishly provided space and time for me to work. I am forever grateful and thankful for the many times he willingly occupied the roles of mommy and daddy with joy. After 31 years of marriage, he could sense my every need at all times (snacks, meals, hugs, kisses, his nearby presence, pep talks), and I never had to utter a request. I am blessed to have him by my side and in my life.

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Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us (Ephesian 3:20 KJV). I will forever remain in awe of all that I have accomplished during the completion of my dissertation. The end result would not have been possible without the support of the following individuals.

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Dr. JoBeth Allen began this journey with me as a member of my committee, but retired during the process. Thank you for introducing me to *Dreamkeepers*. As a student in your course, suggesting that I read *Dreamkeepers* was the catalyst for this project.

Dr. Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor reintroduced me to the world of poetry and helped me find a long lost love of writing poetry. Your summer poetry course, support, and feedback gave me the confidence and courage to write poetry again and to pursue this arts-based project.

Thank you to the seven 5th grade teachers at "Wesley Elementary School" who participated in the study. Your honesty and dedication to the project was more than I could have imagined. You taught me so much about myself as a leader, and I learned so

much more about your daily pedagogical lives with your students. Thank you for sharing your deep, personal thoughts and experiences. You are indeed phenomenal educators.

Arnetta Eady, my research partner, assistant principal, and longtime friend has traveled this journey with me from day one. We have shared incredible experiences along the way and we have remained friends, perhaps closer than ever before. You have been a source of support, strength, and encouragement. I will forever hold dear our commutes to Athens during torrential rain, sunshine, sleet, snow, and floods. Conducting the book study as leaders was a once in a lifetime experience. I could not have traveled this journey solo.

To my many friends and colleagues (too many to name) that prayed and encouraged me throughout the journey, your kind words, hugs, cards, emails, texts, and smiles encouraged me tremendously.

Lastly, I thank God. I continuously looked toward the hills for my help. It is through Christ who strenghthended me, and as a result this dissertation is complete!

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RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Coffee is real good when you drink it; it gives you time to think. It's a lot more than just a drink; it's something happening. Not as in hip, but like an event, a place to be, but not like a location, but like somewhere within yourself. It gives you time, but not actual hours or minutes, but a chance to be, like be yourself, and have a second cup."

Gertrude Stein

Introduction

For many of us who work eight or more consecutive hours daily, the coffee break or any of its counterparts is a naturally occurring and expected routine of the work day. Typically, in my location, the allotted time is 10-20 minutes. Employees anticipate this break even if they are not coffee drinkers. The coffee break is often considered an essential component of the work day.

There is much speculation surrounding the origin of the coffee break; however, its inception allegedly dates back to the 1880s when immigrant women living in Stoughton, Wisconsin took mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks from their shifts to return home to tend to their young children. During this brief intermission from work, the women were free to indulge in coffee and snacks. Early in the 20th century, two New York companies provided complimentary coffee and snacks to its employees as an act of goodwill for labor relations, and so they lay claim as the first to offer coffee breaks. However, it was not until 1952, that the coffee break was established as a workplace routine when an ad campaign by the Pan-American Coffee Bureau urged consumers to "Give Yourself a Coffee Break-and Get What Coffee Gives to You," (Rogers Coffee, 2012). Since that time, the coffee break has become a thread in the fabric of American

culture. Even school age children as early as age five understand the coffee break concept in the form of recess. This 10-15 minute interruption of the school day allows children the freedom to experience a relaxed, unstructured part of the day; they decide how to utilize their "break" time.

Whether we choose to break at work, school, home, or some other place, simply put, we all need a break during the day. So, what is it that makes the coffee break period unique? The "it" can be described as an act of anticipation, relaxation, reflection, and socialization. Yet, the significance of the coffee break extends far beyond a cup of coffee, tea, or a snack. It is about the conversation that surrounds the coffee. It is about the dialogic exchange that takes place among those who share a common beverage, time, and space. The conversation is unstructured, unscheduled, unannounced, unpredictable, and uninhibited. The "it" is the tranquil space that is created when those engaged during the coffee break commune with one another.

As the principal of "Wesley" Elementary School and the researcher for this study, I wondered: what if I created and provided a tranquil "coffee break" space for my teachers, a job-embedded space where teachers could convene for a book study? My assistant principal "Melissa Hall" (who is also my research partner), and I experienced such a space during the spring of 2011 when we facilitated an after school book study as a pilot research project. We selected *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009). As an ethnographic study of eight exemplary teachers of African American children, Ladson-Billings (2009) identified participating teachers as models for "improving practice" (p. xvi, 2009). She provided a

lens into their intellectually rigorous and challenging classrooms where they successfully taught low income, predominately African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

A doctoral course assignment was the impetus that led me to read *Dreamkeepers*. I was so captivated by the book from the onset that I immediately had the urge to share the book with my teachers, but I was not quite sure about how to introduce the book to them. Melissa and I decided to conduct a voluntary, after school book study. We issued an invitation to the entire staff via email soliciting volunteers for the book study. Initially, I assumed the majority of the volunteers would be teachers; however, much to my surprise, more support staff than teachers volunteered for the book study. In the end, 16 staff members joined us as we embarked on a credulous journey to explore and study culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) through Ladson-Billings' (2009) eight exemplary teachers and her personal stories as a learner, educator, and scholar.

During the four week study, I observed my teachers, paraprofessionals, media specialist, social worker, speech pathologist, and parent liaison "critically explore, articulate, negotiate, and revise their beliefs about themselves, their students, their colleagues," (Servage, 2008, p. 70) administrators, their pedagogies, and the school. They shared personal stories and experiences that have resoundingly impacted their current pedagogical beliefs and practices. The media center became our fortress, our "coffee break" space for the weekly book study sessions. During the unscheduled (approximately 90 minutes) gatherings, we ate; we drank; we talked; we listened; we laughed; we cried; we learned from each other, and most importantly, we told our stories. Our voices were heard. Melissa and I quickly recognized that the book study was taking on a different format than we had anticipated. We threw caution to the wind, and

embraced the spontaneity of the book study. As a result, we witnessed the

metamorphosis of the book study group as it took on an unexpected, viable life of its

own.

Purpose

Over the course of the next four years, the challenges of teaching and leading at

Wesley became an even more formidable responsibility. District rezoning resulted in a

significant rise in student enrollment from 430 to 920; a staggering 47% increase over

five years. The enrollment explosion required additional staffing which had already

become an arduous undertaking to secure competent, experienced staff that could

"handle" working in an urban school. The demographic landscape of the school was also

redefined with an immediate18% Latino student population and a 20% increase in special

needs students for which many of the teachers were unprepared to support the cultural,

linguistic, academic, and behavioral needs of many of the students.

The daily challenges that my teachers experienced were parallel to those

documented in the research on teachers who work in urban schools. They are

"encapsulated and overwhelmed" (Montero-Sieburth, 1989, p.337) by the complexities of

their teaching environment. They are often bound by routines that prohibit them from

taking time to reflect on their experiences and teaching practices, and they frequently

work in isolation (Montero-Sieburth, 1989). Past research suggests that teacher isolation

is a pervasive characteristic of the professional life in schools (Flinders, 1988). In

addition, teacher isolation impedes opportunities for professional growth, and presents a

potential obstacle for implementing reform initiatives (Flinders, 1988).

Lortie (1975) described isolation "as a product of institutional characteristics firmly grounded in the historical development of public schools. . . The 'egg-crate' architecture and cellular organization of schools reinforce divisions that physically separate teachers" (p. 69). Sarason (2003) called teaching a "lonely" profession because of teachers' lack of opportunity to discuss their practice with other teachers. Collegial isolation continues to be commonplace to the work experiences of pre-service as well as in-service teachers (Lortie, 1975; Goodlad, 1984; McPherson, 1972). The book study was an approach to circumvent the isolation.

In light of the increasing challenges and the stress that my teachers and I were experiencing, I reflected on the pilot book study and the open, trusting atmosphere that was developed. I wondered if re-creating the atmosphere of the pilot book study in a job-embedded space where the teachers and I could come together and learn from each other would support their learning needs as well as my own. This was the opportunity to convene a job-embedded book study group featuring *Dreamkeepers* (2009). I envisioned engaging one grade level of teachers during their weekly professional learning community (PLC) meeting time to enjoy a beverage, snack, and *Dreamkeepers* (2009) in an open learning space during the workday. Our designated time was called "The Coffee Break."

Significance of the Study

The increasing population of culturally, linguistically, and diverse students in public schools is a concern for educators across the United States (Florio-Ruane and Raphael, 2000). The lack of diversity among the teaching force in public schools, which still remains predominately white, female, and middle class, (National Center for

Educational Statistics, 2013) indicates a need for teachers to learn more about the cultures

and the diversity of the students that occupy their classrooms (Florio-Ruane & Raphael,

2000). Huberman (2004) posited that some researchers think it is necessary for teachers

to engage in critical discussions regarding their own cultural identities and perceptions of

the racially diverse students that they teach. Studying culture among educators requires a

sustained professional development experience where participants can "grow in trust,

explore a complex idea by repeated passes through it from diverse perspectives, and

weave in the exploration of a variety of texts, including their own experiences and those

of others" (Florio-Ruane and Raphael (2001 p. 65).

Culture is the cornerstone of the primary components of education: curriculum,

instruction, administration, assessments (Gay, 2010). It refers to a complex system of

social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give

order and meaning to our lives (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991). Without thought,

culture covertly determines how we behave, think, and what we believe. These actions

ultimately affect how we teach and learn (Gay, 2010). Culture is often misunderstood

and misinterpreted (Howard, 2010). Even more unclear for educators is the manner in

which culture is manifested in school environments and the learning processes of

individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Howard, 2010). New ways of

examining culture have typically been absent from the dominate education discourse

about behavior, learning, and classroom settings (Gutierrez, 2002).

Interestingly, Wesley employs a predominately African American staff but the

diverse complexities of African American students remains misunderstood and often

ignored. The struggle of today's middle class teachers to value, respect, and understand

the cultural capital that urban students and their communities contribute to the classroom could be the reason that minority students are academically unsuccessful in school (Duncan, 2014). As I thought about options, I wondered if implementing a job-embedded book study on culturally relevant pedagogy with a small group of teachers would be a viable approach to studying culture in general and the cultures of our students more specifically.

Job-embedded learning is defined as "learning that occurs as teachers and administrators engage in their daily work activities." (Wood & Killian, 1998, p. 52) This learning is commonplace throughout the culture of the school. The success of job-embedded learning is contingent upon relevancy to the individual teacher, integrated feedback, and the transfer of new skills into practice (Zepeda, 2007).

Study groups exist when school faculty members gather to discuss instructional strategies, student work, school goals, or initiatives (Roberts & Pruitt, 2004). They provide teachers a space for collaboration, dialogue, planning, and team building (Zepeda, 2007). This job-embedded practice also serves as a forum for teachers to study relevant research and instructional practices to inform decisions about student achievement and school culture (Gusky & Huberman, 1995). After conducting annual summer book studies with teachers, Hoerr (2009) concluded that teachers and administrators need opportunities to discuss issues, consider perspectives, share ideas, and weigh possibilities.

Marrying job-embedded learning and study groups resulted in the implementation of the job-embedded book study of *Dreamkeepers* (Ladson-Billings, 2009) as the selected text for studying culturally relevant pedagogy. Ladson-Billings (2009) described

culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) as a pedagogical practice that builds on students'
personal and cultural strengths and interests. It benefited marginalized students by
providing them equal access to mandated, prescribed curriculums that were not designed
to accommodate their culture, interests, or their learning styles.

CRP takes into account students' communities and the resources within those
communities that are available to support academic learning. The effectiveness of CRP
hinges on teachers embracing, adopting, and implementing the tenets of the practice
which are (1) promoting students' academic success, (2) developing students' cultural
competence, and (3) developing students' critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Continuous calls have been sounded for revisions to traditional approaches to
teacher development to include an awareness of how teachers learn (Clandinin, 1993;
Kooy, 2006). A significant gap exists for researchers and school leaders such as myself
who are preoccupied with "what teachers know, how they know, and what is to be done
with their knowledge" (Kooy, 2006, p.15). Book studies have been identified as an
alternative approach to accomplish this goal (Burbank, Kauchak, & Bates, 2010);
however, teachers are rarely engaged in conversation based learning experiences (Florio-
Ruane & Raphael, 2000). According to Hoer (2009) faculty book groups are a powerful
tool for teachers and administrators "to share perceptions, consider possibilities, and
forge…organic solutions with wide ownership" (p. 81). When teachers participate in
book studies, they have the opportunity to examine knowledge, educational issues, new
ideas, challenges, beliefs, and a variety of perspectives that directly impact their practice
(Burbank, Kauchak, & Banks, 2010). Book studies also serve to liberate teachers from
the isolated confines of the teaching profession. The isolation in which teachers work is a

common thread in schools that is rarely noticed or addressed (Lortie, 1975; Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2000). Teachers are bound by the demands of their daily routines with little or no time to collaborate with their peers. They are the most knowledgeable of the complexities of their classrooms, yet they are often not afforded opportunities to engage in compelling learning about interests such as culture (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2000).

Although the phenomenon of book clubs has been documented (Kooy, 1998, 2000; McMahon & Raphael, 1997, Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995), the investigation by scholars in the academy has been minimal due to the perceived lack of credibility (Kooy, 2006). This could be the result of the historical, white, female domination of book club members (Kooy2006).

The role of the principal in professional learning communities is clearly defined in the literature (Dufour, Dufour, & Eaker, 2008; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Kanold, 2008; Lick & Murphy, 2007; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Murphy & Lick, 2005; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Zepeda, 1999) as the lead developer, supporter, and evaluator of the professional learning that occurs in their schools. Principals should ensure that learning is job-embedded and not the traditional "go and get," "sit and get" type of learning. Murphy and Lick (2005) strongly suggested that principals learn alongside their teachers; however, this suggestion is frequently demonstrated by the principal through study group visits, reading and commenting on logs documenting the work of a group, and providing resources for study groups (Lick & Murphy, 2007). While the aforementioned tasks are relevant, they do not constitute a shared learning experience engaging principals and teachers together. The exploration of what teachers and administrators learn about their practices when they learn together as active participants in job-embedded learning

activities is currently needed. Book studies can provide a forum for shared participation and personal-professional development (Murphy, 1992).

The call for job embedded professional learning in the literature began more than 33 years ago with the release of a 1977 report by the California State Department of Education (Joyce, Bruce, Birdall, 1977) that stated there "is very little job-related or job-embedded in-service education, and most of the important options for providing training are not being utilized. The enormous formal structure of school district and college related inservice education appears to be much less effective than the help teachers give to one another" (Joyce, et al., 1977, p. 8). Over a quarter century later, Croft, Coggshall, Powers, and Killion (2010) echoed the same call for job-embedded professional development activities particularly for high needs schools receiving Title I Federal Grant Funds. Findings from this study will address the need for increased job-embedded professional learning for these types of schools.

> Literary texts and social reading experiences offer generous locations for the study of teaching and learning, particularly in contexts where literary readings are shared, critically interpreted, and recreated with other readers. If books can become the language through which people narrate their own experience and understand the experiences of others, book club conversations can reveal considerable insight and innovative understanding into the learning and knowledge of teachers (Kooy, 2006, p. 14).

Research Design

This is a qualitative, case study employing poetic inquiry. Constructivism is the linking theoretical framework – specifically as associated with the construction of arts-

based understandings. This study is significant to teachers, school administrators, doctoral candidates, and other scholars interested in job-embedded learning through book studies when teachers and administrators participate in learning together.

Poetic analysis, a method that transforms research interviews, observations, transcripts, personal experiences, and reflections into poems or poetic forms (Faulkner, 2009) was used to analyze and re-present the data. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. In what ways do book studies support the learning needs of teachers and administrators in public school settings?

2. What do teachers and administrators share when they participate in a book study with their colleagues?

3. What do teachers and administrators learn about their professional practices as a result of participating in a book study about culturally relevant pedagogy?

According to Merriam (1998) a research project begins with the researcher examining his/her "own orientation to basic tenets about the nature of reality, the purpose of doing research, and the type of knowledge to be produced" (p. 5).

"The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). As principal, I assumed the role of participant-researcher as well as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. This role afforded me the opportunity to respond to the evolution of the study by summarizing, clarifying, and processing the data at any stage of the study. The data I collected as participant-researcher through audio recordings, reflection journals, literary autobiographies, field notes, culturally relevant artifacts, and observations provided a rich, authentic account of

the study that was not available through quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires.

Qualitative research "usually involves fieldwork" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). Typically researchers visit the research site to observe participants' behavior in their natural setting (Merriam, 1998). Wesley Elementary was the research site where I served as principal. I was able to observe the participants in various settings other than the book study sessions as they engaged with their colleagues, students, parents, and other school administrators and leaders. I was constantly engaged with the participants through other settings such as classroom observations and feedback sessions, grade level meetings, faculty meetings, and impromptu conversations.

"Qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). I used an arts based poetic approach to re-present my data. The goal of arts-based inquiry is to present data about the research participants. The intuition, subjectivity, and the emotional sensitivity of the researcher were regarded as valuable tools during the research process (Gallardo, Furman, and Kulkarni, 2009). By using poetic devices such as metaphor, symbols, imagery, and cadence, research poems provide readers an opportunity to develop a personal relationship to the work (Gallardo, et al, 2009).

Constructivism is a philosophical view of how people learn. Learners construct knowledge and understanding by actively experiencing the world around them. New knowledge and information is processed using past experiences and knowledge (Brown & Adams, 2001). Sparks and Hirsh (1997) recommended that professional development take a constructivist approach if teachers are expected to integrate parts of their

classroom repertoires constructively. Instead of knowledge being served to teachers on a platter by experts during trainings and workshop sessions, teachers and administrators should collaborate with peers to construct knowledge about the teaching and learning process within their own contexts (Sparks & Hirsh, 1999). A constructivist approach to professional development includes activities such as action research, dialogue between peers about their beliefs and assumptions that inform their instruction, and reflective practices like journaling and other activities that teachers may not view as professional learning (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

All case study research stems from the desire to obtain an in-depth understanding of a single or small number of cases in their real-world environment. This type of study results in new learning about real-world behaviors and their meanings (Yin, 2012). Yin (2009) defined case study as "an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). At the core of this research method is the ability of the researcher to retain the "holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Although case study is a well-recognized research methodology, there is little consensus on what constitutes a case study. This confusion is compounded by the process of conducting a case study that is conflated with the unit of study and the product of the study (Merriam, 1998).

The most essential characteristic of case study lies within delimiting the object of the study, the case. The case is viewed as "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which

there are boundaries" (Merriam, 1998, p. 27). The case could be a specific person such as a teacher, student, principal, a program; a group such as a class, team, school, community, or a specific policy (Merriam, 1998). The following technique can be used to assess the boundedness of the proposed topic. Determine if there is a limit to the number of people within the context of the study who could be interviewed or a finite amount of time for observations. If there is no end to the number of people of who could be interviewed or the observations that could be conducted, then the proposed unit of study does not qualify as a case.

I chose to conduct a qualitative, case study for the following reasons:

- The identified phenomenon for my study was the 5th grade team. There were seven members on the team who all agreed to be members of the book study group and qualified this phenomenon as a bounded system.

- Although I had the flexibility to select from six grade level teams, the 5th grade team was "intrinsically interesting" (Merriam, 1998) because of its unique and diverse makeup which is not inherent on the other grade level teams.

- I was "interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 1998) while I participated and observed the process of the book study.

- This study was unique in that my goal was to study culturally relevant teaching with my teachers through a book study on teaching and learning. I wanted to know how my teachers would respond during the book study and what we would learn from collaborating together.

Case study can be a focusing feature of action research studies. "Almost by definition, teacher research is case study: The unit of analysis is typically the individual child, the classroom, or the school" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 59). Within the action research paradigm, case study is an effective research approach for jump-starting the exchange between thought and action, helping to promote increased capacities of analysis, which make educational change actions possible (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). My goal as the researcher was to use systematic and critical inquiry to improve and/or change the context of the work environment (Bassey, 1999). Case study is a well-suited approach for people of action; in particular teachers and administrators, who engage in life, try out ideas, reflect on the outcomes, and try again. This recursive cycle of thought-action-thought finds a tranquil embrace in case study, a basic methodology for action research (Pine, 2009).

Researcher Subjectivity

I occupied three roles in this study: principal, participant, and researcher. Each role brought a unique perspective. I was most concerned about my role as principal and how it would ultimately affect the sessions. It was important for me to be cognizant of the reversal of roles during the sessions and throughout the study. Could I trust the teachers to speak honestly during our sessions? Would I be able to relinquish my natural inclination to lead the sessions as the principal? As the researcher, there would be times when I would need to be the facilitator. Would I recognize the differences? I thought about my existing relationship with each of the participants. How much did I know about each of them outside of their pedagogical, lives? Did they regard me as trustworthy enough to be open, honest, and critical without expecting judgment or retribution from

me? Would they consider each other to be trustworthy, and would they "be vulnerable, benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 204) to learn about culture at Wesley? These were intrinsic wonders.

Organizational relationships are continuous; therefore, individuals relate to a homogeneous network of people (Hoy and Tschannen-Moran, 1999). My relationship with the teachers was continuous, but I wanted them to allow me into "their" network, so that it would become "our" network. When individuals relate to the same network of people "there is incentive to behave in trustworthy ways, to develop a reputation for trustworthiness, and to garner the benefits of trusting relationships" (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999, p. 184). When trust is absent, people are cautious, and unwilling to take risks. They create a shield to protect themselves against betrayal to defend their interests (Tyler & Kramer, 1996). "Trust fosters cooperation while distrust undermines it," (Dawes, Van de Kragt & Orbell, 1990) and as a result, individuals feel compelled to engage in self-protection against opportunistic behavior (Limerick & Cunnington, 1993). Trust among the participants was vital to the functionality of the group. Without genuine trust, I believed our discussions would have been guarded and contrived.

With the exception of two teachers, I was about 15 years older than the other 5 teachers in the book study. Compared to the entire teaching staff, the average was slightly higher. Because of the age difference, I felt like a "surrogate mother" for everyone. I *always* referred to the teachers at Wesley as "*my teachers*." It was a term of endearment that expressed my maternal need to protect them from the hegemonic mandates imposed upon them because we were a "struggling" urban school with "problems." Outside district personnel thought that many of them were marginal

teachers; they were stereotyped. I constantly checked in with the teachers, particularly my new teachers and my white teachers. They were the most vulnerable at Wesley, and I wanted them to know from me personally that I cared about their survival, existence, and success. I had an open door policy; I was available to them, and I wanted my teachers to trust me. Throughout the study, I used the pronoun "my" quite often in place of the article "the."

Summary

By conducting qualitative research, Wesley was an in-house laboratory for us all, teachers and administrators. We became the "agents and source of educational reform and not the objects of reform" (Pine, 2009, p. 30). This action research study not only empowered me, but also my teachers as we collaboratively "conceptualized and created knowledge, interacted around knowledge, transformed knowledge, and applied knowledge" (Pine, 2009, p. 30) to our daily practices.

In this chapter, I offered orienting positions for the study by addressing the background, problem and purpose, significance, research design, and researcher subjectivities. In chapter two, I build on this foundation by presenting significant literature related to book study groups, culturally relevant pedagogy, poetic inquiry, and constructivism. In chapter three, the methodology that guided the study is presented. Chapter four describes the analysis of the data using poetic transcription. Implications, contributions, and suggestions for future research opportunities are included in Chapter five.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The primary design for professional development has shifted from a stand-alone workshop to teacher learning that is job-embedded in daily practice, promotes high quality instructional development, and connects to student learning (DuFour, 2004).

In order to provide quality professional development for teachers that will impact the academic achievement for all students, principals are encouraged to integrate practices inclusive of all faculty members (Mullen & Huttinger, 2006). Teacher book study groups are an approach to this type of practice (DuFour, 2004; Murphy & Lick, 2005). This chapter presents a synthesis of the scholarly literature pertaining to teacher book studies, culturally relevant pedagogy, poetic inquiry, and constructivism.

Book Clubs/Teacher Study Groups

Typically, book clubs have not been associated with professional development; however they hold potential for collaborative, open spaces for sustained learning for teacher inquiry (Kooy, 2006; Smith & Galbraith, 2011). Book clubs became popular during the 1980s; however, the current serge in the United States took flight during the 1990s with Oprah Winfrey's televised book club phenomenon (Long, 2003) which overwhelmingly resuscitated the reading lives of millions of people, (Kooy, 2006). Despite their wide spread acclaim, book clubs have rarely been the subject of academic inquiry (Long, 2003). The minimal interest within the academy is an anomaly

considering the popularity of this social phenomenon. Although book club membership

is heavily populated with women and mainstream popular culture, it appears that book

clubs have remained "invisible to scholars" (Long, 2003, p. ix). Bauman (1994) supports

this claim and wrote "informal book groups are an important and often overlooked

component of adult and continuing education. [T]he effectiveness and quality of book

groups… need to be studied, specifically within the context of the needs and expectations

of the participants" (p. 38-39).   Researchers have studied the effectiveness of book clubs

as an approach to motivate students to read and discuss books; however, few researchers

have studied book clubs as a method of adult learning (Bauman, 1994).

    Kooy (1996, 2000-2004,2006, Kooy & Wells, 1996), who has researched book clubs

and in particular women's book clubs extensively, addressed this "zone of cultural

invisibility" (Long, 2003, ix) and applied the book club concept to educational inquiry to

examine book clubs as a form of teacher development among women teachers.   Kooy

(2006) found that teacher study groups provided significant insight into an overlooked

field of experience that is more closely related to research interests within academia than

originally thought.

    The flexible, uncomplicated format of book clubs make them conducive to nearly any

locale taking on a variety of formats. Book clubs operate within a wide scope from

formal to informal, with and without facilitators, and can be conducted in university

classrooms, bookstores, cafes, living rooms, and other open spaces (Kooy, 2006). Book

clubs have also been conducted on public radio, television, and online (Kooy, 2006),

newspaper and library sponsored groups, neighborhood and work-based groups, and

parent-child groups (Barstow, 2003). Although there are all male groups, women have

primarily dominated the membership of book clubs (Barstow, 2003). After observing

eight monthly adult book clubs Bauman (1994), found that successful book clubs have a

diverse membership, a varied list of reading titles, semi-formal guidelines that are

established by the members, and maintain an informal context.

Reading is a social practice (Donoghue, 2000; Dressman & Webster; Freire &

Macedo, 1987); therefore, discussing books with other interested readers is a naturally

occurring response to reading a good book (Kooy, 2006). "Talk is one of the ways

through which human beings make meaning" (Kerka, 1996, p. 83), so through a shared

exchange of dialogue, book club members negotiate meaning, construct their thinking,

and internalize the voices of other members (Kooy, 2006).

Through discussions, book club members are able to transform collective and

individual experiences or understandings through discussions. Literary texts and social

reading experiences present opportunities to study teaching and learning in spaces where

the readings are "shared, critically interpreted, and recreated with other readers" (Kooy,

2006, p. 14). In book club settings, members "appeared to mine past and current

experiences for vignettes to tell in response to the themes and issues raised by the books"

(Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 69) they read and study. "If books can become the language

through which people narrate their own experience and understand the experiences of

others, book club conversations can reveal considerable insight and innovative

understanding into the learning and knowledge of teachers" (Kooy, 2006, p. 14).

Teacher study groups have been increasingly a dominate feature in research for

teacher development Clark, 2001; Hord, 2004; Freedman, 2001; Rust, 2001). Mullen and

Hutinger (2008) define study groups as the collaboration of faculty members to discuss

student work, instructional strategies, instructional practices, schoolwide goals and initiatives, and educational research. They support the "improvement of professional learning, coordinating adult learning with student needs adopting research-based strategies, enhancing teacher leadership, and building community and a common vision aligned with school . . . goals" (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008, p. 280) along with consistent dialogue and reflection (Zepeda, 1999).

Groups are often formed across grade levels or departments. This type of collaboration provides a space for teachers to discuss and monitor the implementation of what they are learning (Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman, Hensley, 2012). Kooy (2006) posited book clubs as places and spaces for relational learning. Teacher study groups convening to read and study books have become "storytelling places" where teachers' stories reincarnate. Within this space teachers negotiate meaning, and construct new understandings and new knowledge (Kooy, 2006).

Teacher study groups provide a forum for teachers with different backgrounds, skills, and knowledge levels (Murphy, 1992) to voice their beliefs, opinions, and concerns, and to exchange their ideas with their peers while engaging in inquiry about their teaching spaces. Within the study group space, teachers' voices and views become the foundation for meaning making and knowledge construction (Florio-Ruane and Raphael, 2001).

Discussions surrounding issues of culture and the rapidly increasing diversity among student populations across the United States are frequently silent from the responsive, dialogic exchange between teachers (Florio Ruane & Raphael 2001). The idea of studying culture among teachers requires a sustained professional development experience. Teachers need a space where they can collaboratively "grow in trust, explore

a complex idea by repeated passes through it from diverse perspectives, and weave into the exploration a variety of texts, including their own experiences and those of others" (Florio-Ruane and Raphael, 2001). This type of conversation based learning is rarely a customary component of teachers' learning experiences (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2001).

Florio-Ruane and Raphael (2001) conducted a three year study researching two study groups' context for teacher learning. One group focused on investigating culture, literacy, and autobiography through a master's course on culture, literacy, and autobiography. The second group was a voluntary book club called The Literacy Circle. Over a two year period, participants selected 24 novels to learn about teachers' culture as well as literacy (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2001). The study addressed issues in teacher education: the disparity in background between a largely Euro-American teaching force and the diverse students it serves; and the difficulty teachers experience meeting the academic needs of the students (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2001).

Both groups read and discussed ethnic and autobiographical literature. The principal investigators for the course group were university-based teacher educators; however, the participants of the Literacy Circle took responsibility for making decisions regarding learning within their group (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2001). Florio-Ruane and Raphel (2001) found teachers in both groups learned about aspects of identity, professional practice, and personal growth. They unexpectedly found that the teachers reported discovering themselves as thinkers as a result of their participation in the book discussions.

Identifying and selecting a problem is essential to the group study process. Once the problem is identified, the group members discuss and develop a plan of action that

includes deciding responsibilities within the group (Zepeda, 1999). It is within this space that teachers collaborate, take ownership of their learning, connect theory to practice, and construct professional knowledge (Clark, 2001) that is promoted through active dialogue and reflection centered around professional readings or instructional issues and concerns (Masuda, 2010).

The National Staff Development Council (2005) acknowledged the significance and success of faculty study groups. This type of inquiry is attractive to teachers because of the socialization and supportive environment that promotes learning about professional practice (DuFour, 2006; Murphy & Lick, 2005). This inquiry time ranges from voluntary book clubs to mandatory team-based study groups (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008). Murphy (1992) presented the following three reasons to support professional learning time reserved for study groups:

- Study groups support the implementation of instructional and curricular innovations. This regularly scheduled collaborative environment allows teachers with diverse backgrounds, knowledge and skills to learn from each other.

- Study groups support the collaborative planning of school improvement. This involves creating a work environment where there is a shared understanding of effective teaching.

- Study groups provide a vehicle for teachers to study research on teaching and learning. Teachers should actively collect and analyze data generated in their own classrooms to help them establish improvement targets to measure student outcomes.

Book Clubs as Professional Development

Recent educational conversations call for reinventing and reshaping the contours of professional development to encompass teachers themselves as major stakeholders in their learning process (Kooy, 2006). Teachers are encouraged to be "reflective practitioners" (Schon, 1983) who actively extend their understanding of their knowledge and praxis. This most effectively occurs in sustained learning in social groups (Clark, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Long, 2003)

Traditional professional development sessions often fail to meet the needs of teachers to improve teaching and student learning (Moon, Butcher, Bird, 2000). Recent studies of teacher development support teacher engagement in groups sustained over periods of time (Lieberman & Miller, 1999; Florio-Ruane, 2001). The focus is on small, self-directed, collaborative communities of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001). Revamping models for teacher development requires a fresh awareness and conceptions of how teachers learn (Black, 1992; Clandinin, 1993; Hord, 1997; Stokes, 2001). "What teachers know, how they know it, and what is to be done with their knowledge remains a significant gap for those eager to learn from teachers and about teacher development" (Kooy, 2006, p. 15). Teachers as learners connect their prior knowledge to new understandings (Kooy, 2006, p. 15). Authentic professional development of teachers is essential to educational reform and instructional improvement (Freedman, 2001) along with "*re*professionalizing teaching by forming communities of learning" (Kooy, 2006).

Kooy (2006) researched a teacher book club consisting of six novice teachers and explored the ways in which teachers understand and make meaning of their lives, develop personal practical knowledge of teaching, and constructed understandings of

literature and literary discourses in teacher book clubs. Over a three year period, the teachers met 10 times during open-ended discussions without specific session leaders. Criteria for book selection required that books contain some elements of education. Kooy (2006) found the women linked the book club experience to personal stories of teaching and life. As the book club meetings continued, the women constructed new stories of teaching from the stories in the readings, the other teachers in the group, and their own teaching experiences (Kooy, 2006). The women developed relationships that supported open dialogue, debate, the examination of their changing knowledge, and their experiences and roles as teachers. As a result of the book club, the women became a community of learners using stories to "conduct their epistemologies and practices of teaching and learning" (Kooy, 2006, p. 8).

Burbank, Kauchak, and Bates (2010) studied the professional development experiences of a cohort of 24 secondary preservice teachers enrolled in an urban, teacher preparation program. The study also included 12 inservice teachers who were employed at the research site. The two groups participated in separate book clubs; however, both groups were observed and interviewed regarding their perspectives on the utility of book clubs as an approach for professional development (Burbank, et al., 2010). Literary selections for preservice teachers' book club focused on issues relating to teaching in urban schools and the needs of diverse learners (Burbank, et al., 2010). Literary selections for the inservice book club members focused on issues related to equity in schools (Burbank, et al., 2010).

Findings were reported as three similarities and two differences between the two groups. The first similar finding was utility of book clubs (Burbank, et al., 2010). The

teachers cited three advantages for conducting book clubs as professional development: opportunities to reflect on current teaching practices; mechanism for increasing dialogue between teachers inside and outside school sites; and a platform to discuss educational issues in a nonthreatening environment (Burbank, et al., 2010).

The second similar finding was logistical challenges. Both groups cited challenges with limited time to discuss books which hindered teacher collaboration. The teachers also cited teacher isolation as a major challenge (Burbank, et al., 2010).

The third similar finding was the value of facilitated book clubs (Burbank, et al., 2010). Both teacher groups cited the benefit of reading texts related to teaching experiences. However, both groups found challenges with procedures such as teachers dominating the discussions leaving some members with limited time to engage in sharing (Burbank, et al., 2010).

The first finding of differences was analysis of text (Burbank, et al., 2010). Preservice teachers focused more on instructional strategies and teaching; inservice teachers focused more on institutional and organizational factors that impacted students and diversity (Burbank, et al., 2010). The second finding of differences was reflection and long-term impact (Burbank, et al., 2010). The data suggested that the most practical books for preservice book club members should address the theoretical and the conceptual along with the concrete and the practical (Burbank, et al., 2010).

Flood, Lapp, Ranck-Buhr, and Moore (1995) researched an elementary after school book club consisting of 12 elementary teaches, the principal, and two university instructors representing four different ethnic backgrounds (African American, Caucasian, Hispanic American, and Indochinese American). Participants read multicultural fiction

and maintained a response journal. They read literature that reflected the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students enrolled at the research site (Flood, et al., 1995). The researchers found that participants developed new perspectives about their students, and as a result, they changed some of their teaching practices. They increased their understanding of multiculturalism, and realized that exploring cultural backgrounds helped them to recognize commonalities and differences among themselves as well as the students (Flood, et al., 1995).

As a result of the book club, the teachers gained personal insights that influenced their interactions with their colleagues; they gained insights about the ways in which their knowledge of various cultures influenced how they interacted with their students, and they gained personal insights into the teaching and learning of literature (Flood, et al., 1995). The researchers reported that the changes they observed evolved over time, and required collaboration and discussion from everyone involved in the project (Flood, et al., 1995). This finding was attributed to a process that was necessary to establish trust among group participants which ultimately led to the group creating meaning by listening to a variety of perspectives (Flood, et al., 1995).

Walpole and Beauchat (2008) found in their work on teacher study groups conducted by literacy coaches that successful teacher study groups venerate the principles of adult learning and more specifically teacher learning. These principles are grounded in authentic, job embedded experiences (Walpole & Beauchat, 2008). Another characteristic of adult learning that was considered is the individual experiences that participants brought to the study group. Participants' beliefs, values, and assumptions are not always consistent with the goals and objectives of the group, yet challenges are to be

expected during collaborative work in learning communities (Walpole and Beauchat, 2008).

Teacher book clubs and teacher study groups serve as places and spaces for relational learning. These groups convene in a variety of formats and a variety of places where reading and studying books have become "storytelling places" where teachers' stories reincarnate. Within this space teachers negotiate meaning, and construct new understandings and new knowledge (Kooy, 2006),

Job-embedded Professional Development

Job-embedded learning is "learning that occurs as teachers and administrators engage in their daily work and activities" (Wood & Killian, 1998, p. 52). It is designed to improve teachers' content-specific instructional practices with the goal of improving student learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, Hirsh, 2009). Teachers work collaboratively assessing and seeking solutions for problems of practice as part of a recurring cycle of continuous improvement (Hawley & Valli, 1999; National Staff Development Council, 2010). There is a direct link between learning and application in day to day practice, which requires active engagement by teachers in cooperative, inquiry based work (Hawley & Valli, 1999). A job-embedded model of professional development is more beneficial when it provides recurring opportunities to apply new information and sustained learning (Richardson, 2007; Sparks, 1997).

The heart of job-embedded professional development is teachers participating in professional development during their school day that is with a focus on the current work of schools (Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers, Killion (2010).

Job-embedded professional development that is implemented and supported effectively, contributes to the development and improvement of teachers of a team or a school by creating spaces for teachers to discuss teaching and learning. (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009).

In schools where job-embedded professional development is conducted, teachers draw from the professional knowledge of their colleagues who are the experts within the school (Wei et al., 2009). Job-embedded learning takes place for teachers to share teaching strategies, reflect on teaching experiences, and listen to colleagues share best practices about new experiences or after implementing a pilot curriculum (Wood & Killion, 1998). Groups are often formed across grade levels or within departments, across departments, vertical teams, and teams of teachers engaged in results oriented work (Croft, et al., 2010). Possible activities for job-embedded professional development include mentoring, study groups, coaching, lesson study, action research, peer observation, examining student work, and virtual coaching (Fogarty & Pete, 2009). This type of collaboration provides a space for teachers to discuss and monitor the implementation of what they are learning (Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman, Hensley, 2012).

Teachers are learners and they benefit from a variety of opportunities for learning (Croft, et al., 2010). These learning opportunities require designated time, space, structures, and support to conduct job-embedded professional development. Support from school administrators is necessary to eliminate barriers such as excessive paperwork, non-instructional duties, and inflexible teacher schedules (Hawley & Valli, 1999).

Wood and Killion (1998) studied the factors associated with successful school improvement in five elementary schools, and found the significant difference was staff development connected to the schools' improvement plans and job-embedded learning. Interviews of principals and teachers revealed the factor that had the most impact on teaching and learning occurred during teacher work hours (Wood & Killion, 1998). During interviews, teachers and administrators noted two specific factors that made the most impact on their learning: action research and the study group (Wood & Killion, 1998). The teachers reported they used study groups and action research to learn about and implement new strategies. Future groups were formulated by teachers i pairs or small groups partnering to study an identified problem or a new instructional program or strategy. Future groups were also formed by the principal (Wood & Killion, 1998).

Teachers solve problems best when they identify areas needing change and when they develop the solutions (Hoerr, 2009). Faculty book groups are a compelling tool to develop solutions encompassing wide ownership (Hoerr, 2009). "Teachers and administrators need opportunities to share perceptions, consider possibilities, and forge solutions" (Hoerr, 2009, p. 80).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

"Culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education, whether that is curriculum, instruction, administration, or performance assessment" (Gay, 2010, p. 8). Culture encompasses a complex structure of "social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs" (Gay, 2010, p. 9) utilized to give structure and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

The manner in which teachers think, believe, behave, including the way in which they teach is affected by culture (Gay, 2010). According to Spindler and Spindler (1994),

> Teachers carry into the classroom their personal cultural background. They perceive students, all of whom are cultural agents, with inevitable prejudice and preconceptions. Students likewise come to school with personal cultural backgrounds that influence their perceptions of teachers, other, students, and the school itself. Together students and teachers construct, mostly without being conscious of doing it, an environment of meanings enacted in individual and group behaviors, of conflict and accommodation, rejection and acceptance, alienation and withdrawal (p. xii).

Despite the cultural, ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic disparity between elementary and secondary public school students and their teachers, it is imperative that teachers learn to "recognize, honor, and incorporate the personal abilities of students into their teaching strategies" (Gay, 2010, p. 1). Shevalier and McKenzie (2012) argued that cultural and linguistic diversity is a beneficial resource in urban schools and teachers who adopt culturally relevant teaching practices have the potential to effectively educate urban students. Thus, culturally relevant pedagogy offers an approach for schools to take notice of students' home-community cultures and with sensitivity to "cultural nuances" (Brown & Cooper, 2011, p. 67) integrate their cultural experiences into the classroom learning environment (Brown & Cooper, 2011). A significant problem affecting education is how to ensure that all students, especially culturally and linguistically

diverse students, achieve and reach their full academic potential (Brown & Cooper, 2011).

Researchers have deliberated over strategies to assist teachers in teaching about diversity as well as interacting with the diversity that exists within their classrooms in order to remedy the effects of cultural discontinuity (Brown & Cooper, 2011). Culturally relevant pedagogy is an approach to addressing diversity in classrooms (Brown & Cooper, 2011). As defined by Ladson-Billings (2009), "culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 20). Gay (2010) defined culturally relevant pedagogy as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 31). A primary tenet of culturally relevant pedagogy is for teachers to remain non-judgmental and inclusive of the cultural backgrounds of students in order to be effective in the classroom (Brown & Cooper, 2011).

Over the past three decades, researchers have examined the impact between school and home-community cultures on the delivery of instruction in schools (Gay, 2010; Irvine, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009). They have begun to document some of the ways that cultural dispositions, values and traditions can be adopted in the classroom and positively affect the educational experiences of students of color (Au & Jordan, 1981; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). The investigation of teaching styles and the home-community culture of students emerged from anthropology-

of-education literature and has been given many designations (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). Preliminary work that advocated integrating home-community and school cultures in developing viable teaching and learning environments described the phenomenon in the following ways: (a) *culturally appropriate* (Au & Jordan, 1981); (b) *culturally congruent* (Mohatt & Erikson, 1981); (c) *mitigating cultural discontinuity* (Macias, 1987); (d) *culturally responsive* (Cazden & Legget, 1981; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982) and (e) *culturally compatible* (Jordan, 1985; Vogt, Jordan & Tharp, 1987).

Erickson and Mohatt (1982) explored the interactions between Native American students in Odawa, Canada and their white Native American teachers. The teachers that were the most effective communicators were those that implemented an interaction method termed "culturally congruent." The term illustrates the various ways teachers adapted their speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structures to echo the students' own culture (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981). The researchers concluded that students and teachers behaviors should be acknowledged because they are culturally patterned behaviors. They also concluded that future research should address understanding the impact of teachers' behaviors on students (Mohatt & Erickson, 1981).

"Cultural appropriateness" was a term used by Au and Jordan (1981) to describe the literacy strategies teachers implemented with native Hawaiian students to improve their reading performance. The teachers focused on reading comprehension in small group instruction instead of word decoding (Au & Jordan, 1981). While in small groups, the students were encouraged to discuss their readings with each other in a manner similar to a storytelling method in Hawaiian culture (Au & Jordan, 1981). This method

of storytelling was conducive to students' learning style and positively affected students' reading performance (Au & Jordan, 1981).

Cazden and Legget (1981) found that teachers have to recognize learning styles and specifically students' prior knowledge as well as differences in how students process knowledge cognitively. They noted that teachers should be consistently reviewing and capitalizing on the learning styles of students (Brown & Cooper, 2011).

Jordan (1985) researched the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP), founded to support the elementary age Hawaiian children from low socioeconomic families to raise the school achievement levels to equal the national norms or standardized achievement assessments. Jordan (195) an anthropologist, discovered that the primary organizing concept of KEEP is cultural compatibility. The teachers created a learning environment that was compatible with the culture of native Hawaiian children in order to develop an effective learning system (Jordan, 1985).

Macias (1987) investigated the Papago Indian tribe's early learning environment and found even when the student's home culture is drastically different from the social mainstream, the teachers were able to integrate mainstream concepts into teaching and learning without compromising the students' home culture. Culturally competent teachers are willing to learn enough of students' home culture characteristics and understand cultural behaviors in order to plan the curriculum to meet the needs of students (Macias, 1987).

Vogt, Jordan, & Tharp (1987) investigated the use of elements and processes from the KEEP, program developed for Hawaiian children, to determine if the program elements could be used effectively with Navajo children. The research team found that

many of the elements were not culturally compatible because the elements were designed

specifically for the Hawaiian children; however, changes were implemented to meet the

cultural needs of the Navajo children (Vogt et al., 1987). Cultural compatibility is

believed to be the explanation for the success of KEEP, but could also be the reason for

the lack of success in other schools (Vogt et al., 1987).

Cultural diversity as a focus for professional development is a challenging subject

for teachers to discuss (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2001). Most professional development

addressing culture is of short duration. Limits on time diminishes learning about other

cultures, ethnicities, and races to studying the characteristics of ethnic groups in texts, or

through short, one time presentations by knowledgeable experts in the field (Florio-

Ruane & Raphael, 2001). Limited opportunities for teachers to study culture as a

complex and lived process, and lacking time to gain cultural understanding in and

through "multiple and complex, multi-voiced texts," (Florio-Ruane & Raphael, 2001, p.

12) teachers most often walk away from this type of professional development still

holding to their extant beliefs and prejudices (McDiarmid & Price, 1990). Chavez and

O'Donnell (1998) posited what is needed is a "process of critical engagement-with self,

others, texts, and ideas, not multicultural education as a set of techniques or discrete

factual content" (p. 12).

Culturally relevant pedagogy extends beyond students' use of language. It seeks to

use students' culture to minimize and even eradicate the negative effects of the dominant

White culture. These negative effects are the result of the absence of the representation

of the culture, background, and the history of marginalized groups that are displayed in

textbooks and the curriculum. The negative effects also manifest when school personnel

do not mirror the faces of the student population (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The primary purpose of CRP is to support the development of a relevant minority personality that presents opportunities for minority students to seek academic excellence while proudly identifying with their minority culture (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Culturally relevant pedagogy is a pedagogical practice that builds on students' personal and cultural strengths and interests. In essence, CRP benefits marginalized students by providing them equal access to mandated, prescribed curriculums that were not designed to accommodate their culture, interests, or their learning styles. Culturally relevant pedagogy takes into account students' communities and the resources within those communities that are available to support academic learning. The effectiveness of CRP hinges on teachers embracing, adopting, and implementing the tenets of the practice which are (1) promoting students' academic success, (2) developing students' cultural competence, and (3) developing students' critical consciousness. Teachers must be committed to the practice of CRP and become agents of change in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2009). For Black students who have been historically marginalized due to the inequities in educational policies and reforms, culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) could be a viable means for Black students to obtain access to academic knowledge by recognizing their cultural backgrounds.

There is a significant divide in the achievement of African American students and their white counterparts. The seriousness of this disparity in academic performance and literate competence is exacerbated by a range of social and economic problems facing Black students (Ladson Billings, 1995). According to Ladson Billings (1995), the recent focus has been on the cultural and ethnic conditions of children and the relationship

between these conditions and the context for learning; however, in comparison, less research has been conducted on how teachers frame culturally relevant approaches to learning. Additionally, there has been little research on how these teachers have dedicated their lives to teaching Black students. As the United States endures its largest influx of immigrants along with the increasing number of U. S. born ethnic minorities, the nation must be prepared to make necessary adjustments to face the changing ethnic texture of its citizens (Banks, 2001). The shift in ethnic demographics has important implications for schools and more importantly, classroom teachers (Howard, 2003).

Ladson-Billings (2009) researched the teaching practices of eight exemplary teachers and documented her findings in her book *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children.* Ladson-Billings (1994), Gay (2010), Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999), Klug and Whitfield (2003) and others have contributed to an understanding of the key philosophical, relational, and political orientations, attitudes, beliefs, and related practices that mark culturally relevant pedagogy. This empirical work with culturally relevant teachers finds that these teachers strive for excellence with their students by assuming the responsibility for their students' success (Brown-Jeffy; Cooper, 2011). They believe that all students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some. Culturally relevant teachers share a belief that children are capable of academic excellence, which is matched with classroom practices that insure high academic performance. They view knowledge as socially constructed and teach their students to critically analyze information. Finally, they root learning in issues relevant to the students' lives and help students make connections between their home community and broader national and global issues. In *The Dream-keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (2009),

Ladson-Billings describes the fundamental qualities of culturally relevant teachers as follows:

Culturally relevant teachers have high self-esteem and they hold a high regard for others around them. They see teaching as art and themselves as artist.   They become active participants in the community, because they feel a connection between teaching and the community. They highly encourage their students to become advocates in their communities and to give back to their neighborhoods (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Culturally relevant teachers believe that all students can learn; they are passionate about knowledge, and they view teaching as digging knowledge out of students. This knowledge is recreated, recycled, and shared in order to help students develop necessary skills. (Ladson-Billings, 2009). The relationship between the teacher and students is fluid and "humanely equitable." These teachers cultivate a community of learners who collaborate with their peers. Culturally relevant teachers expect students to learn from each other and to take responsibility for each other (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Culturally relevant teachers view knowledge critically. Excellence is a complex standard that accounts for students' diversity and individual differences (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Since Ladson-Billings seminal research on culturally relevant teaching nearly 25 years ago, "a newer, fresher version of culturally relevant pedagogy" has surfaced. Ladson-Billings (2014) calls this transition from culturally relevant pedagogy to culturally sustaining pedagogy "the remix" (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Culturally sustaining pedagogy, developed by Paris (2012), "seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling" (p. 93). According to Paris (2012), culturally sustaining pedagogy is an

alternative to CRP that encapsulates some of the most respected research and practice in the resource pedagogy tradition. It is a term that supports the value of our multiethnic and multilingual present and future (Paris, 2012). While still paying homage to culturally relevant pedagogy, Paris expanded the boundaries of culturally relevant pedagogy to introduce the nascent arrival of culturally sustaining pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2014). Culturally sustaining pedagogy incorporates the multiplicities of identities and cultures that represent 21st century culture among youth (Ladson-billings, 2014). Instead of focusing on one racial or ethnic group, culturally sustaining pedagogy causes us to consider the global identities budding in the arts, literature, music, athletics, film and even hip-hop culture (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

For the purpose of my research, I used the term culturally relevant pedagogy because it is the term that is synonymous with *Dreamkeepers*. "Pedagogical theory and practice can and should operate in a symbiotic relationship. If we are to help novice teachers become good and experienced teachers to become better, we need theoretical propositions about pedagogy that help them understand, reflect on, and improve their philosophy and teaching practice" (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

> We can no longer afford to be innocent of the fact that "collaboration" improves performance…It is stunning that for all the evidence and consensus of expert opinion, such collaboration—our most effective tool for improving instruction—remains exceedingly, dismayingly rare. It continues to be crowded out by our persistent but unexamined addiction to complex, overhyped planning and improvement models. Though such terms as "learning communities" and "lesson study" are heard more than ever, we hardly acknowledge their central importance in actual practice: It is a rare school that has established regular times for teachers to create, test, and refine their lesson and strategies together.
>
> Mike Schmoker as quoted in
> National Staff Development Council (2004, p. 5)

Poetic Inquiry

Poetic inquiry is a form of qualitative research grounded in arts-based inquiry that integrates poetry as a component of the research analysis. Poetic inquiry combines the tenets of qualitative research with the craft and canons of traditional poetry (Leavy, 2015). This analytic method transforms research interviews, observations, transcripts, personal experiences, and reflections into poems or poetic forms (Faulkner, 2009). The representation of data in poetic form allows the researcher to extract different meanings from the data, sort through different issues, and help the audience receive the data in different ways (Leavy, 2015).

The use of poetry in academic literature is multifaceted. It has been used "in" and "as" research as well as for presentation of research data, a source of data, and as a source for data analysis (Furman, 2006). Faulkner (2009) describes poetry as a "special language" an alternative language for researchers when other analytic methods cannot capture the essence of… research participants (Faulkner, 2009, p. 16). Through the intentional use of poetic tools such as "applied meter, cadence, line length, alliteration, speed, assonance, connotation, rhyme, variation and repetition, poetry can evoke embodied responses in listeners and readers by recreating speech in ways that traditional research prose cannot" (Richardson, 1997, p.143). "Poetry invites us to experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience" (Leggo, 2008, p. 165). A form of representation, poetry depends on the "silences and pauses of speech" (Richardson, 1991, p. 173) and is more similar to oral representation than prose (Richardson, 1991). Poetry is visual and oral, speakable and readable (Richardson, 1991).

Poetic inquiry is often presented in several different formats such as a prosed-based essay with poetry intertwined throughout, published as a single poem, suite of poems, or published with visual images, art, or photography (Prendergrast, 2009). Poetic inquiry has been presented in a variety of literary forms such as Haiku, Tanka, Pantoum, Sestina, I-poems, found poems, free verse, or rhyming verse (Prendergrast, 2009). Scholars have used poetic inquiry to express affective experiences by conducting research on interests such as being a girl, a student, a teacher, a social worker, a nurse, a cancer patient, a refugee, an immigrant, and an anthropologist in an alien culture.

In the last decade, poetic inquiry has become a growing movement that has gained acceptance among research conferences and peer-reviewed publications (Prendergast, 2009). "Somewhere between word and music, poems open a space to represent data in ways that, for some researchers, are attentive to multiple meanings, identity work, and accessing subjugated perspectives" (Leavy, 2015, p. 78).

Undertaking a poetic approach to analyzing and re-presenting my dissertation data as poetry was a bold, audacious, and even risky attempt. My greatest fear throughout this process has been, is my poetry good, bad, or just good enough? Is it even poetry? Several arts based researchers have address this concern. Piirto (2010) addressed the question of quality poetry by judging three examples from her practice instead of judging published work. Piirto (2010) seemed to use a T-chart to evaluate her poems by progressing through a series of poetic devises determining whether they were a plus or a minus. "Crazy Is Good, a poem created from her travel journal of India (Piirto, 2010) was an inferior poem because it was "too expository" (Piirto, 2010). On the plus side, the poem has 396 word, and the title was provocative, "because it goes against common wisdom.

The poems as research conveys descriptive detail about the site. The poem described the interchange that exposes the interface between two cultures" (Piirto, 2010). On the minus side, words in phrases such as "to be" indicated that the poem was not tight enough; a lack of resonant images. (Piirto, 2010). Although the poems has about equal numbers of plus and minus entries on the t-chart, Piirto (2010) was reminded by her colleagues at the Albuquerque Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER) Special Interest Group Conference of AERA, where she read the poem, that "Crazy Is Good" has merit for qualitative research purposes.

Eisner (1998), leaves the question of quality in arts-based research to the critics and connoisseurs to answer—"the artists themselves, the peer reviewers of the art world, those who have the power to move the domain." Lahman, Rodriguez, Richard, Geist, Schendel, and Graglia (2011) discussed the question "[W]ho may write these poems," and decided to call "this stance of research representation, in a spirit of encouragement and possibility of future poetic growth, *good enough research poetry" (p. 894).* The affinity to experiment with poetic transcription or found poetry is most often a result of "seeing" something in the data while planning to use a traditional analytic approach.

CHAPTER 3
PLAN OF INQUIRY

Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.

Robert Frost

The idea is to write it so that people hear it and it slides through the brain and goes straight to the heart.

Maya Angelou

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to explore what teachers and administrators learn about their professional practices as a result of participating in a book study about culturally relevant pedagogy. According to Merriam (1998) a research project begins with the researcher examining his/her "own orientation to basic tenets about the nature of reality, the purpose of doing research, and the type of knowledge to be produced" (p. 5). In this chapter, I offer an explanation of my orienting positions for this study in the following sections: introduction, significance of research, rationale for the research approach, research setting/context, research sample and data sources, data collection method, data analysis method, issues of trustworthiness, limitations and delimitations, and the linking theoretical framework – constructivism.

Significance of Research

The purpose of this arts-based, qualitative, case study was to examine how a job-embedded book study on culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) supported the learning needs of seven 5th grade teachers and the principal. Although professional development is

common place in the development of teachers, there are few examples of teachers and administrators learning together in job-embedded spaces. Employing a constructivist approach, the teachers and the principal discussed, and studied culturally relevant pedagogy by reading *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (Ladson-Billing, 2009) during the 10 week study.

Rationale for Research Approach

An explanation for the research approach is provided in the following sections in this chapter: qualitative research, case study, poetic inquiry, constructivism, constructivist approach for professional development, and book selection.

Qualitative Research

"Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Reality is constructed by individuals interacting in their social worlds. The assumption is that meaning is embedded in the experiences of people (Merriam, 1998). As the researcher, I have conveyed these meaning making experiences through the written words of my research by using poetic inquiry.

"The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). As principal, I assumed the role of participant-researcher as well as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. This role afforded me the opportunity of responding to the evolution of the study by summarizing, clarifying, and processing the data at any stage of the study. The data I collected as participant-researcher through audio recordings, reflection journals, cultural autobiographies, field notes, cultural artifacts, and observations provided a rich, authentic account of the study that was not available through quantitative methods such as surveys and questionnaires.

Qualitative research "usually involves fieldwork" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). Merriam (1998) suggests that researchers visit the research site to observe participants' behavior in their natural setting. Wesley Elementary was the natural setting for the research site. As the principal, I was an integral part of the research site. I was able to observe participants in various settings other than the book study sessions as they engaged with their colleagues, students, parents, and administrators. I was also constantly engaged with the participants in a variety of other ways such as classroom observations, grade level meetings, faculty meetings, and private meetings.

"Qualitative research primarily employs an inductive research strategy" (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). The intuition, subjectivity, and the emotional sensitivity of the researcher are regarded as valuable tools in the research process (Gallardo, Furman, and Kulkarni, 2009). By using poetic devices such as metaphor, symbols, imagery, and cadence, research poems provide the reader an opportunity to create his or her personal relationship to the work (Gallardo, et al, 2009).

"The product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive" (Merriam, 1998, p. 8). My data is best expressed in words. Using participants' quotes from the book study sessions and passages from their journals and literary autobiographies supported my research findings as well as produced a rich, description of the book study experience. This type of detail was difficult to convey using statistical data.

Qualitative studies can be emergent and flexible (Merriam, 1998). My research design was subject to changes and adjustments as it progressed. According to Bassey (1999), qualitative researchers understand that conducting interviews and observations can result in adjustments to the study while it is in progress. By sharing autonomy with

the fifth grade team, we had the opportunity to create and develop the discussion topics for each weekly session as we created knowledge together in our coffee break space.

Case Study

All case study research stems from the desire to obtain an in-depth understanding of a single or small number of cases in their real-world environment. This type of study results in new learning about real-world behaviors and their meanings (Yin, 2012). Yin (2009) defined case study as "an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). At the core of this research method is the ability of the researcher to retain the "holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as… small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes… and school performance" (Yin, 2009, p. 17).

Although case study is a well-recognized research methodology, there is little consensus on what constitutes a case study. This confusion is compounded by the process of conducting a case study that is conflated with the unit of study and the product of the study (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) stated the most essential characteristic of case study lies within delimiting the object of the study, the case. She viewed the case as "a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries" (p. 27). The unit of study, the case, could be a specific person such as a teacher, student, principal, a program; a group such as a class, team, school, community, or a specific policy (Merriam, 1998). I assessed the boundedness of the 5th grade team as the unit, and determined there was a limit of seven teachers within the context of the study who could

participate in the book study for the established 10 week time frame for observation of the weekly sessions (Merriam, 1998).

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Constructivism

Constructivism is an epistemological belief about what knowing is and how one comes to know. It is a philosophical view of how people learn, and a belief about individual interpretations of reality. Constructivism is theory about learning, not about teaching although it often interrupts the conversation on teaching. It is based on the assumption that humans construct their own knowledge, and that they not reproducers of someone else's knowledge (Zahorik, 1995). Knowledge is not predicated on a set of facts, concepts, or laws expecting to be discovered. It does not exist independent of the

learner (Zahorik, 1995). As learners attempt to bring meaning to their experiences, they create or construct knowledge (Zahorik, 1995). Learners construct their knowledge and understanding by actively experiencing the world around them. New knowledge and information is processed using past experiences and knowledge (Brown and Adams, 2001). In essence, learners are active creators of their own knowledge.

Fosnot (2005) defines constructivism as a theory about knowledge and learning explaining what "knowing" is and how one comes to know. "Based on work in psychology, philosophy, science, and biology, the theory describes knowledge not as truths to be transmitted or discovered, but as emergent, developmental, nonobjective, viable constructed explanations by humans engaged in meaning-making in cultural and social communities of discourse" (Fosnot, 2005, p.ix).

Constructivism has been influenced by a wide range of contributors with varying theoretical orientations (Jaramillo, 1996). Vygotsky (1978) is a primary contributor to constructivism through his sociocultural theory which predates constructivism (Jaramillo, 1996). Vygotsky believed that social experiences define one's way of thinking and interpreting the world (Jaramillo, 1996). As a constructivist, Vygotsky viewed constructivism as "a non-developmental aspect of education whereby a child's intellectual personality and socio-moral knowledge is 'constructed' by students internalizing concepts through self-discovery" (Jaramillo, 1996, p. 135).

Vygotsky's theory states that cognitive development progresses through three main elements: culture, language, and social interaction (Louis, 2009). Language and social interaction are regarded as the means by which culture drives cognitive development (Louis, 2009). "Language functions as the facilitator of social interaction,

and that interaction is then the means through which culture fosters cognitive development" (Louis, 2009, p. 20).

In order for cognitive development to progress effectively, Vygotsky identified three specific concepts. The first concept is the Zone of Proximal Development which describes the range of tasks that are too difficult for learners to complete without the assistance or support from someone more knowledgeable (Louis, 2009). Vygotsky believed that cognitive development occurs only when a learner is faced with a task that lies within the zone. If a task is too easy or too difficult even with assistance, no cognitive development will occur (Louis, 2009).

The second concept Vygotsky identified is scaffolding which describes that extent of the assistance given by the more knowledgeable person (Louis, 2009). As a learner completes a task within the Zone of Proximal Development, cognitive development is at its highest level when support from the more knowledgeable person is intense at first and then gradually diminishes as the learner's skill level improves (Louis, 2009). The goal is for the learner to complete the task individually and subsequently take on another, more complex task for cognitive development to continue (Louis, 2009).

The third concept is psychological tools which are intellectual mechanisms or operations one uses to explore the environment and interactions with other (Louis, 2009). Psychological tools such as written language, symbols, the scientific method and oral language substantiates the importance of social interaction to cognitive development (Louis, 2009). According to Vygotsky, psychological tools are shared with learners through social interactions allowing learners to develop deeper understanding of the world (Louis, 2009).

All three concept require effective social interactions to produce cognitive development; however, learners do not always know how to engage in social interactions that will result in appropriate cognitive development (Louis, 2009).

Constructivists are in search of how students learn by focusing on how each individual constructs knowledge in a social setting (Jaramillo, 1996, p.) The teachers in the book study group experienced a new situation, and for some, new information was explored. Meaningful learning takes place within authentic learning environments with learners engaging in authentic tasks (Brown and Adams, 2001). The book study was embedded within the school day making it an authentic learning space, and provided me an opportunity to observe how my teachers experienced the job-embedded open space. Unless teachers are given ample opportunities to learn in constructivist settings and construct for themselves educational visions through which they can reflect on educational practices, the instructional programs will be trivialized into recipe type approaches (Brooks & Brooks, 1999).

At the center of the constructivist approach to education is the understanding that learners are in control of their own learning (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards, Abghari, 2004). Philips (1995) identified three distinct roles for learners in constructivism: active learner, social learner, and creative learner. Teachers as learners infused in social interactive settings that promote discussions, debates, investigations, and explorations of various viewpoints instead of accepting the viewpoints of principals, administrators, or professional development "experts" provide powerful opportunities for active learning beyond textbooks and experts (Milbrandt, et al., 2004). When teachers have an opportunity to sound their voices and are given choices about how their learning should

progress, they are more likely to understand the process of learning (Daniels & Bizar, 1998, as cited in Milbrandt, et al., 2004).

Constructivist Approach for Professional Development

According to Sparks and Hirsh (1997), the implications of constructivism for staff development are profound and direct: professional development should take on a constructivist approach if teachers are expected to conduct their classrooms constructively. Instead of knowledge being served to teachers on a platter by experts during trainings and workshop sessions, teachers and administrators should collaborate with each other to construct knowledge about the teaching and learning process within their own learning environments (Sparks & Hirsh, 1999). A constructivist approach to professional development includes activities such as action research, dialogue between peers about their beliefs and assumptions that inform their instruction, and reflective practices like journaling and other activities that teachers may not view as professional learning (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Study groups for teachers can provide a learning space that has the potential to support adult learning (DuFour, 2006) as well as student learning (Murphy & Lick, 2005). Teachers who participate in study groups bring diverse skills and experiences. Constructivism supports the premise that teachers can make meaningful connections and construct knowledge that is infused into their existing repertoire (Mullen & Hutinger, 2008 as stated in Svinicki, 2004). "From a constructivist perspective, the study group structure supported authentic meaning-making through reflective practice, action research, effective feedback, and dialogue about beliefs and assumptions about pedagogical practices (Murphy & Lick, 2005; Sparks, 1997). In addition, the study group

structure supported the need for teachers to assume leadership roles and to make

decisions about important decisions about the format of the study. This type of active

engagement was critical to the teaching/learning aspect of the study (Mullen & Hutinger,

2008).   As the principal, my responsibility was to "provide a learning environment where

[teachers] searched for meaning, appreciated uncertainty, and inquired responsively

(Brooks and Brooks, p. 108). Principals must view themselves as teachers of adults for

job-embedded professional learning; they must view the development of teachers and

staff as their most important responsibility (Sparks and Hirsh, 1997).

Book Selection

Several books have been written on the subject of culturally relevant

pedagogy/culturally responsive pedagogy that I could have chosen for the book study, but

I chose *Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children by Gloria*

Ladson-Billings (2009) for the following reasons:

- *Dreamkeepers* is a qualitative ethnography that illustrates culturally relevant

  practices in authentic settings.

- *Dreamkeepers* was written specifically about Black and White teachers

  successfully teaching Black children.

- Ladson-Billings (2009) wrote in three voices: as a Black female scholar, a

  Black teacher, and a Black woman, parent, and community member. The book

  study teachers were able to identify with each of these voices in some aspect

  whether they were male or female, Black or White.

- Ladson-Billings (2009) wrote about her personal life and her memories as a

  Black student. She states, "I write in a style that may be seen as

methodologically 'messy'" (p. xv). She chose to dispense with the scholarly canon to permit subjectivity in her writing and the synthesis of her culture and personal experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2009). T

- Dreamkeepers is authentic, providing research based instructional best practices implemented by real teachers. The fundamental principle of the story is the pedagogical practice of the eight exemplary teachers (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

- *Dreamkeepers* is Ladson-Billings' (2009) seminal work on culturally relevant teaching is credible. It is highly respected throughout the academic community. According to Google Scholar, Dreamkeepers has been cited more than 3000 times in academic literature.

- The length of Dreamkeepers was conducive to the length of the book study. The teachers were able to read the entire book within the allotted time frame of 10 weeks.

Research Setting

The City of Evanston

The book study sessions took place at Wesley Elementary School located in Evanston, a small urban city located outside of a large metropolitan city in the southeastern United States. Evanston is meager in size compared to surrounding cities, yet it possesses the infrastructure and complexities of a large city. Evanston has evolved over a span of 125 years experiencing growth in its economy, population, housing, transportation, and government, but not without challenges.

In 2014, the estimated population for Evanston was 35,488 with the following groups accounting for the population demographics: Blacks 75%, Whites 16%, and

Hispanics 12% (United States Census Bureau, 2010). Between 2006 and 2010, 20% of

Evanston's residents lived at or below the poverty level compared to 16% for the entire

state (United States Census Bureau, 2010).

Depending on one's geographical location, Evanston continues to emulate the

charm and nostalgia it did more than three decades ago. There are sidewalks, manicured

lawns, community parks, sprawling green space, and a downtown area that hosts quaint

restaurants and shops. Residents are often seen walking or taking public transportation

instead of driving if they are in close proximately of their destination. A walk down

Charles Drive, or a stroll up James Avenue, or even a ride along Martin Street will reveal

the diverse complexities of the city. These three streets represent a cross-section of the

various neighborhoods that can be found within Evanston: modest red, brick homes,

expensive, restored World War II wood cottages and brick bungalows, and two sprawling

housing project communities all located within a few miles of each other. This is the

community where the children of Wesley Elementary call home.

Wesley Elementary

When Wesley opened its doors 12 years ago; it was an historic occasion for the

residents of Evanston. No other school had been built in Evanston in forty years. After

12 years in existence, Wesley remains a sight to behold. The red brick, one story, linear

building is lightly trimmed in off- white stucco, and looks picturesque as it sits nearly 200

feet from the main street. As you approach the school from the east or the west, your

eyes are immediately drawn to the roaming green, manicured grass that borders the

perimeter of the building. Throughout the front lawn are groups of strategically placed

crepe myrtle trees that bloom hot pink from spring to the end of summer.

Wesley is nestled in the middle of an aging neighborhood of mostly well kept, single family brick homes. A panoramic viewing of the community would prematurely deduce that Wesley is a typical elementary school educating children of primarily middle class families; however, when reality collides with perception, one begins to uncover the illusion resulting from the geographical location of Wesley Elementary. The explanation for this paradoxical encounter with geography can be attributed to the ever changing demographics of the Evanston community.

When I was appointed as the principal of Wesley during the 2010-2011 school year, student enrollment for grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade was 430, and 98% of students were African American with the remaining 2% consisting of a combination of White, Hispanic, and Asian students. The instructional staff was less than half its current size of 70 teachers; the social worker, media specialist, and one first grade teacher were the only White staff members, and there was a total of four male teachers. During my five year tenure as principal, I focused my hiring to create a more diverse teaching staff that included increasing the number of White teachers and male teachers. During the 2014-2015 school year, the demographic composition of the students and the staff looked quite differently than it did upon my arrival.

Student enrollment for the 2014-2015 school year was 875 students in grades pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The racial distribution for students was 78% Black, 18% Hispanic, and 4% White and Asian. Approximately 96% of students received free or reduced price lunch qualifying Wesley for Title I funding as outlined by the United States Department of Education (United States Department of Education).

The instructional staff consisted of 37 regular education teachers, 14 special education teachers, 6.5 early intervention teachers, 2.5 English Language Learner (ELL) teachers, three full time and four part time art, music, and physical education teachers, and 19 instructional paraprofessionals who support pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and special education teachers. There were 14 white teachers, 53 Black teachers, 10 male teachers, and 57 female teachers. The increase in student enrollment over the past three years resulted in the need to increase the teaching staff. Fifty percent of the certified teaching staff at Harris had less than three years of teaching experience. It is important to note that during the 2013-2014 school year, student enrollment reached a high of 920 students resulting in the need for eight outdoor classrooms.

Academic achievement at Wesley was inconsistent over the past five years. In 2013, the state implemented the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI) to measure student achievement across 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades. The index is a compilation of the following indicators: achievement (based on a statewide assessment for 3rd -8th grade students), achievement gap, performance of economically disadvantaged students (ED), English Learners (EL) Students With Disabilities (SWD), exceeding the bar, financial efficiency, and school climate. The data is compiled by the state department of accountability and schools are assigned a score from a maximum of 100 points. Wesley's achievement data for the three years in which CCRPI Scores have been reported indicated inconsistency as follows: 2012 (48.6), 2013 (56.6), 2014 (49.5).

The Open Space

It was around 10:30 on a Friday morning in late February that I sat at my desk in my office, the principal's office, performing the mundane tasks of approving time and

checking email when I glanced at my watch and abruptly discontinued working. Although these tasks were routine, this was not a typical Friday morning. After inspecting my desk, I quickly gathered scattered papers into well-defined 8 ½" x 11" stacks, and looked around my office to decide what needed to be tidied next.

My attention turned towards the mahogany colored laminate table that stood fixed on the right side of the room. My office was rather large, oversized to be exact, compared to most principals' offices. The 24' x 18' room was actually the conference room; however, a colleague suggested that I convert the conference room to my office, and use the much smaller designated principal's office as the conference room. The office was a near perfect rectangle with a large window located along the short, right wall. The walls were painted a soft amber hue that complimented the faint yellow specks sprinkled across the blue-green commercial carpet. A back door in the corner of the right wall opposite the entrance to the office led to the media center. During media center classes, I occasionally heard students laughing and talking. I would peek through the blinds that covered the small window in the door to see what was happening. I often joined the students for an up close look at what they were doing, and to ask them about their learning experiences. Half of the wall opposite the window was covered with blue, green, yellow, and beige textured wall paper. Because of its massive width and length, I hung burgundy and gold metallic artwork on the wall. Below the textured wall was a row of blue, built-in bookshelves that ran the width of the wall. The shelves were filled with 3 ring binders of curriculum and achievement data, colored folders, brown wicker lined baskets of markers, note pads, and large index cards, beige fabric cubed boxes hid cleaning and miscellaneous office supplies, school photo albums, and sets of instructional

"good reads" for staff members. There was also a small section displaying photos of my family and close friends, and memorabilia from my favorite football team and my college alma mater. I felt a since a pride about this section that I could view at a glance while sitting at my desk. My modest enshrinement emanated a subtle whisper that shared a few things about me personally and to hopefully remind visitors that I was more than just an administrator. Two lateral file drawers and a two- door coat closet were adjacent to the back of my desk, and finished off the coordinated office suite of furniture. The coat closet doors served as the backdrop for students' artwork and letters. A mini fridge, microwave, toaster, Crystal Springs, hot/cold dispenser, and a glass top table completed the décor of my office.

Next, I turned my attention towards the mahogany, laminate table that stood fixed on the right side of my office in front of the window. Its 6' x 4' rectangular shape was modest in isolation, but it was the six well-appointed mahogany armed, high back chairs with upholstered cushioned backs and seats that made the combination the impressive focal point of the room. A pair of chairs were positioned on the long parallel sides of the table and each of the remaining two chairs were placed at the ends of the table. Quite often the table would house mounds of miscellaneous reports, meeting notes, unopened magazines, or samples from educational vendors. In the middle of the table, I kept a container of various pens, pencils, and markers along with a Post It Note dispenser, a glass coaster set with the letter P engraved in the middle, and a small note pad that also displayed the letter P. Although there were two oversized soft, pillow back chairs directly across from my desk, most visitors went straight to the table and chairs. I always felt that my work desk created a barrier between my visitors and me. It was a symbol of

empowerment and disconnect that I chose not to embrace. So, I encouraged everyone to have a seat at the table.

I pulled several Lysol Wipes from the plastic dispenser and cleaned the table top. I then began filling a two-tiered, black iron fruit basket with an assortment of snacks, mini bottles of water, and juice boxes. There was popcorn, cookies, chips, and chocolate! The most sought after snacks among educators. Perhaps I should have placed more attention on what was about to take place in my office at 11:05, but I was more concerned that the atmosphere in my office exude comfort and relaxation. I was anticipating the arrival of seven teachers for our first book study session. I was obsessed with what might seem to have been minor details for such an important event. My focus should have been the agenda, the chalk talk, the consent forms, the journals, and the organization of the first meeting, but those elements had been taken care of for months. I was unwavering in my efforts to alter the structure and the ambiance of the teachers' weekly professional learning community (PLC) meeting. My goal was to provide the seven teachers with an opportunity to create a discussion space that would remove them from their conventional weekly morning meetings they were accustomed to enduring.

I took what would be the last look around the room. The table was set. I could hear light conversations and laughter as the teachers approached my office. Like a magnetic force, one by one with *Dreamkeepers* in hand, the teachers were drawn to the mahogany, laminate table to select a chair. Without invitation, the group began examining the variety of snacks and beverages. A few minutes later, the final teacher joined the group and pulled one of the chairs in front of my desk near the right angle of the table, and I pushed my desk chair into the group. "The Coffee Break" had

commenced. With mixed emotions of excitement, nervousness, and angst, I inhaled, took

a few seconds to admire the group assembled around the mahogany table. I exhaled, and

remembered thinking "This is it; we've finally begun"

      This was our open space; the space that was nonjudgmental, nonthreatening. This

was the reserved time when the teachers decided what we would discuss and how we

would discuss our weekly topics from *Dreamkeepers*. There was no designated

facilitator throughout the sessions, and there were no prearranged reading assignments for

each week. In our space, there was no sole expert to tell us what we should know and

learn. Instead, there were eight experts in the room, and we constructed our own

knowledge and created our own truths based on our individual authentic learning spaces

throughout Wesley Elementary.

      Mia summed up the book study experience with these words.

> I like the relaxed feel of being able to have a conversation and not be talked
> to. Feeling like my opinion was valued, just like everybody else's and we're a
> community. Because a lot of times, you have PL, and you're given some
> handouts; you're shown a few slides; you're talked at. I think; go forth and do,
> you don't necessarily have that connection. So I think this is a valuable
> experience where we're able to talk and dial up. Because we all have something
> valuable to bring to the table. And so you capitalize on that.
>
> <div align="right">Book Study Session 10</div>

Research Sample

      In order to determine the participants for this case study, I used a process that

Patton (1990) calls "purposeful sampling" (p. 169). "The logic and power of purposeful

sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information-rich

cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance

to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Prior to selecting the team, I

established a set of criteria that would help me bound the case making one grade level the

most suitable for the case study (Yin, 2009; Merriam, 1998). The selection criteria

essential to the study consisted of male and female teachers, veteran and novice teachers,

black and white teachers, teachers who transferred to Wesley from another school or

school district, teachers who earned traditional and alternative certifications, and teachers

who did not participate in a pilot book study that was conducted two years prior to the

research study. This set of criteria allowed me to gather data from a diverse cross-section

of teachers on this grade level representing the various demographic groups among the

teaching staff. There were only two grade levels that met the selected criteria. I selected

the 5th grade team and the assistant principal (also a doctoral student and my research

partner) selected the kindergarten team. Table1 provides a profile for the 5th grade team at

Wesley.

Table 1   Teacher Profiles of 5th Grade Team

Teacher	Race	Gender	Age	Years Teaching	University	Degree	Subject Taught
Annie	B	F	27	.5	Brenau University	MA (t)	Social Studies
Teaching Philosophy—*I believe as a teacher, you should exhibit a warm and nurturing attitude toward students, and express genuine interest. But the teacher also places limits and controls on the students' behavior. The teacher should be encouraging and motivate every student to do the best he or she can do.*							
Aria	B	F	39	9	DePauw University	BA (a)	Science
Teaching Philosophy—*I truly believe that all students can learn, and it's our job to teach them.*							
Grace*	W	F	25	2	Villanova University	M (a)	Reading/ELA
Teaching Philosophy—*As a teacher, I want to not only prepare students for the next generation, but inspire in them an independent desire to learn. The critical thinking skills we learn in reading are essential to our success. I believe that it is important to show students how these critical thinking skills can help them in society-not just when they are reading a novel or poem. I believe they need to see how to question the world and society in order to improve certain conditions that unfair and unjust.*							
James*	B	M	37	4	Morehouse College, Georgia Institute of Technology, Grand Canyon University	BS (t)	Math
Teaching Philosophy—*I am one that believes in being FAIR, FIRM, and CONSISTANT. The marriage of these three elements have yielded productivity in the students I have taught. Eventually, I desire for*							

my students to be self-motivated, guided, and directed as a result of my high expectations for them. The students are now working, performing, learning as if I did not exists is my desire.							
Mia	B	F	56	23	Georgia State University	M (t)	EIP Math/Reading
Teaching Philosophy—I believe that every child can learn, and that we as teachers must tap into whatever makes that child tick in order to make the light bulb switch on.							
Monica	B	F	55	26	Fort Valley State University	BA (t)	EIP Math/Reading
Teaching Philosophy—I believe that every child is unique and learns in different ways. I feel that supporting each student's individual development within a caring community helps them learn about themselves. Also, engaging children with the world around them encourages them to be positive about lifelong learning, and contributing members to society.							
Stacy	B	F	35	8	University of South Alabama	M (t)	Writing/ELA
Teaching Philosophy—I believe that everyone is capable of learning and it is our job as a teacher to spark that learning in any way that we can. We must get to know our students and determine the best way to reach them.							

Legend: t—traditional education program   a—alternative certification program   *taught 5th grade the previous year

There were seven 5th grade teachers. Five of the teachers had self-contained classrooms and two teachers were Early Intervention Program (EIP) teachers serving students who were six months to a year below grade level in mathematics and/or reading. The five self-contained 5th grade teachers were responsible for teaching one of the following academic content areas: mathematics, science, social studies, writing, English. The 5th grade students rotated to each teacher daily for 55 minute classes; therefore, the teachers instructed all 138 students daily with exception of students with disabilities who had alternate classroom settings as designated in their Individualized Educations Plans (IEPs). Two teachers taught 5th grade the previous year; two teachers were assigned to fifth grade from lower grades after the start of the school year, and a first year teacher joined the team in January of 2015. The first year teacher was not new to Wesley. She served as a kindergarten assistant for two years prior to resigning for six months to complete her student teaching.

The rights of participants were protected by adhering to the following procedures.

- First, the research proposal was approved by the dissertation committee, February 2013.

- Second, the application for approval to conduct the research study was submitted to and granted by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Georgia on January 6, 2015.

- Third, the school district approval to conduct the research study was granted on February 6, 2015 by the Office of Accountability/Strategy and Innovation.

- Fourth, a flyer outlining the purpose of the research study was given to the 5th grade teachers on February 12, 2015.

- Fifth, all 5th grade teachers were provided in writing details of the study and expectations of participants. Teachers were given the option to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Consent forms were given to the teachers outlining the expectations of participants and the researcher. Signed consent forms were collected from participants prior to commencing the study and remain in the possession of the researcher.

Data Collection

Qualitative data is described as "direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge retrieved from interviews; detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions," (Patton, 1990, p. 10) noted in observations and field notes; (Patton, 1990, p. 10) and "excerpts, quotations, or entire passages" (Patton, 1990, p. 10) taken from a variety of documents. According to Stake (1995), the selection of data sources should not be left to chance. "The researcher should have a connoisseur's appetite for the best persons, places, and occasions" (p. 56).   Stake

(1995) described the "best" as those entities that best help us understand the case. Data

collection entails "asking, watching, and reviewing" (Merriam, 1998, p. 69). Merriam

suggested that the idea of "collecting data" can be misleading. Data is not just out there

waiting to be scooped up (Merriam, 1998). Data must be identified initially by the

researcher and regarded as data for the purpose of research. Data collection techniques

and the information considered as data in a study are influenced by the theoretical

orientation of the researcher, problem and purpose of the research study, and the sample

selected for the study (Merriam, 1998).

The data collection period was from February 27, 2015 to May 27, 2015. There

was a total of 11 sessions. Session 10 was a combined session with participants from the

kindergarten book study group. The researcher for the kindergarten group was the

assistant principal at Wesley. Session 11 was scheduled for the teachers to share their

cultural artifacts. The study period extended through May 2015 due to scheduling

conflicts with spring break and statewide assessments. A description of each data

collection tool is provided below.

Audio Recordings

Each book study session was audio-recorded with a digital tape recorder, two

iPhones, and one iPad producing voice memos. Audio recordings provided a reasonable

account of each book study session as well as the audio for the transcription of each

session. Recording the sessions on multiple electronic smart devices provided portable

and personal access to the sessions at my disposal. Using multiple devices was a

safeguard against the possibility of a malfunctioning recorder. Listening to the dialogue

permitted a type of reflection that was critical to data analysis (Hubbard & Power, 2003)

Transcripts of Book Sessions

The voice memos of the 11 book study sessions were transcribed and reviewed by participants for accuracy and reliability. The transcripts were used to create poetry as well as for coding.

Participant Journals

The fifth grade teachers were provided notebooks to use as participant journals to record their thoughts about the book study sessions, *Dreamkeepers*' readings, or any aspects of the book study that may have impacted their pedagogical lives during the 10 week book study.

Researcher Journal

Hubbard and Power (2003) call journal entries "raw notes" (p. 92) the ones that are collected firsthand, such as jotted notes, observation notes, drawings and reflections. I maintained a researcher's journal to record field notes, descriptive, and reflective thoughts. Most entries were written immediately after the conclusion of the book study sessions. My plan was to record notes during the sessions; however, after the first two sessions, I realized that is was difficult for me to be fully engaged in the discussions and take notes simultaneously. The note taken became a distraction, so I decided to record my thoughts immediately after each session.

I made note of questions, concerns, and responses that came to mind while reading *Dreamkeepers* and the transcripts, and while listening to audio recordings. I also wrote my thoughts while I was analyzing transcripts to write poetry. These notes helped me document and come face-to –face with my own biases and subjectivities.

Cultural Autobiography

A cultural autobiography is a personal narrative that describes an account of significant events that have had an impact on the cultural development of an individual's life by highlighting significant cultural experiences such as successes, passions, and dreams. It can also include characteristics such as the writer's identity, beliefs, and perspectives on education, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, exceptionality, geography, socioeconomic status, parental status, marriage status, sexual orientation, educational level. The writer should consider how life experiences within cultural subgroups have influenced shaping his/her personality and identity in relation to others in his/her everyday life who might belong to different cultural subgroups. This document was important to the study because the manner in which we view ourselves as individuals significantly affects how we teach and our interactions with colleagues.

The cultural autobiographies "may begin a process of unearthing assumptions that lead to rediscovering truths about ourselves. . . that lead to making culture, particularly in schools" (Brunner, 1994, p. 31, as cited in Kooy, 2006).

Trustworthiness over Reliability and Validity

Positivists often question the trustworthiness of qualitative data because of their concept of validity and reliability cannot be applied to naturalistic work in the same manner (Shenton, 2004). However, there are measures that qualitative researchers can employ to address the issue of reliability and validity (Shenton, 2004). I used Rubin and Rubin's (2005) criteria for trustworthiness of data: thoroughness an accuracy, believability and transparency.

Thoroughness and accuracy was established by conducting member checks (Merriam, 1998) for accuracy of the audio transcripts and the poems. The transcripts and poems were returned to the teachers for their review giving them an opportunity to confirm, refute, or revise what was in the transcript or if the poems did not convey the essence of the session or their particular voice in the poems. Feedback was taken under advisement and adjustments were made to the transcripts and poems. If changes were requested, the poems and/or transcripts were returned to the participant a second time for approval. The poems were revised a minimum of three times, and some were revised as many five times. The revisions were the result of a combination of participants' suggestions and my re-reading of the poetry throughout the analysis process. Believability and transparency were established by participant selection methods and book session protocols.

Crystallization over Triangulation

Richardson and S. Pierre (2008) postulate the concept of crystallization, not triangulation.

> The central imaginary for 'validity' for postmodernist texts is not the triangle—a rigid, fixed, two dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angels of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns and arrays, casting off different directions. We what we see depends on our angle of repose—not triangulation bur crystallization. We have

moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and

particle (p. 478).

The prisms that were used in the study were reflected through audio recordings or book

study sessions, transcripts or audio recordings, participant journals, researcher journal,

cultural autobiographies,

Data Analysis

"Data analysis is a way of seeing and seeing again" (Hubbard & Power, 2003, p.

88). It is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to data to uncover what is

beneath the surface of teaching, classrooms, and instruction (Hubbard & Power, 2003).

Data collection is like layers of portraits in classrooms that are waiting to be focused to

expose the underlying designs that explain the picture. In order to explain the data that is

collected, the researcher enters a dialogue questioning it further, to find new meanings

and different rhythms (Hubbard & Power, 2003).

The data collected for this study were analyzed using poetic transcription.

Creating poetry using an audio transcript as raw data is known as found poetry or poetic

transcription (Collins, 2015). The poetic representation of social scientific data provides

qualitative researchers with a representational form that extends what they may already

do; however, poetry offers a particular form to express and present human experience and

should not be viewed as an alternate writing template (Leavy, 2015).

Poetic Transcription

Poetic transcription was used to analyze the book study sessions, journal entries,

and the cultural autobiographies. Poetic transcription is an approach to analysis derived

from a grounded theory perspective (Leavy, 2015). Glesne (1997) defined poetic

transcription as "the creation of poem like compositions from the words of interviewees" (p. 202). Faulkner (2009) described poetic transcription as an alternative method of using poetry as/in research. Poetic transcription permits entrance inside the world of the storyteller by preserving the speaker's style and by capturing the spirit of the story to characterize its range of meanings (Carr, 2003). According to Tedlock (1983 as cited in Faulkner, 2009), a person's speech is closer to poetry than research prose. The objective is "not only to analyze and interpret oral performances, but also to make them directly accessible through transcriptions and translations that display their qualities as works of art" (p.81).

Glesne (1997), Carr (2003), Faulkner (2005), and Leavy (2015) have developed similar processes for transforming interview transcripts to poetry. While crafting her research poems about Dona Juana, an elderly researcher and educator, Glesne (1997) developed the following process for poetic transcription beginning with three rules she established. The first rule was words in the poetic transcription belonged solely to the participant, not the researcher. The second rule was phrases and words from the participant could have been extracted from anywhere in any of the transcripts and were juxtapose. The third rule was to maintain enough of the participant's words together to convey the speaking rhythm and style. After several readings of the interview transcripts, major themes were generated from coding and sorting the data that illustrated different aspects of the participant's life. The participant's words were listed under each theme, "searching for the essence conveyed, the hues, the textures, and then drawing from all portions of the interviews to juxtapose details into a somewhat abstract re-presentation (Glesne, 1997, 205). Although Glesne (1997) planned to only use phrases and words

under each theme to create her poetic form, she found herself sifting through other coded data realizing that poetic transcription demanded a "less ordered structure" (Glesne, 1997, 206). In order to convey the emotions from the interview and to use Dona Juan's words, Glesne (1997) repeated words, dropped or added word endings, and changed verb tenses.

Whereas Glesne's process for poetic transcription focused on interviews with one individual, Carr's (2003) process focused on interviews with multiple individuals to investigate their experience of vigilance for family members who stayed at the bedside of hospitalized relatives. Carr (2003) limited the extraction of words and phrases from interview transcripts that depicted a specific theme, idea, or situation to one participant's transcript at a time. This resulted in a poem that presented words from one individual participant. This step aligned with Glesne's (1997) idea of preserving the participant's "speaking rhythm" (p. 205). Carr (2003) randomly chose eight participants' transcripts from several transcripts that were available to her. She contemplated creating and presenting poems in a chronological order, but decided on using themes from her data, because the data was already organized by themes. Verbatim phrases were extracted from identified themes in the transcripts and the phrases were juxtaposed to create a poem (Carr, 2003). Each poem presented a theme that described vigilance from the participants' perspective (Carr, 2003). After completing 10 poems, Carr (2003) noticed that most of the language was from one participant. She revisited transcripts for this participant and decided to develop poems from her transcript because the participant's words best characterized the five themes of vigilance (Carr, 2003).

Leavy (2015) illustrated her approach to poetic transcription using data from a study she conducted about the relationship between sexual identity and body image among college-age females and male. Interviews from 18 female participants were transcribed verbatim, assigned numbers, and systematically coded by two coders for intercoder reliability which resulted in an extensive list of large code categories (Leavy, 2015). The participants' exact language was used in poems for the final representation; however, the researcher retained complete control by selecting the specific parts of the data that would be used (Leavy, 2015). This process dramatically reduced the amount of data while emphasizing "aspects of it, that when crafted, [became] quite emotional and [represented] very personal experiences" (Leavy, 2015, p. 89).

Akin to poetic transcription, Faulkner (2009) used poetic analysis, a process of crafting poems from interviews first, prior to coding or thematic analysis to allow the themes of the research to emerge from the poems (Faulkner, 2009). The poems represented the data for thematic analysis. After the poems were constructed, audio tapes were transcribed and given to participants for feedback and corrections to ensure that participants' narratives were re-presented as they wished (Faulkner, 2009).

Researcher's Approach

A prevalent method of poetic transcription involves a thorough study of interview transcripts searching for themes and language, then extracting exact words and phrases from the data. The selected words and phrases serve as the basis of the poem (Leavy, 2015). This approach relies on a process of reducing the interview transcript to single words or phrases to represent segments of the interview transcript (Leavy, 2015). Although participants' language is the foundation of the poem, the researcher can

integrate her language from the interview into the poem (Leavy, 2015). This third voice (Glesne, 1997) refers to as the researcher's language that comes from the conversation between the researcher and participants. "Poetry offers practitioners a way to address the tensions between commitments to participants' voice and their own insights and political motivations" (Leavy, 2015, p. 84).

I modeled my analytic approach from an amalgamation of the four processes of poetic transcription and poetic analysis described by Glesne (1997), Carr (2005), (Faulkner, 2009), and Leavy (2015) to develop the method I used to analyze the data. The details of my analysis and re-presentation is described as follows.

After each session, I listened to the audio recordings a minimum of two times. The 11 recordings were transcribed verbatim, and were reviewed by participants after completion for accuracy.

The first read of the transcripts was conducted without noting comments, a process I refer to as "dry reads." The purpose of the dry read was to look at the data in its purest state with a clear mind as if reading it for the first time without attempting to make generalizations or assumptions.

During the second read of the transcripts, I used the comment tool in Microsoft Word to note my questions, thoughts, and emotions about the data in the transcript. Use of the comment tool allowed easy viewing of written comments along the right margin. (see Figure 1)

Figure 1. Transcript Coding 1
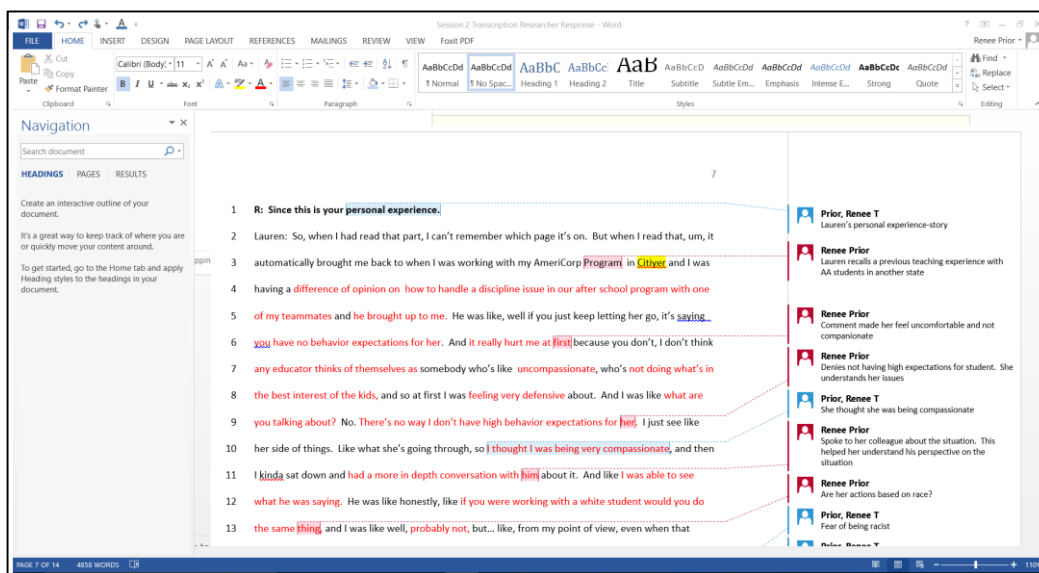
During the third read of the transcripts, I searched for words, phrases sentences, stories, passages, lines, and language that evoked emotion, sounded poetic, or made an impression on me. After reading Prendergrast (2015) and the process she used to create found poems from a selection of poems published in indexed peer-reviewed social science journals between 2007 and 2012, I reflected more on the selection process I used to comb through transcripts. My selections through the transcripts were guided by the following characteristics:

- Personal stories
- Surprise or the unexpected
- Classroom/instructional barriers
- Culture/race awareness
- Community
- Identity

Figure 2. Transcript Coding 2
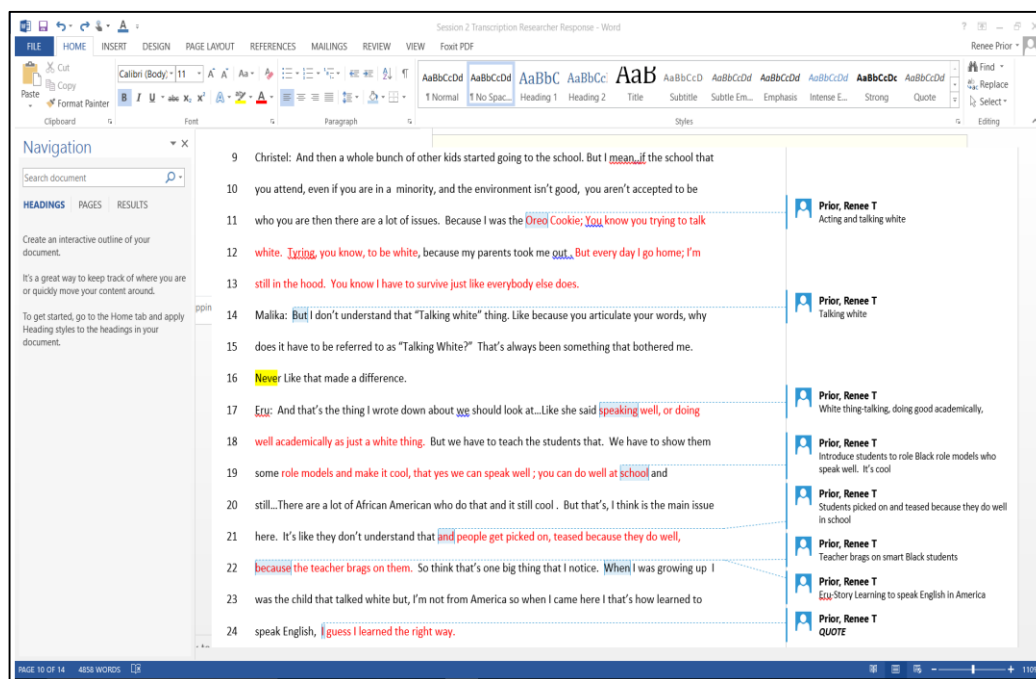
As I identified these gems of language to expose the essence of participants

experiences (Faulkner, 2009), I changed the font to red (see Figure 2 and Figure 3). The

next step involved a common method of poetic transcription that entailed cutting and

pasting text verbatim into a Microsoft Word Document (see Figure 4.) Using the

comment tool, I inserted the word "poem" with a brief description indicating the possible

subject of the poem. The poem comment made visual perusing along the margins of the

transcripts for poetic language easy to locate.

Figure 3. Transcript Coding 3
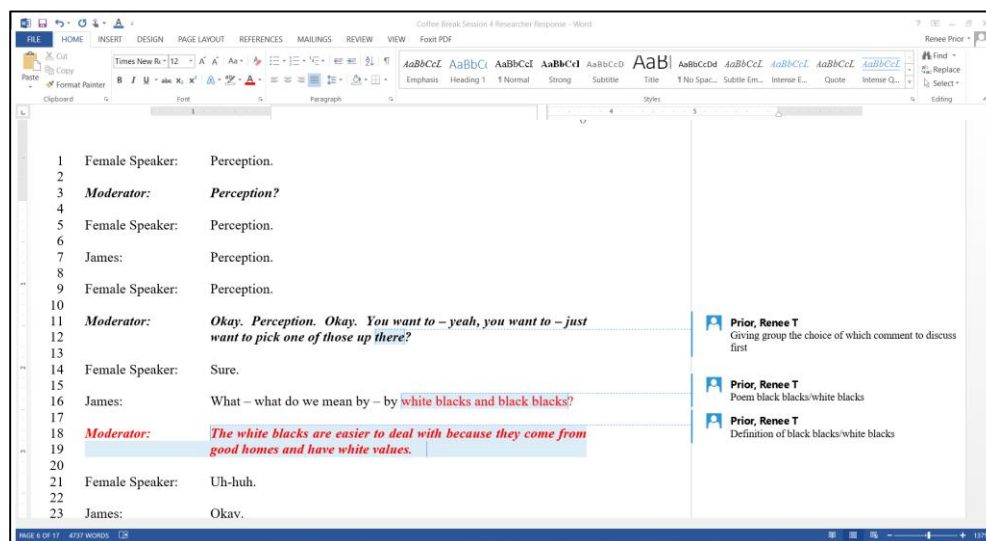
Figure 4. Poetry Draft
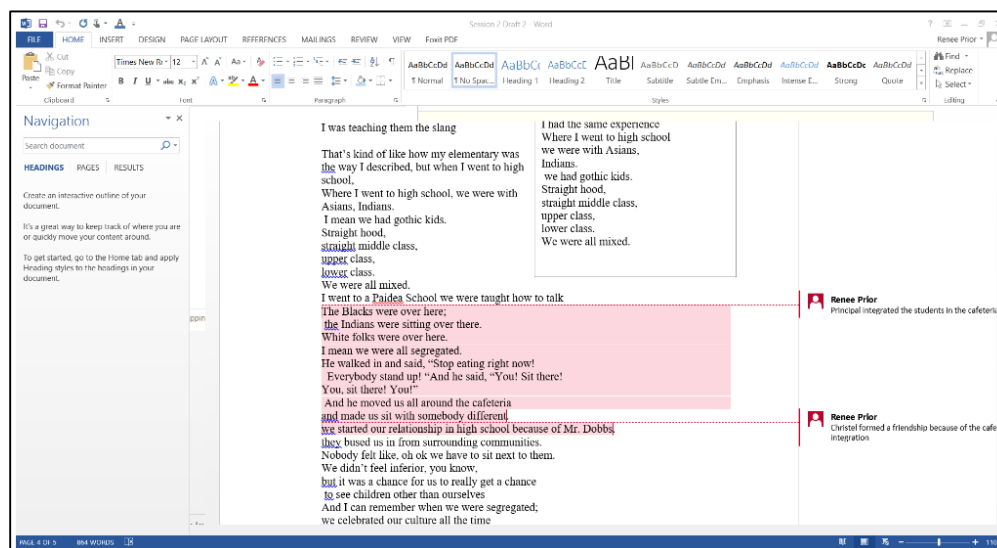
Mixed-voiced and single-voiced poems (Leavy, 2015) were created using

language from individual participants as well as multiple participants. Initially, poems

were created by session; however, as I progressed through the sessions, I noticed that

comments began to reoccur. As I noticed these reoccurring instances, I extracted

language from participants across multiple sessions. Within the transcript, references to

page numbers were highlighted light blue. Quotes and passages from *Dreamkeepers*

were highlighted yellow. I combed through the inserted comments in each transcript searching for additional categories or themes that were not identified with the topics the teachers developed from their readings. These categories or themes were inserted using the Comment Tool in capital letters. The process of crafting participant-voiced poetry or mixed voice poetry (Leavy, 2015) began with copying and pasting red text from Session One into a Microsoft Word Document. The red text was manipulated on the page to create a poetic look, sound, and feel by continuing to extract words, create line breaks, stanzas, enjambments, and using poetic forms such as Haiku, Pantoun, Tankas, I-poems, found poems, and free verse poems. As poems were constructed they underwent several revisions.

I gave the poems to participants to read for clarity, and to ensure that their voices were conveyed accurately. I used the feedback from participants to make additional revisions to the poems.

The poems served as data, and were coded for themes. A chart was created to display the themes developed from the poems (see Table 2). Titles of poems were entered under the corresponding headings to identify the themes of all the poems.

Table 2. Themes from Poems

Empathy	Culture	Community	Frustration	Separation
Un-Common Grace	Un-Common Grace	The MOVE	Train Up A Child	Guilty
Missing VoicES	Train Up A Child	Breaking Barriers	Enough?	Debate
Do You See Me?	Thin Line	Deep In Community	Thin Line	
Thin Line	Kids' Kulture	Separate Separate	The MOVE	
Kids Kulture	Debate	My Cadillac		
My Cadillac	My Cadillac			

Separate Schools	Color Blindness	Effective Teaching	Teacher Support	Am I Enough?
Separate Separate	Do You See Me?	Train Up A Child		Un-Common Grace
			Train Up A Child	Train Up A Child
			Thin Line	Enough?
Barriers	**Frustration**	**Perceptions**	**Communication**	**Parents**
Un-Common Grace	Train Up A Child	Train Up A Child	Train Up A Child	Trilogy
Trilogy	Thin Line	Missing VoicES	Debate	Breaking Brarriers
Breaking Barriers	Guilty	Enough?		Deep In Community
	Kids Kulture	Guilty		Kids' Kulture
	Debate	Train Up A Child		Debate
	Black History			
	My Cadillac			

Instruction	Societal Conflict	Personal Story	Care	
Enough?	Black History	Thin Line	Enough?	
Black History	RISE	The MOVE	Do You See Me?	
			Thin Line	
			Kids Kulture	
			My Cadillac	

Transcripts, sticky notes that were generated at the start of each session, and topics that were discussed for each book study session were entered into a chart (see Table 3).

Table 3. Session Topics

Session Topics Submitted by Teachers		
Session1	Session 2	Session 3
Norms	**Embracing Culture**	**Embracing Culture**
•Relax •Be willing to share •Be open •First names only	Embrace students' diverse culture in the classroom & not express pity for them b/c of their circumstances.	Embrace students' diverse culture in the classroom & not express pity for them b/c of their circumstances.
Chalk Talk Responses	Students less likely to fail in environment where they feel positive about their own culture and are not alienated from their own cultural values.	Students less likely to fail in environment where they feel positive about their own culture and are not alienated from their own cultural values.

•How can we improve?	Let's determine what is wrong with their education, their families & their minds. Let's work on the family structure.	Let's determine what is wrong with their education, their families & their minds. Let's work on the family structure.
How do we already exhibit these behaviors? (of exemplary teachers)	Recognizing and trying to eliminate my own biases was hard at first. (pity, behavior expectations) but once I started to work on that I saw some differences in students responses to me in class.	Recognizing and trying to eliminate my own biases was hard at first. (pity, behavior expectations) but once I started to work on that I saw some differences in students responses to me in class.
Like culture like family, communication, socio economic status, ah parental involvement	When schools support their culture as an integral part of the school experience, students can understand that academic excellence is not the sole province of white middle-class students acting white.	When schools support their culture as an integral part of the school experience, students can understand that academic excellence is not the sole province of white middle-class students acting white.
Is there a correlation between perspectives, gender or age?	**Effective Teachers**	**Effective Teachers**
Educational policies and procedures that support	Who defines effective teachers? She asked parents, principals, colleagues.	Who defines effective teachers? She asked parents, principals, colleagues.
	Separate Schools	**Separate Schools**
Impact of culture on education and future	"The uproar over separate schools has masked the debate about the equality and qualifications of the teachers who teach African American students."	"The uproar over separate schools has masked the debate about the equality and qualifications of the teachers who teach African American students."
Applications to our school	Are there benefits to separate schooling? What are the benefits of learning in a diverse environment? P. 10-11	Are there benefits to separate schooling? What are the benefits of learning in a diverse environment? P. 10-11

Session1	Session 2	Session 3
	Separate Schools	**Separate Schools**
	Large #'s of African American students who are successful in private schools after leaving public schools.	Large #'s of African American students who are successful in private schools after leaving public schools.
	No challenge has been more daunting than that of improving the academic achievement of African American students. Burdened with a history that includes the denial of education, separate and unequal education,	No challenge has been more daunting than that of improving the academic achievement of African American students. Burdened with a history that includes the denial of education, separate and unequal education,

	and relegation to unsafe, substandard inner-city schools, the quest for quality education remains an elusive dream for the African American community. p. xv	and relegation to unsafe, substandard inner-city schools, the quest for quality education remains an elusive dream for the African American community. p. xv.
	Effective Teachers	**Effective Teachers**
	Who defines effective teachers? She asked parents, principals, colleagues	Who defines effective teachers? She asked parents, principals, colleagues
Session 4	Session 5	Session 6 & 7
Cultural Synchronization	**Cultural Synchronization**	**Qualities /Beliefs of Good Teachers**
African American children bring cultural strengths with them to the classroom that are rarely capitalized on by teachers. P. 19	African American children bring cultural strengths with them to the classroom that are rarely capitalized on by teachers. P. 19	Teaching as an art (vs technical) p. 48. A teacher's planning is only tentative. You just can't put a time limit on good teaching.
Lack of cultural synchronization	Lack of cultural synchronization	Teachers with culturally relevant practices have high self-esteem and a high regard for others
What happens between African American students & their teachers represents a lack of "cultural synchronization"	What happens between African American students & their teachers represents a lack of "cultural synchronization"	One dimension of culturally relevant teaching is the teacher's perception of themselves and others. P. 38 chart
"Prescriptive ideology and prescriptive structures that are premised on normative belief systems. WOW! I'm thinking of one size does not fit all! Wesley vs central office.	"Prescriptive ideology and prescriptive structures that are premised on normative belief systems. WOW! I'm thinking of one size does not fit all! Wesley vs central office.	Teachers with culturally relevant practices see teachers as "digging knowledge out" of students and help students make connections between community, national, and global identities. p. 52, 56
"Culturally diverse students' failure results from societal conflict." This could be still true today.	"Culturally diverse students' failure results from societal conflict." This could be still true today.	This job demands that you be up and active…My teaching is not about paper. It's about people.
		That's why my class is in constant search of ways to be successful. Projects-different kinds of things. It's scary to take risks in an environment like ours. P. 50

		Teachers with culturally relevant practices have high self-esteem and a high regard for others
Culturally Relevant Teaching Methods for AA Student	**Perception of AA Students**	**Teachers must be aware of cultures and communities**
Our students' need for a lot of encouragement.	"white-blacks" and "black-blacks"	Rossi's lesson linking current events to the community! So Good. P. 53-55
•How long does it take (might it take) to "transcend the negative effects of the dominate culture. Sometimes seems to be an impossible task •Teachers who practice culturally relevant methods	Behaviors toward academically at-risk students p. 26. Coaches v. Conductors • In her own words, she allows them to "get away with murder, because she feels sorry for them and wants them to know that she cares." p. 23	Ann Lewis emphasizes the idea of community. "They have to care about each other…before we can get anything meaningful accomplished. When we see ourselves as a team-we can do anything." We must have a sense of family. *We should try this-set the tone at beginning of year.
Our students' need for a lot of encouragement.	"…perceptions of African American students interfere with their ability to be effective teachers for them"	"Saying we are aware of students' race and ethnic background is not the same as saying we treat students inequitably." p. 36
Hold their own in the classroom without forgetting their own in the community." p. 30	How teachers see African-American students. Are our students labeled? What is really happening in our classrooms?	
	Their relationships with students are fluid and equitable and extend beyond the classroom. P. 28	
Session 8	Session 9	Session 10 & 11
Building Classroom Community	**Charlie Pippen**	**Joint Meeting & Artifacts**
Students don't think of their classroom as a place where they can be team members	I always had a problem with children visualizing because they don't know how to visualize. And she was able to get them to visualize. P. 1117	
If students don't see themselves as being family-if one does well, we all do well. If one fails, we all fail.	She was able to create a community so they supported the struggling readers.	
Build some type of short curriculum, even if it's the first week of school, where it's strictly about promoting		

teamwork and collaboration with themselves.		
Hold students accountable		
Curriculum		
However, in most low-income communities and communities of color it is neither the national commissions, the state boards, nor the local districts that affect the education of the students, it is the teachers. Whether they exercise it or not, classroom teachers (particularly in these communities) have great power in determining the official curriculum.		

Book Study Sessions

Prior to the first book study session, I created an information flyer (see Appendix A) about the study and placed it in each fifth grade teacher's mailbox. One week later, I met with the teachers to explain the purpose of the study, length of the study, and the expectations of the participants and the researcher. Consent forms were issued along with a copy of *Dreamkeepers*. I explained to the teachers that they could keep the book, if they declined to participate in the study. The teachers had until February 27, the first book study session, to return the consent form. All seven fifth grade teachers returned signed consent forms prior to the first book session.

The sessions convened once a week for 10 weeks between February 27, 2015 and May 27, 2015 during the regularly scheduled fifth grade morning PLC time. Although teachers were given a copy of *Dreamkeepers* prior to the first session, no readings were assigned. The scheduled PLC time was 45 minutes; however, our average session time was about 33 minutes, because the five self-contained teachers had to reserve time to drop off and pick up their students from art, music, or physical education classes. A few times, an unexpected visit from a parent or a student in distress required the attention of

one or two of the teachers. When this happened, we proceeded with the session as scheduled, and the detained teachers joined the sessions later.

Session 1: Crafting Our Open Space

Session 1 began with a welcome and a few words of appreciation for everyone consenting to participate in the study. Due to the recording of the sessions, I asked everyone to speak one at a time so that the recordings would be audible. I reviewed participant expectations and asked if anyone had questions. A time keeper was selected, and composition notebooks were issued for journal writing. I asked the teachers to write in their journals at least once a week regarding the readings, the session, connections to practice, or any thoughts, questions, or concerns they encountered. The Participant Profile Sheet was issued to the teachers. (See Appendix C). This document was used to collect demographic information from the teachers. There was also a section requesting their teaching philosophy, the impact of family background on teaching, and their knowledge of CRP. A flexible deadline was provided for returning the completed form. We discussed anonymity for the teachers, which resulted in them selecting their own pseudonyms. After a brief discussion, the following norms were established: relax; be willing to share; be open; assume good will; first names only.

A Chalk Talk Protocol was conducted using the following question which was written on bulletin board paper attached to the wall:

After spending some time reading or thinking about *Dreamkeepers* or giving thought to culturally relevant pedagogy, what themes, ideas, chapters, sections, concerns, thoughts, or questions would you like to discuss during our book study sessions?

Everyone responded to the question except for me. I did not want to influence their space or their thinking about *Dreamkeepers*. When time had expired for the Chalk Talk, James read the comments. Using a constructivist approach to guide me from this point, I asked the group what they wanted to do with the responses that had been collected. After a short discussion, they all agreed that the responses could be discussed during the weekly sessions.

Next, I asked the group how they wanted to design the discussion of *Dreamkeepers*. This was a critical juncture in the study for me. At this point, I had to relinquish my roles as the principal, the lead learner, the professional development facilitator. This was the time for me to learn from my teachers how they wanted to dissect *Dreamkeepers* to determine our course of study. After several suggestions, the teachers decided the readings for the next week were decided during the current session. They wanted the flexibility to continue the discussion on a particular chapter or topic if needed. They also decided that each session open with a Chalk Talk so that everyone's points of interest were recognized.

Before the session concluded, I asked the teachers to think about their favorite teacher and to share with the group the characteristics about that particular teacher that made him/her their favorite. During the pilot book study, reminiscing about favorite teachers set the tone for our work and opened a safe place to talk about our personal characteristics of exemplary teachers from the perspective of learners.

Immediately after the conclusion of the session, I closed my office door and wrote my thoughts about the session in my researcher's journal.

Session 2

The session began with a review of the norms that were established the previous week. Afterwards, Mia described her favorite teacher, because she was absent from Session 1. I reminded the group that the assigned reading from *Dreamkeepers* was the Introduction and Chapter 1, and that we had agreed that the session would begin with a Chalk Talk. The teachers wrote whatever resonated with them from the reading on sticky notes. The notes were posted on a closed door located directly in front of the table. After all the notes were posted, I read each note aloud. Suddenly, the teachers and I realized that themes were developing. After all the notes were read, the group gave me directions for moving the notes into categories. I suggested that someone write each category on a separate sticky note as a header for the notes, and I continued to move the sticky notes under the headers with pantomime like hand gestures. After our brief deliberation, the categories for our discussion were *Embracing Culture*, *Effective Teachers, Separate Schools, Cultural Synchronization,* and *Perception of African American Students.* The only category that was discussed for the remainder of the session was *Embracing Culture.* The group decided to reserve the remaining categories for Session 3.

Immediately after the conclusion of the session, I closed my office door and wrote my thoughts about the session in my researcher's journal.

Session 3

Norms were reviewed, and the group quickly began the discussion about *Effective Teachers, Cultural Synchronization, Perception of African American Students, and Separate Schools* with James as the facilitator of the session. By Session 3, the format for

the sessions was established, and group members followed the routine listed below for

the remaining sessions:

1. Review norms

2. Write comments about the reading on sticky notes

3. Post sticky notes on the door

4. Read the notes aloud

5. Categorize the sticky notes with headings

6. Prioritize the categories for discussion

7. Categories can be reserved or moved to the next session

8. New categories can be introduced at any session

9. The format of the session can be changed to accommodate the needs of the
   group.

The group decided on Chapter 2 for Session 4. I wrote in my thoughts in my researcher's

journal.

Session 4

Norms were reviewed. The group wrote points for discussion on sticky notes that

were posted on the door.   After sorting the sticky notes the categories were Cultural

Synchronization, Perception of African American Students, and Culturally Relevant

Teaching Methods for Students. The group decided to read Chapter 3 for the next week.

I wrote my thoughts in my researcher's journal.

Session 5

Norms were reviewed, and the discussion continued with the categories from

Session 4 Cultural Synchronization, Perception of African American Students, and

Culturally Relevant Teaching Methods for Students. The group did not discuss Chapter

3, but tabled it for Session 6.

Session 6

Norms were reviewed. I asked the group if there were any additional points or

comments about Chapter 2 before moving on to Chapter 3. Everyone was satisfied with

the discussion of Chapter 2, they began to writing points of discussion on sticky notes

and posted them on the door. The categories for discussion were Color-Blindness and

Equity, Teachers Must Be Aware of Cultures and Communities, and Qualities and Beliefs

of Teachers. Chapters 4 and 5 were scheduled for Session 7.

Session 7

Norms were reviewed and the same categories from Session 6 were discussed. The

group continued to discuss Chapter 3 and started to discuss Chapter 4. Chapters 5 and 6

were scheduled for Session 8.   At the end of the session, I briefly introduced the cultural

autobiography and the cultural artifact. The group received the directions for the cultural

autobiography. I wrote my thoughts in my researcher's journal.

Session 8

Norms were reviewed. The discussion continued with Chapter 5. Chapters 6 and

7 were scheduled for the last group meeting which was Session 9. Chapter 7 was

scheduled for Session 9. I wrote an entry in my researcher's journal.

Session 9

Norms were reviewed. Chapters 6 and 7 were discussed. Everyone had an

opportunity to share any last comments about Dreamkeepers and the book study

experience. The meeting between the two book study groups was discussed. One

additional group meeting was scheduled to present their culturally relevant artifacts and to submit their cultural autobiographies.

Sessions 10 and 11

Session 10 was the combined group meeting with both book study groups, and Session 11 was conducted immediately after the combined group meeting. The teachers presented their cultural artifacts.

CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS

If my poetry aims to achieve anything, it's to deliver people from the limited ways in which they see and feel.

Jim Morrison

In Chapter 4, I offer a suite of five sets of poems re-presented as data poems. The first set of poems were crafted from participants' cultural autobiographies. Six of the seven teacher participants submitted cultural autobiographies. The remaining sets of poems were crafted from across the nine book study sessions. I purposely do not provide meanings or explanations for the poems. "Poetry has a way of drawing us toward a phenomenon so that we feel the emotional reverberations of a shared moment" (Luce-Kapler, 2009, p. 75). I leave the interpretation of meaning to each reader. These 29 poems invite readers to this "way of representing holistically what otherwise might go unnoticed" (Butler-Kisber, 2002, p.234) in a traditional method of data analysis.

We
Accept
And
Embrace

I Am Annie
(Annie)

I was born in Brooklyn, NY in a large family.
I moved to Georgia at the age of 4, but
I have memories of New York,
    my favorite place where
I traveled with my family every summer.

I speak English, my native language.
My family is from Guyana, South America,
    the only English speaking country there.
I have a Caribbean background and dialect.
I am cautious when speaking because
I notice this habit of broken English.

I grew up with my mom, sister, and younger brother.
I visited my dad and his second family in Miami
    during holidays and breaks.
I have two half-brothers and half-sister

My culture has come through
experience and traditions
    of the Guyanese culture.
It is not completely different
    from American culture.
The Bible is important to me;
I would be lost without it.

I learned to write and read when
I attended elementary school.
I give credit to my teachers, but
I acknowledge my mom because
    she was very involved in my education.

I always wanted to be
    a kindergarten teacher since
I was five years old.
I had an older sister and cousins.
I played school with them.

I earned my degree in 2014 in
Early Childhood Education.
The most important moment in my life.
I had obstacles earning my degree.
    There was a time

I wanted to give up, but
    teaching was my dream job. Once
I finished my M. A. T in education
I felt accomplished.

Some define success as how much they
have accomplished or their credentials.

I am successful because
I love teaching.
I want to impact children's lives
I want to make a difference.

The Immigrant Child
(Stacy)

I was the youngest girl born to my family.
My oldest siblings were girls,
I fell between the two boys,
mostly bonding with them.

I was a tomboy playing
kickball, baseball, basketball,
marbles, and video games.
Took swimming lesson at the local Y,
never felt like sports were only for boys.
I was comfortable jumping rope, playing hop scotch.
Never cared for gender roles.

The fact that I speak English, places me
in a dominate subgroup.
My ethnicity is Eritrean
Eritrea is a country in Africa
Gained its independence from Ethiopia in 1993
I am saddened that people don't know
which continent Ethiopia is located.
My native language is Tigrinya
I don't speak it fluently anymore.

When I came to the US, I was four years old.
Started kindergarten and quickly learned English.
Since nobody could speak English well,
I didn't have help at home. By going to
school every day and watching television,
I learned to read, write, and speak English.

Growing up I remember being called
African booty scratcher.
To this day, I don't know the meaning.
When people hear my name,
they want to know where I am from.
They pronounce my name incorrectly;
I don't correct them anymore.

Teased for speaking proper English,
They said I was "talking white."
I was always questioned about my blackness
didn't really bother me.
I was proud of being smart.
I wasn't fazed by the teasing.

At the age of 8, my parents
split up. My mother's courage to
leave my abusive
father,
learn English,
obtain a driver's license,
get a job
inspired me to never
depend on anyone, especially a
man.

My single mother who
didn't speak English well,
didn't have much money
did have food for us
did have clothing for us
did have shelter for us
did have peace with us
made me work hard in school
and go to college for a better life.

Mother always spoke of education
while we watched her work hard.
I wasn't supposed to be successful,
but faith in God, hard work, and support
from family, I have a better life.

Being raised in the US by immigrant parents
had its challenges. My parent's morals and beliefs
sometimes clashed with American culture.

My mother went to a Catholic school
so we were raised Catholic.
Church played a huge role in my life
and my belief system growing up.
In high school, I began going to a Baptist church.
I never understood the Bible in Catholic school.
It was more about rituals than having a
personal relationship with God
The day I gave my life to Christ,
was the most important day of my life.

It saddens me we can't speak of Jesus at school,
but it doesn't stop me from praying daily
for students and staff.
I have students who are Jehovah Witnesses,

and can't say the pledge.
Muslims who have food restrictions.
Respecting everyone's religious beliefs, I create
an environment where students express themselves.

As we learned English and American culture,
our own culture began to dwindle.
Slowly, we stopped speaking our language.
Mother no longer prepared Ethiopian meals.
We began assimilating to the American culture.

I empathize with students that don't
speak English as their first language.
I understand what it is like for them to translate for their
parents and the grammar mistakes they make.

Being from a different cultural background helped me
teach students to take pride in their culture.
It is important to pronounce students' names correctly,
and acknowledge their ethnicity.

I take pride in being a true African American.
I want my students to take pride in their culture.

Cultural Lessons
(Mia)

New chapters, new beginnings
My cultural lessons were not lost on me.
My journey began during the
birth of Alaska and then Hawaii
both claiming America *their* home.
I was born to military parents assigned
to a base away from *their* home
I had no birthplace with
deep roots that I claimed *my* home.

Heartaches and obstacles
my mother endured.
A dysfunctional house and a
marriage that was not secure.
Working hard factory jobs
for my brother and me.
She never complained.
She just got the job done
for our family.

She never went to PTA meetings,
chaperoned school activities, or
served on any committees.
But I was a good, self-sufficient student.
Even though my mom had to be absent.

Mom relied on her dad's strength and perseverance
strong family values, and leadership,
In partnership with my grandmother, they
raised, fed, clothed, sheltered and educated nine children
building their home by hand on a modest income.

I had lots of uncles, aunts, and cousins.
Family was important back then in Georgia.
Gave me a good foundation which more than
made up for the lack of birthplace,
now that I claim Georgia as *my* home.
New chapters, new beginnings.
My cultural lessons were not lost on me.

The late 50s and 60s called for racial and educational reform.
Schools racially separated; resources unequal;
African Americans denied access to mainstream colleges.
Historically black colleges were important to the time.
My uncle was my first example of an HBCU graduate.
He began his career teaching.
Later became deputy superintendent,
and now school board President!
Success—My uncle.
He inspired me to teach.
My cultural lessons were not lost on me.

My husband and I have two children
who are now my best friends.
I was not a popular parent
when my children were young
No nonsense, no excuses.
My past instilled in them to
search for knowledge, and
explore opportunities.
They have solid educational roots.

I embrace and learn from
the cultural roots of family.
My past contributes to who I am
and who my children have become.
Looking to start new chapters, new beginnings.
My cultural lessons were not lost on me.

The Heights"
(Monica)

Life lessons learned
growing up
African American
upper middle class,
from Miami, FL
were immeasurable.

Richmond Heights,
my community in
SW Dade County was
purchased by a
Caucasian aviator,
founded in 1948
for Black veterans to
establish housing after
returning from the war.

Designed to benefit families,
from the late 60s through the 80s,
there were grocery stores, pharmacies,
laundromats, and dry cleaners,
barbershops, hair salons, gas stations,
pools, parks, and the post office,
the water plant, and rec centers
all for our convenience.
Families patronized each other
kept the money flowing in our businesses.
Never had to leave the community.
Gave me a sense of pride
to be from "The Heights."

HIP HOP CULTURE
(James)

I am a young, gifted, and black man
born to two God fearing parents
I am a 70's baby with an influx of
Passaic, New Jersey's
Love, Peace, and Soul
meets Greenwood Mississippi's
Bobby Blue Bland Blues.

 I am the oldest of three sons,
and the coolest older brother
God has created.
My childhood was filled with
the perfect blend of
city blocks and country fields;
pizza and collard greens;
roller coaster rides
and hammock swings;
laughter and "whoopings".
My childhood was nothing short of
memorable, enjoyable, and fun.

During my childhood,
"I met this girl when
I was ten years old,
and what I loved most
she had so much soul.
She was old school
when I was just a shorty.
Never knew throughout
my life she would
be there for me".

These words from the heart
of hip hop artist,
Common Sense,
Personify my introduction into
the hip hop culture
and the influence
it has had in my life.

From music,
to fashion,
to language,
to love
and relationships,
Hip Hop culture
has awarded me
some of the most
important,
saddest,
happiest, and
sweetest memories
in my life.

Growing up in this era,
I was able to see the true
and realness of people
and their culture outside
my immediate community.

The hip hop culture,
with its art of story- telling,
has taught me valuable
life lessons on
 love,
friendship,
 history,
politics,
business acumen,
and LIFE 101.

Although my parents
instilled Biblically sound
morals and values in my life,
there were situations and
experiences wherein Hip Hop
was not just the love of my life,
 but also that of countless friends,
girlfriends, and an entire generation.

Growing up in
Morris County New Jersey,
Succasunna to be exact,
provided me the opportunity
to experience a unique
and diverse community
that shaped and molded
the man I am today.

My community and village included
the African American Baptist church
as well as
Italian,
Jewish,
Polish,
German,
and other ethnic groups
that embraced similar morals
and values that were
fostered and stressed at home.

My academic matriculation
started in New Jersey's affluent
Morris County School District
where I am a Graduate of
the class of 1996.

I attended Morehouse College
from 96-99, Georgia Tech
from 99-2000, and graduated
from Morehouse in 2001.

I furthered my education in the
teaching profession at
Grand Canyon University where
I graduated Magna Cum Laude,
class of 2012.

Although neither one of my parents
graduated from college,
they still stressed and provided
a family culture of educational excellence,
hard work, and integrity.
As a result, my brothers and I

are all graduates of Morehouse College.
It is the Morehouse College experience
that further strengthened and
molded my character and cultural identity.

Benjamin Elijah Mays declared,
"There is an air of expectancy
at Morehouse College.
It is expected that the student
who enters here will do well.
It is also expected that once a man
bears the insignia of a
Morehouse Graduate, he will
do exceptionally well."

I came to Morehouse
in the fall of '96 with
this vision and goal in mind.
I have tried to live up to
this creed ever since.

As life plays out
according to God's plan
for one's life, I found myself
desiring the same experiences
my parents provided for me
with someone I could
love, laugh, and live
happily ever after with.

I found this "good thing"
in a home grown Georgia Peach,
HBCU grad, speech pathologist,
and lover of the same God
and principles my family embraced.

My goals and aspirations of
becoming a model teacher and
furthering this personal and professional
goal in educational
leadership/ administration roles
has been my intrinsic motivation.
This motivation is fueled by my faith
in knowing that my work is not in vain.

My wife's unwavering love and companionship,
my family's support and guidance.
These four factors fuel the seeds
that I plant in students today
who will hopefully produce good fruit
 in adolescence and adulthood.

The saying, "to whom much is given,
much is required" resonates with me
as I look over my life thus far.
I consider myself successful
but not content. Success is realizing that life
is good to those who reciprocate that
gratefulness back to their God,
family, friends, community, and the world.

Success is difficult to define and measure
because it varies for the individual.
For me, success is not easy,
 not guaranteed, nor is it promised.

However, it is the one thing that I trust God
will grant and favor me with, if I continue
to stay diligent to him and the man
He has called me to be.

un-Grateful Grace

Living between 2 worlds

The world where I grew up   **The world that I learned to live in**
where my family is from   **spent most of my young adult years**

These places are most clearly defined by socioeconomics.

The "world of the white, lower-class.   **The "world" of the white, upper-class.**

Trying to flip back and forth
Resulted in confusion, shame
As I tried to figure out
Where I really fit in.

I grew up in Trenton, NJ
same house my mom and her mom grew up.
The block, while poor, always looked nicer
than other parts of the city.
Because the families knew each other.
They worked to keep the area nice.
A busy street, full of loud, dirty trucks
Used to be the view from my front porch.

Across the street, a pretty view of the Delaware River
impossible to access due to
overgrown weeds, litter, and broken glass.
The block petitioned for a traffic tunnel, and
a park to replace the overgrown weeds and litter.
Signs, my speech, a public meeting. The plan passes.
Now the little row house is on a quiet street
With a nice view of a park and the Delaware River

I was reading before I started school
Mom made me work tirelessly on Hooked on Phonics
I remember getting through the most challenging book
 Are You My Mother for the first time.
Reading was important
Despite my parent's aversion to reading,
I was fortunate to grow up in a culture of reading.

Public education did not meet mom's standards.
Catholic School, the popular option to avoid public school.
Safe, small classes, but unchallenging environment.
Easily at the top of my class through school,
I helped mom with her community college homework.

Drama club, softball kept me busy.
Dad coached softball every year.
Mom, a room parent, part of the PTA
Working two jobs, but I knew they were around.

No negative influences like
drinking, smoking, hanging out with boys.

NJ SEEDS—Program for low-income students
with high academic achievement.
I cruised through the process and
landed in an elite, coed, boarding school.
A painful introduction to a
whole new world and way of living.

I was from a different world
than most of my classmates.
Students and faculty dressed for
formal dinner night.

We shopped at Kohl's.
Pantsuits, dresses, skirts, and shoes
$200 to dress for dinner.
I was excited, but felt guilty.

Wore my favorite pantsuit
and new, heeled shoes.
Lining up with dread, realizing
I was the only one dressed this way.

The other girls wore bright, floral dresses.
(Lily Pulitzer, I later found out)
I swore people were giving me weird looks,
but that could have been my imagination.

After that point, I never stopped being
self-conscious about
who I am or where I am from.

White upper class culture,
formal dinners
setting tables
sitting and conversations
boarding school taught me.
Something I never
experienced at home.

At home, everyone gets
home at different times,
wakes up at different times,
eats at different times.
We rarely had formal,
 sit down dinners
Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners
were never at one table.
Instead spread out over the house
with people mingling freely.

Boarding school taught me how
to speak and argue with others.

Growing up, my house was loud.
My dad is loud. He gets louder
when he disagrees.
We were physical,
using big hand gestures,
moving around when speaking.

                                        At boarding school,
                                        the girls were quiet,
                                        didn't use body language
                                        to speak and make a point.

My "accent" made me stick out.
Adding hard consonants and
shortening words in everyday speech.
"Nothing" became "nuttin."

                                        My classmates used softer language.

These realizations were difficult for me.
I began to feel the way I was raised *was wrong.*
They way my parents spoke *was wrong.*
The way they dressed *was wrong.*
The neighborhood I lived in was *all wrong.*
Why was there not a front lawn?
Why was the backyard grass so patchy?
Why could we hear the neighbors through our walls?
A rift grew between me and my family.
I argued with my dad once and he said,
I thought I was smarter and better than
Everyone else in the family
It was true, but painful to hear.

                                        College, a private school with similar demographics.
                                        This time, I was prepared for the people I met.
                                        To fit in, I used everything I learned in boarding school.
                                        I guilted my mom into buying nicer, more expensive clothes.

I never took anyone home to see where I was from.
To afford the nice dinners with friends, I babysat.
I spoke less frequently to hide my lingering accent,
that would reveal that I didn't belong.

The once outgoing, confident, young girl was

                                        replaced by a shy, reserved young woman.

My college friends knew my family didn't have much.
regardless of my efforts to hide it.
My parents never visited and took everyone out to dinner.

I bounced a check at the bookstore.
My name was on a list
"Do Not Accept Checks."

My phone would get shut off
Mom didn't have the money to pay the bill.

I tried to tell my friends
she forgot, but I realized
no one with money would
ever forget to pay the bill.
There was autopay to avoid that problem.

My room was not decorated as nicely as theirs.
When I was excited and spoke,
I was still too loud and abrasive.

A phone call from mom
Saying dad was sick.
Additional phone calls, she told the truth.
Dad had been abusing heroin.
He was experiencing withdrawal, going to rehab.
Anger, disappointment, sadness, guilt, embarrassment
How could I explain to my friends
that my dad was a drug addict?

Their *perfect dads* with
Their *perfect office jobs* and
Their *perfect family dinners* would

Never experience this problem.
I went home and took out
this anger on my mom and sister.
Blaming them for my dad's struggle.

As I have gotten older
I have learned to appreciate where I am from.
I still struggle back and forth
Between my life now and home,
I feel like two different people.

I still don't bring people home,
sharing one bathroom puts others in shock.
I've come to appreciate where I'm from
How I got here much more.
It took sacrifice—material and emotional
for my parents to get me and my sister
to where we are now.

Two hard-working, high school graduates were able
To successfully raise two college graduates.
It feels good to be able to pay my own bills
and help my parents with theirs.

The angst of moving between two
worlds would have been alleviated if

someone from boarding school or college

had acknowledged and validated

who i was and where i came from.

Culturally relevant teaching shows students
who they are and where they come from is valuable.
Teaches them not to reject these things,
but embrace and connect them with their futures.

We
Reject

RISE

Somebody wore a t-shirt with
A simple cotton bulb

"THE SOUTH WILL RISE AGAIN"

They say a race war is inevitable.
The new south-the old south
Will **RISE** again.

It's quoted on page 18,

Culturally diverse students'
failure in school results from
societal conflict.

Teacher of the Year

We had a teacher
several years ago, a
white teacher, young girl.
All she did was scream at kids.
She was "Teacher of the Year."

I just couldn't get
over that. It was hurtful.
I would think sometimes,
You're screaming at our babies;
you know nothing about them.

The Lunch Room

The blacks were over here.

The Indians were sitting over there.

White folks were over here.

We   were   all   segregated.

He walked in and said,

Stop eating right now!

Everybody stand up!

You! Sit there!   *You! Sit here*   *You!* Sit there!

You! Sit here   *You! Sit there!*

Sit there!   *You! Sit here*   *You! Sit there!*

He moved us all around the cafeteria,

and made us sit with somebody different

I'll never forget Anna Marsh,
an Indian girl.
We started our relationship in high school
because of Mr. Davis, our principal.

Guilty

White **Blacks**   and   **black blacks**

What do we mean?

White **Blacks**   and   **black blacks**

Read it again

White **Blacks** are
easy to deal with,
come from good homes,
have white values.

I'm sorry, but

**Black blacks are
less capable academically,
have behavior problems.**

That threw me off-guard.
I wonder how many of us
have thought that.

Maybe we all thought it,
but didn't use those terms.
That hit me hard.

Guilty
of thinking
in those terms,
but
you
know
you
do.
Slap in the face.

Separate
v. **sep**-*uh*-reyt

Separate
adj., n. **sep**-er-it

Separate   schools?

I don't know

about separate   schools.
What would   the benefit be

to separate   schools?
Would that   be fading into

more   separatism,
more   segregation?

Our schools   are   already separate
Without putting   forth effort.

Community   an economics

Divide   us

Communities   separate us,
Define   schools

Define   our lives
Whether we   want or not.

Bein' White

They said I was
The Oreo Cookie,
Chocolate skin with
Vanilla intellect.

Why you tryin' to be white?

Teasing
Taunting
Joking
Mocking
Teacher's pet.
She bragged on me.
The price I paid for speaking well.

Why you tryin' to talk white?

My parents traded
the neighborhood school
for the white one
across town.
School bell rings,
Back in the hood.

Why you tryin' to be white?

Straight hair,
Straight As,
Perfect elocution.

Oprah, Obama, MLK,
Angelou, Morrison, and Langston Hughes
Was their challenge a Tug of War?
A struggle to change or remain the same.

Why you tryin' to be white?o

Confusion,
Guilt,
Acceptance,
Pride
Discords of conflict between two worlds
A daily battle grounded in history.

Born in Somalia.
Moved to America.
Absent of English.
Present for learning.
Repeatedly asked,

Why you tryin' to talk white?

I'm not trying to
talk white.
This is the language
I was taught.
Did I not
learn it right?

We
Challenge

Missing VoicES

It bothered me. You had no male voice.
A field not populated with men, I know.
Out of 8 teachers, you could have had
one male voice. A male perspective
would have been interesting,
female educators versus male educators.

Ladson-Billings mentioned-that flaw.
That's when it triggered,
"How did you choose these 8 teachers?"
She asked principals, parents, and colleagues.
If she intentionally sought that male,
Her data would have been skewed, and
the research process is automatically off.

Gloria, you claim that we have
 a perception of African American students
as "deprived, and deviant"
You explained some teachers take
pity on African American students.

This was uncomfortable
for me to acknowledge.
I emphasize with students
I believe in second chances.
It's my forgiving nature.

Harsh punishment may seem
Racist coming from me.
As opposed to an
African American teacher.
Your point is valid.
Examine our perceptions
And where they come from
To articulate high
expectations for all students

Black History

Listen.

A senator is proposing a bill
Change Black history in the books.
Don't talk about slavery,
Makes Whites look bad.

That's funny, it's against
Common Core reading,
teaching kids to question
Who wrote this book?
What is their motive?
What bias might they have?

How can they master reading standards?
if they're told they can't learn
the other side of the story?

Who changes history?
Good, bad or indifferent,
It's what happened.
It is what it is.

Taking slavery out of books
eradicates hundreds of years.
It's like we just appeared.
Like we had no beginning.

Listen.

Do You See
Me?

You're black. Doesn't mean
you are transparent.   Color
is still important.

Thin Line

Prologue: I had a difference of opinion with one of my teammates on how to handle a discipline issue in an afterschool program.

If you keep letting her go,
it's saying you have no
behavior expectations for her.

     What are you talking about?
     There's no way I don't have
     high behavior expectations.
     I see her side of things,
     what she's going through.
     I thought I was compassionate.

Honestly?
If you were working
with a white student
would you do the same thing?

     Well probably not.

          I'm walking a different line.
          With black students.
          If I'm on them like
          black teachers,

          Oh, you're racist,
          some students said.
          Others told them,
          You're being ridiculous.
          You need to be quiet.

          I don't want to throw my
          relationship with them.
          Treating them white
          improved behaviors.

          Educators don't think
          of not doing what's
          best for kids.
          It's hard,
          A thin line.

ENOUGH?

When I got this job,
I wondered if I was what
students need at school,
if I was going to be
in the right place for students.

I don't want to go
into the school not knowing
what I need to be
for them. They are needy now.
Is it generational?

That is the question.
I'm old school even though I
try to adapt. I
know it's generational.
My discipline doesn't work,

But the caring is
there. My philosophy is
teach our babies, and
care about our babies, but
will that be enough for them?

We
Consider

Kids Kulture

What's the culture of our kids?
Their music,
Their language
It's changed so much.

What is the culture of our kids?
Young parents, kids
raising themselves.
It's changed so much.

Years ago, families
valued education, kids
behaving, wanting them
to do their best.

I don't know what to do.
What can you do to help?

Call parents.
Reach out.
Change the program.
Make it work.
Reach the children

What is the culture of our kids?
It's changed so much.

Community

Students have to care
and depend on one another.
They don't see themselves as a team
There's no team spirit in the classroom
to accomplish anything meaningful.

Someone called a student "broke."
He burst into tears,
and was ready to fight.

We haven't talked about
community in the classroom
There is no time.

We could talk about learning,
getting an education.
With community building activities,
at the beginning of the year
like Miss Lewis' class in *Dreamkeepers*.

.

We have to get straight to the curriculum,
remediation, and interventions.
We don't take time because of pressure
from the outside telling us to do this, this and this.

We need to address there is no sense of community.
But we don't have the opportunity
because they put so many parameters
around what we can and can't do.

Deep in the Community

Ms. Madden was covering a class
having a time with kids, until
Ms. Hayes came in
and broke it down.

Okay, I live down the street from you.
I'll see your mama tonight.

She walked to one kid,
whispered in his ear.
What she said, worked.
She has deep connections
living in the community.

How do we establish
relationships if we don't
live in the community?
How?

What if I saw parents
that attend my church
every Sunday, or every
Saturday at the salon
sitting under the dryer
having a conversation?

Would they feel connected to me?
Would it make a difference?

Sacrifice.
Do things in the community.
Encourage teachers to
see this approach.

Breaking Barriers

Nowadays,
it's difficult if you don't
live in the community
where you teach.

Because you're out of touch
with the kids and being able
to run into a parent
at the grocery store.

Oh, Mr. Jones,
Hey, how are you doing?
I see you're getting milk.
How is my kid doing?
He's not doing too well,
We need to talk about –

That connection
breaks the barrier
of a phone call.
Like an ice breaker

My connection with
parents affects not
just my classroom,
but the community.

When I started teaching,
I lived in Evanston. Could walk to the
middle school basketball games,
Easily go to high school games,

Building that connection
with parents was critical.
It broke barriers.
Changed kids

Nowadays,
it's difficult if you don't
live in the community
where you teach.

Now that I don't,
it's tough.

My Cadillac

It's nothing new,
a guy told me
when I bought my Cadillac
five years ago. He said,
My kids went to that school
20 or 30 years ago.

Was the community different?
Yeah, it was different.
Houses look the same.
Now grandmothers and grandfathers
in the same houses with
their children and grandchildren.

What we see in 2015
happened in 1980.
We don't talk about it.
We can't move on.

Do something different
in this community.
As opposed to the community
that never experienced crack
cocaine or those epidemics.

Can't ignore it.
Have to acknowledge it.
What's the plan?

Debate

Debate
What *is* the culture?
Many moons ago,
Downtown *was* the black mecca.

Black homes,
Black businesses.

Argument
We lost all of that.
Our culture was diluted
with European culture.

Segregation
We became weaker.
Didn't stand fast and
keep our culture.

Time
Has come and gone
More water is added.
Dilutes our culture

that kids don't know,
except what's taught in school.

We Recognize

The MOVE

Dear Mom & Dad,
Why did you move
from the inner city
to the suburbs?

I saw my friends
only once a week
at church.

Although high school
was fun, sometimes
I was the only
African-American child
in the classroom.

I was mad, because
you moved me.

Until I started teaching,
I didn't understand.

You sacrificed
to give me
a better education,
an advantage.

Love,
Your son

Train Up a Child

Nigel from last year came to visit
Mr. Jones, how are you, sir?
Good. How's school?
I'm doing very well
I'm in SGA.

> *Proud to see him*
> *in this light. Last year,*
> *I got so discouraged*
> *talking to him.*

> **You have to learn this**
> **before you leave me!**
> **No. You don't.**

> **Slow down.**
> **He's 10.**
> **Tomorrow, he doesn't**
> **have to find a job!**

> *Expose him.*
> *He still has years,*
> *to find himself,*
> *hopefully, in college.*

> *Now he's growing up*
> *to be that man,*
> *you envisioned.*

> > *Maybe it's something you did.*
> > *Like that old adage,*
> > *Train up a child*
> > *in the way he should be.*

> > *You're making a difference.*
> > *You planted a seed,*
> > *somebody else planted a seed.*

> > *Do a little all the time.*
> > *Give them a since of pride.*
> > *Maybe that's what we're missing.*

A
L
L

MIXED
      U
      P

It was the era of the
late 80s, early 90s.
There wasn't any
racism where I
went to high school.

        It was hip hop
        It was style, and
        It was fashion.

Where you get
those shoes from?
Flea market.
I wanna get some.

        I went to
        school with
        Italians,
        Jews.
        We had
        Yom Kippur,
        Rash Hashanah.
        We had every holiday off!

I had the same experience
where I went to high school.
We were with
Asians,
Indians
gothic kids.
straight hood,
middle class,
upper class,
lower class
We were all mixed up.

        Bused in from
        surrounding communities,
        nobody felt inferior.
        It was a chance
        to SEE children
        other than OURSELVES

Un-common Grace

reading
discussing

culturally   relevant   teaching
can   be   uncomfortable.

i wondered
was it possible
to be a good teacher
in a school where

I   represent   the

DOMINATE OPPRESSIVE CULTURE

many things
i have in common
with our students' culture
that others may not.

growing up in an

angry   turbulent   home

i empathize
with our students.
there is still

a   racial   barrier
that   must   be   acknowledged.

Trilogy

Major issue we
have is the marriage between
teachers, students and
parents. If you don't have all
three, then there will be conflict.

What happens in schools
where teachers, parents, students
seem to get it right?
Classroom success models for
African Americans.

We
Think

Prologue: Poem is in reference to *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*.

THINKING…

That stuck with me.
I started thinking.

NEVER MET AN UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENT

If we thought that of *all* our students?
Would *that* be easy to do?
Would *that* be difficult to do?

Do we think that?
Do we *actually* think?

WE HAVE NO UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

It would be difficult to do,
only because the way schools operate.

With all the standardized testing,
there's only *one* way to be successful.

NEVER MET AN UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENT

It's hard to focus on ways to be successful.
There's pressure revolving around
this *one* way to be successful.

Because of that, teachers have a
hard time thinking outside the box.

WE HAVE NO UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

Our jobs are on the line because of it.
We're in a tough position.

I highlighted on page 50, Winston says.
Her class constantly searches for ways to be successful.

NEVER MET AN UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENT

There are projects in her class.
She links success with other tasks.

In our school, kids are behind.
We're playing catchup.
WE HAVE NO UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

Test scores don't look the way
the district wants them to look.

We forget the ways our kids can be successful.
Nobody wants to risk trying a different way.

NEVER MET AN UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENT

People are scared to look at it in any other way.

WE HAVE NO UNSUCCESSFUL STUDENTS

Really.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS

I truly believe that everything that we do and everyone that we meet is put in our path for a purpose. There are no accidents; we're all teachers - if we're willing to pay attention to the lessons we learn, trust our positive instincts and not be afraid to take risks or wait for some miracle to come knocking at our door.

Marla Gibbs

The Doorbell Rang…

On a typical, warm summer afternoon in July 1996, two women unsuspectingly are about to converge upon an extraordinary relationship that neither could have imagined. Renee, was a third grade teacher, bored with the long, relaxing days of summer vacation, and decided to take a brief stroll in the neighborhood; however, destiny collided with divine intervention and Renee found herself standing at the door of a neighbor who lived two doors down the street. This was to be a brief, casual, "Hello; how are you?" After all, these two women were not close friends, they were just neighbors.

Renee walked up the driveway and stood in front of the mahogany glass double doors, and rang the doorbell. Arnetta, a stay at home mom and wife, answered the door. Even before the customary exchange of pleasantries took place, Renee detected that Arnetta looked somewhat frazzled; however, initially she decided to avoid commenting on Arnetta's disposition and continued with "I just came by to see what you were doing." With a look of despair and disdain, Arnetta explained that she was facing a deadline for an assignment that would be due in five hours. Arnetta was enrolled in an alternative

teacher certification program. Renee and Arnetta had discussed Arnetta's dream to teach on a few occasions. Renee took the same path to teaching a few years earlier through an alternative certification program, so it was Renee who encouraged Arnetta to seek the same program. After their greeting, the following dialogue took place.

Renee: Is there anything I can help you with?

Arnetta: Oh no! You're on vacation.

Renee: Do you want me to help you?"

Arnetta: What? I can't ask you to help me.

Renee: Do you want me to help you?

Arnetta: You're on vacation.

Renee: Well, I don't have anything else to do. I don't mind.

Arnetta: Okay. I could really use some help.

Renee: Tell me what I can do to help you.

Who would think that the ring of a doorbell would be the onset of a sister-like, friendship that has sustained nearly 20 years of unimaginable encounters, circumstances, and experiences? This was more than a chance encounter; this was more than just a friend helping out a friend. This was a teachable moment—the inservice teacher supporting the preservice teacher through collaboration. This is only the first example of the many instances in which Arnetta and Renee supported each other in education for over 15 years. There were times when they worked in different schools, and there were times when they worked in the same school together. Regardless of their work locations or positions, they had always been a source of support for one another.

The convergence of this friendship and professional relationship began when the doorbell rang. By opening the door, we embarked on a journey that has taken us on adventures through a variety of terrains: hills, valleys, deserts, and depressions. Together as co-leaders of Wesley Elementary School, doctoral students and research partners at The University Georgia, we have temporarily docked at the shores of our dissertation. In our quest to construct learning spaces in schools that value the cultures of all students, we explored how teachers experience learning about culturally relevant pedagogy with their grade level colleagues and administrators in a job–embedded book study on *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children by Ladson Billings* (2009). Both researchers worked at Wesley Elementary School; Renee was the principal and Arnetta was the assistant principal. Arnetta acted as research participant with the kindergarten team and Renee acted as researcher participant for the 5th grade team. We met independently with our groups. Each group constructed its individual identity, and met during different times of day. After the groups' final sessions, Arnetta and Renee convened a joint session of both groups. A principal and an assistant principal in the same school conducting research within their schools is a unique aspect of this study; therefore, we decided to co-author Chapter 5—Findings. The findings were derived from a convergence of analysis across Arnetta and Renee's data. Both of us mined each other's data searching for major similarities and differences. The results of the converged analysis of both sets of data yielded the implications and future recommendations that follow.

Convergence of Analysis

Findings and Implications

Finding 1 - The teachers learned to create knowledge construction zones for themselves and for each other. They framed space for storytelling in these zones. Through these stories, they were able to construct learning for themselves and for each other. In these zones, teachers had the autonomy and administrative trust to design a safe, non-judgmental, non-threatening, narrative environment conducive for their learning needs.

Mia (5th grade): I thought it was refreshing. It's not often that we get a chance to talk amongst adult friends and to talk about subjects that may be off limits or maybe not friendly all the time. We talked about culture in a non-judgmental environment and I learned a lot.

Clara (Kindergarten): I felt that I already knew my team, but after this experience, it kind of opened up doors that I didn't know about. And even within myself, like I opened up to my team, I believe, more than I did before.

Alex (Kindergarten): I agree with Clara. Me and my team, we were always close, but discussing the book, you got to know their perception on stuff that you guys might not usually talk about or discuss. So we got to experience those things and it was a no judgment, but it was good to know because they let us know some things. And we let them know some things and everybody out there like came out of there, just like smarter in other areas, that you were just unfamiliar with. Well, this is how my culture thinks and well, this is how we are and some people are. So it was interesting. And a learning experience.

Implications: The knowledge construction zone is a safe, non-judgmental, non-threatening space created by the learners that inhabit it. Zones look different for different groups of learners depending on the purpose and focus of the group. These spaces are framed to help teachers forge the path to knowledge construction in classrooms that are safe, non-judgmental, non-threatening spaces. The idea of knowledge construction zones has positive implications for schools. Constructivism is the conceptual framework for our work. As constructivists, we choose "complex, relevant problems because we believe people learn best when they are able to construct their own knowledge while shifting perspective form the individual to relationships (Dietz, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). As lead learners, we modeled our idea of knowledge construction zone by providing a safe space for supporting the learning needs of teachers through participation in a book study. Now that the teachers have experienced this zone and designated this space as safe, non-threatening, non-judgmental and refreshing, it is our hope that they will implement knowledge construction zones, in the same manner, on their teams as well as in their classrooms. We envision teachers who are teaching children how to construct their own knowledge through this layered process. The ultimate goal is for children to create knowledge construction zones in the classroom among themselves and perhaps even transfer that learning to home. They will be able to encourage parents to construct their own learning by embracing the idea of construction knowledge zones. Indeed constructivism has influenced both studies because the participants were able to construct their own learning during the book club discussions. The knowledge the participants constructed for themselves as they learned and evolved in the book study will hopefully impact their practices and pedagogy in progressive ways.

Finding 2 – Teachers and administrators discussing their reading among trusted co-participants creates a particular kind of reflection that can have a transformative potential either for individuals or for the group as a whole (Long, 2003). In our book studies, both teachers and administrators learned meaningful lessons about their professional practices as a result of participating in a book study about culturally relevant pedagogy. The conversations that occurred in the book clubs "allowed participants to clarify their own insights and opinions and also to integrate the various perspectives other readers brought to bear on the book" (Long, 2003, p. 187).

Teachers acknowledged the value of being more reflective about their practices. In the poem "Uncommon Grace," Grace, a white female, middle class teacher, acknowledged that she represents the dominant oppressive culture. For that reason, reading and discussing culturally relevant teaching is uncomfortable for her and so she wondered, "Am I good enough?" She said that she has many things in common with the students even though she is white. She came from a poor family with no front yard and little to no green space in the back. She could hear the neighbors clearly through the walls. She admitted, "I feel like many of my students feel."

As lead learners, we realized that the teachers' reflections came through as personal stories of lived experiences which enabled us to get to know them and to learn more about them beyond their pedagogical spaces. Through storytelling, we learned about their family influences, cultures, personal development and teaching circumstances. We learned about them as learners especially during their formative years. For example, listening to and reading their narratives revealed how they learned to read. Since the way we learn influences the way that we teach, we have a tendency to teach the way we were

taught. We recognize that their reflections came through storytelling which gave us a lens into their lived experiences during their formative years. We were able to reflect on our relationship with them. It gave us better insight to them as learners and as teachers.

Implications: Administrators need to employ opportunities to evoke reflection that results in learning more about the teachers. Reflection results in storytelling. Through storytelling, leaders should construct spaces that allow teachers to reflect through storytelling which allows us to build relationships with them and gain better insights to them as teachers and learners. If we want our teachers to be socializing and self-authoring knowers, we must create a learning space for them to do that type of reflective, collaborative work. Professional development for the teachers normally focuses on instruction; professional learning is normally not interactive and leaves no opportunities for feedback. This book club was unique in that it was less scripted, less procedural and more reflective. This process is allowing teachers to see students differently. The book study discussions allowed us to gain new perspectives and new understandings about our teachers. And so we wonder, "What approaches would our teachers use to get to know students better?

Finding 3 – Through storytelling, the influences in our lives manifest themselves throughout the eight week book study with kindergarten and fifth grade. The haunting concern is we are not thinking and embracing the possibility that these same influences are going on in our students' lives. Just because the students are not demonstrating evidence of family influences does not mean that those influences are non-existent. There are certainly influences in the children's lives and whatever they are, those influences are actually constructing their foundation**s.** Human beings are participating in

the book study – human beings with a history that still sits with them. Our family influences made indelible impressions on who we are personally and professionally. This finding resonates throughout the poems and the stories of the participants.

The modeling the participants received from their families and how the participants credit different things, favorably and unfavorable, is apparent in the poems and the stories. The more we know about our own personal histories, the better we act. Connelly and Clandinin (1998) claim, "The more we understand ourselves and can articulate reasons why we are what we are, do what we do and are headed where we have chosen, the more meaningful our curriculum will be" (p. 11).

Implications – During the book study, we shared our adult stories and now we wonder, "Are we ready to hear the stories of our students and their parents' stories? Teachers and leaders "understanding of student learning is limited without the input of children's first teachers, their parents (Bisplinghoff, 1998). As leaders, we realize now that we are armed with nuggets of necessary action that are just waiting for us to crack them open in a way that welcomes the stories of our students and their families. Some of the actions we might take to build bridges with our students and families are as follows. First, as lead learners, we should model how to get to know the students' stories. We could model by meeting with a different student every day to hear his/her story. Secondly, when we see students for discipline issues, if possible, we might possibly step away from the problem and have the student share his/her story. Also, there might be a school wide focus at the beginning of the school year to collect and share stories of our students' families.

At Wesley, we have started the work of welcoming parents in to the school to tell their stories. We invited parents to make dream boards with their children on literacy night. The dream boards lined the hallways of the school and served as a bridge between home and school. Parents and students were able to write and/or illustrate stories of their choosing to share with the school community. Based on discussions with students, Bisplinghoff 1998) states, "Families are very influential in the way they use literacy in their own lives, and the varied ways they support their children's literacy development. Teacher insights are much richer with the perspectives of parents and other family members." (p. 1) Reaching out to students and their families in relatable ways on an ongoing basis will increase the chances of breaking down barriers that impede student success.

Finding 4—Job-embedded book studies as an approach to professional development met the learning needs of teachers and administrators. Teachers from both book study groups specifically noted the appreciation and value in conducting the sessions during the day. Embedding the sessions during the school day situated learning as an integral part of the teachers' professional practice.

Aria (5th grade): It was refreshing for me to have the conversations throughout the day and to actually address some of the topics that might be quote unquote taboo to discuss during the school day and as a professional. I really enjoyed just delving into some of the reasons why – I've been thinking about some of why our students may react in the manner that they might react.

Annie (5th grade): I like the fact that we have the time to do it during the day and it wasn't after school. And like it was very comfortable and we didn't feel pressured.

Scheduling the book study sessions during the school day supported three major

attributes: relevance, feedback, and transfer (Zepeda, 1999). Relevance is guaranteed if

learning is embedded in the daily work of teachers and administrators, and if it addresses

their current needs (Zepeda, 1999). Feedback from within the group is encouraged

(Zepeda, 1999). The transfer of practice is essential to ensuring that the needs of teachers

are being met.

Finding 5 – Trust was a major factor in the positive outcome of the book

discussion groups. There was a high level of trust between the teachers and their

administrators**.** The teachers felt they could be honest and freely speak without fear of

retribution because we created a school climate that fostered an open door policy.   This

is how we led within our learning community. Teachers knew that it was safe to express

concerns and disagreement without fear of reprisal. Blase & Blasé (2001) advise

principals to "welcome and embrace conflict as a way to produce substantive, positive

outcomes over the long run" (p.14). We believe that administrators must develop trusting

relationships with teachers in order for them to be honest and open when discussing

sensitive issues such as culture.

When we became the leaders at Wesley Avenue Elementary School, we knew that

building trusting, collegial relationships with our staff would be a priority. When we

arrived in August 2010, the school had been open for seven years. In this short time span,

the teachers, staff, students and community witnessed the expiration of three

administrative teams. I was the fourth principal and Melissa was the fourth assistant

principal. Needless to say, staff morale was low. There were lots of questions, concerns

and wonderings. We understood and deliberately set out to build relationships at the

beginning of our first school year by laying a foundation for teacher-administrator trust.

First, we acknowledged that we were aware that there had previously been no stability in

the leadership of Wesley. We voiced out commitment to Wesley and promised to be

transparent and deliberate in our efforts to create a trusting, collegial and family oriented

learning community. We were committed to demonstrating personal integrity, to be

accessible, to facilitate and model effective communication as well as involve staff in

decision making. We also opened ourselves to the constructive feedback and sometimes

harsh criticisms of staff members. When we received the results of county mandated staff

surveys, we celebrated our successes and immediately addressed areas of concern. For

example, much to our surprise, the first year surveys revealed that the majority of the

staff believed that our communication was inconsistent and untimely. As a result of our

transparent approach, we were able to earn the trust of our staff. This was not an

overnight fix. Changing the climate and culture of the school, and changing the way the

staff felt about school was work that took time and patience. Our staff learned that we

were not perfect people; we allowed them to witness our vulnerability so that they could

see our growth and willingness to learn. As administrators, we were consistently

reflective. We spent time together being candid and open with each other, growing together, struggling together, not always agreeing but always presenting a united front to our staff.

Indeed trust was a factor in the findings of the book discussion groups. Without the established relationships between administrators and teachers, the participants might have had reservations about the degree of honesty they could share. They possibly would have only shared what they thought we wanted to hear versus what they actually felt, thought, and believed.

Finding 6 – The most significant challenge and overriding threat was time. Time was a factor but we made the book study a priority. We worked around scheduling and state wide testing. We also circumvented the teachers' regularly scheduled PLC data and curriculum meetings which required finding alternative means for the teachers to access this information. As we progressed through the book study, it became increasingly evident of the importance of the book study experience because of what teachers learned about themselves, what we learned about ourselves as administrators, and what we learned about each other. Although forcing the window of time to learn together was an ongoing challenge, the participants felt that job embedded professional learning was meaningful and worthwhile. Aaron (Kindergarten) shared,

> Normally when we attend professional development, there are not
> opportunities for feedback. With the book club, we knew we were going to meet
> every week and so we could continue our conversations. We could try ideas that

we discussed and then share out about what happened the next week. It really

made a lot of sense.

Mary (Kindergarten) shared,

Good teachers really do use their planning time to create engaging lessons

and pull resources. I am a good teacher that wasn't super excited about giving up

this time to talk about a book. That's honestly how I felt initially. Now I see the

value and I can truly say that the experience has helped me become a better

person and teacher. I didn't even realize some of the things I was saying. And the

way I was handling certain situations, I'm not proud about it. The wonderful thing

is now I am aware and now I will be more cognizant of the things I say to and

about my students.

Quite honestly, we believe that designating a set weekly time to discuss *Dream-keepers* may indeed have been initially frustrating for some of our teachers. Scheduling

for the assistant principal was frustrating.   Regardless of her efforts to plan in advance,

issues surfaced requiring her undivided attention immediately before or during the book

study sessions. Sometimes, these distractions caused her to join the study five to ten

minutes after the start time or leave the session 5 or 10 minutes early. During the

disruptions, the teachers continued the session.

As the principal, I did not experience the same level of frustration with scheduling

the book study sessions as the assistant principal, due mostly because of the differences

in our distinct working responsibilities. I had more flexibility in adhering to my schedule

with very few interruptions. The advantage of having a dedicated professional assistant

helped in keeping disruptions to a minimum.

In retrospection, I am pleased that we remained focused, fought through the challenges and saw the process to the end. I am confident that all of the teachers realized exploring the text and issues of culture was a worthwhile effort. Allocating time to focus on the issues in the text provided a platform to collaborate, bond, and reflect on sensitive issues that teachers and administrators confront daily. In the end, finding the time and pushing the agenda made us stronger, better more prepared educators. The lessons we learned will hopefully translate into improved student learning.

Next steps – Now that we have completed the book study with kindergarten and fifth grade, we anticipate doing two grade levels each semester until we have shared this experience with every grade level, pre-kindergarten through grade 5.

Now that we have modeled the experience for kindergarten and grade five, we expect the teachers to continue the book discussions amongst themselves. *Dreamkeepers* is important enough for all grade levels to experience the book. Going forward it may not be necessary for every grade level to select the same text. We expect them to select books that align with their specific grade level needs and goals. Our hope is that they continue this job-embedded professional learning experience with their administrators being included in the process. The teachers will interchange roles as facilitators and participants. The expectation that as administrators we will serve as facilitators will dissipate. We will serve as participants. Hopefully, after we have modeled this process with every grade level, it will become embedded in their practice, by automatically scheduling book studies.

As administrators, we will continually seek ways to carve out windows of time for book discussion groups during the school day. For example, we could possibly combine

or alternate data and curriculum meetings instead of designating two separate planning periods (one planning period for weekly data meetings and a second planning period for weekly curriculum meetings). This adjustment would result in the availability of one planning period for weekly book study sessions.

We would also like the teachers to implement book discussion groups in their classrooms with their students. Initially, the teachers would facilitate the book discussions with the goal of gradually relinquishing the facilitator role to the students. Students currently discuss texts in pairs and small groups during center rotations. We envision one of the 20-25 minute center rotations becoming book club time. The students would come together to discuss the various texts and write reflections in their journals about their wonderings and new learning. Our long term goal is to invite parents to participate in a book study with their children's principal and assistant principal. This goal aligns with our overall efforts to create a welcoming school where family members are valued and embraced as an integral part of the Wesley Avenue learning community. Once the idea ignites amongst our parents, they might start multiple book clubs throughout the community.

In order to ensure the sustainability of our work, we will need to organize a committee comprised of all stakeholders including teachers, staff members, students, parents, business partners, and community members. We will share our vision and seek buy in. We will embrace their ideas for building literacy, dissolving cultural barriers, and making our school an institution where collaborative learning by all stakeholders is valued and prioritized. As lead learners and visionaries, we will also continuously seek

opportunities to share our experiences with larger audiences by publishing in educational journals and presenting at conferences.

Conclusion

Educational research suggests that the more traditional, textual descriptions of qualitative findings do not adequately reflect the complexity of studying human behaviors (Butler-Kisber, 2002). Nor do they satisfy the ethical issues of voice and relationship to which researchers have become more sensitive, or permit the possibility of multiple interpretations that the postmodern world has come to accept (Butler-Kisber, 2002). We used poetry and storytelling to situate ourselves in the book studies and to work intimately with our teachers to create relationships that helped us ensure that their voices and perspectives were respected and reported.

Our first research question challenged us to explore ways book studies support the learning needs of teachers and administrators in public school settings. Indeed the book study sessions provided opportunities for the teachers and administrators to construct their learning. The teachers and administrators also embrace the job embedded nature of the professional learning experience. They felt that learning together during the context of the school day was more valuable because they were able to meet consistently over a period of several weeks. This opened the pathway for immediate feedback and opportunities to nurture collaborative relationships.

Our second research question dared us to scrutinize what teachers and administrators share when they participate in a book study with their colleagues. Both teachers and administrators shared intimate details of their lives inside of and outside of the classroom. They shared stories of their lived experiences including their culture,

3. The book study approach not only accommodated teachers' needs for professional growth but also created opportunities for collaboration among teachers at different developmental levels. Drago-Severson (2004) posits, "If schools are to become new centers of learning that effectively support teachers at all levels of experience and development, it will be because principals take the lead in making them new centers for learning" (p. xix) At Wesley, our new center includes job embedded professional learning in a safe, non-threatening, non-judgmental space where teachers and administrators can identify their learning needs in collaboration with their colleagues and administrators then construct new knowledge that will lead to long lasting understandings.

As we conclude our doctoral studies, we will channel our new knowings into our previous work, but with new eyes, fresh ideas, and youthful vigor. We are excited about the possibilities of ringing doorbells together, entering doors that will lead us on new adventures of creating learning environments that welcome families, embrace diversity, and support the learning needs of students and teachers.

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APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Informed Consent

The Coffee Break—Teachers, Conversations, and Books:
Teachers and Leaders Creating Job Embedded Spaces for Conversations about
Books

Please read this consent document carefully before deciding to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this research study is to explore the learning needs and the professional practices of teachers and administrators as a result of participating in a job-embedded book study about culturally relevant pedagogy.

Researcher: **Principal Investigator**
Renee T. Prior   Dr. Betty Bisplinghoff
Department of Educational Theory& Practice   Department of Educational Theory &
Practice
The University of Georgia   The University of Georgia
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404-259-3054   706-424-098

Study Procedures:

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:
- Participate in an eight week book study discussion during your 45 minute Professional Learning Community (PLC) team time with your grade level colleagues
- Read a book about culturally relevant pedagogy
- Write a cultural autobiography and share with researcher
- Maintain a participant journal and write at least one entry each week that reflects your thoughts about your readings and the book study sessions, and share with the researcher
- Agree to be audiotaped during each book study session

- Prepare a culturally relevant artifact to share with the research participants after the last book study session

Time required:

The book study discussion sessions will be held during your 45 minute PLC team time. You will need 60-90 minutes to complete your cultural biography and 30-45 minutes each week to write entries in your participant journal. Timing is at your discretion to prepare your culturally relevant artifact.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks associated with this study. This research has the potential to directly benefit you as a study participant by enhancing your pedagogy. It will possibly help you to become a reflective practitioner through your experience of participating in a PLC book study with your grade level colleagues. Your insights about culturally relevant pedagogy could become specific actions in your teaching practice.

As participant-researcher and principal, the study will provide me with an opportunity to learn how teachers and administrators learn collaboratively when they engage in a book study on culturally relevant pedagogy.

Confidentiality and Anonymity:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your documents and information will be kept in a locked, secure location and will only be assessable by the researcher. The researcher will retain possession of all information and documents associated with the study for a period of three years for the purpose of publication. At the end of three years, all documents and information will be destroyed. Participants' privacy will be protected by the use of pseudonyms. Any references or identifiable information that could reveal the identity of participants will be replaced with pseudonyms.

Even though the investigator will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the group sessions should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future.

Voluntary participation/Right to withdraw from the study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision will have no effect on the services you are currently receiving as a teacher. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, all information and documents collected from you will remain as part of the study and could be analyzed unless you submit a written request to destroy, return, or eliminate your information and documents from the study.

Recording:

The weekly book study sessions will be audio-recorded. Agreeing to be audio-recorded is required for participation in this study. A participant can request that the recording be stopped temporarily at any time during the book study session. As researcher, I will have access to the recordings, where they will be stored, and when they will be destroyed. The recordings will not be used for any purpose other than the research study. Portions of the recordings will be transcribed; therefore, a typewritten version will be created. No names or other information that could be used to identify participants will be included in the typewritten version. Anything that could possibly indicate the identity of participants will not be included in the typewritten version. Pseudonyms will be used for names and place to protect anonymity. Audio-recordings will be destroyed after a period of three years.

Contact information for questions about the study:

Researcher:	**Principal Investigator**
Renee T. Prior	Dr. Betty Bisplinghoff
Department of Educational Theory& Practice	Department of Educational Theory & Practice
The University of Georgia	The University of Georgia
prior@uga.edu	bettysb@ uga.edu
404-259-3054	706-424-098

Who to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to:

The Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
The University of Georgia
609 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center
Athens, GA 30602-7411
&706) 542-3199

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM WHETHER OR NOT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE.

If you agree to participate in this study please sign on the next page. Thank you.

Agreement:

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study, and **I have received a copy of this description.** I understand that the weekly book

study sessions will be audio-recorded, and I understand that I can request that the recording be stopped at any time.

Participant's Name Printed _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Name Printed: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please sign both copies; keep one copy for your records and return one copy to the researcher.

APPENDIX B
CULTURAL AUTOBIOGRPAHY

What is A Cultural Autobiography?

A cultural autobiography is a personal narrative that explores your life by highlighting significant cultural experiences that have impacted your successes, passions, and dreams. It should also include your identity, beliefs, and perspectives on education. The manner in which we view ourselves as individuals significantly affects how we teach and our interactions with our colleagues.

As you begin to think about writing your cultural autobiography, you might want to consider the following demographic characteristics: age, gender, ethnicity, religion, language, exceptionality, geography, socioeconomic status, parental status, marriage status, sexual orientation, educational level. Consider how your life experiences within the cultural subgroups that you belong have been influential in shaping your personality and identity in relation to others in your everyday life who might belong to different cultural subgroups.

Think about the following questions as you begin your cultural autobiography:
- Describe where you grew up?
- What is your native language?
- Describe where you went to school (elementary, middle, high, college, post graduate)?
- When did you learn to read and write, and who taught you?
- Who is/was your family?
- Describe some of your favorite places?
- What were the most important, saddest, happiest moments of your life?
- In what ways has your culture been taught to you?
- What objects or artifacts are or have been important to you?
- What is your career goal?
- How do you define success?

You will share your cultural autobiography with me unless you volunteer to share excerpts during any of our weekly meetings. You are under no obligation to share it with others. The cultural autobiography will be retained by me for a period of three years and then it will be destroyed by shredding. No information will be provided to identify you with your writing. All names, places, and any other identifiable information will be given pseudonyms to retain your anonymity. If you should have questions or concerns about any portion of this document, please do not hesitate to see me. Thanks!

APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Participant Profile

Name	
Pseudonym	
Current Teaching Assignment	
Previous Teaching Assignments	
Other Employment	
Education (Degrees Earned)	
Education (Degree Pursuing)	
Certification/Endorsement	
Marital Status	
Race/Ethnicity	

Professional Goals	
Meaningful Professional Learning Experience	

Tell me about your teaching philosophy?
What do you know about culturally relevant teaching or culturally relevant pedagogy?

What impact, if any, did/does your family background have on your decision to become a teacher?