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“What Right Do You Have To Teach This To Us?”: White Teachers Negotiate Dilemmas Of Multicultural Young Adult Literature In Urban Classrooms

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“What Right Do You Have To Teach This To Us?”:
White Teachers Negotiate Dilemmas Of Multicultural Young Adult Literature In Urban
Classrooms

Ricki Ginsberg, PhD
University of Connecticut, 2017

Researchers have documented a range of dilemmas associated with multicultural and young adult literature. This study used an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach to explore the lived experiences of nine White, middle-class teacher participants as they negotiated their perceived dilemmas in planning for and teaching multicultural young adult literature to students in culturally diverse, urban school contexts. Critical Whiteness Studies and Dilemma Management were used as conceptual framework for the study, and data sources included three interviews of each teacher participant occurring before, during, and after the instruction of the unit that included the multicultural young adult text; participant artifacts; and a researcher journal. This study is grounded in the belief that how these teacher participants interpreted and negotiated the dilemmas they associated with multicultural young adult literature was valuable to understand because their perceptions could have shaped both their selection and instruction of such texts. Purposive culturally response teaching fosters students’ sense of self, and a strong self-concept has been linked to high academic achievement. Findings revealed that participants experienced dilemmas pertaining to their identity and knowledge, dilemmas specific to students, dilemmas related to book content, and dilemmas connected to curriculum and resources. To manage these dilemmas, they participated in passive approaches, authoritative approaches, conferences with others, and pedagogical

approaches. Discussion includes the ways in which the teaching context did (not) matter, an interrogation of power dynamics, and implications for theory, practice, and research.

“What Right Do You Have To Teach This To Us?”:
White Teachers Negotiate Dilemmas Of Multicultural Young Adult Literature In Urban
Classrooms

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B.S., University of Connecticut, 2006

M.A., University of Connecticut, 2007

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at the

University of Connecticut

2017

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Ricki Ginsberg

2017

APPROVAL PAGE

Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation

“What Right Do You Have To Teach This To Us?”:
White Teachers Negotiate Dilemmas Of Multicultural Young Adult Literature In Urban
Classrooms

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2017

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The United States is a land defined by rich cultural diversity and increasingly diverse classrooms. By 2019, approximately 49% of public school students will identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan Native (Hussar & Bailey, 2011); however, White culture continues to be pervasive in the framework and functioning of schools, particularly with respect to curricula (Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2003). In Secondary English Language Arts settings, school administrations and teachers consistently put tattered trade books reflecting one dominant culture into the hands of students (Stotsky, Traffas, & Wolworth, 2010), and “institutions often tend merely to reinforce and crystallize the particular customs and traditional values built up by the past” (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, p. 157). This leads to a lack of diversity in texts which extends beyond school walls into the realm of publishing. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC), a library at the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, began tracking children’s books in 1985. In 2013, they received 3,200 of the estimated 5,000 books published; of these books, only 7% (223) were written by and 8% (253) were written about Africans/African-Americans, American Indians, Asian Pacifics/Asian Pacific Americans, and Latinas/os. In 2016, perhaps due to the rise of the #weneeddiversebooks campaign, percentages of publications by authors of color (12.6%) and about characters of color (21.6%) had grown, but they still did not reflect population demographics. Given the changing demographics in the United States, the paucity of

multicultural literature written by or about people of color has very real consequences for young people.

When students cannot see themselves in the texts they read, they can develop feelings of marginalization and isolation that can impact their self-concept and cause them to question their position and positioning in the world (Landt, 2006; Young, Campbell, & Oda, 1995). A positive orientation of self is extremely important; high self-concept has been linked to high academic achievement in students (Huang, 2011; Marsh, 1990). Conversely, when students see only themselves in the texts they read, they might develop a skewed sense of reality (Larrick, 1965), which may leave them unprepared for the diversity that exists in the world at large. Adolescents are a particularly vulnerable population because they are at a stage of identity exploration (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006), and being surrounded with and exposed to a diversity of texts—both inside and outside of their cultures—is imperative for the development of a strong, confident self-concept (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Landt, 2006).

Problem Statement

Teachers negotiate myriad pressures and demands when selecting the literature adolescents read in schools (Stallworth et al., 2006). Though limited research exists about the dilemmas secondary English teachers perceive in the selection and instruction of multicultural *young adult* texts, some scholars have examined teachers' decisions to exclude or include multicultural texts, in general, in their curricula. In Stallworth, Gibbons, and Fauber's (2006) qualitative study of Alabama teachers, participants' choices to exclude multicultural texts were influenced by a variety of factors, including *institutional* dilemmas, such as a budgetary concerns and limited access to these texts. Additionally, the potential negative outcomes of parent, school, district, and community censorship and lack of buy-in were perceived as not worth the potential

benefits of including diverse titles in their curricula.

Beyond these institutional dilemmas, teachers also perceive *professional* dilemmas that come with the instruction of these texts. Teachers might ask themselves questions such as: Am I prepared to teach these texts? Do they have literary merit, particularly in comparison to classic texts? Are they important, and do they have classroom merit? In response to these questions, teachers express a lack of knowledge and expertise about multicultural literature and may feel unprepared to teach these texts. This is reflected in Gill's (2000) study in which 72% of participating Young Adult Literature professors stated they found multicultural literature simply too difficult to teach. A lack of knowledge and preparation can prevent teachers from including these titles on their book lists.

Though researchers have not systematically examined teachers' perceptions of the dilemmas associated with multicultural *young adult* literature (MCYAL), Stallworth et al. (2006) found that many teachers are concerned that multicultural literature, in general, does not have the "staying power" of classic literature and that it might not be at the same caliber as texts within the canon. These concerns about literary merit may be tied to other professional concerns, such as rigid, unyielding curricula and perceived time constraints.

Moreover, some teachers fail to recognize the classroom merit of using multicultural texts but feel external pressure to teach the literature. Gill (2000) identified these perspectives in a study of Young Adult Literature professors and found 17% of the participants, who prepare teachers for the workforce, felt that teaching MCYAL is an attempt at political correctness. The diversity among students within classrooms is not balanced with a diversity of educators, as nearly 85% of all secondary teachers are White (Aud et al., 2010); often hold deficit-oriented perspectives toward diverse populations (Garcia & Guerra, 2005; Glenn, 2012); and engage in

limited, if any, preparation for working with the cultures reflected in their classrooms (Gomez, Black, & Allen, 2007; Howard, 2006). Scholars note that White teachers too often fail to acknowledge or discuss racism in the classroom (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2012; McIntyre 2002); a “meritocratic myth” exists, which is grounded in the de-emphasis of an individual’s ethnic group membership and a belief that ethnicity is an irrelevant factor of achievement (Tatum, 1992) hinders such conversations.

This *professional* concern about the classroom merit of multicultural young adult texts may be closely linked to a *personal* dilemma, or what Copenhaver-Johnson (2012) describes as a general discomfort with using these texts, which inherently deal with complex issues like race, culture, and privilege. In a study of preservice teachers’ discussions about a multicultural young adult novel, Bean, Valerio, Mallette, and Readence (1999a) found teachers experienced discomfort with a text that featured a character of a culture different from their own, and they had difficulty understanding and relating to the character’s perspective, particularly with respect to the institutional racism faced by the character in the story.

The need to address the institutional, professional, and personal conflicts that teachers perceive with using multicultural young adult texts in their instruction is greater now than ever due to the increasing diversity in U.S. classrooms (Hayn & Burns, 2012). Teachers must manage these tensions in order to teach these texts in ways that address the needs of all students.

The challenge for teachers is identifying strategies or behaviors that will help them negotiate dilemmas that may come with the instruction of multicultural literature for adolescent students. Though research exists about teachers’ concerns with multicultural texts and discussions about culture, a void exists in research about how classroom teachers make sense of and perceive that they negotiate these dilemmas. A better understanding of the cognitive

processes and behaviors that teachers describe may enable teachers and teacher educators to develop ethnically and culturally responsive approaches to teaching multicultural texts. With increased awareness, knowledge, and comfort, teachers and those who train teachers may be more willing to challenge perceived conflicts, engage in conversations about this literature, and adopt texts for curricula. When teachers provide opportunities for students to read literature that depicts the experiences of diverse characters, adolescents may be able to see themselves and others reflected in the texts and, in turn, develop a more positive concept of self and society (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Landt, 2006).

Purpose Statement

This study used an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach to explore the lived experiences of nine White, middle-class teacher participants as they negotiated their perceived dilemmas in planning for and teaching multicultural young adult literature for students in culturally diverse, urban school contexts. Critical Whiteness Studies and Dilemma Management were used as a conceptual framework for the study, and data sources included three interviews of each teacher participant that occurred before, during, and after the instruction of the unit that included the multicultural young adult text; participant artifacts; and a researcher journal. This study is grounded in the belief that how these teacher participants interpreted and negotiated the dilemmas they associated with multicultural young adult literature was valuable to understand because their perceptions could have shaped both their selection and instruction of such texts. Exploring this phenomenon is particularly important because purposive culturally response teaching fosters students' sense of self (Landt, 2006; Young, Campbell, & Oda, 1995), and a strong self-concept has been linked to high academic achievement (Huang, 2011; Marsh, 1990).

Further, understanding how teachers navigate dilemmas regardless of subject matter and context has the potential to contribute to the field of Education.

While the findings and discussion sections reveal that much of the data that emerged from this study were connected to teachers' dilemmas about discussing race in their classrooms, the purpose statement of this study has not changed. Not all of the dilemmas that emerged in the findings were connected to their concerns about discussing race in their classrooms. The initial purpose of this dissertation was focused on the teachers' dilemmas associated with the instruction of multicultural young adult literature, and I believe that the teachers' overwhelming concerns about discussions of race in their classrooms was a critical finding, rather than a new purpose for this study. The multicultural young adult texts were critical to this study, and changing the purpose statement would lose a large piece of the framing of the study. Thus, I remain true to my initial purpose, which drove the study's design.

Research Questions

This study was guided by two connected research questions:

1. What dilemmas do White teachers in urban school contexts associate with the instruction of multicultural young adult literature?
2. How do teachers internally negotiate these dilemmas before, during, and after the instruction of a multicultural young adult text?

These research questions are grounded in an Interpretive Phenomenological Research (IPA) approach, which aims to understand how individuals perceive a “particular situation they are facing” and “how they are making sense of their personal and social world.” In the spirit of IPA, the research questions are broadly framed to facilitate a flexible but detailed exploration

(Smith & Osborn, 2003) of any dilemmas the teacher participants associate with the instruction of MCYAL.

Research Design Overview

This phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of nine White, middle-class teacher participants as they negotiated their perceived dilemmas in planning for and teaching multicultural young adult literature for students in culturally diverse, urban school contexts.

To explore the participants' dilemmas and dilemma management approaches, the primary qualitative methods used to obtain data were three interviews of each teacher participant occurring before, during, and after the instruction of the unit that included the multicultural young adult text; participant artifacts, including emails and a participant-organized graphic that used post-it notes; and a researcher journal. All data were coded and analyzed through an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach, a branch of hermeneutic phenomenology (Smith & Osborn, 2003) that concentrates on the insider perspective of individuals who are negotiating specific situations in their lives (Smith, 1999)—in this case, a unit that featured multicultural young adult literature.

Dissertation Overview

This research study contains six chapters. In Chapter One, I discuss the overarching argument of the study and situate it contextually in scholarship and classroom contexts today. I introduce the design of the study, the research questions, and the general structure of the project.

In Chapter Two, I provide in-depth reviews of the conceptual framework for this study: Critical Whiteness Studies and Dilemma Management. I also review existing scholarship, including contextual information and provide definitions of adolescents/ce and multicultural

young adult literature. I present existing scholarship about the dilemmas that may come with the instruction of these texts, including institutional, professional, and personal dilemmas. Within each dilemma, I detail potential strategies to overcome these dilemmas, most of which are theoretical.

In Chapter Three, I describe the research methodology and design in detail, including an in-depth overview of Phenomenology and Interpretive Phenomenological Analyses. I include descriptions of my participants and their school environments and provide descriptions of my data collection, data sources, and data analysis process. This chapter also includes potential limitations of the study.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six highlight and discuss the themes that emerged from the data and were saturated across participants. Chapter Four addresses my first research question and includes representations of the data pertaining to dilemmas that include: teacher identity and knowledge, students, book content, and curriculum and resources. Chapter Five connects with my second research question and includes representations of the data pertaining to dilemma management strategies that include: passive approaches, authoritative approaches, conferences with others, and pedagogical approaches. I have elected to include connections between my findings and the conceptual framework in my findings chapters. This is a stylistic choice. I believed that unpacking each section of the findings was critical to understanding each subsection as they worked together. It allowed me to focus on each category as it was connected to my theoretical framework. Chapter Six centers on an overall discussion of the findings and connects with recent, relevant scholarship. This chapter includes other dilemmas and dilemma managements approaches not saturated across participants; a dialogue about context and power; and implications for practice and research.

CHAPTER II

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Conceptual framework

Two overarching lines of thinking guided the framework of and analytical processes within this study. Within Critical Whiteness Studies, Leonardo's (2002) conception of Whiteness and Nayak's (2007) paradigm of rethinking White identities are relevant to the exploration of these White participants' experiences as they taught multicultural young adult texts in culturally diverse, urban school contexts. Additionally, literature regarding Dilemma Management was used to better understand the ways in which teacher participants managed the dilemmas they experienced with the instruction of multicultural young adult texts.

Critical Whiteness Studies

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) is a theoretical framework that grows from Critical Race Theory, which "recognizes the permanency and endemic nature of race in American education" (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011, p. 96). Critical Race Theory honors the voices of marginalized communities, such as those featured in MCYAL, by showing that racism is pervasive in society (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001), and it interrogates the legal, historic, and educational constructions of White identity.

Leonardo (2002) defines Whiteness as "a collection of everyday strategies characterized by the unwillingness to name the contours of racism, the avoidance of identifying with a racial experience or group, the minimization of racist legacy, and other similar evasions" (p. 32). The CWS theory aligns with scholarly research that finds that teachers reveal their Whiteness when

they are unwilling or unable to recognize the role of racism in society and classrooms. The CWS theory was ideal for this study because all of the teacher participants were White and taught texts that featured cultures different from their own, and had the potential to impact their instruction in (sub)conscious ways. Because Whiteness was a part of the participants' identities, a CWS lens allowed me to make sense of dilemmas they associated with the instruction of MCYAL that could be connected to underlying concerns related to culture and race.

CWS analyses show that overt racial bigotry need not be present for racism to be ingrained in the foundation of education (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Scholars have long claimed that such a system masks the normalized dominance of White privilege in schools (e.g. Delgado & Stefancic, 1997), and schools “do not merely *manage* race; they *create* and *enforce* racial meanings” (Fine, 1997, p. 58). Because many Critical Race theorists focus their examination on marginalized groups, the CWS framework is different, yet overlapping, in the way it explores the constructions and shifting nature of Whiteness.

Conceptions of Whiteness vary across scholarship, but Nayak's (2007) sociological work explores three major paradigms concerning White identities that he identifies within existing scholarship: *abolishing*, *deconstructing*, and *rethinking* Whiteness. Nayak argues that Marxist views embedded within research that focuses on *abolishing* or dismantling Whiteness are often associated with ideas of activism. For instance, scholars grounded in an abolishment paradigm might focus research on a critical examination of police brutality. The implications of their research would focus on how the dismantlement of police brutality is only possible if we focus on abolishing privilege and Whiteness. Nayak claims that, traditionally, such studies also concern themselves with degrees of Whiteness and social class, naming populations perceived to be “less White” than others, such as those labeled as “White trash.” An abolishment perspective

is common in scholarship, but the work of this study does not align with this paradigm because this approach may not afford promising results, particularly when compared to the other two paradigms. If this perspective was used as a lens of analysis, the participants' Whiteness would be viewed as something that should be eradicated. The strength and power of participants' White identity would be evaluated and implications would report ways teachers' Whiteness could be abolished. This might include a focus on helping teachers understand universal elements of culture to feel a sense of comfort rather than helping teachers learn to identify and celebrate the rich diversity that culture brings.

Nayak forwards a second paradigm of White identities that exists popularly in Feminist studies and promotes the *deconstruction* of or engagement with these identities. Whiteness is seen as fluid and changeable, and it is conceptualized as limited when perceived uniformly and fixed to the idea of a White body. Categorizations of an individual's race and culture are viewed as subjective within varied contexts; people may be considered more or less White in different settings depending on their background, the context, and the situation. Within this paradigm, which may be limited due to its focus on external elements such as setting and context rather than internal and personal conceptions of race and culture, analyses would explore multiplicity within my participants. In other words, a participant might be perceived as becoming more White if she teaches students of color. Outside of the classroom, this participant might be perceived as becoming less White if she fights for Civil Rights concerns with a group of racist, White individuals.

Nayak's third paradigm of Whiteness identities is less developed within the literature but aligns most clearly with the work of this dissertation. When we *rethink* Whiteness, we understand that it is both internally and externally realized. With a *rethinking* conceptualization,

we consider how race and ethnicity might be “understood in relation to its imaginary racialised Others, and that racism cannot be explained purely at the level of the rational” (p. 746).

Whiteness may be viewed from a variety of platforms, such as a participant’s racial uncertainty and anxiety or in the ways that a participant’s White subjectivity is cultivated within his or her responses.

Under this theory of *rethinking* Whiteness (Nayak, 2007), race is psychoanalyzed for its discursive nature and also in the ways participants might relate it to the monstrous, imagined Other. Pajaczkowska & Young (1993) perceive that White individuals may deal with anxieties about the Other and feelings of White guilt “through [the] projection and denial and disavowal of the reality of the traumatising racialization” (p. 213). Similarly, Rutherford (1997) describes how he previously disavowed the racial exclusivity of his White ethnicity and experienced it as a blankness; he never attempted to analyze or understand it. When we *rethink* Whiteness, we consider the ways our personal and collective past may continue to haunt the present. With this framework in mind, I explored the ways that race and culture was both implicit and explicit within participant responses and whether participants conceptualized the imagined Other as influential on their instruction of MCYAL.

Dilemma Management

Within English Education, scholars have used myriad terms to describe teacher conflict, including *barriers* (Kist, 2007), *challenges* (Finders & Bush, 2003), *dynamics* (Stewart & Webster, 2011), *obstacles* (Finders & Bush, 2003), *rubs* (Meth & Anzo, 2012), *tensions* (Beach, 1994; Meth & Anzo, 2012), and *threats* (Agee, 1999). But terms such as these imply that conflict is external to teachers, so perhaps the conceptual understanding of *dilemmas* may be more appropriate due to scholars’ focus on internal beliefs and values (Anderson, 2002). For the

purposes of this dissertation, I sought to understand the *dilemmas* that were relevant to understanding the ways teachers negotiated the conflicts they associated with multicultural young adult literature.

Cuban (1992) defines dilemmas as “conflict-filled situations that require choices because competing, highly prized values cannot be fully satisfied” (p. 6). He writes that such choices involve a messy process that does not allow for routine, definite solutions. Rather, dilemmas require teachers to resort to “good-enough compromises” that involve sacrifice (Cuban, 1992, p. 7). Similarly, Lampert (1985) describes a dilemma as “a problem forcing a choice between equally undesirable alternatives [...] in which neither side can come out the winner” (p. 182). Teachers may need to continually renegotiate compromises for dilemmas because the conflicts may be imbedded in their morals or the nature of teaching (Delpit, 1986). The work of this study is centrally focused on teachers’ deliberations of the alternatives rather than the final choices they enact.

Lampert (1985) discusses how teachers may feel a sense of resolve when they develop a “sense of who [they want] to be” when they negotiate and cope with dilemmas (p. 184). She describes her personal experience: “My strategy gave me a way to live with [the problems], a temporary respite that would prevent the underlying conflicts from erupting into more serious, distracting discord” (p. 185). In this way, she became a “dilemma manager” by seeing two potential solutions but developing a third solution that valued both sides. Though researchers like Berlak and Berlak (1981) view dilemmas as solvable, most scholars recognize they must be managed through compromise (Berg & Mensah, 2014; Cuban, 1992; Gort & Glenn, 2010; Katz & Raths, 1992; Windschitl, 2002). More closely related to the work of this study, scholars have explored the ways educators navigate challenging dilemmas related to culturally responsive

curricula, language, and practice (Gort & Glenn, 2010; Thomas, 2013). The concept of race and ethnicity is difficult to affix to bodies or objects, and scholars argue about whether race and ethnicity are philosophically engrained or socially constructed (Nayak, 2007). Definite, irrefutable solutions are unlikely in classroom concerns related to race due to the murkiness of how it is socially conceived (Nayak, 2007). Thus, classroom interactions and conflicts may be seen as “inherently dilemmatic” (Thomas, 2013, p. 330).

Teachers may have specific principles which define their explicit or implicit feelings of professional responsibility and these may affect the strategies they employ to manage dilemmas (Oser, 1991). Fritz K. Oser, a Swiss scholar who is known for his research in moral and professional development in educational psychology, conceptualized moral education as falling into three cognitions of morality. When teachers practice “normative morality,” they are considering hypothetical courses of action in their decision making processes. When subjects use this line of thinking, they are unlimited by time and think more in the abstract. They often think about how they *should* ideally act but may not actually act in such a way given a concrete situation. With “situational morality,” an individual is forced to act in a crucial life situation. It differs from “normative morality” because it connects moral judgment to action. “Professional responsibility” may not appear to be connected to morality, but it manifests itself in professional acts. Oser defines “professional responsibility” as a separate cognitive field because he believes the morality or ethos of individuals play a role in their professional decision-making processes.

Oser (1991) developed a model which includes five major types of professional ethos, which may manifest dilemma management. His conception of moral development has been used by other scholars as conceptual grounding for their research in education (Barak, Kheir-Farraj, & Becher, 2013; Maslovaty, 2000; Tirri, 1999). According to Oser’s model, a teacher might use an

avoidance orientation by ignoring a dilemma and taking no responsibility for managing it. A teacher who practices avoidance may understand that s/he should be more engaged in the decision making process but elects to ignore this responsibility. A teacher might also use *delegation* as a strategy and transfer the responsibility of a dilemma on another person or group (e.g. a principal). This teachers accepts his/her responsibility and shifts it to another person or group. In *single-handed decision making*, a teacher positions himself or herself as the expert and singlehandedly makes decisions about the dilemma without consulting others. This process is often handled in an authoritarian manner. In an *incomplete conversation (or discourse I'')*, a teacher takes responsibility for a dilemma and will explain his or her decision making to others. With this strategy, the teacher assumes others (students or administration) will understand his or her rationale or explanation. Lastly, with a *complete conversation (or discourse II'')* approach, a teacher assumes others are capable beings who may be deeply involved and could have valuable input, and the teacher involves these others in managing the dilemmas. Oser and Althoff (1993) suggest that these five modes of dilemma management are hierarchical with the least favored strategy being avoidance and the optimal strategy being complete conversation because it is characterized by an awareness, acknowledgement of others, and commitment to collaboration. Tirri (1999) examined the moral, everyday dilemmas identified by Finnish teachers and found their most preferred method to be single-handed decision making. Barak et al. (2013) examined Arab, Druze, and Jewish mentors who work with teachers. They were interested in the ways these mentors managed educational dilemmas in Israeli-Arab schools, which are known to be multicultural and politically-conflicted contexts. Their data revealed two salient findings: a) avoidance of dilemmas and b) the predominance of a new sub-category in Oser's model which they named *elusive single-handed decision-making*, where a mentor manages a dilemma single-

handedly yet avoids any kind of direct confrontation. The mentors said they acted in ways that avoid overtly imposing their single-handed decision making on an encounter.

Dilemma management can be connected conceptually to the Critical Whiteness Studies framework because teachers might become active negotiators if they experience a “conflict of identity” (Lampert, 1985) as they navigate their Whiteness while instructing multicultural young adult texts. Windschitl (2000) further describes such conceptual dilemmas as times when teachers might become more conscious of cultural assumptions, activities, backgrounds, and experiences within their classrooms in order to manage a “collective transformation” (p. 133) and act of “re-culturing” (p. 151) their experiences. A stronger understanding of the ways in which teachers negotiate dilemmas is necessary. Though they may be unsolvable, their “enduring nature” provides us with opportunities to explore the discursive and intricate nature of pedagogy and practice (Glenn & Gort, 2010, p. 61). Further, this exploration may offer knowledge to improve the preparation of other teachers who encounter similar dilemmas in the classroom (Loughran & Russell, 1997).

Review of Literature

The following four sections establish a context for the dissertation research. They explore relevant scholarly research and definitions of adolescence and adolescent readers, young adult literature, multicultural young adult literature (MCYAL), and multicultural literature. The landscape of research that grounds each of these fields is necessary to better understand the dilemmas that teachers perceive with the instruction of MCYAL.

Adolescence and adolescent readers

Adolescence encompasses a transitional time of life between puberty and young adulthood (Erikson, 1968). Experts disagree about the chronological ages that accompany this

stage of development. Erikson's psychosocial theory is roughly associated with the ages of 12 through 18, whereas Arnett (2000) proposes that adolescence extends further to age 25. Regardless of age range, scholars agree that this period of life is crucial to human development and a major focal point in the discussion of identity formation (Erikson, 1968, Appleman, 2009). Abstract thought, introspection, metacognition, and the development of social-cognitive abilities are significant milestones of this time period (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Two questions that drive adolescents' thinking and behavior—"Who am I?" and "What is my place in the world?" (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006)—often invoke feelings of confusion, awkwardness, and solitude in young people as they attempt to come to know themselves and find their places in the world (Landt, 2006). Reading literature provides one way that adolescents can come to understand and develop this concept of self.

Secondary schools are brimming with readers who are labeled in a variety of ways, including struggling, resistant, and proficient. Some students refuse to read required texts at school but are avid readers at home; others wish they enjoyed reading as much as they did in elementary school. The labels seem unimportant in the face of the low percentage of students who are actually reading, as many students graduate from schools stating "that they'll never again read another book voluntarily" (Lesesne, 2003, p. x). The National Endowment for the Arts [NEA] (2007) reports that about half of all Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 do not read books for pleasure. Between the years of 1984 to 2004, the percentage of 17-year-olds who read nothing for pleasure has more than doubled. Perhaps we aren't introducing young people to appropriate texts that will enable reading habits.

Young adult literature

Young adult literature (YAL) was initially marketed to adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18. Recently, publishing companies have pushed the boundaries, and some books are marketed toward readers from ages 10 to 21, reaching beyond the traditional margins of adolescence into the more expansive view that Arnett (2000) and others propose—that adolescence does not stop at the age of 18. For a text to be defined as young adult literature, it must be written both for teenagers and about teenagers (Brown et al., 2014). Young adult literature offers complex themes in well-written stories that are comparable to those revered in canonical texts (Groenke & Scherff, 2010; Soter & Connors, 2009). The primary difference from classics is that young adult literature offers accessibility that the classics often fail to provide (Brown et al., 2014). The characters are teenagers who embody the characteristics and concerns of adolescent readers. Seeing themselves in the themes and characters of this literature enables adolescents to learn about others and develop their personal ideologies, as well as engage in rich dialogue about the texts (Bean et al., 1999a; Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). Readers are better able to connect with this literature and therefore seem better able to respond to it.

But young adults are not simply adolescents with similar backgrounds and experiences. They reflect rich linguistic and cultural heritages, which puts demands on our ever-changing schools. This diversity, many scholars argue, also has implications for schoolbooks, which ought to reflect the faces of the students (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Graff, 2010). Students belong to diverse subcultures—racial, religious, geographic, socioeconomic, age-specific, and gender-specific—which form their identities (Banks, 1994; Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). More specific to ethnicity, it is estimated that, by 2019, approximately 49 percent of public school students will

identify as Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaskan Native (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). Currently, people of color represent the majority in U.S. births and more than 40% of American youth under the age of 18 (Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). Students' ethnic and racial identities undergo important transformations during adolescence. While adolescents are exploring their personal identities and developing their goals and values (Erikson, 1968), they are also coming to know and understand their ethnic and racial identities. They are learning to contest, elaborate, negotiate, explore, and/or internalize their cultural values; this process may cause self-verification, but it may also cause feelings of confusion or alienation from their position and positioning of their home identities (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Multicultural literature: A definition

Multicultural education is a reform with a major thrust to decentralize the power of the White culture of privilege in order to provide equal access and opportunity to students of underrepresented cultures that have been systematically marginalized (Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2003). Relatedly, in this dissertation, I use the term, "people of color," because terms such as "minority" and "nonwhite" are deficit-oriented and problematic because they further place the White culture in a position of power. These deficit-oriented terms normalize Whiteness and make people of color the default "other." Scholars often use terms like ethnicity, race, and culture interchangeably (Betancourt & López, 1993). "Culture" is often conceived of as a way of life that is transmitted from one generation to another (Rohner, 1983) with psychologically relevant elements (Triandis et al., 1980). "Ethnicity" is used in reference to a group of people who share a common nationality, culture or language, and a means by which culture is transmitted (Betancourt & López, 1993, p. 631). Because the concept of "race" is accompanied with issues of skin color, facial features, and hair color (Jones, 1991), whenever possible, I avoid

using the term “race” in this dissertation or pair it with the concept of “ethnicity.” Out of respect for the scholarly research and theory within this dissertation, I sometimes use the term “race” to avoid imposing my accepted definitions of these concepts on others. Further, to avoid defining the terms to my participants and potentially influencing their conceptions of the concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture, I use both the terms “race and ethnicity” as paired terms in my interview questions. Lastly, within this dissertation, I capitalize all races and ethnicities to avoid normalizing any particular race or ethnicity.

The field of multicultural literature emerged from the Civil Rights and Feminist Movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Until then, writers and illustrators of color were denied entry to the publishing industry (Cai, 2002). Historically, research has concentrated on the Black-White paradigm, but the field is slowly shifting, and analysis of other underrepresented groups and gaps is emerging in the literature (O’Connor et al., 2009). Across the fields of multicultural literature and multicultural education, in general, scholars do not agree on the definition of the term, “multicultural.” Much controversy exists regarding how many and which cultures should be included in this definition.

Cai (2002) laments that there is confusion regarding the prefix, “multi-,” and some believe the more cultures in a given text, the more “multicultural” it can be considered. Defining a cultural group is difficult because people from different demographic regions and religions also consider themselves to be from unique “cultures” (Yokota, 1993). For example, basketball players might deem themselves to be a “culture.” This expansive perspective of culture leads to an all-inclusive definition, which then causes many people to argue that *all* literature can be identified as multicultural (Bishop, 1994). Moreover, some argue that separating multicultural literature from general literature constructs multicultural literature as separate and outside of the

norm of all literature, which further reifies notions of privilege. Although this is an enticing argument, it seems to show a genuine lack of respect for, and understanding of, the fact that “people of color have been discriminated against, oppressed, and exploited throughout history and today,” and that we live in a racialized society that seems to demand an examination of the existing inequities (Cai, 2002, p. 10).

In order for the multicultural movement to have legs toward social and academic reform, further clarity about which cultures should and should not be included in this definition seems to be essential. Some cultures clearly fall into the realm of “multicultural literature,” while others are fiercely contested. For instance, many scholars present definitions that embrace all marginalized groups, and they include ability, age, social class, sexual orientation, and disability in their list of cultures (Hayn & Burns, 2012; Landt, 2006). Although it may be tempting to adopt an all-inclusive definition, it ignores the primary motivations of the multicultural movement. Contrarily, accepting an exclusive definition that multicultural literature should only reflect people of color does not acknowledge other regional or religious groups that have been historically marginalized or which claim “minority status”—such as members of the Amish or Appalachian communities (Bishop, 1992).

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will use a widely accepted definition of multicultural literature: “literature about racial or ethnic minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the white Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States, whose largely middle-class values and customs are most represented in American literature” (Norton, 1999, p. 580). I also include international literature in this definition (Cai, 2002). Although an all-inclusive definition that includes ability, age, and sexual orientation is acceptable to many

scholars, I believe it is not grounded in the major commitment of the multicultural movement, which is to highlight cultures outside the mainstream, White, Anglo-Saxon majority.

Multicultural young adult literature

Students bring particular funds of knowledge from their home environments to the classroom community (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2005), and their experiences, voices, and home cultures might serve as the starting point for conversations about curriculum and instruction (McLaren, 2003). In order for schools to be effective, these home cultures, values, and experiences ought to be connected with what is valued in schools (Gay, 2000; Heath, 1983; Tatum, 2009). Anything that is significant to the student should be significant to the teacher and school because it may mold the student's literary and academic development because these home discourses impact their perceptions of self and learning (Delpit, 2006). Reading, learning, and literature exist in a complex nexus of factors and influences (Rosenblatt 1938/1995), and in order to empower students to achieve, teachers should understand these factors and value students' cultural identities—engaging them with texts that matter to them. Delpit (2006) reminds us, “In order to teach you, I must know you” (p. 183).

Despite this, theorists argue that the White culture of power is not accommodating of all students and privileges the dominant group in schools, as evidenced in part by the established curricula (Apple 2004; Graff, 2010; McLaren, 2003). Publications reflect this concern, and a historical drought of multicultural texts continues to chronically persist today. In her 1965 landmark article, “The All-White World of Children's Books,” Larrick found that only 6.7% of books reflected Black characters in either their text or illustrations—and often, Black characters were only in the background of illustrations, could easily be mistaken as sunburned, and/or were associated with stereotypes. The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) examines and

counts the number of publications by authors of color or featuring characters of color. 52 years after Larrick's study, the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) (2016) still finds that the number of publications authored by people of color (12.6%) and or about characters of color (21.6%) still favor more strongly the White world that Larrick describes. Although Larrick's findings focus solely on Black characters within text or illustrations, Koss and Teale's (2009) content analysis of YA books published between 1999 and 2005 present similar concerns. These researchers' findings highlighted the imbalances in young adult literature and noted a significant lack of multicultural main characters and a dearth of texts with culturally specific content. Larrick's, the CCBC's, and Koss and Teale's investigations differ in their approaches, but all three reflect that the number of publications featuring, about, or authored by people of color is abysmal.

The paucity of multicultural literature written by or about people of color seems to have real consequences for our children. This under-representation of culturally diverse texts may cause students to accept stereotypes and judgments about others and themselves. For many adolescents, success in school can only be achieved with "a type of forced, cultural suicide" (McLaren, 2003, p. 230), where students must "irreparabl[y]" (Larrick, 1965, p. 1) compromise their identities in order to achieve (Gay, 2000). Boyd (1997), an African American female, writes about her childhood and her inability to see herself in the texts she read. She recalls, "I realized that I was invisible, excluded, disaffirmed, spurned, discarded, scorned, and rejected in the white world of children's literature" (p. 107). When students cannot see themselves in the texts of their schooling, they can develop feelings of marginalization, which may cause them to question where they fit in the world and put them at academic risk (Gay, 2000; Landt, 2006; O'Connor, Hill, & Robinson, 2009; Young, Campbell, & Oda, 1995, Rawson & Hughes-Hassell, 2012).

At a time when children are exploring and discovering their identities, adolescence seems a critical moment to avoid alienating our students. Encountering and reading texts with which they identify is a promising approach to the development of a positive self-concept and a sense of agency and voice (Bean, Valerio, Senior, and White, 1999b; Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Graff, 2010; Landt, 2006; Yokota, 1993). Self esteem and academic achievement are positively correlated (Baker, 2005), so it is not surprising that scholars have found that MCYAL has a positive impact on both reading achievement and reading motivation in students (Rawson & Hughes-Hassell, 2012). When literature reflects the culture-specific experiences of the students, reading comprehension improves (McCullough, 2008; Rawson & Hughes-Hassell, 2012). Teachers might try to approach instruction and text selection as a “*communion with the people*” (Freire, 2000, p. 170) and seek supportive, caring relationships (Noddings, 2003) that are responsive to students’ textual needs. Meanings are constructed based on the students’ cultural, historical, and psychological experiences, so culturally relevant text selection may empower students and improve their global perspective (Appleman, 2009; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

MCYAL is relevant for all students and not just students of color. Kozol (2005) argues that school systems should not adopt one method of instruction for urban schools and another method of instruction for suburban schools. (It is worth mentioning that urban communities are not presumed to be populated by students of color, and Kozol’s conclusions are grounded in a specific setting.) If students are only afforded opportunities to interact with texts that reflect their own cultures, Ford (2013) believes they will be less likely to interact with and celebrate texts and people from cultures different from their own. Further, Larrick (1965) declared that the impact of White constructions in texts was “probably even worse” for White children than for children of

color because such constructions teach White children that they are “kingfish” (p. 1), or the most important, central culture. Teachers might use multicultural literature in ways that dispel these prejudices by focusing on student responses to non-dominant perspectives and work to challenge students’ perceptions of the world (Wender, 2015; Coleman-King & Groenke, 2015).

Dilemmas and strategies

Within this review of literature, teachers’ perceived conflicts with the instruction of MCYAL are grouped into three overarching domains: institutional dilemmas (concerns with resources and censorship), professional dilemmas (concerns with a lack of knowledge, text selection and authenticity, rigid curricula and rigor [self imposed or institutional], and cultural and racial topics within the texts), and personal dilemmas (concern about discomfort). To begin, I did a general search of the ERIC and PSYCINFO databases and relevant, scholarly journals for any challenges, barriers, or tensions that teachers might associate with multicultural young adult literature. The search terms I used were: *multicultural literature*, *young adult literature*, *adolescent literature*, *barriers*, *tensions*, *problems*, *education*, *teachers*, *teacher education*, *race*, and *multicultural education*. I interchanged these terms in my searches to complete a comprehensive search. I also did a hand-search of *The ALAN Review*, a journal that focuses on young adult literature. Within the relevant articles that I found, I made the decision to organize the concerns into more coherent, cohesive chunks to make the dilemmas more organized and manageable for the reader. The organization of these categories is superficial, and many overlap in context. From my review of the literature, I noticed that dilemmas seemed to fall into three main categories: institutional, professional, and personal. In the following sections, I review the literature related to each of these dilemmas and proposed strategies to overcome them. Following a discussion of these conflicts, I explore the gaps in this literature and need for further research.

Institutional dilemmas. We live in an educational era with many demands and pressures, and teachers cite what I have categorized as *institutional dilemmas* as justification for why they are unable to include multicultural young adult texts in their classrooms. Despite a significant gap in the literature about the dilemmas teachers perceive regarding the instruction of MCYAL, however, we can find potential answers in the research about the separate fields of multicultural literature and young adult literature. Some of the dilemmas teachers identify in regards to multicultural literature include inadequate funding, or a lack of resources, and concerns of censorship (Stallworth et al., 2006).

Resources. Apart from Stallworth et al.'s findings of teachers' concerns about funding for multicultural texts, scholars have not extensively studied the dilemma of resources. Funding has supported priorities of testing, and schools are moving toward uniformity in their practices (e.g. with the acceptance of the Common Core State Standards). Given the emphasis on testing and accountability in school systems (Kohn, 2000) and perhaps the inevitable need to defend the complexity of YAL within the context of the Common Core (Ostenson, 2012), the use of MCYAL does not seem to be a significant focus for administrators and teachers. Inquiry, creativity, and imagination no longer seem to take precedence to accountability. Kozol (2005) argues that teaching units are leashed to standards, and though students are expected to compete in the job market, the structure of their education does not seem to honor their voices.

Strategies to overcome perceived dilemmas of resources. Classroom teachers are faced with a lack of resources and limited access to class sets of MCYAL (Stallworth et al., 2006). Oswald and Smolen (2010) discuss that teachers are rarely given funds to build and maintain their classroom libraries but many overcome this obstacle by using parent-teacher organizations; attending used book sales, library sales, and garage sales; and writing grants. But funding is not

the only dilemma teachers face, and without easier access to multicultural young adult texts, some teachers may be using a lack of resources as a smokescreen for more deep-rooted concerns about these texts.

Censorship. Teachers state that the benefits of including diverse titles in their curricula do not outweigh potential negative consequences of censorship (Stallworth et al., 2006). The ALA's Office of Intellectual Freedom has reported 10,415 censorship cases over the last twenty years (Hill, 2010). Employers—or administrations or school boards—have historically been viewed as the antagonists or enemy, and a lack of a mutual confidence or common goals may feel problematic for teachers (Taylor, 1914). Because of these worries about administrative or parental support and the susceptibility of MCYAL to censorship (Lewis, Ketter, & Fabos, 2001; Nilsen, Blasingame, Nilsen, & Donelson, 2012), teachers may intentionally exclude multicultural texts from their classrooms.

Further, Rosenblatt (1938/1995) argues that traditional classroom teachers may have the desire to insulate students from controversy. Traditionally, teachers are taught to avoid seemingly taboo topics—such as race and ethnicity—so they may feel unwilling to approach conflict and worry it will create divisiveness in the classroom (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Graff, 1990; Tatum, 1992). White-Kaulaity (2006) suggests that teachers' perceptions of Native American voices, for instance, are seen as “too complex, too controversial, too risky, too time-consuming, too political, too painful, and too many other things” (p. 10). Therefore, one might argue that the value of multicultural literature and honoring voices of marginalized cultures is not fully realized in the minds of all classroom teachers who are concerned about censorship dilemmas.

Strategies to overcome concerns of censorship. Research suggests that teachers may develop strategies to transcend these dilemmas of censorship and foster culturally responsive classrooms that allow for cultivation of critical thinking skills and help students explore and build their identities with the diverse experiences of the characters (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). Though multicultural young adult texts may contain controversial material, teachers might engage in conscious and direct instruction to help students grapple with these concerns rather than fixate on worries about censorship. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) argues that ignoring these texts causes teachers to sidestep issues that directly affect their students. Apple (2004), among other scholars, argues that administrations should concern themselves with the political and moral aspects of curricula and understand that their positions of power—and their political, ideological, and personal conceptions of the world—inherently define what is presented as knowledge and truth. Gay's (2000) work in cultural responsiveness, which is more specific to the topic of this dissertation, aligns with Apple's arguments. She believes that teachers should be supported in their endeavors to address any controversy that comes with the instruction of a multicultural young adult text, such as censorship. Whether censorship is intentional or not, she argues that it sends a message of the devaluation of diverse perspectives and by censoring materials, school officials fail to honor the humanity of their students and, in essence, declare that there is one total and permanent (White) truth that should exist uncontested. Gay's work forwards the notion that culture must be at the heart of education, and students should be the heartbeat of all curricular and instructional decisions.

Professional dilemmas. Though institutional concerns such as funding and censorship certainly play a role in teachers' decisions to exclude texts from their book lists, as described below, teachers also identify professional dilemmas regarding their decisions about multicultural

and/or young adult texts. Some dilemmas teachers cite include their professional preparation and worries about the inclusion and implementation of such texts in the classroom. As with many of the other dilemmas cited in this dissertation, professional concerns about multicultural young adult texts have not been extensively researched.

Teachers' lack of knowledge of the field. Teachers cite a lack of knowledge and expertise about multicultural literature as a reason for their exclusion of the texts. Stallworth et al. (2006) asked teachers to list the multicultural titles they teach in their classrooms, and many of the texts they listed were not examples of multicultural literature. Beyond a misunderstanding of what multicultural literature actually is, teachers seem to consistently teach token examples of the literature and rarely extend beyond a few common texts. For instance, in Stotsky et al.'s (2010) study, the top twenty most frequently assigned books for grades 9-11 include only three multicultural titles: *Night* by Elie Wiesel, *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck, and *Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. By focusing their teaching on only a few multicultural texts like these three (at least one of which might not be defined by all scholars as multicultural), teachers may potentially be creating stereotypes, as students may not recognize variety within cultures. So though multicultural titles are occasionally taught in classrooms, their variety is quite limited. This could be troubling because these books are not the only multicultural texts that have merit and value.

Strategies to overcome a lack of knowledge of the field. As they consider selecting multicultural texts for instruction, teachers may employ a variety of techniques, including students' personal engagement (Bean et al., 1999b). Research suggests that these might allow teachers not only to consider integrating culture in their classrooms but make space for young adult literature, as well. Teachers might first become knowledgeable of the myriad, high-quality,

multicultural young adult publications in order to confidently teach and address diversity and draw upon varied resources in their classroom instruction (Hayn & Burns, 2012). To gain this knowledge, they might consider participating in professional development programs or collaborative experiences to bridge gaps in their knowledge. As Dietrich and Ralph (1995) report, these programs would likely help teachers develop strategies to honor students' voices and allow both teachers and students to develop their own meanings from texts and use the diverse experiences of the characters to build and expand their cultural identities.

Research suggests, too, that collaboration might provide another way to build support and build confidence in teachers as they cross these cultural borders. Dietrich and Ralph (1995) advocate that as teachers critically examine their own perceptions of culture, they can share these ideologies with a larger community of teachers and discuss culture in literature circles and online forums. Ward (2010) recommends multicultural conferences and outreach programs to assist teachers in learning more and collaborating with others who share common goals. Thein et al. (2012) recommend that teachers organize and videotape lessons and discuss strategies as a collective group. In their study, the teachers made advancements in knowledge. One participant described:

As a teacher in an upper-middle-class, predominantly white middle school, Scott found that listening to the perspectives of the teachers who had more experience working in communities with students of colour and observing their instructional choices related to shared principles helped him to develop and refine instruction that challenged his students to consider unfamiliar discourses, dialects and cultural values. (p. 128)

This participation and commitment would require teachers to engage in genuine dialogue to increase their confidence and knowledge in non-evaluative ways (Thein et al., 2012). Oswald

and Smolen (2010) suggest that support groups and mentoring programs might offer teachers insight and would likely provide them with tools for effective pedagogical, culturally responsive teaching strategies. Rather than focusing on merely including these texts on book lists, these kinds of programs could prepare teachers to move toward using the texts in empowering and transformative ways (Hinton & Dickinson, 2005).

Gill (2000) found that 95% of Young Adult Literature professors intentionally used multicultural novels, but 56% had no specific unit or lesson about multicultural literature. So though the multicultural young adult texts may exist on professors' syllabi, it is unclear as to whether they are merely highlighting diverse texts as token examples or actually addressing the field of MCYAL in informative ways. It is important for professors to educate students in order to dispel myths, alleviate tensions, and provide specific teaching strategies to foster a firm understanding and knowledge base to support teachers to effectively teach these texts.

Researchers have argued that, in order for teachers to gain knowledge about MCYAL, they must perceive and value it as important to know and understand. Dietrich and Ralph (1995) argue that developing a personal philosophy of multicultural literature does not happen in isolation, so supporting teachers in this endeavor is crucial. Teachers have been described as overwhelmed by the demands and mandates that come with teaching, and they may not have the time to learn about this literature (Landt, 2006; Stallworth et al., 2006). Because they may feel woefully underprepared, they may hesitate to share multicultural texts with students (Hinton & Dickinson, 2005). In order to foster confidence and knowledge, universities and schools need to build a community of ethnically and culturally diverse teachers who are willing to engage in these kinds of conversations. The need to address diversity is now greater than ever (Hayn & Burns, 2012), so it seems important that institutions of higher education, centers for professional

development, and school districts make the time for teachers to feel prepared and confident to tackle these texts.

Textual authenticity and text selection. Accompanying teachers' fears of their own lack of knowledge are concerns about text selection, which includes concerns about the authenticity of texts. There is wide disagreement about insider versus outsider perspectives (members of a culture versus outsiders to a culture) within multicultural literature and whether an author must be an insider of a culture in order to have the authority to write a multicultural text. Many teachers feel they have neither the time nor skills to make determinations about this authority and/or research and evaluate the authenticity of texts (Landt, 2006). A lack of confidence and worries about controversy, particularly fears of being charged with racism or insensitivity, may prevent teachers from teaching multicultural literature (Nilsen, et al., 2012; Bishop, 1992). Cai (2002) confirms the legitimacy of these fears about text selection and authenticity when he argues that White authors often misrepresent other cultures:

The goal of the multicultural literature movement is to give voice to those who have been historically silenced, to represent those who have been underrepresented, to give true faces back to those whose images have been distorted. But unfortunately, in the name of multiculturalism, some authors and artists from the mainstream culture are doing a disservice to the movement by turning out books that perpetuate stereotypes or present inaccurate cultural information. (p. 49)

The repetition of subtle stereotypes harms those of the represented culture, "breed[s] ignorance," and deludes reality for White students (Cai, 2002, p. 71). Scholars urge the public to examine sources for their accuracy and authenticity and analyze the "gatekeepers," or those who

determine what and who are published (Bishop, 1992; Masuda & Ebersole, 2010) in order to provide a rationale and justification for decisions concerning text selection.

Opinions about authors' authority dominate research about multicultural literature. Some scholars argue that the writer must be a member of the culture in order to accurately portray it. Young et al. (1995) take a more resolute position and argue that "more often than not, cultural emphasis and essence are lost" (p. 387) when authors write outside of their own cultures. Further, Bista (2012) states, "Without the cultural identity and experiences, writers' stories may perpetuate bias or misinterpret cultural practices, traditions, or even ways of relating" (p. 320). He reasons that authors within the culture have the authority to portray these cultures better than those outside of the culture, but with reliable, extensive research and background information, others can write about a culture different than their own. Landt (2006) asserts that it is "difficult if not impossible" (p. 695) for readers outside of a culture to determine authenticity, and insiders are generally considered authentic in their knowledge and presentation of a culture while outsiders "may or may not be authentic" (p. 696) in their knowledge and presentation of a culture.

Meanwhile, other scholars and authors argue that being a member of the culture is not essential to guarantee authenticity. Yokota (1993) says that being born into a culture does not necessarily give a person expertise, particularly in instances such as adoption, where a person of color may be raised without familial cultural norms that reflect their ethnicity. She states that instead, evaluators must examine the quality and cultural authenticity of the text. Cai (2002) feels that an author's persistent efforts to understand a culture grants him or her authority and "if the author is able to do so, he or she should be considered an insider" (p. 49). Multicultural young

adult author Lisa Yee (2015) would agree with Cai. She argues that she can and has written outside of her culture, and that extensive research allows her to do so.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I acknowledge these various viewpoints and their stances. However, perhaps due to the complexity of this issue and my lived experiences—extensive discussions with Native American tribal members living on reservations—I am mindful of a sacredness that accompanies culture. Likewise, I am aware that as a Native American who did not grow up on a reservation, this makes me an outsider to some who share my ethnicity, but I am perceived as an outsider of Native American culture much more commonly by those who are not Native American. Similar to an adopted child, this leaves me as an outsider of two cultures, because to many, I am not fully White, though to others, I am not fully Native American. Because of the deep intricacies of issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and identity, I align myself with scholars like Yokota (1993); I argue that being born into a culture does not signify expertise, and I propose that perhaps, the insider/outsider binary is more of a continuum. I agree with scholars like Bista (2012) and Landt (2006) that those who are closer to being “insiders” to a culture have a stronger authority than those who are deemed to be outsiders, including myself, who is perhaps perceived to be closer to the outsider end of the continuum of both of my two ethnicities. I recognize the power of gatekeepers, so I believe every literary work needs to be evaluated for its individual merit and accuracy. Extensive research provides authors more authority to write about a culture, but classroom discussions of such texts might focus on issues of authority, and might consider discussing these concerns openly with their students.

Strategies to evaluate authenticity and for overall text selection. In order for teachers to evaluate texts for authenticity, Bishop (1992) recommends they follow general strategies, but there is no specific and precise checklist. He believes it is important for teachers to select texts

based on literary merit rather than solely because they contain people of color. These texts should not be similar to social studies texts or feel didactic to readers. Yokota (1993) argues both for literary merit and cultural consciousness. This means that the texts should have rich cultural details, authentic dialogue and relationships, a comprehensive treatment of cultural issues, and purposeful inclusion of people of color—rather than serve as an attempt to fill a quota of a number of characters of color. Landt (2006) offers a similar list and emphasizes dialogue, accurate and realistic portrayal of cultural and social issues, frank but not simplistic portrayal of problems, and characters of color as leaders. Harlin and Morgan (2005) stress the importance of considering the values a book transmits and the ways a culture is represented as a whole.

Across multicultural scholarship, stereotypes are a principal area of concern for scholars. Many researchers reference the Council on Interracial Books for Children's (1980) *Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks*. This book is now out of print, but Derman-Sparks and the A. B. C. Task Force (1989) published a revised version that suggests educators and readers check for illustrations and story lines which promote or reinforce stereotypes; examine power relationships, heroes, and victims between cultural groups; note loaded words or phrases; examine authors' perspectives and potential biases; and look at copyright dates to select more recent works in order for more informed, bias-free text selection.

Cai (2002) further emphasizes that teachers and students must examine stereotypes within the context of the entire text. Scholarship explores the ways the public's criticism of stereotypes in literature seems to be oversimplified, which causes readers to view these negative portrayals in isolation; rather, preferably, texts should reflect reality and not contain exclusively positive or negative images of people of color. Marston (2004), for instance, who focused specifically on Palestinians in children's literature, considers students' emotional responses and

pushes for stories that allow students to form positive, enduring impressions of people of color. Tatum (2009) provides a rubric to assist educators with identifying the positive texts that Matson describes. He critiques disabling texts, which reinforce negative stereotypes and praises enabling texts, which promote action, particularly for those who share the same culture as the characters. Enabling texts are described as texts that matter—they don't stress a victim mentality, and they provide platforms for change. Tatum believes they liberate and empower young people.

In consideration of text selection, Tatum (2009) emphasizes that these enabling texts need not be overtly positive in their message to readers. At the conclusion of her study of preservice teachers who were reading *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie (2007), Wender (2015) worried that the teachers in her class would be left with feelings of hopelessness and negativity. Oswald and Smolen (2010) argue that students should be probed to interrogate injustice; they should be permitted to act upon these feelings of negativity in order to work toward an equitable, just society. Under this argument, it seems the inclusion of contemporary themes—positive or negative—will present students with a platform to challenge the status quo in transformative ways.

As teachers evaluate texts with these checklists and rubrics in mind, they might consider other supportive resources described within scholarship. Landt (2006) cites specific cultural awards and websites for teachers. Hinton & Dickinson (2005) encourage partnerships with library media specialists, who might provide training to teachers. And Delpit (2006) urges educators to seek community or cultural insiders for specific help with evaluating texts. She states, “Good liberal intentions are not enough” (p. 45), and the participation of people of color is crucial for successful cultural instruction.

Scholars underscore the importance of teachers' immersion in multicultural literature to

build their personal awareness of their own cultural borders in order to extend beyond these to become informed cultural educators (Gay, 2000; Peck, 2010). Stallworth et al. (2006) adds that teachers who read widely are more likely to engage in rich, literary conversations and contextualize multicultural literature for their students. Scholarship suggest that they also gain insider perspectives and expose their students to more quality literature (Cai, 2002; Elliot-Johns, 2012; Rochman, 1993) and become more aware of recurring themes, attitudes, and cultural mores, which can offer them a frame of reference to evaluate and select texts (Cai, 2002; Bishop, 1992). This is an iterative process that requires time, commitment, persistence, and self-confidence (Gay, 2000; Ward, 2010).

As they select texts for the classroom, teachers may aim for a balance of texts. In their book about affirming diverse voices, Oswald and Smolen (2010) write that schools are responsible for providing a varied literary diet for students, and a possible first step for teachers is to build an expansive classroom library with diverse philosophies and ideas that liberate students from assumptions and stereotypes about cultural groups. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) states, “[I]n a democracy, the more varied the literary fare provided for students, the greater is its potential as an educationally liberating force” (p. 204). Teachers and students might collaborate to build culturally responsive classrooms. Tatum (2009) stresses the importance of building textual lineages—carefully chosen texts with significance to each student. A culturally responsive classroom is one that recognizes the cultural richness within a classroom and empowers and validates students through literature (Gay, 2000).

Although it is important to offer a variety of cultural perspectives in curricula, teachers may also select texts that show diversity within cultures (Bishop, 1992). In order for students to critically understand multicultural perspectives, Arnold (2009) suggest that they should explore

cultures from a variety of lenses. Students are likely to see how cultures are different from their own, but scholarship focuses also on the recognition of the differences among these differences (Grobman, 2007; Thein, Beach, & Parks, 2012). In their work with preservice teachers, Coleman-King and Groenke (2015) asked students to serve as “critical witnesses,” in the hope that their emotional connections with the multicultural texts would foster dedication toward a path focused on change. They selected three very different texts for their students—each representing a different aspect of the Black-White paradigm: a fictional slave narrative, a contemporary realistic fiction, and a work of nonfiction. This model granted students opportunities to discuss matters of culture from a variety of perspectives and issues while affording opportunities to perceive its richness.

Rigid curricula and concerns of rigor. As teachers work to be culturally responsive educators—“releas[ing] the intellect of students of color from the constraining manacles of mainstream canons of knowledge and ways of knowing” (Gay, 2000, p. 35)—new dilemmas emerge. Introducing *any* new texts to a rigid curricula (both prescribed and self-imposed) and may be a concern due to a perceived lack of time or space. Thus, selecting texts within and between cultures may seem to be an overwhelming endeavor. Bobbit (1918) defines the curriculum as the range of directed and undirected experiences that are concerned with the individuals’ abilities and the series of training experiences that schools use to consciously direct these experiences. According to Apple (2004), curricula and teaching experiences must be built by both the teachers and students and be responsive to the community, school, and student needs—rather than rely on traditional texts and lessons, which may no longer have relevance. Dewey (1938/1997) reminds those who are devoted to the literary canon: “It is not enough that

certain materials and methods have proved effective with other individuals at other times” (p. 46), and each class must be perceived as offering a unique set of challenges and interests.

Regarding self-imposed rigid curricula, scholarship has also explored what texts teachers select and their reasoning for selecting them. In his (1982) review of teacher practices, Michael Fullan found that most “teachers frequently take and teach the textbook.” (p. 118). In his later (2007) work, Fullan still found concerns with weak teacher communities, where teachers continued to enact traditions in the isolation of their classrooms. Friese, Alvermann, Parkes, and Rezak (2008) discuss that some schools have institutional constraints that require teachers to select specific texts yet those teachers who had more freedom in decision-making seemed to be fixated on assessment. They argue that further research needs to focus on the cultural capital of teachers and how this affects perceived rigidity in curricula and that text selection seems to be a possible site for teacher autonomy and agency because many have power and opportunity to advocate for specific texts.

Theorists continually argue that a curriculum deluged with classics does not promote lifelong reading habits (Gallo, 2001; Hipple, 1997). Many teachers narrowly define classic literature as the only model of good literature and thus may be concerned that multicultural literature, and by extension, MCYAL, does not have the same endurance or caliber as canonical texts (Stallworth et al., 2006). They may even believe themselves to be defenders of the canon (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). Dietrich and Ralph (1995), however, believe that we do not live in a homogenous society, and if we are to deconstruct this myth that the canon is the priority, we must embrace works that reflect various perspectives and ethnic groups. Stallworth et al. (2006) found that teachers with one to five years of experience were less rigid in their perspectives of curricula and more likely to include multicultural texts on their lists of quality literature. It is

unclear exactly why newer teachers tend to include these diverse titles in their classrooms. However, research does show that teachers are more likely to teach novels that they learned when they were in school (Nieto, 2004). Perhaps, as multicultural literature becomes slowly integrated into classrooms, each generation of teachers will have greater confidence that these texts are worthy of analysis.

As young adult titles gain credence as “real” literature and thus are perceived in a more positive light, their inclusion in school curricula seems to increase in response. This seems to have generated more exposure, familiarity, and acceptance of these titles among younger teachers. Cai (2002) urges that teachers concern themselves with not just what a book means but what it can do for a reader. According to Rosenblatt (1938/1995), a growth in literary knowledge should be paired with a growth in understanding the human condition. Good teaching seems necessary to help students situate multicultural literature within the larger literary tradition where it can be valued (Stallworth et al., 2006).

Scholars reports that too often, high school students (and teachers) think books are meant to be picked apart and analyzed, rather than read and enjoyed (Hale, 2008). Teachers of young adult literature can provide opportunities for students to respond deeply and critically to texts in ways that are comparable to analyses of classic literature. Scholars have made compelling arguments that these books have substance which makes them just as worthy of critical analysis (Groenke & Scherff, 2010; Lesesne, 2010). Rosenblatt (1938/1995) pushes against the overemphasis on classic texts and states, “To force such works on the young prematurely defeats the long-term goal of educating people to a personal love of literature sufficiently deep to cause them to seek it out for themselves at the appropriate time” (p. 207). The underlying logic is that matching readers with good books will allow them to embrace reading with commitment and

passion (Lesesne, 2003). Teachers might strive for a balance of texts in curricula. Kozol (2005) believes that those who select texts should not be “hardened into cold concrete of absolutes and certitudes” (p. 332), and Nicol (2008) says there is no specific formula for the number of multicultural young adult texts to include in a school year; rather, teachers should consider their students’ needs and balance texts responsively and responsibly. Aligned with this theory, students should genuinely hear a diverse set of ideologies in a welcoming classroom and school environment (McLaren, 2003).

Currently, there is a dearth of research regarding the integration of contemporary literature—multicultural or not—into curricula and the impact of such literature on the identities of students (Boston & Baxley, 2007). We know that teachers list a lack of resources and curricular time restraints as dilemmas to the inclusion of multicultural texts on their book lists (Stallworth et al., 2006). However, in Gitlin’s (2001) study of the practices in schools, he found that, “Teachers underutilized their autonomy by often following quite precisely the state core curriculum, textbooks, and prepackaged curricula, which limited their ability to act on and even transform pedagogical relations, forms of legitimate knowledge, and cultural canons” (p. 254). Scholars argue that in order to challenge the hegemony that exists in school systems and society—which may be shielded by the notion of rigid curricula or concerns of rigor—we must make multicultural texts available for students to critically examine their world (Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2003; Masuda & Ebersole, 2010).

In order for multicultural young adult texts to find a space in the classroom, scholars agree that teacher concerns about the rigor of such texts should be addressed first. For instance, teachers and the public may see young adult literature as inferior because of its marketing, shifting definition, lack of study, and perceived blurry connection to the standards (Hazlett,

Johnson, & Hayn, 2009). But according to Ostenson and Wadham (2012), just because books are enjoyable or accessible to readers does not mean their content is not difficult or challenging for students. Rosenblatt (1938/1995) writes that a text can have more than one value and be both aesthetic and rigorous, just as some classics may embody both categories. Hipple (2000) argued that young adult literature features themes parallel to those in classics and that these themes “merit and reward examination and commentary” (p. 2), and Moore (1997) showed that literary criticism can be used for rigorous analyses of young adult literature. Multicultural texts are denigrated (Ford, 2013) just as frequently as young adult texts because they are seen as separate and distinct from the classics. Young adult author and scholar Crowe (1998) admits, “I’m a little reluctant to label their books ‘multicultural’ because labeling good books as anything but literature seems to place them out of the mainstream” (p. 125). Similar to young adult literature, scholars have shown the content and language of these texts are rigorous and worthy of literary analysis (Cai, 2002; Dunbar, 2013).

Strategies to overcome rigid curricula and concerns of rigor. Research suggests that teachers and school districts should be taught that high quality MCYAL affords students opportunities to examine stereotypes, expand perspectives, and foster an understanding and appreciation of culture (Masuda & Ebersole, 2010). “[I]t is an aesthetic form of literary creation just like any other kind of literature, a political weapon in the cultural war, and an educational tool to change people’s attitudes toward cultural diversity” (Cai, 2002, p. xv). It seems important that teachers read widely and participate in the text selection process, so they can identify these high quality texts and not feel as if they are choosing mediocre texts purely for the fact that they are multicultural (Hopkins & Tastad, 1997). Rigor also goes beyond the actual texts. Scholars suggest that teachers focus on asking complex questions and assigning complex tasks, promoting

critical analysis, helping students understand the texts' place within the larger literary tradition, integrating texts in across disciplines, and promoting a strong understanding of the world (Appleman, 2009; Bickmore & Emiraliyeva-Pitre, 2013; Stallworth et al., 2006).

Cultural and racial topics within the texts. Perhaps concerns about rigor are overshadowing a deeper issue at work in the educational system. Nearly 85% of all secondary teachers are White; often hold deficit-oriented perspectives toward diverse populations; and engage in limited, if any, preparation to work with the cultures reflected in their classrooms (Glenn, 2012). By 2019, it is estimated that 49% of students in classrooms will be children of color, which is not reflected in the teaching workforce. Research has shown that despite attention toward racial integration in schools, segregated schooling still persists and is actually increasing (Kozol, 2005). Almost three quarters of African American and more than three quarters of Latina/o children attend schools with a majority of students of color (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2003). Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry (2009) closely examined the intersection of race, culture, language, and disability in urban schools and discuss how the schools attended by students of color tend to be in high poverty areas where a vast majority of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. They write:

According to the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2005), 70% of African American students, 71% of Hispanic students, and only 23% of White students live in poverty, and these numbers are even more disparaging when it comes to students concentrated in urban environments. (p. 390)

The challenges within urban schools are both quantitatively and qualitatively different from schools attended by predominantly White middle-class students (Blanchett, 2006; Blanchett, Klingner, & Harry, 2009; Losen & Orfield, 2002). Because urban schools are replete with

dilemmas such as funding, teacher turnover, and student retention (Noel, 2010), the educational goals of various stakeholders present various dilemmas for teachers (Deeds & Patillo, 2015; Kraatz & Block, 2008), who may not be prepared for these social, cultural, political, and economic tensions (Noel 2010).

For this reason, researchers have focused on teachers' dispositions toward urban schools. Olsen and Anderson (2007) explored 2nd-year to 6th-year urban, elementary school teachers and found that regardless of whether they planned to stay at or leave their current institutions, all were committed to their initial goal of improving the education of urban youth, in general. Researchers and teacher educators Freedman and Appleman (2008, 2009) analyzed the experiences of students from their graduate program, which is dedicated to preparing secondary teachers for urban school contexts. They report that the teachers they studied reflected a "sense of mission," and "disposition for hard work and persistence" (Freedman & Appleman, 2009, p. 329). However, their cohort had significantly higher retention rates than the national average. While 96% of their students were still teaching in the urban schools after their first year, only 76% of beginning teachers, nationally, continue to teach in urban schools after their first year. They attribute this high percentage to their school's focus on preparing students for urban school contexts. (Freedman & Appleman, 2008).

However, a "demographic divide" (Gay & Howard, 2003) exists in school systems, and not all teachers have positive sentiments about the movement. While 95% of the Young Adult Literature professors in Gill's (2000) study strongly agreed that MCYAL is important for children to study, 17% felt that teaching these texts was an attempt at political correctness. Scholarship reveals that many White teachers believe in a meritocratic myth—that race and ethnicity are irrelevant to achievement (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2012; Tatum, 1992) and that

multiculturalism is a nefarious force driving a liberal agenda (Cai, 2002) in which marginalized groups conspire to gain advantage (Jay, 1997; Taxel, 1997). These educators may resist political messages that threaten their identities (Beach, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lewis et al., 2001). White individuals sometimes look upon those from different cultures as inferior and discriminate in favor of their own group (Howard, 2006; Rosenblatt, 1938/1995), resist acknowledging or interrogating White privilege (Guillory, 2012; Thein et al., 2007), and use words like “we” in ways that reify their own privilege (Lewis et al., 2001). Howard (2006) states, “[S]omething powerful has to happen to [White people] . . .” for them to begin to critically examine racialized oppression as well as their own Whiteness and privilege (p. 17).

Within the classroom, some teachers intentionally elect not to teach multicultural young adult literature thus promoting the culture and language of power. Scholars like Hirsch (1988), for instance, endorse a controversial stance called “cultural literacy” and believe that students both across and within schools should read shared texts—which inevitably, are canonical. To support this argument, Hirsch speaks out against schools with varied texts and course options and writes, “The inevitable consequences of the shopping mall high school is a lack of shared knowledge across and within schools. It would be hard to invent a more effective recipe for cultural fragmentation” (p. 21). Positions like these may be affecting the multicultural movement. Olneck (2000) found that despite advances in multicultural education, those who defend cultural capital have succeeded in blunting and decelerating the success of the movement.

Hughes-Hassel (2013) reports that well-meaning teachers may also reflect color-blind ideologies and may be ignorant to White constructions within texts; they may wonder also why people of color cannot just imagine their own culture while reading about a White narrator. King (1991) calls this “dysconscious racism,” where teachers have distorted views of the inequities

that exist in society—a colorblindness that leads to distorted understandings and limited action to prevent imbalances in education (Glenn, 2012; Howard, 2006; McLaren, 2003; O'Connor et al., 2009).

In general, research has shown that White people rarely think about their culture, power, or privilege (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2012; McIntosh, 1989). Even after seeing the power of White privilege, teachers may express concerns that addressing racism in the classroom and affirming other cultures might cause a separation that leads to further stratification and divisiveness (King, 1991). Some professors worry that revealing their expertise and providing well-intentioned arguments about power and privilege will lead students to more strongly resist this knowledge (Lewis et al., 2001). But Howard (2006) argues that if White teachers do not understand their dominance and the ways that culture and privilege are a regular part of everyday life (Lewis, 2003), there is little hope that they will act in transformative ways. Culture and privilege seem to be a regular part of everyday life. Teachers may resist the temptation to indirectly confront issues of culture because it is perceived to be easier than interrogating modern, racial inequities (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). Schneider (2005) urges teachers to engage in the everyday acts of power and privilege that saturate classrooms today.

Theorists argue that schools are at the very center of racial lines (Garth-McCullough, 2008; Gay, 2000; Lewis, 2003). Appleman (2009) believes that myriad cultural contexts shape the way students read texts. When we deny students access to multicultural texts, we seem to deny them access to information, and Cole (2008) argues that this is an act of oppression. The hegemonic spiral is continually recreated which Apple (2004) says will further the economic and cultural disparities in society. In order to fight this “dominance paradigm” (Howard, 2006, p. 74), we might consciously design curricular and instructional decisions to resist the traditions

within the hidden curriculum of schools (Apple, 2004). Reading is believed to be a highly political act, and with literacy comes power (Apple, 2004; Appleman, 2009). By not exposing students to the exploitation of the oppressed, it seems that we are silently accepting this reality (Freire, 2000). Rosenblatt (1938/1995) urges educators to develop students' "capacity to feel intensely the needs and sufferings and aspirations of people whose personal interests are distinct from our own, people with whom we may have no bond other than our common humanity" (p. 178). This empathetic stance may allow them to discern and challenge dominant ideologies (Cai, 2002; Lewis et al., 2001) while increasing their "intellectual flexibility" (Appleman, 2009, p. 113). According to McLaren (2003), students might develop an enriched understanding of how knowledge is produced, appropriated, and consumed in order to engage in what Appleman (2009) describes to be a personal, cultural, and political discourse about texts. Although talking about culture is valuable, it seems unlikely to eradicate racism, and students might be afforded opportunities to engage in genuine conversations to develop enriched understandings of constructions of power.

Critical consciousness may help students extend beyond classroom discussions and engage in public participation and social action (McLaren, 2003). This "talking back" (Enciso, 1997) may allow them to challenge problematic inequities. Authentic experiences facilitated by teachers seem to help students scaffold understanding (Taylor, 2004), and problem-posing inquiry should be at the forefront of curricular design (Freire, 2000; McLaren, 2003). In 1907, Addams wrote that literature can be used for the "preparation for better social adjustment—for the remedying of social ills" (p. 8). This issue-driven approach will likely build community and allow students to tackle complex moral issues, and in turn, Delpit (2006) feels they would be better able to think for themselves, rather than depend on external sources as compasses for

meaning. The development of critically thinking, democratic students seems to require teachers to relinquish some control in their classrooms in order to provide students with the tools to think for themselves with diverse literature as lenses (Appleman, 2009). Delpit (2006) theorizes that students might then be more competent and prepared to become active local, national, and global citizens who construct their citizenship in positive, meaningful ways.

Strategies to tackle concerns of race, ethnicity, and privilege. Teachers might consider the democracy of public schools and that if students are unable to learn about and explore different worldviews both inside and outside of school walls, they may not be fully prepared to emerge into the world. Research shows that unfamiliar cultures become more tolerable when students are able to see themselves in the familiar experiences of characters; this helps students build an understanding of the human experience (Landt, 2006; Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006). A rich diversity of texts with a variety of characters may allow students to shape their worldviews and find their voices and, in turn, augment their involvement in the cultural controversies in curricula and society (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995). When teachers present diverse, authentic texts as both legitimate and essential, they may be encouraging students to celebrate and respect the dissimilar, varied cultures that exist in society. By allowing students to read multicultural texts, they may also be allowing them to view outside perspectives, communicate across cultures and develop an affirmation of themselves and their ethnic identities (Bean et al., 1999b; Harris, 1994; Landt, 2006; Stallworth et al., 2006; Young et al., 1995). If students do not see themselves in the literature, they may not sense that their voices are valued or important. Conversely, if students only see themselves in texts, the dominant paradigm may continue, and concerns like the meritocratic myth may persist. This literature can be used by educators in Bishop's (1990) metaphor of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors. In other words, students

can use these texts to consider other cultures, to understand their own cultures, and to become part of the cultures or worlds an author has created. Based on research, it seems important that students be afforded opportunities to see and express themselves, engage in dialogue, and (re)act in powerful ways with an educated awareness of other cultures. Rather than read this literature, Rosenblatt (1938/1998) stresses that they should participate in it.

Research findings suggest that no single strategy or uniform text will effectively engage all of the diverse learners in the classroom. Teachers may play a significant role in helping students understand and explore culture and privilege, and "conquering racism requires the concerted, conscious, continuous efforts of many" (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2012, p. 14). Freire (2000) believed that only with repeated experiences and immersion can students understand the repetitive, salient patterns of power and privilege. However, McIntyre (2002)'s antiracist work in her teacher preparation program has garnered negative attention from those in her school. When a college administrator asked her if discussions of Whiteness had to "permeate everything," and then suggested she was "shoving it down [students'] throats" (p. 46), she stood her ground and affirmed that these discussions must "permeate everything" because systematic racism is engrained, and transformative discourses are purposeful and methodical. It seems that only when it is assimilated in curricula will this prolonged contact yield results.

Prolonged contact seems to require more integrated approaches of multicultural education. Banks' (2004, 2009) work categorizes the varying levels of curricular reform for multicultural education. He presents four levels of integration. Level one, the lowest degree of integration, is a Contribution Approach. Educators highlight aspects like heroes or holidays. In level two, the Additive Approach, curricular structure still does not shift, but teachers focus on multicultural content and themes in addition to the curriculum. Other scholars lament superficial

efforts like these, particularly when cultures are only celebrated within their designated “history months” (Cai, 2002; Copenhaver-Johnson, 2012; Hinton & Dickinson, 2005). This level would likely also include the superficial approach described by Bishop (1994) as “holidays and celebration syndrome” (p. xxii), or the four F’s described by Cai (2002) as “food, festival, fashion, and folklore” (p. 135). Multicultural literature is often merely tolerated at this level and therefore consigned to classroom libraries and treated as an after-thought (Hinton & Dickinson, 2005; Smolen, Oswald, & Jenkins, 2010). Banks’ level three is a Transformation Approach. Curriculum structure changes in order for students to view themes, concerns, and issues from diverse perspectives. The highest level, according to Banks, is level four, The Social Action Approach, when students are asked to think critically and work actively to solve social problems.

Research suggests that it is optimal for MCYAL to be integrated at these higher levels with function or purpose. Dietrich and Ralph (1995) emphasize that it should be used in ways that promote critical inquiry with high level questions designed to tackle controversial issues. Teacher educator researchers have confronted issues of culture and privilege with a variety of pedagogical approaches. Guillory (2012) asked preservice teachers to use autobiographic inquiry and examine their relationships and histories with culture and acknowledge how these constructions affected them as teachers. Using collages about culture and privilege as a classroom activity in a teacher preparation program, McIntyre (2002) attempted to disrupt the ways her students positioned Whiteness to reveal implications in their teaching. Within the aims of multicultural education, some scholars provide suggestions for using multicultural literature in meaningful ways. Thein et al. (2007) recommend drama and performance activities. Smolen et. al (2010) provide suggestions to help students embrace multiple perspectives with twin texts, or multicultural texts that are linked based on theme; texts sets, or collections of books based on a

central theme; and thematic units that provide rich connections to other content areas. More specifically to this dissertation's aims, or the integration of MCYAL, teacher educators have used these texts in innovative ways. Wender (2015) asked preservice teachers to develop journal forms focused on perspective-taking to help them understand the positions and lived experiences of characters of color. As stated previously, Coleman-King & Groenke (2015) asked their students to serve as critical witnesses and developed a unit that integrated nonfiction, historical fiction, and realistic fiction to teach about racial identity. And Glenn (2012) asked students to read and reflect on counter-narratives to consider culture and their assumptions about culture both within and beyond the texts.

In order for teachers to successfully teach (and value) MCYAL, scholars propose that teachers become students: seeing themselves in the texts they teach, identifying with characters and themes, and rethinking their approaches (Appleman, 2009; Dietrich & Ralph, 1995; Hayn & Burns, 2012). Well-intentioned approaches have not always been successful, however. Researchers continue to find that even when they consciously focus on using MCYAL to help teachers see across differences, norms of Whiteness persist, and teachers have difficulty empathizing with the texts (Arnold, 2009; Glenn, 2012). But scholars have not yet determined what helps teachers feel comfortable and prepared to teach in diverse classrooms, and perhaps, well-meaning teacher training is not the only magic ticket. In her quantitative study of preservice teachers' preparedness to teach diverse children, Wasonga (2005) found that even with a significant increase in knowledge about multiculturalism, this knowledge did not necessarily change participant attitudes. Wasonga argued for a need for more direct and sustained interaction with multicultural issues in order to prepare teachers to apply their knowledge about multiculturalism to their classrooms. Scholars disagree about the best practice for refocusing

teachers' mindsets. Cai (2002) encourages teachers to go through the same experiences that they expect their students to go through, but Thein et al. (2012) suggests that, in order to see results, perhaps instruction must be practical rather than purely personal in focus. A balance of these approaches seems necessary to disrupt deeply entrenched beliefs of culture and privilege—both in teachers and students.

Personal dilemmas. Institutional and professional dilemmas can feel very real for classroom teachers. It is difficult to categorize and define the complexity of the overlapping concerns that come with the instruction of these texts. But accompanying each of these institutional and professional conflicts are perhaps personal dilemmas that teachers associate with these texts. Even with the knowledge and means to do so, feelings of discomfort may prevent teachers from adopting MCYAL in their classrooms.

Teachers' discomfort. The following research shows that teachers may not feel confident teaching texts that contain characters of cultures different from their own. For instance, 72% of the Young Adult Literature professors in Gill's 2000 study stated they found multicultural literature simply too difficult to teach. Because 56% did not teach a specific unit or lesson about multicultural literature, it is possible that the preservice teachers who read these texts adopted the same belief that their professors hold—that these texts are inherently more complicated than traditional texts that may be more familiar. Units and lessons about multicultural literature seem necessary to provide opportunities for students to deliberate and negotiate with issues and relieve tension and discomfort. Scholars like Kuo and Alsup (2010) and Wender (2015) report that much of teacher discomfort comes from a lack of knowledge or experience with other cultures. When preservice teachers were asked by Bean et al. (1999a) to discuss a multicultural young adult novel, they had difficulty understanding and relating to a character's perspective, particularly

with respect to the institutional racism faced by the character in the story. They also struggled to understand the character's problems as universal. Appleman (2009) feels that a yearning to learn more about different cultures can fill these knowledge gaps and provide a foundation for culturally critical classrooms, and teachers should be willing to challenge their cultural perspectives and beliefs and engage in these difficult conversations.

Using MCYAL in the classroom may be uncomfortable for teachers. As Rochman (1993) states, "[Good books] unsettle us, make us ask questions about what we thought was certain. They don't just reaffirm everything we know" (p. 19). Wender (2015) suggests that rather than ignore these "moments of discomfort, rejection, and worry," teachers should take advantage of the tensions to promote critical readings (p. 47). Howard (2006) discusses the need to address the insecurities and assumptions that White teachers have in multicultural settings because they "have not learned to be, namely, culturally competent professionals" (p. 6). They may distress about sensitive or offensive topics, and therefore withdraw from the discussions entirely (Copenhaver-Johnson, 2012; Nilsen et al., 2012; Young et al., 1995). Dickson and Costigan (2011) note, "Trying out new approaches can mean more than overcoming the fear that a lesson might not go well; it also may involve the risk that a teacher will be 'discovered' deviating from what is 'prescribed' and somehow be reprimanded or punished" (p. 167). Teachers who learn to feel secure when controversy arises seem to take advantage of teachable moments to benefit and be honest with both students and themselves (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995).

Strategies to overcome discomfort. Both teachers and students may feel discomfort and uneasiness with multicultural young adult texts. Tatum (1992) describes student resistance from all sides. One of his Black students wrote that she felt it was important for her White peers to discuss culture, yet she didn't want to hear them talk about Black people. Though discussions of

culture may not be easy, Delpit (2006) states that students should be afforded nonthreatening environments to work through their discomfort in meaningful ways in order to create meaningful experiences. Howard (2006) argues that students will see teachers' credibility if the teachers acknowledge their own insecurity, privilege, and discomfort. As a first step, teachers might help students identify with the characters' perspectives and see universal themes across multicultural young adult texts (Bean et al., 1999a). Dunbar (2013), for instance, highlights her students' need to see other cultures as severely different from their own, and she works to help her students see that Asian Americans are fully American. Students might consider their own cultural heritage and make connections with characters thus opening lines of communication (Dietrich & Ralph, 1995).

As a second step, teachers might then help students become more self-conscious, ethical readers, with a much clearer sense of their own positionality in relation to textual others (Dunbar, 2013). Universalizing all experiences takes away from a diversification of the curricula and detracts from important, productive distinctions between cultures. Some scholars believe that too much universalization is guided by racist epistemologies (Appleman, 2009; Lewis et al., 2001) and leads to "narcissistic reading practices that actually nurture racism" (Schneider, 2005, p.197). Dunbar (2013) urges educators to find a balance between universalizing and Othering to avoid reifying privilege and oversimplifying multicultural texts.

Teachers who are focused on creating public spaces where students participate in uncomfortable conversations may see the benefits of a culturally responsive classroom. "Culturally responsive teaching can be defined 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. It teaches *to and through* the

strengths of these students. It is culturally *validating and affirming*” (Gay, 2000, p. 29). Gay (2000) and Kozol (2005) feel that these are classrooms where students’ voices are honored and recognized in literature and conversations. This conflict runs counter to Lewis et al. (2001)’s perception that teachers may be worried about singling out students of color. Delpit (2006) theorizes that transformative ideologies require a teacher’s commitment to *all* students in the classroom. These practices extend beyond teaching instruction into curricula, assessment, and the entire school context (Apple, 2004; Gay, 2000). It seems promising for teacher preparation programs to require students to engage in activities centered on culturally responsive practices and the missing connections between these ideologies and schools in order for students to understand their value (Glenn, 2012). As teachers partner with students to learn and combine resources, they might join forces to negotiate this dilemma of discomfort.

In order for multicultural texts to be taught intentionally, researchers might identify the strategies or behaviors that teachers use to overcome concerns of discomfort. They might accomplish this task by building a community of ethnically and culturally diverse teachers who are willing to engage in conversations in settings such as literature circles, forums, or online literature discussions to strengthen their comfort with the instruction of these texts. Dietrich and Ralph (1995) argue that students have frequently been insulated from discussions of race and culture, so Glenn (2006, 2012) proposes that teachers begin students’ enculturation with fictional texts, which are farther removed from students’ realities of culture. Further, Appleman (2009) advocates for theoretical lenses as a safe way for students to consider issues of culture without fear or discomfort. Literature circles can potentially broaden students’ perspectives and ease concerns of discomfort (Bean et al., 1999a; Boston & Baxley, 2007). Tatum (1992) suggests that teachers focus on creating safe classrooms with strong models and opportunities for students to

generate their own knowledge and feel empowerment and agency. Chen (2005) argues that teachers should offer ethically oriented strategies that emerge from the literature itself in order for students to work through their differences. As an alternative format, Harper (2010) suggests that audiovisuals promote active participation with unfamiliar cultures and themes. And in their related work about LGBTQ literature, Renzi, Letcher, and Miraglia (2012) suggest presenting texts to students as if they are either LGBTQ themselves or supportive allies in order to disrupt norms rather than reinforce existing attitudes. This optimistic approach might prove helpful for tackling issues of culture. Though discussions of White privilege may be important for classrooms, which may be described as multicultural spaces, it seems likely that teachers would have better success approaching their students as fellow crusaders in a joined quest to fight injustice.

Above all other strategies, scholars repeatedly recommended literature response (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) as a potential remedy for overcoming concerns of discomfort. Despite the many courses in multicultural literature, typologies in ethnic identity development, and frequent exposure to multicultural texts, Bean et al. (1999a) found that when discussing a multicultural text, preservice teachers had difficulty moving beyond a New Criticism stance—an ideology that a novel is examined closely to discover its hidden meaning. Therefore, teacher educators and classroom teachers might intentionally model literature response for their students and work to train students to disregard traditional expectations of literature—which seem to worship mastery, over-analysis, and systematic assessment—in order for these students to delve deeply and emotionally into texts (Chen, 2005, Rosenblatt, 1938/1995). According to its theory, literature response would allow for a classroom to be reader-centered, where students are reading and rereading their positions (Schneider, 2005). According to Appleman (2009), it is unlikely

that students will overcome concerns of discomfort associated with culture if they believe there is one correct interpretation of a text, so reader response may be used as a transaction, where students see themselves as “equal partner[s] in that transaction” (p. 25), just as they may be seen as equal partners in the classroom.

Conclusion

Adolescence seems to be a crucial time period for the fusion of young people’s personal identities with their ethnic and racial identities as they develop ethnic group consciousness (Quintana, 1998) and integrate these ideas into their concepts of self (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). Smith and Silva (2011) suggest that an achieved, positive ethnic identity can be matched with positive well-being and self-esteem. When confronted with discrimination, opposition, and marginalization, a strong alignment with an ethnic or racial group may help adolescents identify the positive qualities of their ethnic groups. Multicultural literature and young adult literature might also be investigated for the intersection of the common traits they explore about crises of identity.

We know that a racial achievement gap exists in education, but it is unclear if a reliance on White classic texts plays any role in this achievement gap. O’Connor et al. (2009), for instance, argue that Native American populations are not considered very often because of their small population sizes, but overall, the existing system clearly disadvantages Blacks and Latinos in comparison with White and Asian students. This can be seen in Garth-McCullough (2008)’s research findings. She analyzed the cultural load of texts, or the amount of cultural knowledge necessary for comprehension and then compared this cultural load with the reading comprehension scores of low, medium, and high performing African American students. Garth-McCullough found that the cultural load had a significant impact on reading comprehension

performance, despite the students' prior achievement levels. In other words, the more cultural information within the text that matched the students' own culture, the higher their reading comprehension performance scores. These findings are promising for the potential benefits that may exist in MCYAL. In a small study, Lipka (2002) found that American Indian and Alaskan Native students who were forced to deny their cultural values and conform to Western Schooling chose instead to resist. How these students would react to MCYAL is unknown. We know that a hidden curriculum and dominance paradigm exist and students of color feel disempowered, but the true impact of these relevant, diverse texts need to be explored further (Baker, 2005). Overall, the literacy levels of marginalized populations have not been extensively studied (Boston & Baxley, 2007).

MCYAL seems to be a promising approach to provide all students with opportunities to participate in engaging texts that are ethnically and culturally diverse and increase achievement. Currently, most scholars discuss what schools should do to prevent biased education, but few studies examine what teachers describe that they are actually experiencing and perceiving as they navigate dilemmas in the classroom. We currently know very little about the most effective practices for teacher preparation and professional development programs, and more directed research is needed to thoroughly compare and analyze the various recommended strategies. Further, there is little known about how teachers cope with or negotiate the dilemmas they perceive as they teach or prepare to teach multicultural young adult texts—the primary focus of this dissertation. With a strong knowledge of these coping strategies, teacher preparation programs and professional development centers may be better able to be more systematic in their approaches to prepare other teachers for success in their adoption of these texts. There is a broad

consensus that MCYAL has import in classrooms today, but there is a dearth of sound practices to encourage its implementation.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Introduction

The primary goal of this study was to understand participants' lived experiences as they worked to negotiate the dilemmas that come with their instruction of MCYAL. In order to accomplish this goal, the study is grounded in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a branch of hermeneutic phenomenology (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I chose this branch of phenomenology because of its concentration on the insider perspective of individuals who are negotiating specific situations in their lives (Smith, 1999)—in this case, a unit that featured MCYAL. IPA considers and interprets what it *means* for the participants to experience a situation in the ways that they do (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton 2006). Degand (2015) argues that, “People’s interpretations of an experience have the potential to shape how they believe the world sees them, how they see the world, and how they determine and value the skills they think they need for social success” (p. 876). This study is grounded in the belief that *how* the participants interpreted the dilemmas they associated with multicultural young adult literature was valuable to understand because these perceptions could shape both their selection and instruction of such texts.

This study was guided by two connected research questions:

1. What dilemmas do White teachers in urban school contexts associate with the instruction of multicultural young adult literature?
2. How do teachers internally negotiate these dilemmas before, during, and after the instruction of a multicultural young adult text?

These research questions are grounded in an Interpretive Phenomenological Research (IPA) approach, which aims to understand how individuals perceive a “particular situation they are facing” and “how they are making sense of their personal and social world.” In the spirit of IPA, the research questions were broadly framed to facilitate a flexible but detailed exploration (Smith & Osborn, 2003) of any dilemmas the teacher participants associated with the instruction of MCYAL.

Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl (1917/2012) founded the philosophy of phenomenology as distinct from the psychological sciences of facts; he was most interested in the “science of essential Being” and focused on *Wesenserkenntnisse*, or the “knowledge of essences” (p. 3). Husserl believed in the importance of exploring “‘phenomena’ and in all their meanings” (p. 1), and he saw the world as a totality of objects that we directly experience in infinite ways. As we analyze phenomena, Husserl stresses that we consider:

Even that which is here intersubjectively known in common is known in different ways, is differently apprehended, shows different grades of clearness, and so forth. Despite all of this, we come to understandings with our neighbours, and set up in common an object spatio-temporal fact-world as *the world about us that is there for us all, and to which we ourselves none the less belong*. (p. 55)

By understanding these diverse perspectives, or lived experiences, we learn about commonalities that will bring us closer to understanding the essences of experience. In order to better understand an experience, we can gather individual descriptions to derive understandings of some, but not all, universal meanings about the structures and essence of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Husserl (1917/2012) believed that, prior to the investigation of a phenomenon, we must “bracket” or “disconnect” our own perceptions of a phenomenon (p. 58). He was influenced by Descartes’s (1912/1988) concept of objective reality and the concept of the Epoche, which stresses raising knowledge above doubt (Moustakas, 1994). By closely considering our own judgments and bracketing them in this Epoche process, Husserl judged that we can better ensure that these beliefs will not become the foundation for our understanding of the phenomenon. Moustakas writes, “In the Epoche, the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and phenomena are revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide open sense, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego” (p. 33). Ideally, we better receive the phenomenon freshly, naively, and without bias; later, we can accept our preconceived judgments and personal realities of the phenomenon after we have placed them in the bracket and considered the phenomenon in this disconnected approach. Giorgi (1979) describes this descriptive phenomenological analysis as (re)reading participant descriptions to get a better sense of a whole; dividing the description into horizontal meaning units of equal value to each other; and clustering, organizing, or synthesizing those units into a structural *description* or unified statement of the phenomenon. Transcendental phenomenologists are disciplined in their research and focus on systematically bracketing their prejudgments to transcend the ego (Moustakas, 1994).

Later philosophers, like Gadamer (1975), have argued that closely following the objectivity of Husserl’s (1917/2012) work in this descriptive way may be antithetical to the purposes of research within the human sciences. Although Husserl’s work is foundational for phenomenological scholarship, the field has diverged into disparate approaches from his initial philosophical conception. Two classic approaches emerged: transcendental, or descriptive phenomenological research, such as Giorgi’s (1979) theory described previously, and

hermeneutic, or interpretive, phenomenological research (Langdridge, 2007). Hermeneutic philosophy focuses on “the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the *logos* of *other*, the *whole*, the *communal*, or the *social*” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 7). It requires researchers to examine their assumptions—not to forget them—but to “hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn this knowledge against itself” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 47). Researchers focus on “borrow[ing] other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning of significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 62). Correspondingly, I understood that I was borrowing my participants’ reflections to better conceptualize the human experience related to this phenomenon of the ways White teachers negotiated the dilemmas they perceived with the instruction of MCYAL.

Scholars argue that no strict mechanical procedure or set of methods for data analysis exists in phenomenological research (Gadamer, 1975; Smith, 2003), but scholars must follow a tradition of knowledge (Van Manen, 1990). This tradition, or aim, is “*to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience*” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 41) to consider themes of the human experience with the phenomenon. More specifically, IPA is a branch of hermeneutical phenomenology that focuses on a more psychologically driven, empathetic, or questioning approach to analysis (Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2003). The intent of IPA is to explore the complexity of each individual’s experience (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999) within a given context (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It is commonly used in psychology because it stresses researchers’ commitment to participants’ lived experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith (1996) argues that in order to fully explore a participant’s perspective, a

researcher must engage in a dynamic process that is both dependent upon and complicated by the researcher's own conceptions.

The varied branches of phenomenological research are not without controversy. King et al. (2008) demonstrate the polemic approaches within their study: each researcher analyzed the same data using his or her preferred approach of phenomenological analysis, and as a group, they subsequently tried to reach consensus in their findings. Their divergent beliefs with respect to phenomenological theory—which ranged from descriptive to hermeneutic—were too great to grant consensus of their findings. Relatedly, Smith, the founder of IPA, and Giorgi, an oft-cited researcher of descriptive phenomenology, have publicly lambasted each other's approaches to phenomenology. Giorgi (2011), who strictly adheres to a descriptive phenomenological approach, attacks IPA as deficient for its lack of steps for bracketing. But Smith (1996) sees an interpretive position as indispensable within phenomenological research and contends that there must be a “shared commitment to mind and cognitions” (p. 264). This study was designed to align with IPA because of my intention to emphasize the insiders' perspectives. My beliefs correspond with those of IPA—that the researcher and participant construct the account together (Finlay, 2009) which thus conflicts with the concept of bracketing (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

Participants and school environments

IPA research studies focus on intensively exploring small sample sizes because the aim is to explore participant experiences in detail rather than to make generalized assumptions about the population (Smith & Dunworth, 2003; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Prior to this study, I conducted a larger, nationwide study where I surveyed the challenges secondary English teachers associated with MCYAL. Findings revealed that participants

perceived a wealth of challenges and dilemmas regarding the instruction of multicultural young adult literature but most of these teachers did not use the texts in their classrooms. These challenges and dilemmas were described briefly in survey responses, so I decided to conduct a more focused study to explore in detail the perceptions of a smaller number of teachers who were actually using these texts in their classrooms. All of the participants who lived in states surrounding my own and who stated that they planned to teach a multicultural young adult text were asked to participate in this dissertation study. Twenty participants expressed willingness to participate in further research. Of these twenty participants, thirteen were excluded from the study because they a) would not be teaching a work that met my definition of multicultural young adult literature, or b) would not be teaching the text as a whole-class novel. Of the seven remaining participants, six participants were selected for this study because they met the following criteria: a) they were secondary English teachers at the middle school and high school level, b) they lived in the Northeastern United States, c) they were planning to teach a multicultural young adult text as a whole-class novel in the following school year, and d) they taught in urban school districts. In an attempt to achieve saturation within the data, I used university faculty members at my institution as key informants to recruit three additional participants that met this criteria. Prior to the study, all nine participants noted that they self-identified as White teachers. They all taught in urban schools that, demographically, had between 57% and 93% students of color. Within IPA, the goal is to have a fairly homogenous sample (Smith & Osborn, 2003), so I used purposive sampling of the criteria above to find a more closely defined group.

Some of the participants had chosen the multicultural young adult text they taught, and others were required to teach the text per school or district curricular guidelines. The

participants' comfort with the text and their teaching abilities ranged. Four of the participants taught high school students, and five participants taught middle school students. Below, I detail each of the participants. The demographics and free/reduced lunch rates for each school below are from the Institute of Education Sciences' National Center for Education Statistics. For ease, a quick reference guide of all participants is provided in Appendix C.

Becky was in her late twenties and had been teaching sixth grade reading for six years at the time of the study. She graduated from a small, private college. Becky taught at a magnet school that enrolled 75.6% students of color (60% free/reduced lunch) (IES). The magnet schools in her state require student of color enrollment rates of 25%-75%. She worked at the same school as Jackie and worked in the same district as Laura. This school district adopted a scripted curriculum in the year prior to the study. When I asked her to describe herself as a teacher, she said she took a "hands-on approach" and was "right next to the kids all of the time." She perceived herself to be outgoing. Becky said that as a teacher, the thing she valued most was rapport, and she didn't feel that she was truly teaching unless she has made "some type of connection—big or small." Becky was teaching Christopher Paul Curtis' (1999) *Bud, Not Buddy* for the second time.

Dave was in his late thirties and had been teaching for ten years in his school. Previously, he lived in Spain for ten years and taught ESL for two or three years. He was connected to education in the years prior to this and taught adults, college students, high school students, and children. Dave graduated from a large, public university and then from the Alternative Route to Certification program. He also received his TESOL certification. At the time of the study, he taught a 7th and 8th grade split newcomer group that was all bilingual and Spanish-speaking. He taught his class entirely in Spanish, and almost all of his students had arrived to the United States

within the last year. He taught language arts, humanities, and social studies to the same students. Dave said the most important thing he valued was creating relationships with his students. His school enrolled 91% students of color (73% free/reduced lunch) (IES), and he was teaching Julia Alvarez's (2010) *Devolver al Remitente*, the Spanish translation of *Return to Sender* for the third time.

Jackie was in her early thirties and had been teaching seventh grade language arts for eight years at the time of the study. She graduated from a large, public university and taught at a magnet school that enrolled 75.6% students of color (60% free/reduced lunch) (IES). The magnet schools in her state required student of color enrollment rates of 25%-75%. She worked in the same school as Jackie and in the same district as Laura. This school district adopted a scripted curriculum the year prior to the study. When I asked her to describe herself as a teacher, she said she was "Type A," "definitely pretty strict," and she said "concrete" was her "favorite thing." She said she didn't "do fun" or "abstract." Jackie described that she "used to be excited" but that the new scripted curriculum took the "fun out of teaching." Jackie said that the thing that she valued most was education and that she didn't care if her students liked her as long as she was teaching them. It was her first time teaching Laurence Yep's (1975) *Dragonwings*. Disclosure: I knew Jackie prior to the study, and we were friends in college.

Katherine was in her late twenties and had been teaching eighth grade for two years at her middle school and did a long-term substitute position at a school for two years prior to that. She had also worked in outplacements for a few years. She graduated from a medium-sized public university. Her school enrolled 66% students of color (73% free/reduced lunch) (IES). When I asked her to describe herself as a teacher, she said that she tried to be outgoing and open-minded but that students consistently brought up issues of race. When I asked her what she valued most,

she said “valuing what [she has]” and trying to give back to her students. She was teaching Jacqueline Woodson’s (2014) *Brown Girl Dreaming* for the first time.

Kayla was in her early thirties and had been teaching high school for nine years at the time of the study. She graduated from a large, public university and taught various grades in the high school, but for the study, she was teaching MCYAL to her 11th grade college preparatory class. She was the English department head, and her school enrolled 66% students of color (64% free/reduced lunch) (IES). When I asked her to describe herself as a teacher, she said that she had recently been making a lot of changes and reconsidering what she valued. She had been trying new things and was working on determining what was best for her students to prepare them for the future and to teach them to be good people. She said she was “pretty strict” with “a lot of rules.” This was her third year teaching Sherman Alexie’s (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Disclosure: I knew Kayla prior to the study because we attended the same university.

Kim was in her late twenties and had been teaching high school for four years. She graduated from a large, public university. She taught a variety of courses but was teaching MCYAL in her 10th grade, co-taught humanities class with a social studies teacher. Her school enrolled 57% students of color (52% free/reduced lunch) (IES). She said she was enthusiastic, animated in the classroom, loved to learn while she taught, and enjoyed working one-on-one with students. She valued most the exchange between student and teacher and strong relationships with her students and learning from them. This was her second year teaching Marjane Satrapi’s (2004) *Persepolis*, but it was her first time teaching it with someone else.

Laura was in her late twenties and had been teaching high school for three years. She graduated from a large, public university. She taught a variety of courses, but the multicultural

young adult text was being used with her 11th grade class. She worked in the same district as Becky and Jackie, and their district adopted a scripted curriculum in the previous year. Her school enrolled 93% students of color (86% free/reduced lunch) (IES). She described herself as a “tough love” kind of teacher who didn’t want to make excuses for her students. Because of recent issues in her school (administration leaving and changing), she said she valued leadership most. This was her third year teaching Gene Luen Yang’s (2006) *American Born Chinese*. Disclosure: I knew Laura prior to the study because she we worked in the same school—a different school than her context at the time of the study.

Lisa was in her early thirties and in her ninth year of teaching the remedial 10th and 11th grade freshmen English repeaters at her school. She graduated from a large, public university. Her school enrolled 84% students of color (61% free/reduced lunch) (IES). She described that she was really good at connecting with her students, bringing them things they cared about, and modifying the curriculum to suit their needs. She said she valued most the connections she made with them, and that was what kept her coming back. This was her second time teaching Sherman Alexie’s (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*.. Disclosure: I knew Lisa prior to the study because we attended the same university.

Marcia was a veteran teacher in her 60s. She taught university English for eight years and had taught elementary and middle school for fifteen years—twenty years of teaching, total, if substitute teaching was included. She had been at the middle school level for twelve years at the time of the study. Marcia completed an undergraduate degree from a large, public university; Master’s degree at a large, ivy league college, and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from a large, public university. At the time of the study, she taught 8th grade English. Marcia’s school enrolled 59% students of color (100% of students had free lunch) (IES). When I asked her to

describe herself as a teacher, she said she liked creativity and she was frustrated with the stress on testing and that she was not “the world’s greatest disciplinarian.” Marcia was teaching Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, Rameck Hunt, and Sharon Draper’s (2006) *We Beat the Street* by for the first time in all of her classes, but she also elected to teach Sandra Cisneros’ (1984) *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros to half of her co-taught class at the same time. It was her third time teaching the latter text.

Data collection

This research study took place between November 2015 and June 2016. All data collection took place in the classrooms of the eight schools of my participants (two of the participants worked at the same school). The intention was to increase participant comfort and not burden the teachers with travel. IPA researchers focus on participants’ perceptions of the phenomenon rather than the actuarial account of what is occurring (Smith & Dunworth, 2003), so I decided not to observe the participants. My data sources for each participant consisted of three interviews, participant emails, a participant-organized graphic (using post-it notes) of the dilemmas they perceived with the instruction of MCYAL, and my research journal.

Interviews. The participants were interviewed using informal, semi-structured interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2003) before, during, and after they instructed a unit that featured a multicultural young adult text as a whole-class novel. Each participant was interviewed three times (before, during, and after the unit). They were told that they would potentially participate in a fourth phone interview following all data collection, but this fourth interview proved unnecessary in the data analysis process because all of the dilemmas were either saturated across all nine participants or not discussed by the majority of participants. The interview protocol and sample questions are detailed in Appendix A. Interview one occurred prior to the start of the unit

and included questions about their conceptualizations about themselves, the school, and MCYAL; their purposes and anticipated approach for teaching MCYAL; and the dilemmas they perceived with the instruction of MCYAL. Interview two occurred halfway through the unit and included questions about participants' perceptions regarding the success of the instruction and their negotiation of specific, instructional dilemmas that occurred. Interview three occurred following the conclusion of the unit and included questions about participants' overall conceptions of the success and conflicts with the instruction of the unit; whether they planned to use the texts again and how their approaches would differ; and whether their feelings toward MCYAL changed following the conclusion of the units. For triangulation, some of the questions were repeated across interviews. Interview questions were framed with consideration of Critical Whiteness Studies and Dilemma Management. I specifically asked teachers about the role of race and culture both in their instruction and within the texts. Further, each time the teachers discussed a dilemma, I asked them how they did or did not react. Due to the prevalence of the Oser's (1991) avoidance strategy in the studies detailed in my theoretical framework, I paid careful attention to the language of my questions to ensure I was not making any assumptions that my teacher participants did react to a dilemma.

Smith and Osborn (2003) argue that questions should be framed in a way that provides a gentle nudge from the researcher without leading participants; they believe the flexible structure of semi-structured interviews facilitates rapport with participants and produces richer data. On average, each interview was approximately 60-70 minutes in duration. All interviews were audiotaped using a small digital voice recorder and subsequently transcribed.

Participant artifacts. I emailed each participant twice during his or her participation in the study (See Appendix B). These emails did not provide a lot of data related to my research

questions, and most of the teachers responded to my emails by telling me their pedagogical plans for the next few weeks rather than providing data connected to the research questions about their dilemmas or dilemma management approaches. One participant, Jackie, who knew my phone number because we knew each other prior to the study (as mentioned in the Participants and School Environment section, text messaged me following the conclusion of the study, and this data is included in the findings. At the conclusion of the first interview, I wrote each dilemma that the participant described during the interview on a separate post-it note. I then asked participants to arrange the post-it notes in a way that made sense to them. They were asked to group the post-it notes or write on them in any way that helped them conceptualize the dilemmas. Then, I asked them to verbally describe the ways these dilemmas related to each other and how they negotiate each of them. I also asked them how they would rank the dilemmas. This approach was not something that I had seen used by other scholars. Rather, I saw its potential for my own data collection purposes for four reasons: a) I wanted the participants to see the dilemmas from interview to interview and discuss how they managed dilemmas across interviews; b) I believed that the ways the participants arranged the dilemmas might reveal more about their perceptions of the dilemmas; c) if participants arranged the dilemmas in groups, I wanted to ask them to describe their dilemma management strategies as they pertained to whole groups of post-it notes; and d) I wanted to be sure that I was understanding the participants' dilemmas accurately, and the post-its would serve as additional confirmation of the data. I took photographs of the arrangements of the post-it notes following the interviews and kept the arrangements intact on their poster boards. During each subsequent interview, I asked each participant to modify his or her arrangement by adding and subtracting post-it notes of a different color and explaining the changes he or she made. This allowed me to develop an understanding

of the progression of the dilemmas as the participant experienced them throughout the unit. The final post-it note arrangement of each participant is available in Appendix D.

Researcher journal. As stated previously, I maintained a reflexive journal during data collection and data analysis. These entries contain a subjectivity statement prior to data collection (Peshkin, 1988), overview descriptions about the settings and participants, general reflections about the process, problems and setbacks, conceptual memos (Heath & Street, 2008), patterns and breakthroughs, emergent categories and themes, and all stages of the coding process. Though this approach is common for IPA researchers, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend maintaining an individual reflective journal to warrant credibility for all forms of qualitative research.

Data analysis

Varied analytical approaches are acceptable within IPA, and one approach involves writing initial codes in the left-hand margin and then translating these codes into themes in the right-hand margin (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2003). I used a relatively similar method by starting with the first participant and using tracked changes to marginally document my initial codes. Specifically, I was looking for the dilemmas teachers described and any dilemma management strategies they employed (or did not employ). Though I had knowledge of scholarship regarding these topics, I made strong attempts to allow these initial codes to emerge from the data. All data sources were analyzed equally, including the coding of the participants' arrangements of the post-it notes (both the visuals and the transcriptions of their verbal descriptions of these visuals). I considered the ways they elected to cluster or group post-it notes and their markings and rankings of the post-it notes of their perceived dilemmas. Their descriptions of the ways they arranged these post-it notes provided a wealth of data related to the

research questions.

Next, I listed the raw data and initial codes into two columns of an Excel spreadsheet. In a third column, I transferred these initial codes into categories. For clarity with my final findings, I used the term “categories” instead of Smith’s term “themes” to describe these second-level interpretations. Smith and Osborn (2003) describe these second-level interpretations as “concise phrases which aim to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text” that reach “higher level of abstraction” from the initial coding (p. 68). For example, when I was coding Becky’s interview transcripts, one initial code that I used was, “Students perceive ‘brown boy’ comment in the book to be racist.” Then, I transferred this initial code into the category, “Controversial content” because Becky’s students perceived the language to be racist. Because racism was discussed in relation to this section of the text, Becky deemed it to be controversial.

After I completed clustering the categories of the first participant into themes, I coded the next participant and followed the same process of initial coding. Smith and Osborn (2003) state, “When the number of cases is very small, it is best to start analysis of each from scratch and then look for convergence and divergence once one has done each case separately” (p. 74). After analyzing each participant separately as an individual case, I examined the categories from each participant and arranged these categories again into themes that were central for all participants. For example, the category “Controversial content” that I described in the previous paragraph was grouped under the theme, “Dilemmas related to book content.”

I then wrote all of these categories onto post-it notes and, using an iterative process, worked to make sense of the categories by clustering them based on their conceptual ideas to build overarching themes. I collapsed several categories in order to provide a clearer, more coherent representation of the data. For example, I collapsed “Background knowledge,” a

category that I used to represent teachers' dilemma about the need to teach more background knowledge of the text with "Student lack of knowledge," a category that I used to represent students not knowing or understanding material. For each of the categories and overarching theme clusters, I then carefully considered how each theme repeated across participants. For every dilemma, there were participants who discussed the dilemma as very challenging, and there were participants who described the dilemma as not particularly challenging. I removed dilemma categories that were not discussed by all of the teachers. For example, I removed the category, "rigor," because not all participants discussed the rigor of the text. In another example, I removed the category, "reflection," (a dilemma management strategy that some teachers said they practiced), because it was not repeated across participants. I also removed categories that did not seem to be dilemmas. For example, I removed the category, "Teacher Emotion" because though it seemed like a dilemma to me during the initial coding process, further analysis revealed that the teachers' emotions were not an actual dilemma that they encountered. Rather, their emotions seemed to be a byproduct of their experiences with dilemmas. For a richer understanding of the phenomenon, in Appendix E, I provide a frequency list for the number of times that each category appeared in the data. I only include categories that were saturated across participants.

I created a separate spreadsheet for each theme; to remain true to the participants' responses and ensure trustworthiness, I kept the participant data with these clustered themes to continually check my sense making and interpretations back with the data. When I wrote about and described these overarching themes in the findings and discussion sections, I continued to remember the core aims of IPA and worked to ensure that my participants' voices remained present in my description of each theme (Smith & Dunworth, 2003).

Following the organization of all of the overarching themes, I went back to the data to reconsider how each theme worked for each participant (Smith & Dunworth, 2003). As I worked through this process, I reflected in my researcher journal to assist me with the analysis process and also to provide an audit trail for trustworthiness and transparency (Yardley, 2000); this reflexive journal, which I will describe in detail later, is common for IPA researchers who do not use bracketing (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Additionally, I continually reflected on how any of my interpretations are “central” to participant responses and “contextualized” within the data (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006, p. 114). Throughout my data analysis and again as a final step, I considered how the themes related to universal and philosophical aspects of being human (Halling, 2008), particularly within my conceptual framework of Critical Whiteness Studies and Dilemma Management.

To provide trustworthiness within research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. For credibility, I asked another researcher trained in qualitative methods to review my interpretations of the data; for transferability and dependability, I worked to provide clear, transparent, rich descriptions of the data and data processes; and for confirmability, I worked to show internal coherence within my findings and interpretations and used multiple data sources for triangulation.

Limitations

Because this study is qualitative in nature, it is not generalizable to the population. However, because it is a study of the human sciences, it could never be entirely replicable or objective. Rather, I aimed to focus on resonance and a transferability of the findings to other individuals and contexts (Tracy, 2012). Researchers adopt different interpretations to similar data

(King et al., 2008), so I worked to be transparent in my decisions and interpretations (Creswell, 2012).

My participants were from one area of the country and resided in two neighboring states. This is limiting because aspects of their experience may not be representative of or transferable to individuals in different areas of the country or outside of the United States. Additionally, some of the potential participants graduated from the same, large, public university. Due to their similar education, they could share beliefs and practices that are different from those who have graduated from different institutions. However, this limitation, their demographic closeness and similar education, could provide for a stronger, more unified case and thus a “thickness” (Geertz, 1973) of the data. Ideally, I wanted participants to be similar in many aspects: their teaching experience, confidence level, institutional affiliation, and reasons for teaching the texts (e.g. by choice versus by school mandate). However, in human research, there are infinite variables across human subjects, and every attempt was made to select a unified sample. Given my research questions and purpose, I opted to focus on selecting teachers who were White and teaching a book-length text that met my definition of multicultural young adult literature as a whole-class text. Additional constant variables included their urban school contexts. The dilemmas within the participants’ contexts were different, and this added richness to the data and my understanding of the phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS: DILEMMAS

Introduction

This chapter reveals findings to my first research question: *What dilemmas do White teachers in urban school contexts associate with the instruction of multicultural young adult literature?* The dilemmas that participants described are clustered into emergent themes growing from the analysis of the data. To align with the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis methodology, any dilemma not addressed by all nine participants has been removed and is described in more detail in the discussion chapter.

The themes described in this chapter reflect a range of participant perspectives. For any given dilemma, some participants experienced the dilemma as particularly challenging, while others felt it was less challenging. I intentionally selected participant responses that reveal the breadth of perceptions for each dilemma in order to accurately depict the considerable differences pertaining to each of the dilemmas within the phenomenon.

Because Interpretative Phenomenological Analyses are also concerned with the individual participants, I worked to ensure that each participant is represented across several sections.

The sections are divided into four emergent themes:

- Dilemmas of teacher identity and knowledge
- Dilemmas specific to students
- Dilemmas related to book content

- Dilemmas pertaining to curriculum and resources

Dilemmas of teacher identity and knowledge

Data revealed that participants experienced dilemmas regarding their identity and knowledge level as they considered their instruction of multicultural YA literature. Our conversations indicate that being White in the enactment of this instruction seems to be inextricably tied to dilemmas of discomfort. Within the phenomenon, some participants expressed their perceived robust knowledge level and preparation, while others felt troubled by their lack of expertise. Across the participant responses, findings reveal that participants' negotiation of these dilemmas of identity and knowledge seems to be discursively reflected in their perceptions of their pedagogical perspectives, instructional decisions, and interactions with students.

Teacher identity. Participants described the impact of their White identity on their instruction of multicultural young adult texts to students of color. They shared the ways they frame their Whiteness to both students and themselves. Some participants experienced their White identities to be tremendously influential on their instruction of MCYAL, while others had more difficulty articulating the ways in which their identities might shape their instruction. Similarly, data revealed that participants described feeling varying levels of comfort regarding their instruction of these texts.

Being White. Participants who described their Whiteness as being at the forefront of their instruction discussed the ways in which it impacted their interactions with students.

Laura examined the ways that her White identity might influence her perspective:

I think as a White person, if you don't have a class on MC lit or anything like that, you read *The Great Gatsby* [Fitzgerald, 1925] and you don't think about the other

people. You just don't. Because your ethnicity is reflected. I know I certainly did not think about, Where were all of the Black people? When I was in high school. It wasn't something on my mind. [...] If you were an ethnic minority, that is probably a very big question unless society just completely acculturated you that you are used to never seeing your ethnicity in books, which is sad. Because sometimes that happens. But, I mean, your ethnicity impacts your perspective. And when you teach, when you read, when you do anything, it is your perspective.

Laura understood that her Whiteness impacted many of the things she did in the classroom, but she also considered how her White identity might impact her interactions with students. She said,

I feel like it is the elephant in the room because they have a White teacher. And, sometimes, I've found they don't feel comfortable. Not that class in particular. But some of my other classes don't feel as comfortable talking to me about some of these things because I am White. And I think they are afraid that they are going to offend me.

Laura's comparison of her White identity as the "elephant in the room" suggests that it looms over her classroom. Her description of her students' discomfort and fear of offending them reveal that both she and her students are very conscious of her Whiteness. Similarly, Lisa recognizes her privilege openly. She said "[Race] affects everything that [the students] do all of the time, and it doesn't affect anything that I do, which I realize is a tremendous hallmark of privilege." Lisa reflects about the ways in which being White might impact her interactions with her students and her position as a role model: "I think [being White] makes me not as good because I firmly believe that we learn best from people who are from our

culture, who look like us, who talk like us, who can serve as role models. And what kind of role model am I for a Black boy? I am a White woman.” In Lisa’s post-it note arrangement of the dilemmas that she encountered while teaching her text, she placed the post-it, “teacher’s lived experiences differ than those of students” in the top left corner of her poster arrangement. She said, “I am just going to put it like at the sun. Because this whole book [*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007)] is about culture and where we are from and what we do and how it shapes us and what we can change.” For Lisa—and similarly, for Laura—being White shined over their instruction and is mentioned repeatedly in their answers to interview questions. When I asked Lisa, specifically, if race or ethnicity plays a role in teachers’ planning and instruction of MCYAL, she said,

Only if they don’t think it does. So if they walk in and say, “It doesn’t matter that I am White or Black or whatever, whatever,” then that is when you are going to have the issue [...] I think an awareness that it does make you different from your students in good and bad ways—then that should definitely change and inform your instruction.

Though all participants acknowledged their privilege to some extent, not all participants felt their Whiteness influenced or informed their interactions with students or their instruction of the text. Lisa and Laura’s comments can be examined alongside those of other participants to reveal the range of teacher participant perceptions of how their White identities might impact students in this work. When I asked Marcia how her race and ethnicity might have impacted her instruction of her two multicultural young adult texts, she said,

I am sure it probably did. [...] You know, I would really have to really, really think

hard because I am sure there are things I kind of stayed away from. I am sure there are things that somebody else—maybe a teacher of color—might have dealt with better or in more depth or would have been more comfortable talking about. I'd really have to think about it.

I asked Marcia this same question three times throughout the interviews, and she continued to say that she believed her race or ethnicity impacted her instruction, but she could not articulate how. Marcia placed her lack of a lived experience post-it in the “least challenging” section she created on her poster. When I asked Marcia how she could have been better prepared in college or professional development to teach these texts, she said,

I don't know. I mean, at the level that I am at, at the doctoral level, and having done so much with critical social theory, I don't know. I mean, go back and read my *Life in Schools* [McLaren, 2003] again? Or get *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [Freire, 2000] or any of those things? I mean, I feel like that has really informed my teaching over the past few years, the heightened awareness of those issues. [...] I really feel like, as far as education goes, I have had a lot.

Marcia feels that she is well-prepared, but she has suggestions for teacher preparation programs for other teachers:

I think that they could offer more critical social theory to beginning teachers. I really do think that that's the area that it seems to me that really, particularly so many of the young teachers that you see are White, middle class females. They really could benefit from the consciousness-raising that comes from reading and discussing Paulo Freire or Henry Giroux, or there are just so many. McLaren and Kincheloe, and whole, all of them.

As a follow-up question, I asked Marcia, “And those you feel helped you?” and she responded, “Right.” Marcia was unable to articulate how her White identity impacted her teaching and interactions with students, but she expressed that instruction in critical social theory would benefit “young teachers.” Though she said she had a “heightened awareness,” of critical social issues, her responses reveal that she did not seem to reflect on them before or during her instruction of these texts.

In a similar example, Katherine ranked her challenges on her post-it note arrangement in eleven columns of post-it notes (from most challenging to least challenging). She placed “teacher’s upbringing does not match those of students” in her tenth column, so she did not find it to be particularly challenging relative to the dilemmas included in the other columns. In the beginning of the first interview, when I asked Katherine to describe herself as a teacher, she said, “I try to be as outgoing and open-minded as possible. You know, the biggest thing is that the kids will be, like, [*high-pitched voice*] ‘You’re mad at me because I’m Black.’ And I’m like, ‘I don’t see color. I really don’t. I never have. I probably never will.’” Here, Katherine reveals what King (1991) described as “dysconscious racism,” or a colorblind perspective, because she is unable or unwilling to recognize the inequities that exist in society. Whenever Katherine talked about the race and culture within the text, she reminded me, “I don’t see color.” When asked what she valued most, she said,

You know, definitely working in [names two cities], I have learned to definitely value what I have and then try to give back to my kids. Because a lot of my kids don’t have the luxuries that I had growing up. So if anything, I really try to just value what I have and what I can give back to them. So I know that, you know, even just lessons and morals and values that my parents taught me in growing up, I try to kind of teach my

students because I know that they don't have that parental positive influences in their life.

Though Katherine has a well-meaning approach to students, her comments reflect a White savior complex, or a "condescending sympathy" (Bex & Craps, 2016, p. 45) toward the students. Her belief that her students don't have "parental positive influences" reveals that she perceived her students and their families in deficit ways, and she feels that she has the ability and privilege to offer the "lessons and morals and values" that were bestowed to her by her own parents.

The ways that these four participants discussed their instructional approaches to the texts also reveal how their awareness of their White identities might have impacted their pedagogical philosophies. In their comments about their teaching units as a whole, they take different instructional approaches. Laura described her next unit: "So the next book I teach is *The Great Gatsby* [Fitzgerald, 1925]. And there are no Black people. There are no Hispanic people. There are White people. So in that text, we do a lesson where we look at, 'Where were all of the minorities in the 20's?' It is great that White people were having these mansions. Where was *everybody else*!'" Similarly, when Lisa reflects on her unit for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), she said, "Oh! I am all jazzed up! [...] I am all types of excited for them to learn and for them to be outraged with me [...] at the injustice that the Native Americans have experienced since White people showed up in 1492." Both Lisa and Laura center instructional lessons around discussions of race, ethnicity, and culture.

In contrast to Laura and Lisa, Marcia described her instructional approach to literature quite differently. When asked if she teaches multicultural young adult texts differently from

other texts, she said: “No, because I view the text as being the tool to teach the standards.” In a different interview, she said, “I am looking at it as a tool to teach character development, thematic development, questioning techniques...whatever you use any book for.” When I asked her if culture plays a role in that, she said, “Not unless they want to talk about anything that Esperanza [*The House on Mango Street*, Cisneros, 1984] has to say about different things about her culture.” Katherine, who was teaching *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson, 2014), which is set during segregation, framed her book historically. When I asked if there was anything about her urban setting that played in any decisions she made about the text, she said, “Just the race thing. You know, I don't want them to think that one race is better than the other. This is just an unfortunate time in history, and we conquered. You know, we got through it. And people like Jackie Robinson and Rosa Parks and just trying to let them know that there was light at the end of the tunnel.” Katherine’s colorblind mentality seemed to impact her instructional choices. She viewed racial inequities as an “unfortunate time in history,” and she believed that we have “conquered” that racism. Leonardo (2002) writes that racism is often viewed historically and argues that, “Despite the racial progress we have experienced through the Civil Rights Movement in the USA and the fight against apartheid in South Africa, white normativity remains central to the development of both Western and non-Western nations” (p. 35). Katherine’s comments reveal that she did not consider the ways in which racism is endemic in modern society.

Marcia and Katherine are representative of many of the participants who were unable to articulate the ways that their White identity impacted their instruction of MCYAL. Jackie shared how parts of their upbringing reflect her privilege:

I mean being Jewish there was the whole Holocaust. However, I am very far removed

from that. I don't have any relatives that I know of that were a part of it. And me, personally, I really feel like I haven't struggled very much. I grew up in a predominantly White town, being White. I even had all of the Jewish holidays off. So there really wasn't any sort of discrimination. You know, even as a teacher in an urban school—the majority of teachers are White here. So it is not even that I am a minority here.

But when I asked Jackie if she taught MCYAL differently from classic texts, she said, “I don't think so.” When I asked if it impacted her interactions with students, she said, “No.” And when I asked if it impacted her planning or instruction, she responded, “I don't think it should.” Kayla answered similarly to these questions in her first two interviews. She acknowledged her privilege but did not feel it impacted her instruction or interactions with students. However, in the third interview, when I asked her again if the race or ethnicity of a teacher might play a role in their planning or instruction, she said:

It is funny because I want to say no. But I am thinking of a particular teacher here who is of a different race and ethnicity than I am. And I would say yes when I think of that person. But for me, no. [So not necessarily for a White teacher, but for a teacher of color?] Yah. Yah. [...]I just overheard a conversation recently, and it just kind of opened my eyes to it, and it made me realize that I don't think about those things when I am planning a lesson, but maybe other people do. And should I be thinking of those things? [What things?] Maybe the selections that you pick out or the different parts of a book that you maybe gloss over or things that you want to bring in. This person that I am thinking of was a history teacher, so historically, there might be something that he really wants to go over because it means a little bit more to him.

Whereas, for me, I might learn about it and be like, “Okay, yah. That happened in history. But I might not have that connection to it.”

Kayla’s responses reflect that because the text, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), may not be as personal to her, she does not feel that her race or ethnicity impacts her instruction of the text. Leonardo (2002) writes that, “[W]hiteness has long reserved the privilege of making everyone but itself visible, lest it be exposed as a position within a constellation of positions” (p. 41). The conversation that Kayla overheard revealed to her that teachers of color might teach MCYAL differently, but because she is White, she felt that this was less likely to impact her instructional decisions.

The distinctions that the participants drew relative to their Whiteness and privilege with respect to their students—and the varying ways that they approach their instruction and their interactions with students—can be connected with Critical Whiteness Studies. Though all participants recognized their privilege relative to their students, some did not see this as impactful on their pedagogical philosophies or instructional approaches. Laura and Lisa openly discussed issues of race, ethnicity, and culture and directly connected them with oppressive ideologies. Leonardo (2002) believes that “Students of color benefit from an education that analyzes the implications of whiteness because they have to understand the daily vicissitudes of white discourses and be able to deal with them.” Not having sanctioned conversations to explicitly discuss implications of power, racism, and Whiteness in the classroom may be at the detriment of students.

Teacher discomfort. All of the participants with the exception of Dave revealed discomfort with their instruction of the texts. The three participant responses described in this section are representative of the range of discomfort that participants experienced: no

discomfort, discomfort in specific moments, and overall discomfort with the text as a whole. Their responses can be connected with their perceptions of their Whiteness.

Dave recognized he had White privilege. As an example of this, when asked how his race or ethnicity impacted his instruction of MCYAL, he said, “I am a firm believer. White privilege. Male privilege. I understand that I am a White man coming from an upper middle class background. I’ve got huge privilege, and I always have. I don’t want to say that I am reflecting on that all of the time, but I am talking to my students.” However, because he spent ten years in Spain, he said, “Most of the students are a little bit fooled by who I am because I speak Spanish—not perfectly—but near perfectly.” All of Dave’s students are Latina/o. He says, “To them, they are all coming from different Hispanic communities, so they speak Spanish all differently. They have trouble, sort of, identifying where I am from. [...] I can see things from both sides.” And when Dave described his comfort, he shared, “I think that I am aware of the fact that I am different from my students but I think that I am sort of at a place where I have been at this school for a long time, I live in this community, that it doesn’t really seem to affect much.”

Dave perceived that his ten-year experience of living in Spain and eight-year residence in the community in which he worked allowed him to feel more comfortable. He spoke entirely in Spanish to his students, and he described how they are essentially “fooled by” his Whiteness. Dave was the only participant who did not express discomfort at anything pertaining to the texts, but he is included in this section and the dilemma is perceived as significant to the phenomenon across all participants because he explicitly shared *why* he experienced no discomfort in his instruction of a text. Perhaps because the multicultural text he taught during this study, *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2010), featured Latina/o characters

and because Dave was in a unique position that he only taught Latina/o students, he did not have this discomfort. The comfort that Dave experienced was reflective of Nayak's (2007) conception of "deconstructing whiteness." Whiteness is seen as "fluid, mutable, and ever changing is curtailed when it is tethered to the weighty anchor, and seemingly fixed idea, of the white body" (p. 742). Dave's experiences in Spain made his Whiteness more fluid in the ways that he was able to connect with his students; he was not attached to his Whiteness as an anchor. He perceived that situations and experiences mattered.

Becky's comments about discomfort are reflective of many conversations with the other participants throughout the study. Data revealed many specific moments that participants experienced discomfort while they were instructing MCYAL. Becky shared one instance:

Okay, so some of the characters in the book [*Bud Not Buddy*, Curtis, 1999] had spoken in slang. They had a little bit of a dialect to them. Like, they would say things like, "Yo mama" or—I am trying to think of some of the phrases. And you know, I am reading it out loud. I don't want to try—I am just going to be really blunt—I don't try to act Black. [...] I've done it a few times and tried to read it—and I don't always read it aloud—but when I do, the kids enjoy it. Sometimes I will try to get into the character, and sometimes the kids don't care. And other times, they will look at me and say, "Ms. [Name], stop. You are White." You know? So that is sometimes uncomfortable. [...] I know. It sounds awful coming out of my mouth.

Becky was honest in her embarrassment for admitting her discomfort at reading sections aloud. Participants shared numerous instances where they felt these brief instances of discomfort—moments that were connected to their White identities.

The last example, from Jackie, reveals the ways that participants expressed discomfort toward the text as a whole. Out of the few required text options, Jackie intentionally chose a text, *Dragonwings* (Yep, 1975), that featured Chinese culture—rather than a text about slavery, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Douglass & Garrison, 1845). In the quotation below, she explained her rationale for not choosing the text about slavery:

I feel like they [the students] would be like, “What are you doing? You have no idea. What right do you have to teach this to us?” [Because of?] My race. Because I just [sighs]. I mean I can kind of relate in terms of being Jewish and being persecuted but certainly not to the extent...I mean, their [the students’] history is really, really sad and awful and I don’t know. There is just something about me teaching it that I just don’t feel right about.

Jackie seemingly prioritized her personal comfort over selecting a text that was perhaps more relevant to her students’ histories. She rationalized her decision by expressing the ways that she might not be qualified to teach the text to her students. In the end, Jackie was forced to teach the text about slavery, as well. She text messaged me, “So I just found out that I have to teach the slavery unit after all. I don’t want to do it! 😞😞”

The three levels of discomfort—none at all (Dave), moments of discomfort (Becky), and overall discomfort (Jackie)—are representative of the data. Hunter and Nettles (1999) describe that White individuals can only tolerate small levels of confrontation with regards to race and ethnicity. This perspective seems to match the fact that Becky said, “I don’t always read it aloud—but when I do, the kids enjoy it.” Despite knowing that the students enjoyed it when she read aloud, her discomfort could have been a contributing factor as to why she did

not always do so. For Jackie, the text about slavery exceeded her comfort level, and thus, she elected to use a different text to maintain her comfort (and to maintain the status quo). In the beginning of her first interview, she shared, “We have very few Asian students.” Selecting the text that featured the Asian culture better positioned her as the expert, a concept that will be discussed further in the next section.

Teacher knowledge. Participants described dilemmas of their knowledge levels as influential on their perceptions of the instruction of MCYAL. More specifically, they shared their perceived expertise and their preparation to teach the texts. Data revealed that participants felt varying levels of knowledge pertaining to the instruction of these texts, and their connections can be connected to Critical Whiteness Studies.

Expertise. All of the participants with the exception of Dave—because of his experiences living in Spain and also in the community in which he worked—described their concerns regarding their level of expertise in their instruction of the texts. The three participants described in this section reveal the range of ways that participants positioned this dilemma to themselves.

Participants described differing levels of comfort related to their knowledge about the culture(s) featured in the texts. Kim, who taught *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004), experienced discomfort about her White identity and saw this as connected to her lack of knowledge. She said:

[T]here is, I guess, a little bit of a Who am I? to teach this. I am not an expert on Islam. I am not even Muslim. I am not a Latino boy. And it is hard, I guess, when you are in a place of perceived authority as a classroom teacher and students look at you, and you don't look like them and you are kind of telling them, “This is good. This is

what you should know. This is what you should question. This is what you should consider.” So I try to go about it, like I said, that I am a learner, as well. I read these books to learn about other cultures—to see my struggles and my issues reflected in the overarching ideas and themes.

Kim positioned herself as a learner who was acquiring knowledge right alongside the students. She read books to learn about culture in order to learn more about the content. This did not fully protect her from instances where her lack of knowledge emerged—and occasionally, in uncomfortable ways. She said,

There was one moment where [the co-teacher and I] couldn’t remember a particular historical fact or detail. We were up there in front of the class like, “Um, mmm...you know what? We don’t really remember. Let’s double check this.” So it was kind of a moment of vulnerability for me and my co-teacher because you want to be able to provide the students with the correct information.

Kim’s language reveals the ways that she framed these instances of discomfort to her students. She is careful to position herself: “Just navigating how I present information to my students and facilitate conversations among my students as a White female—just someone who doesn’t have the background knowledge of the text.” Kim’s vulnerability and her cautious presentation of the material was a perspective that was shared by several other participants.

Relatedly, Lisa described feeling a lack of confidence regarding her knowledge of the cultures featured in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007):

It makes me less confident because I don’t identify with the same background as most of my students, and I am obviously not Junior from the book either. So yah, it makes

me a little cautious. It makes me—I don't want to say hesitant—but I make sure I know what I am saying, I make sure I am confident with my research. I don't want to say something that is not true or accurate or inappropriate, even.

Lisa worked hard to improve her lack of knowledge by seeking out more resources and articles. Describing this process, she said, “You know, I want to have the best articles and the best clips, and the best interviews, and the best everything, and I just don't know if I do or not.” In the first interview, Lisa placed her dilemma post-it “teacher feels like not doing book justice (doesn't know enough about culture)” in the “I need to work on” section of her post-it note arrangement. She described her confidence level as “emerging.” In the second interview, she moved the post-it note and rested it outside of the border of her “goal” section of the post-it notes arrangement. She said, “Ugh, and still with this one [...] I want to move it closer [to the goal], but I am not in my goal yet.” In the third interview, she created a new post-it that said, “teacher hesitation with content” and rested it on the border of her goal (but not in the goal section). The ways that Lisa moved the post-it notes revealed how she slowly built confidence in her knowledge of the culture but also recognized that she was still not an expert in Native American culture.

The third participant, Jackie, acts as a foil for Kim and Lisa. Many of the participants shared their lack of expertise but did not seem as concerned about the dilemma. Jackie began by sharing her discomfort with the knowledge:

I am a little apprehensive because I have no background myself. The book [*Dragonwings*, Yep, 1975] is about a Chinese immigrant. And I just—I mean, I have no background on that myself, which is terrible. But it is not something I have ever taught. It is not a population that I am often in contact with. We have very few Asian

students at our school. It is just not something I really know a lot about, and so I am a little apprehensive to teach the unit.

Jackie's lived experiences make her nervous about her lack of knowledge with respect to the Chinese culture featured in the text. However, her responses differ from those of Kim and Lisa in that she does not intend to educate herself regarding the culture:

[G]oing back to the lack of background knowledge that I have, it is going to be a challenge for me to really be an expert on the subject matter unless I really go and do my research, which, to be honest, with [a child at home], I probably will not do. So I think that, you know, I know a little bit about the Gold Rush and I know a little bit about immigration. I know very little about Chinese immigrants, so I think that will be a challenge. If they have questions, I probably won't know the answer. You know, and I really can't relate to that either. I am three generations removed from immigrants. So, I mean, that, I think will be a challenge as well.

And in a different response, she said, "[O]ther than doing research and doing background knowledge, I can't change who I am. I can't change how I grew up. So my lack of expertise and not feeling qualified, I am not sure that is ever going to change." Unlike Kim and Lisa who actively worked to navigate the tensions that came with their lack of knowledge, Jackie seemed to surrender to the fact that she could never fully understand the culture because she was White.

Kim's, Lisa's, and Jackie's comments about their lack of knowledge reflect the nuances in the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon. The teachers' lack of knowledge can be examined through a Critical Whiteness Studies lens. Kim, for instance, articulated the ways she perceived her power in front of the classroom and how she must carefully navigate

this power. This connects with Ansley's (1997) theory that "Political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and nonwhite subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings" (p. 592). When Kim and Lisa selected resources to build upon their knowledge (and potentially, the knowledge of their students), they are doing so in positions of White dominance. Jackie's lack of effort to improve her knowledge reflected her Whiteness in the ways that she was complicit with the status quo—that schools are swathed with institutional racism. Even though Jackie was using a text that features Chinese culture, her failure to improve her knowledge of the culture promotes white superiority and dominance in her classroom.

Preparation. Participants felt varying levels of preparedness with respect to their college education and professional development. To begin, I will share representative comments from participants who felt very unprepared. Jackie, for example, did not remember much from her teacher education experience at college. She said, "I feel like it was so long ago, and I am young considering that this is only my eighth year of teaching. I can't imagine teachers who have been teaching for twenty or twenty-five years how far removed they are from education. But I feel like, sadly, I don't even remember [*laughing*]." Katherine described her only memory of her multicultural course: "We did a puppet sock. And we had to decorate the puppet based on things in our culture, type of thing. And then we had to talk with the puppet [...] about our culture type of thing. So I did an Italian type of...my sock was red, green, and white type of thing." I asked her if she found this experience to be helpful, she said, "No. Italy meet Poland. Like, no. It just didn't work for me." When I asked her if

most of the cultures represented on the socks featured White cultures, she said, “Yah. They were, now that I think about it.” I asked if the professor acknowledged this, and she said no. Both Jackie and Katherine said they would like a “refresher.” Katherine said, “I found an old binder on multicultural students. So I think that we definitely need a refresher in that.” Becky remembered one portion of her teacher education program that prepared her: “I remember in college that that is when I read *Seedfolks* (Fleischman, 2004). I was like, ‘Oh my God. This book is life-changing.’” She wanted these experiences to happen more often for preservice teachers: “I think that [students] need to be immersed in these books and learn to have these discussions in the classrooms and how to consider the needs of the students in front of you—not learning style needs but the cultural, economic, racial needs of the students in front of you.” However, other participants felt particularly well-prepared by the courses they took in college. Marcia said, “I know my content [... My] doctorate is in leadership in urban schools. And certainly, you know, what we haven’t read, what we didn’t read and talk about in urban schools, is probably not even worth talking about. So I do feel from that point-of-view, I feel prepared.” Marcia perceived that what she didn’t learn in her doctoral experiences was not significant to her professional development.

All of the participants felt their current schools could provide more professional development opportunities. Kim, for example, said that this might be a good place to further her knowledge. She said about professional development, “That would have been a nice refresher.” Marcia was the only individual who perceived her school as providing good professional development. She said, “[Professional development name] was a good professional development. And that was about close-reading. I liked some of the close-reading techniques that I picked up.” As described in the White identity section, Marcia did

not center her instruction of the text around issues of race, ethnicity, and culture, and this might be why she perceived the school's professional development to be helpful. Marcia's responses were particularly complicated because they did not fit the phenomenon as clearly as the other participants; she described the wealth of knowledge she received in college, yet these learning experiences did not seem to inform a culturally responsive approach to her instruction of the text—instead, she continually expressed that she valued the “standards” and using the text as a “tool” for teaching literary techniques. As stated previously, she understood that her Whiteness likely influenced her instruction (a concept that she likely learned in her educational experiences), but she was unable to articulate just how her Whiteness might impact that instruction.

All of the participants—with the exception of Marcia—did not believe that their school's professional development prepared them to teach multicultural young adult texts. Becky, for instance, “[B]egged to go to the professional development for [the curriculum], but none of the 7th and 8th grade teachers were able to go to it.” She felt unprepared and wanted more expertise. Laura shared her disappointment with professional development: “[T]he district put up new curriculum halfway in between last year. No PD. No training whatsoever.” Similarly, Jackie, said, “We weren't prepared in any way to teach this. And in college, I mean a) it was a million years ago, and b) I took one multicultural literature class. I should have taken many more.” She continued,

By the time I got a few years into teaching, what I had already learned, even in my Master's, was kind of gone. So it is just an issue in terms of—okay, how do you take what you know and what you learn in college and then apply it to the real world? I think there is a major disconnect. I can't remember anything in undergrad or grad at

this point that helps me.

Becky, Laura, and Jackie's comments seem to reveal that professional development matters. As teachers emerge and grapple with the dilemmas regarding their lack of knowledge, they desire continued support in the field.

In further comments, Jackie seemed resigned to the fact that she would never improve her lack of knowledge. She admitted, "Unless I throw myself into some place or country that is totally different than what I grew up in, it is just no. It is kind of just how it is." The experiences she described were shared by other participants as powerful for their learning. In the discomfort section, I shared Dave's life experiences in another country. Laura also shared similar, impactful experiences in her education:

I am lucky. Like I said, I did. The classes with [Professor Name] my junior and senior years which really focus on MC lit. So I had that background. Then I taught in London, which is so diverse that it is not even funny. [...] And they were using multicultural books. Like, it is just what they do. It is not even a big deal. They don't even mention it because it is just what they do, and that was awesome. And then the course with [professor name] really prepared me. I think that every teacher should have to have that multicultural class—even if it is not specific to literature.

She critiqued other, shorter programs that she perceived don't provide quality preparatory experiences. In particular, she focused on the Teach for America program: "If we are talking teacher prep programs. TFA, man, they gotta do something because they send us teachers who have been so happy for a summer, and then they get here and it is like a smack in the face eighteen times a day. And they are sending their teachers to the districts that need this the most." Laura perceived that these teachers' preparation was inferior to her own.

Jackie's, Dave's and Laura's comments reveal that they perceived experiential learning to be significant for White teachers' growth of knowledge. Participants also shared personal life experiences that prepared them to better navigate their knowledge of the texts. Laura, who self-identified as White and repeatedly discussed being White ("I am pretty translucent!"), shared that she is a quarter Japanese. When pressed, she described how being around her Asian family members prepared her in an experiential way:

I was around Asian culture since I was little. You know, my grandmother was Japanese, spoke Japanese, Japanese food at home, you know. So if it was maybe not an Asian character. If it was a Black character or a Hispanic character, I personally might not be able to identify so much with the author, and I might have a harder time dispelling stereotypes because I don't know what life is like for a Black student. I don't know what life is like for my Hispanic students. But because I think it is an Asian character [in *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006)], it is very easy for me to dispel some of those myths because I grew up with Asian family members.

Data reveal that all experiences—life experiences, college experiences, and professional development experiences—are influential and important to prepare teachers to use these texts in the classroom. Critical Race Theorists emphasize the importance of ensuring that this learning is ongoing. Matsuda et al. (1993), described Critical Race Theory as “work that involves both action and reflection. It is informed by active struggle and in turn informs that struggle” (p. 3). In order for the teachers to be continually questioning the endemic nature of race in their instruction and to be fully prepared to enter their classrooms each day, theorists might argue that these discussions about race, ethnicity, and culture do not stop at college or at a single-day professional development session. Instead, they are persistent and ongoing.

Dilemmas specific to students

The second theme to emerge from the data was that participants experienced dilemmas specific to students. These dilemmas are discursively connected to the previous theme of teachers' identity and knowledge. As the teacher participants reflected on the students' home experiences and troubling connections with the texts, their responses and discomfort connected in (sub)conscious ways with their own identity and knowledge level. However, the categories within this theme were different in the ways in which teachers described particular dilemmas that were closely tied to the students in their classrooms. Within this theme, I describe the dilemmas of student-home connections and student knowledge. As in the previous section, there was a vast range of participants' perceptions of and positioning in relation to these dilemmas.

Student-home concerns. The following two sections describe the participants' (dis)comfort regarding the students' home experiences and the participants' reactions to the connections that students make during class. Data reveal that, similar to the other dilemmas described in the findings, participants ranged greatly in their comfort levels with their students' lives and their willingness to allow students to share their home lives within the classroom setting.

Students' lived experiences. Participants shared their personal struggles with the students' home experiences. The following participant responses represent the range of ways that participants positioned themselves to their students based on that discomfort. Their (dis)comfort with the students' home situations emerged further in their descriptions of their instructional decisions. The participants' perceptions of the students' lived experiences and their instructional decisions can be connected with their perceptions of Whiteness. The level

to which they invited and encouraged students to discuss their home lives in class seemed to correlate with the level to which they were aware of their Whiteness.

Marcia described how she positioned herself as the teacher rather than therapist when she considered the ways in which students could draw textual connections. When I asked if she was required to teach the text, she said, “No, we had a choice. [...] I did not choose *Tears of a Tiger* [Draper, 1994]. I originally was going to pick that one even though that one doesn’t really speak to me. But we have at least one kid with a sibling suicide on the team, and since that is what that book deals with, I decided I wouldn’t touch it with a ten-foot pole.” In our conversations, Marcia mentioned several instances where students might make personal connections to perceived controversial sections of texts, and she navigated these by selecting a text that did not feature much controversial content. She rationalized this: “And I am really uncomfortable using a text that deals with those issues because I am not a psychologist. I am not a psychiatrist. And I don’t believe in bibliotherapy. I mean, that is not something that I think I would do well.” When I asked her what the race or ethnicity of the protagonists was in *We Beat the Street* (Davis, Jenkins, Hunt, & Draper, 2006), the text she selected, she said, “I think they are African American if I remember right. [Does this play any role for your students?] Let’s see. We have a lot of African Americans. We have a lot of kids that spend a lot of time in the streets. So I am hoping that it will speak to them.” Marcia “hop[es] that the text will “speak to” students. Her language (“if I remember right”) reveals that the race/ethnicity of the protagonists is not likely to be central in her instruction of the text. Instead, it seems that she deemed that just selecting the text might be enough, connection-wise, for students. As the interviews continue, she continued to support this position. She said,

I think certainly, I am really happy we didn't do *Tears of a Tiger* [...] In the community, there was an eighth grade suicide at a different school. Some of the kids knew that one. I think that makes the challenges—and so many of them have heard of it or experienced it—I am not a therapist. I am not a believer in bibliotherapy.

Marcia repeated again that she did not believe in bibliotherapy, or using books therapeutically for the students. When Marcia was making her post-it arrangement of the dilemmas she experienced, she wrote on the "some multicultural young adult texts available are too controversial" post-it, "not experiences that kids can relate." Marcia perceived some student connections to difficult issues of texts as controversial, and she preferred to use a different text rather than acknowledge her students' life experiences. She positioned herself as teacher rather than "therapist" to justify this decision.

Throughout the discussions, participants repeatedly discussed their own life experiences as different from those of their students. Becky was one of the participants who particularly struggled with this reality. She explained, "My dilemma [is] that I am kind of going over in my head of how to address the fact that some of my students are going through this really awful life situation that the kid has in the book [*Bud Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999)]. I wish I had some more guidance about how to roll that out—how to make that happen." When discussing her own privilege, she said,

I feel guilty. I guess the word is guilt for being White, employed, earning a living, doing well for myself. And I don't know how to get over that or how to compartmentalize that [...] This mother was telling me [...] they lost their house. And I felt so guilty to go home to my apartment. And it is really hard to—I think at the end of the day—to understand or wrap your head around why certain people were dealt

the cards that they were dealt. And when you are sitting there, knowing that you have the better cards to play, it is a really unsettling feeling.

She shared another instance that reminded her of her privilege: “The poverty level of some of the kids I teach—I can in no way relate to that [...] I had one of my girls who was homeless getting into my 2015 car. You know? And I had my L.L. Bean boots on. And you just feel kind of—almost dirty. Like, I don’t deserve this.”

Becky experienced not only personal guilt as dilemmatic but was also troubled by the connections that students made to the text. When I asked her what personal, internal challenges or dilemmas she faced when teaching MCYAL, she responded, “To be blunt, being White. [...] My position in society—I can sympathize, but I can’t empathize with the kids when they draw connections to the things that the main character in this book—who is Black—that he is going through.” Becky believed that she was unable to truly *know* how her students were experiencing the text because she did not share their life experiences. Throughout the interviews, Becky did share that she tried to learn more to understand the students’ situations. She described her experience with a student in an after-school homework group:

And so the other day, a kid was saying, “Miss, there was a stabbing on my street the other night.” And I try really hard to just say, “Oh, do you want to talk about that? Tell me about that. Was that scary?” And in part I am listening, but in part, I am trying to see into their world. Because I know nothing of what they go home to. I do not know what it means to have a stabbing on my street and just wake up the next morning like it is nothing.

Becky allowed the student to share, and she listened in order to try to understand his home

experiences and to see into his “world.”

Becky’s positioning of the post-it notes of the dilemmas that she encountered while teaching her text revealed her discomfort with the students’ home experiences. In the top row (most challenging), she placed the post-it notes, “teacher discomfort” (interview one), “teacher struggles with sad connections students make with book” (interview one), “teacher doesn’t understand some personal experiences of students” (interview two), “teacher feels discomfort with own privilege” (interview three), and “teacher cannot fathom the poverty of students” (interview three). However, in the second row of her post-it arrangement, which she considered slightly less challenging, she placed the post-it notes, “students share hard reality of main character” (interview one) and “sections of book might upset students (connections)” (interview three). She positioned her own discomfort of the student connections as more challenging than the students’ actual connections. When I saw this on her post-it arrangement, I asked her, “The students sharing the hard reality—how is that a little bit easier [than your own discomfort]? I just want to know your distinction between these two,” she responded: “Because I think this [points to the “students share hard reality of main character” post-it] is them dealing with it, but the top one [points to the “teacher struggles with sad connections students make with book” post-it] is me reacting and teaching to and planning for that situation.” She explained further in the last interview, “I guess it has to do with my discomfort with students’ experiences versus my students’ experience and how to handle that.” Becky’s comments reveal that she found her reactions to the students’ situations to be more difficult than the “hard reality” that the students were actually facing. She seemed to privilege her reactions as more challenging because they impacted her more directly.

Some of the participants recognized the students' home experiences as challenging but felt they provided advantages rather than discomfort. Lisa described her school: "It is very diverse in every meaning of the word 'diverse'—religion, language, race, everything is extremely diverse. And so they really just identify with the characters in the book. [So is that a challenge?] No. If anything, it helps." Lisa described the way that she negotiated these student-text connections:

I feel that the basis of teaching is connection. It is kind of, almost a bragging point that I do know that much about every single one of my kids. You could point to a name on a list, and I could tell you so much about every single child. And really, I just try to learn. I like to ask them questions about what they do, their culture, things that they like. I invite them to bring in food and stuff, and they just love it.

Lisa recognized the students' home lives to be influential on their connections with the text, and she encouraged these connections from her students to afford them opportunities to share their experiences. She positioned herself as the facilitator of the conversations and showed obvious comfort when she said, "I think it is kind of cool because they can all add in perspectives that I never thought about, and I can just...this is truly a group where I can just guide their discussion instead of saying, 'Next question. Here is what you are going to say next.' I am not trying to drive them towards some bigger point. They are taking it there themselves. It's wonderful."

Marcia, Becky, and Lisa are representative of the range of participants' perspectives and reactions toward their students' home lives when they were using MCYAL in their classrooms. Marcia viewed herself as a teacher rather than a "therapist," and she avoided texts that might be relevant to students' personal experiences because she deemed them to be

too controversial. She describes her discomfort with the student connections. Becky experienced tremendous guilt at her own privilege as it related to her students' home situations. She positioned her own discomfort as more challenging for her than her students' actual "hard realit[ies]." She allowed her students to share their experiences, and she admitted that this served to help her better understand their "world." Lisa looked upon her students' connections positively and described them as a strength. Thus, she actively worked to understand her students' home lives by encouraging and inviting them to share their connections during class. All participants struggled with their students' lived experiences, and many mentioned that their teacher preparation programs should have better prepared them for this reality. Dave, who did the Alternative Route to Certification and a TESOL certification later, critiqued his preparation: "One of my really big concerns, and I voiced it, was that I didn't really feel like there was anything about social justice. I didn't feel like there was enough about a focus on students and who they are and what their backgrounds are." The participants' comments revealed that they struggled with the experiences that their students shared.

In their two studies, Iyer, Leach, and Crosby (2003) found that "White guilt was not, however, predictive of support for noncompensatory efforts at promoting equality[.]" (p. 117). Marcia's, Becky's, and Lisa's descriptions reveal that though they all recognized their privilege, they did not approach it in similar ways. Marcia chose a text that would seemingly provide less controversy. When I asked her about the race or ethnicity of the narrator, she said, "I think they are African American if I remember right." The characters' race or ethnicity was not at the forefront of her mind, and based on her instructional positioning (a focus on standards) described in the last section, she was unlikely to promote the equality

that Iyer, Leach, and Crosby describe. Becky, who was most articulate about the guilt she experienced, only verbalized an interaction that she had with students in an after-school homework group outside of school. Lisa, who in the last section said, “[Race] affects everything that [the students] do all of the time, and it doesn’t affect anything that I do, which I realize is a tremendous hallmark of privilege,” positioned herself as a facilitator and actively invited the students to make connections. Thus, though all three participants (and those they represent in the phenomenon) admit their privilege, their efforts to encourage discussions about students’ home experiences—and the potential discussions about equity that could come with these discussions—are dissimilar.

Student-Text Connections. In the previous section, I described how the participants position themselves in relation to the students’ home experiences. In this section, I describe the ways that participants reacted in class when students made these home connections to the MCYAL. The three participants featured in this section reveal the variability of the teacher participants’ willingness to allow students to share their connections openly in class. These participants also had varying levels of awareness of their Whiteness, which seemed to impact their desire to facilitate these classroom conversations

Some of the participants did not feel comfortable having open conversations about students’ home connections. Katherine, for example, saw these conversations as a “challenge”:

You know a challenge, definitely, [is] when I have the conversation about how [the narrator’s] mother affected her. It will be interesting to see how the kids relate to their own lives. You know, we do have some issues with drugs and alcohol with parents. [...]

Sometimes I worry about that, in a way—students acknowledging their home life

problems and how their parents—if they do use drugs and alcohol—how that affects them.

Katherine “worr[ied]” about these connections, and she described her typical approach to the dilemma:

When it comes to the home life problems, I definitely pull them aside. And that is more of a one-on-one thing. I don’t really let them take it to that level in class when it comes to home life. I know a couple of kids, especially, I would just stop that conversation. I mean, some things with the home lives—like making them go to bed earlier, being in by when the lights go out because bad things happen when it gets dark out—those things, that is one thing. But like I said, the home lives of drugs and alcohol or if there is abuse at home, I definitely don’t let them talk about that openly.

I will pull them aside and talk to them about that.

Katherine’s willingness to let students talk about curfews but not problems that were perhaps more significant to their lives—drugs, alcohol, and abuse—revealed that she was not comfortable with them sharing their personal lives and connections openly in class. She justified this further: “Well, I think any time you talk about race and culture, there are boundaries.” This was a stronger challenge for Katherine; in her post-it arrangement, she placed “teacher has to be cautious about difficult sections students might make personal connections with” in her second highest level of most to least challenging. Katherine’s comments show that she was not comfortable with students sharing their connections with the entire class, but she was willing to listen to them if they met with her in private.

Other participants seemed to make efforts to avoid cultural connections in their classrooms. Kayla described how a student randomly brought up his culture: “Sometimes

they are very candid, so they will offer—I am thinking of one boy who looks like he is White, but he is actually half-Mexican. He talks about that a lot. You know, ‘Cinco de Mayo is coming up,’ so he will say, ‘Oh, we are having tacos tonight.’ And he is really funny about it.” Kayla discussed how she and her co-teacher approached this: “We try to bring it back to the book because we don’t want to shut down the things that he is saying. And sometimes you can use them. There are times that you can [laughs], but other than that, if a kid is not bringing it up and not talking about their personal beliefs or cultural background, we don’t go out of our way, necessarily, to do it.” Kayla’s language seemed to show how students’ home connections inconvenienced her instruction. When a student made a connection—humorous or not—Kayla and her co-teacher had to work to connect that home experience with the text. Her last comment that “we don’t go out of our way, necessarily, to do it,” illustrates that students’ cultural experiences were not openly encouraged in the classroom.

Dave’s discussion of students’ connections to the text is representative of participant responses at the other end of the range within the phenomenon. When I asked him what he finds safe and unsafe about the text, he said, “[A]s unsafe as this text is, it also kind of feels safer because the kids relate to it.” The text he uses in his class, *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2010), features issues of immigration, a very relevant topic for his students, who are all newcomers. Dave’s students’ lives were complicated by a threat of deportation raids during the instruction of the text. Dave described the raids: “And it started out very interestingly because they started talking about doing deportation raids in [district’s state] right after the New Year. And that was a big deal for many of my students. I had some familiarity with who was undocumented and a few who had family members who were undocumented.” Dave’s familiarity with the students’ immigration status revealed his understanding of his students’

home situations. He described how this became relevant to his students: “It was a big deal because it turns out that they are specifically focusing on kids from Central America that were stopped at the border, and that just so happens to apply to, like, eight kids in my class.” In comparison with the other two participants described in this section, Dave’s response to this controversial connection is particularly salient: “And it was neat because I had about twelve kids together sharing—first of all, [I was] just trying, really, to field their questions and share their stories and stuff like that—but it was a good introduction to the book because that is what happens in the book.” Unlike Katherine, who will only allowed connections in private and Kayla, who seemed to deem the connections as a slight inconvenience for instruction, Dave found the students’ connections to be “neat” and allowed the students to share openly in a discussion. Dave was not alone—his encouragement of student connections was shared by some of the other participants within the phenomenon.

Katherine, Kayla, and Dave reveal that teachers’ perspectives toward students’ home connections is likely influencing the conversations that are occurring in classrooms. Leonardo (2002) writes, “The frequent detours, evasions, and detractions from the circuits of whiteness cripple our understanding of the racio-economic essence of schools and society.” Based on his scholarship, Leonardo would likely view Katherine and Kayla’s decisions to avoid conversations as “detours, evasions, and detractions,” as they act as attempts to shield the realities of Whiteness. A willingness to discuss students’ home connections—as troubling as they may be—had the potential to publicly confirm these teachers’ privilege. Dave’s responses reveal that he did not fear these kinds of conversations with his students.

Student knowledge. The teachers described dilemmas related to students’ knowledge. Included in the following two subsections are two categories that are separate but

also inextricably connected. First, participants described students' lack of knowledge. In their descriptions of this dilemma, each participant revealed their values about what they perceived to be important for students to know. Second, teachers worried about singling students out because of the knowledge these students might already hold because of their shared culture with the text. The teachers' responses to these two dilemmas were particularly revealing of the ways they (un)intentionally positioned themselves as teachers and as teachers who are White.

Students' lack of knowledge. Across the interviews, all of the participants discussed the students' lack of knowledge as a dilemma. They expressed concerns regarding their students' lack of knowledge of concrete aspects like vocabulary and also more abstract aspects like conceptions of race and ethnicity. Marcia's comments exemplified her concern about students' vocabulary but also revealed her deficit-oriented perspectives toward her students. When I asked her if she thought that her race or ethnicity affected the way she would teach the text, she responded,

I don't see how it could not. I really don't. The kids always complain that my vocabulary—that I use words that are too big. “Why do you use such big words?”
[laughing] And I think that maybe my expectations of understanding, sometimes, I have to realize that maybe I am making a dangerous assumption about either the vocabulary that they know or something that they are going to understand. And I sometimes have to chunk it down and break it down for them.

During the interview, I was curious why she responded to the question about her race and ethnicity with commentary about her strong vocabulary, so I asked her a follow-up question to clarify: “Do you think that is tied to ethnicity?” Marcia's response revealed that she did

find race and ethnicity to be linked with the students' lack of knowledge. She said:

I was an excellent reader. I went to first grade all ready, and I don't know how I learned to read. I just learned to read. So for me, I knew how to read. And that is a big disadvantage when you are working with...and I have always loved to read. And that was all I wanted to do when I was in school and when I was growing up. So I think that it is actually a disadvantage to have been a good reader when you are trying to teach struggling readers.

Though Marcia did not specifically discuss race or ethnicity, both of the directed questions were specifically about race and ethnicity. Her responses seem to show that she felt that her students' races or ethnicities was connected to what she perceived to be a weakness of their vocabulary and reading abilities.

Other participants shared perspectives of what they perceived to be the students' lack of knowledge. Some of these perspectives revealed the teachers' personal agendas. For example, Jackie said,

My mom used to really hate this, and it doesn't really bother me—but Hispanic culture, they will say "Miss" instead of Mrs. [Teacher's last name]. You know, they just have a different way. This might be kids in general being lazy and not speaking proper English, but language itself like "I been done that." You know, so instruction, you have to up the ante and be like, "No, no. This is how it is said." But that is not book specific. That is just teaching in a city.

When Jackie decided to "up the ante" and teach students how language *should* be used, she used her power to promote what she believed to be "proper English." Though Jackie perceived her beliefs to be superior to her mother's beliefs because Jackie allowed the

students to address her as “Miss,” she still exerted her power to enforce “proper English.”

Similarly to other participants, Jackie also discussed her perceptions of students’ lack of knowledge with respect to issues of race or ethnicity. When I asked her about the role that race or ethnicity played when she was teaching the text, *Dragonwings* (Yep, 1975), she said, “This is going to sound terrible. But I feel like kids—because I have mostly African American and Hispanic students, I feel like they still think that Chinese people are White. So it doesn’t—I mean obviously they are not, but I think they think, ‘Oh, they are White,’ so it is not really a race thing.” Because Jackie’s students perceived her narrator as White, she was able to avoid conflict by not addressing issues of race, ethnicity, or culture with her students. So I asked her, “So you don’t really talk about [race or ethnicity] because of that perception?” And she said, “Yah.” Jackie knew there was a gap in students’ knowledge, but she made the decision not to address the students’ misconceptions about the race of the narrator. As stated in a previous section, she avoided a text about slavery (*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* [Douglass & Garrison, 1845]) because she worried about students’ reactions. She later learned from a colleague that her students might not know as much about slavery as she initially thought. She said,

I was actually talking to a teacher who is teaching it right now. [...] And she was saying [...] she hasn’t really even gotten to the book yet because the kids don’t know anything. Like even the Black kids don’t know anything. She has to go to, “What was the North? What was the South? And the South had more. What did a slave do?” She said it is really a history lesson more so than anything else because the kids just have no idea. So I mean, I probably would be okay doing that. [Because the kids don’t know it?] Right.

Jackie was comfortable talking about issues of race and ethnicity if they were grounded in students' lack of knowledge about history. Her comfort with this historically based teaching approach was shared by other participants. Katherine focused her instruction on historical figures and said that her students were exhausted with her school's instruction of the same historical figures. She said,

We are looking at different people [in history] that the kids really aren't well associated with. [...] Going back last year, a lot of my kids were like, "Well you guys talk about the same people over and over again. It is Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks." So we really tried to expand who we are looking at.

When the students complained that they were receiving repetitive information about the same historical figures from year to year, the teachers varied the content to include other historical figures. This didn't come easily for Katherine, who was teaching *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson, 2014). When she was placing her dilemma post-it, "Helping students understand the historical setting" into her arrangement, she said, "I am going to put that with the background knowledge [section of my poster]. Because like I said, I am still working through that [*lowers voice*] making sure I know exactly what I am talking about."

Katherine said "I don't see color" in every interview, but her language reveals the ways she did see color. In her description of what she valued as important knowledge for her students, she said,

We talk about social norms. "How I was raised was different from how one of you was raised. Sometimes it has to do with our culture. [...] It also has to do with sometimes the color of our skins. Were slaves taught social norms back then? Were White people more privileged to that?" So we had this really great in-depth

conversation about—I look at social norms. Another one of my students brought up religion—which I don’t touch too much about, but I knew exactly where he was going. So I look at, like I said, the social norms.

Katherine’s focus on social norms was confusing because it seemed trivial (and confusing) to consider whether or not slaves were taught social norms. She avoided potentially controversial conversations about religion because she had a clear agenda for students. She wanted them to gain historical knowledge, and she valued social norms as important knowledge for the students. When a student brought up religion, she decided not to “touch too much” on this topic because she perceived that she “knew exactly where he was going.”

Katherine valued discussions about racism if they were grounded in history. She perceived that her students inaccurately described contemporary issues of racism, and she worked to dispel what she perceived to be myths. She said,

I would really like them to just realize...almost soak in the history, realize what happened and move away from comments like the racist comments and just so quick to say "racist." I would love to just have them think twice before saying it. Because really it did affect people that lived during that time period. And there really were racist people that treated African Americans and other cultures so badly.

By saying “really it did affect people that lived during that time period,” Katherine showed that she didn’t believe that racism impacted her students. Though she did perceive race as a contemporary concern, she focused on White people as the victims when she stated,

I guess [there is] the challenge of them thinking one group is better than the other. So kind of like, should Blacks be treating Whites badly now because of what happened in the past? I think that [the students] get very stuck on, “Wow this is what the White

people did.” So now the Black people are retaliating in today’s world with the shooting. And then we even think, you know, [the students] like to bring up the police brutality. So that has been some challenges, too.

Rather than acknowledging that her students might have a different perspective toward the current racial climate, Katherine believed her students simply lacked historical knowledge, which led them to make assumptions about the current racial climate. She explained, “I mean, I think being in [District name], you know, unfortunately, these kids have that mindset that you know, it is Black and White. And it is like, ‘We’re in the same place. We are at the same level. I mean, I am your teacher, so you have to be more respectful, but we are all human beings.’” Katherine told her students that they were at the same level as she, in terms of racial equality, but she reminded them that she was their teacher, an exertion of her power positioning. By placing herself in this authoritative position, she was seeming to tell the students that she held the knowledge that they lack. She described her reactions to the students bringing up the police shootings in connection to her text: “I always say, ‘Let’s not blame it on...let’s not use the race card as you guys would say when you are arguing. And let’s look at the facts.’” Katherine was not alone in her belief that the students too quickly jumped to issues of race. By asking her students to look at the “facts,” she reminded them that what she said was truth.

Several teachers, including Becky and Jackie, discussed how students were fixated on whether ideas or actions were racist. However, not all of the teachers were quick to tell students not to “pull the race card,” as Katherine did. For example, Dave was on the opposite side of the spectrum regarding what he valued for students’ knowledge with respect to race. Though he would agree with Katherine that students’ historical knowledge was lacking, his

beliefs about the ways in which history impacted his students was quite different. He described what he saw as the challenge:

One of the really huge challenges about that is that the kids just don't get it. They don't understand the weight that being an African American in this country and what that means. And they don't understand the Civil Rights Movement. [...] I think they don't understand just the struggle of African Americans starting with slavery and then just going through Civil Rights and coming up to now, where—I mean, you and I understand it, we grew up here—they just don't see—they can't really see it from my perspective, having grown up in this country and growing up in a fairly wealthy community and seeing the disparities. They are new here. They don't get that at all.

Dave seemed to try to use his White privilege to his advantage by sharing with students the inequities that they perhaps didn't see or understand. He believed that he understood more about the privilege that he had because he grew up and experienced the privilege. Because his students were new to the country, he perceived that they hadn't seen these great disparities that he saw. The difference between Katherine and Dave is that he believed that the “struggle” continued “now,” whereas Katherine believed that “Now the Black people are retaliating in today's world.” These perceptions would likely impact the conversations in these two teachers' classrooms.

The participant comments within this section are representative of the range of dilemmas that teachers within this study experienced regarding students' lack of knowledge. Marcia was frustrated with the ways her students didn't share her vocabulary or reading skills; Jackie was concerned that her students didn't use “proper English” and, also, was willing to teach a text about slavery because of the students' lack of historical knowledge;

Katherine taught her students historical knowledge as a way to dispel what she perceived to be inaccurate visions of racial tensions today; and Dave believed the opposite and used historical knowledge to show his students the racial inequities that exist today. Using theories of Whiteness as a lens, it is clear that participants like Marcia (as described in previous sections) and Jackie preferred not to broach issues of “power, hierarchy, oppression, and resistance” (Hunter & Nettles, 1999, p. 394). They framed students’ lack of knowledge with respect to issues of vocabulary and language. Katherine, who told her students “I don’t see color,” was willing to engage in these conversations but only in a historical context. She revealed the ways she *did* see color when she positioned White people as victims. Her perceptions align with Leonardo’s (2002) theory that “Through certain social developments, whites are coming to see themselves as racialized whites, not merely as individuals” (p. 41). Dave recognized the endemic ways that “white people are often the subjects of whiteness because it benefits and privileges them,” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 32), and he worked to help his students understand these inequities. Though Dave and Katherine shared the same dilemma of the students’ lack of knowledge, their philosophies of what students should know were very different.

Singling students out. In addition to being concerned about students’ lack of knowledge, teachers were also concerned with students’ knowledge. More specifically, they worried about singling out students who matched the culture depicted in the texts. The ways in which the teachers positioned this dilemma contrasted. Laura described another text that she taught and discussed how she used her students to help her with the dilemma. She said, “I would look to them for guidance. And I would say, ‘What do you think? I don’t know. I’ve never been a young Black female facing these problems.’ So I really depend on my kids,

which is what I want. You know, you are the authority on your own experiences.” However, Laura was also careful to share what she *didn’t* do when she asked the students to share their experiences. She stated,

And it is not in the way that I know a lot of times people are like, “Oh, slavery! Look at the Black kid.” It is not that. It is, you know, they don’t know. They did not grow up during that time. But if it is just these experiences where people discriminate against you or people follow you with their eyes in a grocery store or a convenient store, that is now. That is something that they could actually be experiencing now, so those are the type of things where I look to my students for guidance, and they become the authorities.

Laura was very clear that she did not single students out in her classroom or make them speak for their entire culture. Instead, she encouraged them to share their own experiences with racism, which might be particularly relevant.

She described another incident when she did not have enough knowledge, and she turned to her students for guidance. In a longer quote that is representative of Laura’s philosophical approach and many of her comments throughout the interviews, she said:

I acknowledge [my lack of knowledge]. If I am uncomfortable talking about something or if there is something that somebody brings up, like a student, I will actually say, “I am a little bit uncomfortable talking about that topic. I don’t know a lot about it. If somebody else wants to jump in?” For example, we were talking about the Syrian refugees [...] and one of my students brought up the Bosnia-Albania conflict. We have a lot of refugee students from there. And I said, “I don’t know a lot about it.” And I had a student: “I am a refugee from Bosnia.” I said, “Go ahead.” So

he got up, and he showed us on the map where the two countries were. He told us about what is going on, what the conditions were like, we watched a news report on Syria, we were able to have a discussion about it. But I will acknowledge when I am not comfortable with something, and we will do research as a class if I am not sure of the answer. And then I also give my kids the power, too. I am not the only authority in the room. My kids are also authorities on a multitude of different things. [...] but that student did amazingly, and he is the authority on that. So I let him take that, and then I wasn't uncomfortable anymore.

Laura is not alone in this perspective. Many other teachers positioned their students as the authorities. Though Laura used this approach in a seemingly confident way, however, not all of the participants did so confidently. Many repeatedly expressed worries about offending students that shared the culture of the text. While teaching *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004), Kim was concerned about taking students' voices when she asked them to speak individually. She said,

If I am not sure if it is right, I am not going to say it because I don't want to offend someone. I don't want to take their voice. And at the same time, I don't want to call on an individual student and say, "Oh, you're fill in the blank. Give us your opinion." Because they are an individual. They don't speak for their entire race or religion or culture. So it is a challenge in the sense of trying to balance a back and forth of information without offending and without accidentally taking people's voices away. But it is also, on the flip side, something that is really beneficial. It allows for more perspectives. It really kind of helps the conversation in the class.

Though Kim recognized that her students' perspectives were beneficial and valuable to

conversations, she worried about both singling students out and allowing them to speak for their entire race, religion, or culture. Her way of inviting students to share their experiences was when she told them: “If I say something wrong, I apologize. And if you know I am saying it wrong or you have something to add and you would feel comfortable adding it, please feel free.” Her language revealed that she was a bit more cautious than Laura. She invited students to “add” to her comments rather than giving them the floor, as Laura did.

Kim described a particular situation where a Bangladeshi student was singled about by his friend. His “friend turned to him and made a comment to him about being Iranian. And he is like, ‘I am not Iranian at all.’” Though Kim perceived that this student didn’t seem particularly troubled by the incident, she noted the ways that these discussions shaped how her students viewed their environment. She described it: “Particularly when you read a book where there are issues related to race and ethnicity, it heightens everyone’s awareness of it. So suddenly, kids are looking around the room and are like, ‘This student looks this certain way. I wonder what he or she is feeling during this. Because me as this particular race is feeling this.’” Kim saw this as a positive benefit for her classroom, but she said, “This hasn’t happened, but the only time that I would talk about that with them and kind of bring it up or maybe try to address that is if someone is putting someone on the spot and trying to get them to speak for an entire group of people.” Kim described that she was most concerned with the way that singling students out might put them “on the spot” to speak for their entire culture.

As with all of the dilemmas, the teachers differed greatly in their comfort level of singling students out. Most extremely different was Katherine, who was teaching a text that featured Jehovah’s Witnesses. She knew a student in her class identified as a Jehovah’s Witness, but she didn’t acknowledge this during class. When some students “couldn’t wrap

around the idea of not celebrating a birthday,” she said to the whole class, “This is their belief, and we don’t have to agree with it.” Katherine admitted to me that she didn’t agree with the culture when she said, “And you know, [the students] have kind of struggled, and even I have struggled with the right answer to [why Jehovah’s Witnesses don’t celebrate holidays] because I don’t necessarily agree with it.” The class struggled to understand and rationalize the customs of this culture; perhaps not approaching the student who was a Jehovah’s Witness individually and inviting him to share his knowledge with her or with the class was a missed opportunity.

I asked Katherine in the last interview: “I remember you said that there was one student who was a Jehovah’s Witness. Did that come out [in the unit] at all?” And she said, “No.” I said, “Not even in writing or anything?” and she said, “Uh unh.” Perhaps because I was troubled by this fact, I asked her, “So when the students that were talking negatively about it, and you were saying that we don’t have to agree with it and what not, the student was just silent?” and she responded, “He was silent. Yah.” Other teacher participants in the phenomenon did not invite students to share their perspectives in the classroom. Katherine’s situation was a bit different from the other participants in the study because both she and the other students shared that they did not agree with the culture’s customs. This may have been why the student remained silent. Katherine did not seem to understand the ways that she may have made the student uncomfortable. She described similar moments that occurred with other multicultural texts. Instead of inviting students to share, she silently acknowledged them: “I will glare over at them not trying to point them out, but I do try to make sure that they are okay. They will smile and nod at me, knowing. [So you look over at them to make sure they are doing okay?] Yah. One particular student that I am thinking of was looking at

me the whole time, so.” Her way of acknowledging students was by looking at them to confirm that they were “okay.”

Katherine did “pull” the student who was a Jehovah’s Witness “aside” when he was “quiet” in class. When she asked him how he was feeling, he said, “I have just learned to accept it. Getting used to it or whatever. [...] As long as the kids don’t say anything, I am fine.” When she reflected further on his comments, she said, “So that worked out more in my favor more than I thought it would! But this is a good kid, so.” Katherine used her position of power—and her White perspective—to guide the classroom conversation. She described the silent boy as a “good kid,” and it is unclear what she would have perceived that a “bad kid” might have done or said during class. This situation “worked out in her favor” and continued to promote her position of power in the classroom, where her perspective was favored and the student’s marginalized perspective remained silent.

Laura, Kim, and Katherine represent the range of ways that participants positioned themselves with respect to the dilemma of singling students out. Laura gave her students the floor and openly encouraged them to share their perspectives. Kim invited students to let her know if she offended them, if she represented material inaccurately, or if they wanted to add any new information. Katherine did not acknowledge students that shared the culture featured in the text during class. Though this was a practice shared by other participants, she was at a more extreme end of the range in the phenomenon because she discussed with students the ways that she did not agree with the culture in front of the student who remained voiceless in the classroom. Leonardo (2002) said that, “Discussing (anti)racism is never easy and is frequently suppressed in mainstream classroom conditions. The establishment of the right conditions is precious but often precarious” (p. 39). In order to discuss racism or antiracism,

teachers would likely need to feel comfortable first in acknowledging the cultures of students in the classroom and inviting students to speak about their experiences. Data revealed that participants faced a dilemma of how to approach and acknowledge these students in the classroom.

Dilemmas related to book content

A third theme to emerge from the data was related to the content of the MCYAL the participants were teaching. The first subsection will detail the dilemma that participants experienced relative to their text preferences. Participants felt varying emotions toward the texts—some of the texts were required, while others were texts of the participants' choosing. The second category within the theme pertains to the perceived controversial content within the texts. As evidenced in the other two themes described previously, the participants' perspectives and descriptions of the dilemmas within this theme show a range of perspectives relative to each dilemma. Within each section, I show how the decisions they made regarding texts and content can be connected with Whiteness.

Teachers' book preference. Conversations revealed participants' (lack of) desire to use the MCYAL they were teaching in their classrooms. The participants ranged greatly in their emotions toward the texts that they were using. Though all participants believed MCYAL was valuable to classrooms, not all of the participants valued it equally. The following section is representative of the phenomenon and reveals four different perspectives—from passion to frustration.

Many of the teachers felt very positively toward the book they were using. Lisa shared that she obtained her book, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), even though it was an "option for freshman." Similar to Dave, who was also teaching

students who existed outside of the traditional mainstream classes, she was able to break curricular rules to pick a text that she preferred. She came to know the power of the text when she was teaching freshmen. Lisa said, “I had a group of freshmen, and it was the toughest group that I have ever had. And it was actually really successful with them. So, yah, that is what led me to be like, I need to read this every year.” She explained this was possible because: “For my kids because once they are placed on my team, they are kind of in an alternate curriculum, I have access to the book. So it is just, ‘I want to teach this. Can I?’” I asked her how much freedom she has to choose her texts, and she said “A lot of freedom” and there are about “twenty books you can choose from.” Lisa selected this text from among several choices, and she had a positive perspective toward it.

Within her district, she explained that, “Units are quarterly, and they are thematically based. [...] That is what is required. So there are only four units per year. And the upcoming unit has to do with courage and self-discovery, so this is the perfect book for it.” When I asked her in the last interview how her instruction of the unit went, she said, “I think it went better than I anticipated. It has, so far, been the kids’ favorite book and my favorite one to teach, I think.” She did admit that part of her preference toward the book was that it was easier to teach a book when none of her students were aware of the culture besides her. She said, “It is easier because I am back to being the teacher in the room where I am the one who knows, and they are the ones who don’t know. It’s also a little bit of more pressure because I want to teach them the right way.” By using a text that featured a culture different from the students, Lisa was “back to being the teacher in the room.” This may have influenced her positive perspective toward it in that she felt comfort knowing that she had more knowledge about the culture than her students did. When I describe Lisa in my researcher’s journal, I

note that, “I got a strong impression that she loved her job because she energetically talked about teaching with a large smile on her face” (January 15, 2016); so Lisa’s positive spirit might have shined regardless of the text, but her answers seem to reveal that the text did influence her perceptions toward the unit.

Kayla, who was the department head of her school, also had some flexibility based on her position. When I asked if that influenced text selection, she admitted, “I think I feel a little bit more brave in a way. But no one else can really just order texts. They could probably go through me and request, but we just don’t order texts here.” Similar to Dave and Lisa, Kayla had power over the curriculum. She said about the text she taught, *The Absolutely True of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), “It is not required, but it is part of the curriculum, so I can choose to teach it,” and she explained that she liked the text because

It has everything in it. You have the multicultural piece, you have the language piece, you have the drawings and sketches that the kids like because it is not words on every page, which might sound ridiculous, but they look at those things. I just am really looking forward to starting it because I think that these kids that I have this year are very difficult, and it will be interesting to see.

Because the novel seemed to check several boxes (“multicultural,” “language,” “not a lot of words on the page”) it was a good fit for Kayla and her students. I asked Kayla how this influenced her teaching and she said, “I think I personally enjoy this book a lot more than any of the other novels that we’ve done this year, and that makes me want to be invested with them as I am teaching it and reading it.” Like Lisa, a positive perspective toward the text seemed to play a role in Kayla’s perceptions and instruction.

Two participants, Becky and Marcia, represent the perspectives of teacher

participants who did not prefer the book that they were teaching. They, among other participants, were more limited in their curricular choices, and they discussed how this impacted their perspectives. Becky said, “I am not really engaged by the book [*Bud Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999)]. And I think that’s hard. [...] I just kind of plug along. I don’t think—I wish I could force myself to be engaged, but I don’t know, that is kind of hard to do. I don’t know what it is about it. I don’t know if it is because the kid is so young or maybe the story. I am not really sure.” Becky was unable to articulate why she did not like the text. Like Jackie, who taught in the same district, she was given five book choices for four single-book units, and at least one of those choices was a text that they perceived would not engage students. She explained the other book choice that was not a good option, and this, essentially, made the choice for her: “However, it is *Lyddie* [Paterson, 1995]—ugh. So, okay, I could teach *Lyddie*, but now I am adding another White character and taking a character that is Black out.” So while she did not like the text *Bud Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999), she deemed it a better choice than *Lyddie*, a book with a White narrator that she didn’t prefer either. I compare and contrast Becky and Jackie in my researcher’s journal, and I write that “Though Becky was not as angry as Jackie in her interview [...] both teachers are very unhappy. A sense of bitterness filled the room, and I could tell from her facial expressions that Becky loves teaching but feels strapped by a scripted curriculum with required texts” (December 3, 2015).

When I asked Becky to describe *Bud Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999) with one word or short phrase in the first interview, she said, “Complacent. [How come?] I am fine with teaching it. I think there are things I can do with it, but I think I mentioned this last time, but there is another book by this author that really does a better job of talking about race issues and how things have changed in the past 56 years.” She described *Bud Not Buddy* and then compared

it with a text that she preferred by the same author:

My challenge is that it is not diverse enough. I don't feel like we jumped into diversity enough with this novel. I think I mentioned before—this author—another book that he writes, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham* [Curtis, 1995], there is so much more that we could have done, and I am just a little bit sad that this is all that we have this year for reading about a character that is not White.

The curriculum locked Becky into the texts she had to teach. She preferred a text that “delve[d] into racism” and was frustrated that there were complete sets of the text that she would like to teach (*The Watsons Go to Birmingham*) “literally sitting with dust on them” in their bookroom because they weren't included in the scripted curriculum that the district purchased. Becky placed the post-it notes, “teacher dislikes book” and “book is not diverse enough” in the bottom level of her three sections of dilemmas that are “most difficult to overcome.” And when I ask her in the final interview to describe her desire to teach the book again, she said, “Ehh. If I have to. [...] It is just...it leaves me wanting more for my students, wanting more for myself as a teacher. I feel unfulfilled.” Becky wanted more for her students, and her responses reveal that the text provided a dilemma for her because she wished she “could force [her]self to be engaged.”

Marcia provided a slightly different perspective of how an undesired text might impact instruction. When I asked her to share a word or short phrase to describe her desire to use *We Beat the Street* (Davis, Jenkins, Hunt, & Draper, 2006) in her classroom, she said, “I have trepidation.” Marcia discussed other books that she refused to use: “*Speak* [Anderson, 1999] I think is about a cutter. And I don't really want to deal with that,” and “I did not choose *Tears of a Tiger* [Draper, 1994]. I originally was going to pick that one even though

that one doesn't really speak to me. But we have at least one kid with a sibling suicide on the team, and since that is what that book deals with, I decided I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole." Because of her dislike of controversial issues, Marcia described her choices as "limited."

She described how her personal tastes might also be relevant to her dislike of some of the texts within the curriculum. The following quotation is long, but it is very telling of Marcia's positioning and identity:

I have less positive feelings about [*We Beat the Street*, (Davis, Jenkins, Hunt, & Draper, 2006)] because I haven't really finished reading it myself. I don't like gritty urban novels, and we seem to have a lot of those on the list to choose from. My personal taste is for things with happy endings. My personal taste in literature is, I mean, I am probably pretty typical of my age and class. I like British and some American literature. I grew up on *Little Women* and *Anne of Green Gables* and loved those books, a series called *Swallows and Amazon*. It's a British series of books about sailing children, and I love picture books. So the gritty urban novel does not really speak to me personally. And I would love to do a study on...I keep thinking about this. I would love to do a study on how effectively teachers can use books they don't like as tools. Because a lot of times it is forced on them. "You will do this."

Like Becky, Marcia was unable to verbalize what it was about the text that she did not like. She said, "For whatever reason, I feel comfortable with *The House on Mango Street* [Cisneros, 1984], and I am less comfortable with some of the others. I am certainly not comfortable with *Tears of a Tiger* [Draper, 1994]." She admitted that she had not dealt with the same struggles as her students and this might influence her perspective:

While I have been fortunate enough not to have had suicide in my immediate family, I have had friends that have dealt with it and other people. And it does make me uncomfortable, and I also feel that when I am looking at a sea of kids, and I know that they've dealt with it, I am like, you know. What makes a book feel unsafe to me is if I think it is going to do damage to a child.

From Marcia's point of view, using a text that might connect with students' home experiences might "damage" a child. But perhaps another contributing factor was her White perspective. When I asked her, "Do you feel more comfortable teaching a book that features you own culture than one that features a different culture?" she said, "You know, I probably do. I would have to say that, given what I enjoy reading, I probably would. I mean, I like books with happy endings [...] I really enjoyed using *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* [Spreare, 1958] last year which has a strong female character, it takes place in Connecticut, it's Puritans. I mean, it is a very Anglocentric book. And I did enjoy using that." Despite her comfort with White texts, Marcia took a risk to teach *We Beat the Street* (Davis, Jenkins, Hunt, & Draper, 2006), a risk that provided her with "trepidation." The risk paid off, and she ended up enjoying the text. In the second interview, she said, "Actually, I'd say that it is going very well. Much better than I thought."

Lisa, Kayla, Becky, and Marcia reveal the ways that book preferences may influence perspectives of a unit. The four participants represent the different (non)choices that participants had with regards to text, and how this shaped the energy and passion of their instruction. Flagg (2005) writes that, "A second metaprivilege of Whiteness enables it to set the terms on which valuable resources are allocated" (p. 4). In the case of these participants, the Whiteness that allocated these texts ranged from the district to the participants. But even

at the teacher level, the participants had some level of choice. Marcia chose a text that she deemed to be less controversial, Lisa chose a text that featured a culture that was different from her own but also different from her students, and Becky chose a text that she didn't like but preferred because it was the only multicultural option for her. These participants reveal the nuances of this dilemma, as teachers struggled with limited choice and decisions about the cultures featured in the texts that they would use in their classrooms. In the case of all of the participants, the mandated curricula for the school as a whole was "colonizing," and the multicultural text choices—young adult or not—were limited.

Controversy in the classroom. The teacher participants expressed both fear and confidence toward controversy that could come with using multicultural young adult texts in the classroom. They described specific examples of controversial content that troubled/empowered them, concerns about how to be politically correct, and worries of censorship. All of these dilemmas could be connected with their perceptions and awareness of their Whiteness. Within this section, I provide examples of participant comments which exemplify the range of responses within the phenomenon.

Controversial Content. The participants varied widely in their approaches to controversial content. On one end of the range of responses, participants like Katherine admitted that she avoided some sections of *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson, 2014): "I kind of skipped over certain parts because it was about the Adam and Eve. And I was, like, I could totally see this going in the wrong direction." Katherine made the decision that she didn't want to discuss these sections, so she skipped them. and on the other end of the range, participants like Lisa said that when she reached a controversial part of the text, her plan of attack was: "Plow ahead. Let's go! Embrace it. They are going to laugh. They are going to

love it [*laughing*].” Participants’ positioning to controversial content seemed to coincide with their enactments with respect to their Whiteness. The participants, like Lisa, who were acutely aware of their Whiteness and discussed their identity openly with students were more open to controversial content, while the participants who did not psychoanalyze their White identity or said they did not discuss their identity with students seemed to be more fearful and/or disapproving of controversial content in the classroom.

Jackie is representative of participants who experienced discomfort with certain sections of the text. In her first interview, she described one such section where the narrator of *Dragonwings* (Yep, 1975) showed negative views toward White people. She said, “He refers to White men as ‘demons,’ so that is going to be interesting teaching. [...] I think the fact that he does refer to White men as ‘demons’ is interesting because my kids may not think, you know, I am a demon or White people are demons. They certainly have negative connotations to some extent.” When Jackie described the controversial section, she also described her White identity and how her students might perceive her as a demon.

Some of Jackie’s comments about race/ethnicity may be problematic. She discussed how she approaches the demon wording: “In talking about the ‘demon,’ we have had conversations about, ‘Okay, it technically is not a very nice way to describe White people. However, is it racist if it is based on fact? What he knows about White people and the White Americans is that they are cruel, and they are dangerous, and all of these characteristics that you can equate with a demon.’” Jackie perceived that the stereotype that the narrator offered was accurate if it was grounded in what he knew about White people. Jackie placed the “demons” post-it in the “multicultural” section that she created, and she said, “I think that is reverse racism. They are used to calling everyone else like White people racist, but in this

time, it is kind of the reverse, so I think that is an interesting spin on multicultural.” She added, “And it is funny because typically White people are the racist ones, not the other way around.” Jackie’s comments about “reverse racism” are disputed in scholarship. Scholars believe that the concept of “reverse racism” promotes the idea that “Whites have replaced Blacks as the primary victims of discrimination” and by nearly every measure in society, statistics show “drastically poorer outcomes for Black than White Americans” (Norton & Sommers, 2011, p. 215).

Jackie described her approach to controversial content and her concerns with her administration, as evidenced in her comments related to another controversial section: “We were reading an excerpt from Lawrence Yep’s autobiography, and he said he grew up in a neighborhood of Yellow, White, and Black, and the kids [*laughs*] were like, ‘Uhhh, that’s not okay.’ And I was like, ‘Well, he said it about himself. He is Yellow. So it is fine.’” Jackie preferred to move quickly from these complicated issues about race/ethnicity. She explained that rather than discuss this section that students might find problematic, she tried to avoid the conversation: “Yah, unless a student makes a comment about it. If someone brings it up, like when we were reading his autobiography and we read the word ‘Yellow’ and most classes someone said something. In that case, we talked about it a little bit, but otherwise, I kind of just let it go.” Given the choice, Jackie preferred to avoid these conversations. She admitted that she didn’t write anything on the board:

I didn’t really want to write it [Yellow] on the board in case my principal walked into the room and saw it out of context. And you know, instead of writing Yellow, I wrote Chinese when we were doing notes. And he said he lived in a Black neighborhood, and I probably could have written “Black,” but I wrote “African American.” So I just

try to be a little bit more P.C. about it when I am writing it on the board. [...] It is kind of, you know, I wouldn't use the "n" word. I wouldn't describe a Chinese person as yellow either, so it is kind of just making it a little bit more appropriate. [For the administration's sake?] To cover my tush. Yah.

Jackie allowed some conversations about the controversial content, but her language reveals that these conversations involved her explaining and justifying the content to students rather than asking them to be critical of these portions of the text. She feared administrative pushback and did not write anything controversial on the board in order to "cover [her] tush."

Jackie's description and fear of the administration's reaction to controversial content works as a counterexample to Laura's perspective about controversial content. Laura described a controversial classroom discussion when she was teaching *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006):

A lot of my students were saying that they felt like in order to realize the true American Dream, [...] you have to be a White male. [...] So this was when my administrator was evaluating me. And she didn't come in at the beginning of it, and she came in when I had the definition written on the board, and we were going to have how we feel, and then we were going to write our own definition. So she only saw the how we feel part, and it was like, you know, that you can't realize the American Dream if you are not White or if you are not a male. [...] So when she came in, the first thing she did was attack the one on the other side. So rather than me say anything and defend it. I figure, well this will be a good test for my kids to see if they can defend their own thoughts when they are being challenged, and they did it beautifully. And one of my students [...] looked at our principal and said [*voice has*

attitude], “Well, you weren’t here for the beginning, and you don’t understand that we are just talking about how we feel, and then we are going to fix it.” And I was like, “Wooo! All right!” And my principal was like, “All right!”

Laura encountered a situation when her administrator questioned the controversial content on the board, and rather than justify it, Laura invited her students to clarify the content for the administrator. Her positioning is one of confidence—she trusted her students to explain the controversial situation.

This is likely due to the preparation that Laura did with her students across the year. In the beginning of the school year, to make her students “feel a little bit more comfortable,” she said,

The first thing that we do is White privilege. We don’t look at the struggles of Black people first. We don’t look at immigrants from Puerto Rico or wherever, from Mexico. We look at me first. And we take apart what my skin gets me. What it buys me. And I think by disarming myself and allowing them to see some of the things that I acknowledge that I get because of my skin color...I mean we have to tread pretty lightly.

Laura talked about all of the topics she included following this discussion of White privilege: “rape culture,” “ethnicity,” religion,” “sexual orientation.” Her purpose was: “We are criticizing American culture. And we are criticizing the American way.” For Laura, the rapport she fostered was most important for these conversations: “I think as long as you have a safe environment for your students set up, anything is safe because it is life.” She invited students to frame their questions in appropriate ways: “So they learn pretty early on to be respectful, and again, if they have a question, phrase it nicely.” In one example, she depicted

a conversation about the text that represented this respect:

“But, Miss. I am going to ask a question, and it is going to be racist, but I don’t mean it in a racist way.”

And I was like, “Okay.”

She goes, “Do they eat dogs? Because it is seen as like, Asian people eat dogs.

And I was like, “Why don’t we take a look?”

In contrast with Jackie, Laura did not provide an answer to her student. Instead, she invited the student to look up the information with her. Laura described how *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006) afforded her opportunities to have critical conversations like these. She described the narrator of her text:

The character Chin-Kee is basically every stereotype about Chinese people rolled into one: buck teeth, braid down the back, traditional clothing, eyes so squinty you can’t see his pupils, he talks about binding girls’ feet. So we talked about how he is kind of funny, but then why is he funny? And they were like, “Well, because it was a stereotype?” And I am like, “Okay, but are stereotypes funny?”

Laura valued texts and conversations that would be relevant for her students. She understood that stereotypes might be pertinent topics for them to discuss, so she used the text to foster conversations that invited her students to think critically. When I asked her what was safe or unsafe to her in her text, she replied, “We lost three students last year. So nothing is safe for them.” Laura emphasized that controversial content is what drove her instruction. In a quote that represents Laura as an educator, according to our conversations throughout the study, she said bluntly: “The student issues is why I teach. Making racial slurs, having these stereotypes being continually perpetuated, not being able to analyze the media that they are seeing every

single day, that is why I teach. I feel like, if it wasn't for these challenges, what would I teach?"

Descriptions of controversial content by Katherine, Lisa, Jackie, and Laura reveal that participants experienced varying levels of comfort. Katherine avoided controversial content entirely, and Jackie felt uncomfortable discussing the content aloud and when the students pressed, she asserted her own opinions without engaging them in a critical conversation. Katherine's and Jackie's Whiteness emerge in their power and privilege to avoid engaging in conversations (Flagg, 2005) that are likely relevant to their students. Lisa and Laura, however, embraced and even encouraged controversial content and perceived it to be valuable for classroom conversations.

Political Correctness. The participants worried about what they should say when racism emerged in the texts and in classroom conversations. In this section, I provide one quotation from three different participants to depict the range of participant views about this dilemma.

Becky said,

Sometimes I feel uncomfortable—I don't know. I feel uncomfortable saying...I mean, literally the book said "brown boy" [while teaching *Bud Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999)] or talking about...I don't know. I just feel uncomfortable. I don't know if I am saying something in a politically correct way. And then I feel unbelievably ignorant.

Katherine said,

I kind of just joke with them [when I approach controversial sections], and sometimes I get a little bit nervous with that. Like, if we are the same color, I will say, "Just don't say stuff like that." Sometimes I will take the approach to stop and explain to

them that it is not the right thing to say. [...] And sometimes I will just [*laughs*] ignore their comments.

Lisa said,

Before we started *To Kill a Mockingbird*, you know the N word is in it everywhere. So we had to have a conversation. It was actually very heartwarming. A very great moment. I was like, “Listen, guys. The N word is in the book. I am going to be reading lots of passages to you where it is in there. And I am going to leave it up to you. Do you want me to say the word or not? I am the only White person in here, so you get to tell me.” And they really liked that, and they were, like, “No. You gotta say it. You gotta say it.”

The juxtaposition of these three quotations is representative of the internal conversations that teacher participants had with respect to the dilemma of political correctness. Becky was uncomfortable saying the word “brown boy,” and her consideration of the dilemma made her feel “ignorant.” Katherine emphasized her camaraderie with students who were “the same color” and tried to guide them to speak appropriately. She also mentioned that sometimes she ignored their comments. Lisa had an open conversation with her students and asked them how they wanted her to approach the “N word.” Leonardo (2002) writes that, “With the increasing interrogation of whiteness as a social construction, an unearned center, and its spurious claims to superiority, it becomes more difficult to assert its invisibility” (p. 41). For these participants, their White identity was not invisible. Becky acknowledged the discomfort she experienced as a result of Whiteness. Katherine might not have recognized her privilege, but her comment in this section reveals that she *did* “see color,” and she spoke to White students individually about their language. And Lisa openly

acknowledged her Whiteness to her students and encouraged their input about political correctness. Her language to her students demonstrated the way she privileged their views about the topic of the “N word” as superior to her own.

Censorship. Controversial content brought inherent concerns about censorship. Every participant mentioned issues of censorship, and they were concerned with several groups of potential censors: students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and districts. Two participants’ positions toward the dilemma of censorship are featured in this section. These perspectives depict the range of emotions that participants experienced toward this dilemma.

Kim’s fears of censorship were grounded in the history of her school and longstanding rules about the instruction of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. She explained, “[T]eaching *Huck Finn* here, we had parental issues [...] because of the use of the N word in the novel.” As a result of these parental issues, she said, “There is a restriction in terms of how you are supposed to teach that here. You are not allowed to read any passages out loud in class.” I asked her if that included all passages, even those without the “N word”, and she replied, “Yah. It is just a blanket no reading out loud in class. [...] So yah, I think that has been the only PD that has existed, and I had a session about how to teach *Huck Finn*.” Kim’s school reacted to parental pushback by banning read alouds of an entire text, so her fears stemmed from her knowledge about censorship in her district.

Throughout the interviews, Kim mentioned her fear of “pushback” often. Kim was not only concerned with the “nudity,” “explicit sexual scenes,” and “violence” in *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004), but she was concerned about perceptions of the book’s rigor because it is a graphic novel:

There’s always the possibility that there will be pushback—we didn’t get any,

thankfully. But you know, pushback from parents who are like, “Why are you teaching my honors student a comic book?” Or pushback from the students themselves. “This isn’t preparing me for an AP exam next year,” or something about that. [So mainly the pushback is about rigor?] Right. With a graphic novel, yes.”

Kim worried that the parents and students would not understand the value of a graphic novel in the classroom, so this added to her fears of censorship.

Kim’s fears of censorship did not stop her from using the book in her classroom. She said, “I will go to bat for this book. I will write emails.” More specifically, she described what she would do if she faced issues of censorship from various groups:

For students...to kind of quell their fears, again, I think it comes back to showing them that the skills that we are working on here are going to help you later on. For the parents, I think it is just sending emails that fully explain the benefits of this book and why we have chosen to teach it. I am not really sure what I would do with the Board of Ed. I mean, they are the ones that initially said that we need to diversify, so I think that I would use that as one of my arguments. But at the end of the day, they do have the ultimate power to say, “No, you can’t teach that anymore.” But I think that our department would rally and make a case for it.

Kim had a plan of attack for the various groups that could have presented censorship concerns, but she admitted that the Board of Education had the power to take the book away. She believed her department was supportive and would “make a case” to keep the text. In the past, a group of teachers “sat down” and “wrote an email” to explain the benefits of a text to parents. Kim may have been nervous about censorship, but she felt supported in her department.

Many of the participants were nervous about censorship, like Kim, but others expressed much more confidence. Laura described how she tackled controversial topics right at the beginning of the school year: “We did our first unit where we looked at race and ethnicity and gender and sexuality and you name it. We looked at it. Rape culture, everything. So I have already gotten all of the things that I could get fired for out of the way!” Laura’s language exuded confidence rather than fear. It is unclear whether that confidence helped her deliver her message in parent-teacher conferences. She described the reactions of the parents of her students: “When I would show the parents the books we’re reading, my parents, you know parent-teacher conferences, are very happy because it is books that are different. So if anything, my parents, I know, support me, which is very nice.” She explained that she also wrote a letter to the parents of her students: “I do send home a letter at the beginning of our previous unit about some of the discussions we are talking about, but it doesn’t have to do with multicultural literature. It is more of those tough topics.” Laura knew that censorship was a reality, so she wrote a letter to parents as a preventative measure.

Though all of the participants described potential censorship, Kim’s example of *Huck Finn* was the only example of actual (rather than perceived) censorship within the schools. Participants’ language was very revealing about their fear/confidence toward the dilemma of censorship. Flagg (2005) writes that, “Whiteness not only has control of valuable resources, but has the ability to limit access to those resources to those who reflect its own image” (p. 6). Across the interviews, Laura exuded confidence about difficult conversations that she had with her students. She said the very first topic she discussed with her students was her own “White privilege.” Laura’s responses and her positive positioning to the dilemma of

ensorship showed that she seemed to understand the ways that Whiteness “has control of valuable resources” and also the ability to “limit access to those resources,” and she was determined not to allow that to happen. Kim was fearful of censorship, but she would “go to bat” for her book. The difference between Kim’s and Laura’s comments is that Kim said that the Board of Education had the “ultimate power,” and Laura was willing to “get fired” to teach the texts that she valued. On the one hand, one might argue that Laura’s comments reflect a certain sense of privilege and power, but she used this power in ways that she perceived would benefit her students to learn about issues of equity.

Dilemmas pertaining to curriculum and resources

The fourth theme that emerged from the data pertained to curriculum and resources. The first category described below illustrates the dilemmas that participants shared with respect to rigid curricular requirements and the constantly changing curricular initiatives. The second category within this theme includes teacher dilemmas with respect to resources, or access to texts. The ways in which participants positioned these curricular restrictions and availability of resources can be connected to their perceptions of their Whiteness. Similarly to the three previous themes, the participants’ perspectives ranged, and representative comments for each dilemma are provided.

Curriculum. The curriculum was mentioned as a dilemma by all of the participants. Their comments revealed that they had very different experiences regarding the flexibility of their curricula. Three of the participants in this section, Becky, Jackie, and Laura, taught in the same district, which purchased a scripted curriculum for all of its schools. Becky and Jackie taught in the same school, a magnet school, and Laura taught at the high school, a public school. Their combined perspectives paint a rich picture of the impact of a scripted

curriculum on teacher perceptions. Beyond these three teachers who worked in the same district, I also include Kayla's perceptions of her curricula to depict another concern that teachers shared—the impact of school initiatives on curriculum and instruction.

Among all of the participants, Jackie mentioned curricula most often. In her arrangement of her post-its, Jackie had four categories, and one of those categories was “Curriculum.” At the conclusion of the third interview, Jackie said that “curriculum” was her biggest challenge (the other three categories were “student engagement,” “multi-cultural,” and “interactions with students”). The curriculum category had the most post-its—twenty-one in all. In her description of her post-it arrangement, she expressed relief in this and said, “I think that it is clear, at least to me, that the bulk of my challenges come from the curriculum. I mean, it does make me feel better that so few of my challenges are actually teaching multicultural literature, or with the interactions with my students.” Jackie was pleased that most of her challenges were related to the curriculum and not the multicultural category, which featured issues of her own White identity.

When she described why she used the text described in this study, she said, “I mean, I am being forced to teach it, honestly.” Later, she added, “I would not have chosen to teach it. I certainly would have loved to have done a multicultural novel, but not this one. But the district spent 3 billion dollars, million dollars, whatever it is, on this curriculum, and we have to teach it.” Jackie disliked this required text that was required by the curriculum; she shared that she would have loved to use a multicultural novel, but she said “a” multicultural novel rather than multiple “multicultural novels.”

Jackie's comments about the scripted curriculum being “dry” and her admission to me that, “I feel like I am just bitching as opposed to doing anything productive,” seem to be

confirmed by her administration's disapproval of her. She described that she was called into the administrative office for "not being enthusiastic enough." Her administrator's comments were connected to curricular concerns. Jackie said,

She also kind of accused me of not using the curriculum, so in that sense, I said to her, "You can come in on any given day, and what we are doing is mostly at least—if not all—from the curriculum. You can accuse me of not liking it. I am not going to disagree with that. But you can't accuse me of not doing it. I know there are other teachers who are not, but I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. And it is just—I don't think you can tell me I have to like it. I don't think that's fair.

Within her description of this interaction, Jackie said that other teachers did not follow the curriculum as strictly, which will map on later with the comments of Becky and Laura, two teachers in the same district. Jackie's frustration emerged as she reflected about that encounter with the administration: "It makes me want to find a new job [...] It is just stifling. [...] But all of what I have done with this [curriculum] just leaves something to be desired for me." For Jackie, the curriculum provided a significant dilemma. She described the dilemma more specifically: "And I am torn as a teacher now with how to teach it and make it interesting and how to do what the district wants me to do."

Jackie discussed other curricular titles that she did not like. She described a conversation that she had with students about one of these texts: "The kids were like, 'We hate this book' and I said to them, 'I do, too.'" Despite these comments, Jackie said that she and her team partner would try to make small changes: "We were talking—my partner and I—it is just, I mean we are reading through the lessons, and we are bored. So how are we supposed to engage the students? [...] So the challenge is going to be not only to pretend that

I like the book and make it interesting, but you know...it will be interesting.” Throughout the interviews, Jackie did not seem to gain much traction, and she described one interaction where she said to her students, “I am sorry. This is really boring. We just have to do it.” The students, while uninterested, do the work required in the curriculum. Jackie says, “[*Laughing*] I mean, today, I felt so bad. They looked like they were falling asleep. No one actually fell asleep, so that was a positive. But they just have blank stares. God bless them. They are sitting quietly and writing down and doing what they should be doing. [...] It is just—they look bored.” Based on her comments, of the three participants, Jackie followed the scripted curriculum most strictly. The result was that she felt: “Lethargy. It just makes me tired. It really does. It is so sad. It is not like I dread coming into work, but I really am not excited to come into teach.”

Becky, who taught in the same school as Jackie, was very negative toward the curriculum, as well. She said, “The curriculum is tough in the way that [District] has told us to follow it because we are pretty tied down and shackled to following it verbatim.” She described one lesson that seemed valuable at first glance: “And then they have to find three pieces of evidence that prove that that is his message. Great skill. However, because there are three stories, we do the same exact lesson three times with the same exact chart. And, you know, the kids are kind of like, ‘We can’t look at this chart again.’” Becky shared the curriculum guide with me, and the same chart was, in fact, repeated across days and across units. Becky tried her best to infuse more material into the curriculum. She received permission from her administration and said,

They were fine with the little supplemental lessons that I did, but they didn’t want me going far from what the curriculum prescribed. And you know, I kind of said back to

them, ‘With all due respect, I understand that. But there is a great opportunity here to learn about kids who were orphaned, especially at this time, especially Black Americans. They are not going to get adopted. Let’s just talk about this kid being on the run and challenges that he faces because of that time period.’ And we just didn’t get to do that.

Becky’s strategy was to wait until the end of the year and squeeze in a book that she perceived to be valuable for her students. She said, “One thing that I do is that at the end of the school year, we usually have 3-4 weeks leftover, and I do the book *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleishman [2004]. And that book is excellent [...] And I think, ‘Fine. If I didn’t get to touch upon it all year, here are my four shining weeks.’ So that is another book I can throw in there and supplement.” In my researcher’s journal, I noted, “Becky’s eyes light up each time she described *Seedfolks* and how empowering the text is for her students” (December 3, 2015). The difference between Jackie and Becky is that Becky pushed back a bit and made space for a text that she perceived to be valuable. When the administration confronted Jackie, she said to them, “‘You can accuse me of not liking it. I am not going to disagree with that. But you can’t accuse me of not doing it.’” Becky, on the other hand, tried to convince the administration of the missed opportunities, and she provided “little supplemental lessons” and the additional text that was outside of the curriculum for students.

Laura, who taught in the same district with the same scripted curricula, worked at the public high school. Her descriptions of her administration seemed to show that they were more relaxed about the curriculum. She did not follow the scripted curriculum at all, and she said about her administrator, “She doesn’t challenge me on it as much.” Laura did fear repercussions in the future: “The people who I think would have more of an issue if they

came in is central office because we are supposed to be following this [Curriculum Name]. And I am wondering how that is going to play out this year.” When I asked her what her approach would be, she said, “So I never lie. I am never going to lie and say I don’t teach this book. If they ask me, I tell them. If they say no, I challenge. And I won’t stop teaching it. I’m not going to! [laughing]” Similar to all of Laura’s responses across the interviews, she exuded a confidence that she was doing “what is best for [her] kids.” When she looked at her post-it note arrangement, she admitted, “Really the curriculum one is what really bothers me, and I am trying to come up with a solution if a problem arises [...] definitely on my radar.”

Laura’s confidence might have come from the way that she positioned herself as a teacher and her perceived flexibility of her administration. She said, “I am a bulldozer teacher. But I can see how that would be a problem if I was working in a district that...not that they don’t allow freedom but that didn’t check in on me.” She also said of her administrator: “She knows what I do, she knows what I teach, she’s also aware that the district put up new curriculum halfway in between last year. No PD. No training whatsoever. I disregarded it because it is a scripted curriculum.” Laura knew that the scripted curriculum was required by her district, but the lack of administrative oversight made her feel comfortable “disregard[ing] it.” When she ranked her four groups of challenges, she said, “Number four would be curriculum because I just don’t care.” Laura’s later comments seem to reveal that she might disregard the curriculum even if her administrator enforced it. When I asked her to give advice to teachers who might be confronting challenges of any kind, she said, “If it is curriculum or administration or adults that are giving you the issues, go with what you believe in, and if what you believe in is that your students need to read MCYAL books, then don’t change your mind.” Laura placed her students’ interests as more important

than the prescribed curriculum. Her comments cannot be directly compared with Jackie's and Becky's comments because they perceived their administration to be much stricter and because they worked in a different school, but taken together, they provide a range of experiences with respect to a scripted curriculum.

Jackie, Becky, and Laura were the only teachers using a scripted curriculum. Dave said his coworkers had very rigid curricula, but he was able to make his own curriculum because he was the only teacher in the transitional bilingual program. Kayla, whose curriculum was much more flexible, provided insight of other curricular challenges that the teachers discussed in interviews. She talked about the many district-wide initiatives that impacted her daily lessons. Kayla said,

I feel like we have so many [initiatives], and they [...] never really finish before you have another one. [...] There is a pre-conference, the lesson, a post-conference. There is the teacher evaluation which is a whole 'nother piece. We have student-centered learning. We have learning walks. We have leadership academy. We have the [Name] grant, and we have the technology specialists. So you are heavily suggested that you use these things. Last year, I used Google classroom, and I loved it. And now the push is, "Well, Moodle, and here are all of the reasons why we want you to use Moodle." And people above tell the coaches, "Make sure the teachers are using Moodle."

When I asked Kayla what she does about these initiatives, she said,

I mean, I am a rule-follower, so I just do them. You tell me I have to do 25 things, I will do 25 things. But it's exhausting. And it is hard sometimes because you would go home and do all of this work at home, and I find that I can't do all of this work at

home. I just sometimes can't keep up with all of the changes. [...] Just when you think you get a handle on something, it changes.

Kayla felt frustrated by all of the initiatives, which impacted both her planning and instruction. While she followed them, she felt overwhelmed by the amount of work that they caused for her.

Kayla's comments about her curriculum are revealing of the texts that she valued. When I asked her if she planned to teach similar texts to *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007), she replied,

I don't want to say no. But we don't have any here. I would have to get it approved by somebody else. But we are currently revamping the curriculum. They are thinking about making 11th grade only a half year requirement of American Literature, so the positive thing about that is that it would only be a half of a year for them, but the downside is what do you cover there? And there probably wouldn't be room for this. [Who has to approve the text?] The supervisor of language arts as well as the superintendent that is above her.

If the course became a half year course, Kayla thought that there "probably wouldn't be room" for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) or similar texts. Kayla's comments in the other sections reveal that there was flexibility in her district with respect to text selection. To confirm this, when she placed her post-it notes on the poster, she said, "I think the students are the most challenging. I don't see the district, necessarily, as a challenge." Kayla did not perceive her district as an impediment for text selection.

These discussions with Becky, Jackie, Laura, and Kayla are representative of the phenomenon with respect to the dilemma of curriculum. Becky and Jackie show that the

rigidity of curricula and text requirements can greatly impact teachers' dispositions. Laura revealed that in some circumstances, teachers opted to avoid rigid curricula. And Kayla explained the ways in which district/curricular initiatives could impact teachers' sentiments and instruction. These four participants expose the complicated and dilemmatic systems for text inclusion and exclusion. Flagg (2005) writes, "And Whiteness not only is a set of unearned privileges, but the capacity to disguise those privileges behind structures of silence, obfuscation, and denial." Though it is unclear just how much power Becky, Jackie, Laura, and Kayla had to select texts for instructions, they all discussed issues of power relative to their districts. Their perceptions of just how powerful their districts could be reveals that both teachers and districts play defining roles of what is taught in schools. Laura reminds us that some teachers elect to obfuscate the rigid structures and systems that might exist.

Resources. The last dilemma that was discussed by teachers across the phenomenon was the issue of resources. All of the teachers discussed the dilemmas that came with the acquisition of texts. Their comments reveal that, similar to curricula, schools have varied procedures that influence teacher participants' perceptions. The teachers responses to their lack of resources are revealing of their conceptions of Whiteness.

As noted in the previous section, some teachers like Jackie and Becky are provided the class sets that come with a purchased curriculum. Kim was "part of a committee to increase the diversity of our reading selection" and she said, "We bought [*Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004)] and we bought (Spiegelman, 1980)." When she considered including other texts, however, she said, "I mean, I have a limited budget, so I always have to go to the library, as opposed to, you know, buying books. If there is something that I really, really love and my students connect with it, I will buy it for my classroom library." Kim's comments

reveal that if she elected to include more multicultural young adult literature, she would consider it primarily for her classroom library. When I asked her if there was anything at all that she could do about the dilemma of a limited budget, she said,

I am sure there are...there is all of the GoFundMe pages and things like that, so if I really wanted to get a particular book for my classroom and the school didn't have the budget for it, I could probably set up one of those accounts. DonorsChoose and things like that. We start off the year with a certain amount of money in the school budget, so I could appeal for that. Sometimes we luck out, and we can find PDF versions of things online, and so that is nice.

Kim's comments remind us that there are options which exist for teachers to access texts, but they require some effort from the teacher. When I asked her if she had any advice for teachers facing challenges, her comments reveal what she valued. She said,

Be creative and acknowledge your own flaws and shortcomings and identity. [...]
You know, if it has something to do with outside of your classroom like administration or a budgetary restraint, what are some creative ways that you could do this? Is there a PDF version online? Are there other resources? Are there other—you know, DonorsChoose? Think outside of the traditional, "We have to buy three classroom sets of this particular text."

Her response shows that if she wanted to expand her access to texts, she would consider external sources for funding or would flexibly adjust her classroom structure.

Dave used external funding sources such as these. He said, "Yah, so these specific books, I think we [the English Education coordinator and he] got on DonorsChoose. So we had to raise the money. So most of the...the bilingual department and the school has bought

us some books but a lot of them we got from DonorsChoose.” Dave was able to acquire texts with this funding, but he faced different dilemmas with respect to access. First, he explained the difficulty in acquiring quality texts that have been translated to Spanish, the only language spoken and read in his class: “And the second quarter is actually supposed to be nonfiction [according to curricula], but there are just no books available in Spanish that I can use.” Dave’s issues of access weren’t necessarily connected with budget constraints but with the number of translated texts that exist at all. Further, once he acquired the texts, the school enrolled too many students in his classroom for students to have their own texts. He explained, “Right now in this class there are 28 kids, and I have 25 or 26 books.” Dave said that he could “get [other copies] on Amazon,” but he found a different solution. He shared,

I was having kids share books, and then I noticed that those two students were not following along in the book at all and had no intention of doing so, so instead of calling them out on it, I just ask them to give their book to one of the kids who were sharing, and they were happy to do it. And since then, that is what they have been doing, and no one else has questioned it either.

Dave was resourceful in his approach to text acquisition. He used DonorsChoose, he used texts outside of curricular requirements when he could not find translated texts, and he moved texts flexibly between students. Though the last situation was obviously not optimal, it allowed those students who wanted the texts during the read aloud to have them.

Laura shared similar resourcefulness and said, “I did DonorsChoose, and I got 100 books for my kids, so that they can actually take home books, and I am not making photocopies, which [*said under breath*] I am usually doing. But it’s...I find my own resources. I do my own thing.” And Marcia, who wanted to read *The House on Mango Street*

(Cisneros, 1984) with her students described how she acquired a small class set to use with a co-taught class: “I bought them two years ago. I bought a class set of them. [...] Yes, with my personal money. So they are my personal books, and the kids are pretty good with them.” I knew that she was frustrated with *We Beat the Street* (Davis, Jenkins, Hunt, & Draper, 2006), so I was curious why she bought the texts solely for her co-taught class. I wondered if she had different rules, like Dave’s did. She said, “No, the rules are all the same. I am breaking the rules. I am just saying I am not giving those kids something to read that I think is going to defeat them from the very beginning.” Marcia broke the rules in her school to acquire a small set of texts for the students in her co-taught class because she believed they needed them.

Many of the participants expressed frustration at the dearth of quality multicultural young adult texts. Lisa said, “I love it, and I am also pissed because there is not enough of it. There is not enough good MCYAL.” When I asked her if she meant in general or in her building, she replied, “Definitely in the building but also, I feel like, in general. I guess I am not that exposed to all of the new young adult literature that comes out even though I keep up with ALAN and all of that stuff. I feel like there needs to be more and more high quality.” Lisa’s felt that she was not exposed to enough MCYAL, and she understood that this might be a flaw of her own lack of knowledge.

When I asked Lisa if she would teach similar texts, her comments reveal the ways that, similar to Kayla, she might value other texts more greatly. She replied, “If I can, certainly. If it becomes an option, absolutely. I mean we are limited on the number of texts that we have access to and that are approved by the Board.” I asked her if access to the books was the problem, and she said, “Sort of, yah.” I asked her if that was due to money, and she

admitted, “It is not money. Honestly, it is a lot with me. Because of the program that I teach, I could probably ask for books and get them, but I would be hesitant in knowing what is a quality text that would hold up throughout the years.” Lisa explained that she was very concerned with the “staying power” of the texts she might purchase. She said, “There is such a glut of young adult books right now that you don’t know which ones have staying power, which ones will still be relevant in 5, 10, 15 years.” The problem didn’t exist with the budget, but instead, the problem stemmed from her own confidence. She explained, “I can really, essentially, just ask. It is more in my confidence in the quality of the texts.”

Further complicating Lisa’s worries of the “staying power” of these texts were the ways that she valued other texts more. Lisa was forced to read all or most of the texts aloud: “No, we don’t send texts home because they don’t come back. Ten years of experience is that we don’t get books back ever.” Because of this, she had to be selective in the texts she chose. She explained, “We only read about four books a year. So that really limits it. As much as I would love to teach them four multicultural YA texts, I want to expose them to everything that there is.” Other interview responses revealed that the other three texts that she used were not multicultural: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Williams, 1947), *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008), and *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925). Lisa’s comments show that while she could acquire the texts, her discomfort in choosing quality texts and the ways that she valued other texts (that were not MCYAL) all played a role in the decisions she made in her classroom.

These teacher participant comments revealed that access was presented as a dilemma, but the teachers used or knew “creative” ways to acquire multicultural young adult texts. Thus, the dearth of these texts in their classrooms might be more concerned with issues that Lisa discussed candidly: the teachers’ confidence in selecting the texts and/or the teachers’

value of the texts. Flagg (2005) writes about the perception that “[T]he individual is not responsible for what he or she has not brought into being, and thus systemic dominance and subordination are beyond the scope of (individual) moral obligation.” She said that “Whiteness posits the individual as the unit of human agency” (p. 7). By placing blame on curricula or access, these teachers might be releasing the responsibility from themselves. Some of the teachers resigned to curricula and access while others found creative forms of subversion. All of the teachers in this study praised multicultural young adult literature as relevant and important for their students, but their comments from the last two sections reveal that they varied in their perceptions of and commitment to the texts. Some of the participants reconciled the “systemic dominance and subordination”—real or perceived—as too great to overcome, and others saw themselves as Flagg’s “unit[s] of human agency” and were prepared to teach these texts, whatever the cost.

Conclusion

The findings within this chapter reveal the multiple ways that participants perceived the dilemmas that came with the instruction of multicultural young adult literature. Participants experienced dilemmas of teacher identity where they perceived conflicts of their White identities and discomfort, and they experienced dilemmas that came with their own knowledge—specifically their expertise and preparation. With respect to students, participants felt troubled by students’ lived experiences and also the connections they made with the texts. They described dilemmas related to the books’ content that included both their text preferences and their struggles with controversial content, political correctness, and censorship. Dilemmas also emerged connected to the curriculum and the teachers’ resources or access to texts.

As described within the individual sections of this chapter, participants' perceptions of the severity of each dilemma seemed to be discursively connected to Critical Whiteness Studies. Some participants were acutely aware of the ways in which their Whiteness impacted their instruction but others felt it had minimal to no impact on their instruction or their interactions with students. Thus, there were considerable differences between the participants' perspectives of each dilemma within the phenomenon. In the next chapter, I describe how participants managed the dilemmas described in this chapter, and I connect these approaches with Oser's (1991) dilemma management model.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS: DILEMMA MANAGEMENT

Introduction

This chapter presents findings to my second research question: *How do teachers internally negotiate these dilemmas before, during, and after the instruction of a multicultural young adult text?* The dilemma management approaches that participants described are clustered into emergent themes growing from the analysis of the data. In accordance with the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis method, I removed any dilemma management approach not discussed by all nine participants. The approaches that I removed are described in more detail in the discussion chapter.

Similarly to the first research question, the themes described in this chapter reflect various, representative participant perspectives. As a reminder, I coded in a way that looked for emergent rather than a priori or deductive codes. However, my emergent themes aligned closely with Oser's (1991) dilemma management model. Within the following sections, I describe the nuances of how findings agreed with, contrasted with, and extended his model. The wording of each section is my own because I did not find that my findings mapped on perfectly with Oser's (1991) categorizations.

I intentionally selected participant responses that reveal the breadth of perceptions for each dilemma management approach to accurately depict the differences within each dilemma management strategy of the phenomenon. I also worked to ensure that individual participants were represented across several sections.

The sections are divided into four emergent themes:

- Passive approaches
- Authoritative approaches
- Conferences with others
- Pedagogical strategies

Passive approaches

Findings reveal that participants used passive approaches—passive acceptance and cognizance—to manage the perceived dilemmas of their classrooms. These strategies were present in all of the participants’ approaches to the dilemmas, but I highlight participant comments that are representative of the phenomenon. In particular, I worked to select participant comments that might reveal how these passive approaches have the potential to impact classroom conversations and teacher dispositions around teaching MCYAL.

Passive acceptance. All participants passively accepted some of the dilemmas. More specifically, they discussed a challenge and did not take action to try to solve the dilemma—either alone or with others. This approach is different from the cognizance approach in the next section because the participants expressed a defeatist attitude toward the specific dilemma. The participants in this section are highlighted because they represent the range within the phenomenon. Some participants used this approach of passive acceptance often, while others only passively accepted minor dilemmas.

Jackie passively accepted most of her dilemmas, and the approach reflects her overall attitude toward the multicultural YA text, the unit, and her teaching. In the third interview, I asked her how the instruction of the multicultural young adult text went, and she was very upset. She said,

I had a nervous breakdown. [My assistant principal] came into my room [...] She said

that my calendar said January. [Student name] just fixed that today. And I don't have any student work up. And I said to her that because I don't have my classroom during prep, there is another class in here, that all of that stuff is falling by the wayside because I can't be in here because there is another class. So also, I am not getting parent phone calls done, lesson planning is almost impossible, grading I have to find somebody else's quiet space. I don't have time to do anything here anymore. And then I can't stay after school a lot of days because I am picking up [my child]. But then if [my spouse] is picking up [my child], and I want to stay here and get work done, I don't want to stay here. I want to go home. [laughs] And I am bringing work home, and I am just so exhausted that I am not doing it at home, so I just...I am failing.

Jackie's language reveals her frustration that her assistant principal approached her about the appearance of her room. She discussed that she was unable to get work done because of time constraints, but when she did have the time, she admits that she didn't have the desire to complete the work. Jackie's discourse reveals the way that she passively accepted that she was unable to maintain her room, lesson plan, and complete her work. Her lesson planning seems minimal, based on the scripted curriculum she showed me. In my researcher's journal, I note, "She showed me the scripted curriculum, and everything is scripted out—even what she has to say in most instances" (January 8, 2016). In the previous interview, I wrote, "Jackie is not looking forward to teaching her text, and she seemed very forlorn and slightly angry in my interview with her." (November 29, 2016). Overall, Jackie was upset with her assistant principal and the curriculum. She admitted, "I kind of just tell myself that I am biding my time and hopefully next year is a better story." It is also significant that the first

dilemma that Jackie described regarding her instruction of the multicultural young adult text was this encounter with her administrator and her inability to get work done. She did not mention issues of race, culture, or ethnicity.

When she talked specifically about having to write controversial words from texts on the board, she said, “Because I am forced, in that sense, to talk about those words because that was a part of what I was supposed to be teaching. I am supposed to be talking about [the author’s] autobiography where he uses those words, so I have to write them. So that is part of the curriculum.” The curriculum was not the only dilemma in which Jackie used a passive acceptance approach. During the post-it note arrangement activity, when I showed her the post-it note of her dilemma, “Students’ perspective of the world is much different from the teacher’s perspective,” she said, “I am going to put that under interactions with students. [...] Because in a sense, I can’t—not that it necessarily very much so affects our interactions—but it is something that I can’t connect with them because I just don’t...my perspective is very different from theirs.” Rather than considering how she could connect with her students or bridge the gap in her perspective, her language revealed the ways that she passively accepted this as a stagnant dilemma.

Jackie’s post-it note arrangement included four sections, one of which she defined as “Multi-cultural” dilemmas. I asked her how she negotiated each section. When she reached the “Multi-cultural” section, her third biggest challenge, she said, “Multicultural, I think...I can’t really do anything about any of these! I think that I can’t really do that much about that [section] either because I am teaching the text that I have to teach.” Some of the post-it notes of dilemmas in this section included: “no background of culture” and “not feeling qualified” and “lack of expertise.” Jackie pointed to each section of her post-it note arrangement and

told me how the dilemmas were out of her control. Her discussion of her post-it note arrangement was entirely different from Lisa's discussion of her arrangement. As I described previously, Lisa designed her arrangement with a "goal" area in the middle of the poster and worked to move the post-it notes into that goal as she instructed the unit. Lisa took a very active rather than defeatist approach to her poster arrangement, and this comparison reveals the ways that some participants, like Jackie, passively accepted dilemmas as out of their control and others, like Lisa, actively worked to negotiate dilemmas. In my concluding question for all participants, I asked, "Has participating in this study altered your thinking or altered your instruction in any way?" Jackie's response shows the ways that she passively accepted dilemmas rather than worked to actively negotiate them:

It has made me realize that I am very negative [*laughs*]. But I mean it is interesting to look at—in black and white—what the issues are. [...] You know, you can sit there and complain all day, but I find this very interesting to see exactly from December all the way until now, and the consistency of what my challenges have been. I don't know that anything changed because I had to continue to teach what I was told to teach, but it is interesting if nothing else.

Jackie took this consistency of her unchanging dilemmas as a positive. She said, "At least I'm consistent."

Katherine was another participant who often used the passive acceptance approach to dilemmas. She considered the racist comments her students made to "absolutely" be a dilemma that influenced how she taught the multicultural young adult title. She described the dilemma:

And like I said, unfortunately students making comments, especially racist comments,

you know, they'll...they talk to each other using the N word, and that is just not how I was brought up, and sometimes I am like, "Don't do that." But that is how they converse. So just race, in general, you know, especially in [district name], the way that they talk to each other [*laughs*] is, you know, an issue in itself. But that is what they are used to, unfortunately.

Katherine's said that this was "just not how [she] was brought up," and her descriptions of the students were deficit-oriented. She looked at her students' language in deficit ways. In another comment, she described a different dilemma: "I just think that some kids just have the language barriers because they came here from Puerto Rico or somewhere else, and the parents not being as involved with the reading and the writing." In this example, Katherine was describing the students' parents negatively, and her language reveals her passive acceptance that her students' home lives are to blame for the dilemma. Negative, deficit-oriented language was common in participant comments when they described the dilemmas they perceived with MCYAL. For instance, Marcia seemed to surrender in passive acceptance when she said, "I don't know. I don't know what changes urban schools. Diane Ravage said that it is like a battleship. It doesn't turn on a dime." Marcia seemed to place the blame on the slow-moving urban schools rather than placing herself in control.

Participants also expressed a sense of remorse at what *wasn't* being done in schools. They described the status quo and some even expressed remorse at not attempting to work through some dilemmas. About multicultural young adult literature, Becky said, "I think that we have to be teaching it, we have to be talking about it, and I don't know that we do it enough. [Why?] I don't know. Because it is not like the books aren't available. I don't know the reason. And you know, I guess I should inquire about that, and I never have." Becky saw

the value of MCYAL, and she admitted that she had never inquired about why these texts weren't being used.

The participants highlighted in this section reveal the ways that all of the participants of the phenomenon passively accepted some of the dilemmas. These three participants were discussed, in particular, because they used this approach often. The lowest level of Oser's (1991) model is the avoidance strategy, where participants intentionally avoid a dilemma. The passive acceptance approach maps on with the "avoidance" approach of Oser's model because the participants took no responsibility for managing the dilemmas. I did not name this category "avoidance" because I felt that the term "avoidance" did not reflect the participants' countenance as accurately as the term "passive acceptance." The participants shared dilemmas that they felt were external to them, and they took defeatist attitudes and expressed an inability to change or influence the dilemmas.

Cognizance. The participants expressed that their dilemma management approach for some of the dilemmas that came with MCYAL was "cognizance" or an awareness of the dilemmas. Thus, they didn't work to solve the dilemmas, but instead, they kept them in their minds as they taught the text. This approach was different from passive acceptance because the participants didn't necessarily accept the dilemmas as unchangeable or outside of themselves. Rather, the participants framed their approach in a non-action way—they were "cognizant" of the dilemmas and this might or might not influence aspects of their teaching. Within this section, I provide examples of the cognizance approach that are representative of the phenomenon.

When I asked Becky if her race or ethnicity affected the way she taught MCYAL, she said, "No, but I feel that because I am not a minority that I am...that my eyes are more open

maybe, and I am maybe more eager to listen—not more than anybody else, but I definitely have a yearning to understand the lives that my kids are living.” Becky felt that her White identity made her “more open maybe” and “more eager to listen.” Thus, when she approached the dilemma that her White identity might influence her instruction of the text, Becky used cognizance as her approach.

Participants also used cognizance when they considered specific students within their classrooms. Jackie, for example, described how she was cognizant of what she said aloud. She said,

I think making sure, you know, I am sensitive to the character’s struggles. Especially last year, when we were reading *A Long Walk to Water* [Park, 2010], and I had a South Sudanese student in my classroom. I didn’t want to say something that would offend him that was so blatantly disrespectful or incorrect. So I definitely had to watch myself. I just want to teach it in a respectful way.

Similarly, when I asked Katherine if she experienced any personal, internal challenges, she said, “I guess, you know, for me, not being of African American descent. You know, that is always a challenge. You don’t want to say the wrong thing to upset them. I mean, you hear the things that they say to each other, and it is okay. But you know, if the teacher said the wrong thing...so just trying to be aware of that.” Katherine described how this awareness impacted her speech: “I have to be cautious about how I say that and not hurting anybody’s feelings. That is a challenge in [district name] and districts like this that have the family issues, unfortunately.” Katherine’s language seems to reveal that she saw the diversity of her classroom as a challenge rather than a strength because she was forced to monitor her speech. Similar to the previous section, Katherine perceived her students’ families in deficit ways

when she said they had “family issues, unfortunately.”

Kayla expressed a cognizance toward her speech when she was teaching MCYAL, as well. She said, “In general, when you are speaking to a group of people in a diverse population, you are very conscious of the words that you are saying and the things that you are making yourself aware of.” When I asked her if the gender or ethnicity of her students played a role in the way that she instructed the text, she responded that she was cognizant of the student ethnicities in her classroom, but she didn’t think this played a role in her instruction:

I don’t think it plays a role. But it is definitely something that you keep in mind. Like, I know that there are three or four kids that are Mexican or half Mexican. And I know that there are kids that are African American. I know that there are kids that are Hispanic or Puerto Rican. And they like talking about it, so I think I am aware of it, but I don’t think it plays a role.

Kayla’s words seem to reflect the cognizant approach—she was aware of the students’ ethnicities, but she did not perceive that this awareness impacted her instruction.

When I asked Kayla what challenges she associated with teaching MCYAL, she described how her own experiences as a teenager did not reflect those of her students. She detailed the things that she did that were different: “I played sports. I read. I went places. Like, we were able to go on vacation. I’ve been to Disney. I’ve been out of [state name]. I’ve played travel soccer. I went to [neighboring state]. I had to share a room with three other teammates because that was the coach’s rule.” She then offered a long explanation of why this experience of traveling away from home taught her a lot: “All of that, no matter how silly some teachers think that it may be to have kids go to Disney for five days, it is a

learning experience.” Kayla struggled with the fact that her students did not have these same experiences. She said,

So to understand it, I still struggle with that. I don’t know what else to do because I logically can understand how and why something is, but I can’t really put myself in their situation and come from a place where I am watching a kid to support the family and actually give money to the family for something. Again, I can see it, and I can know that so-and-so does this at home, but to really understand how they feel and are they missing out on a high school experience? I don’t know.

Kayla’s description of her struggle to understand how her home experiences differed from those of her students reflects a cognizant approach. She considered how this might impact her students’ lives, and she said that she could “know” their home lives, but she couldn’t necessarily “understand” them.

In consideration of Oser’s (1991) model, the cognizance strategy falls under the lowest level of dilemma management, the avoidance strategy. Oser described that teachers know that they should be engaged in deeper decision making but choose not to participate. The participants of this study were not wholly avoiding the dilemmas, but they were “step[ping] outside of [their] responsibility (Oser, 1991, p. 203) by displacing the blame on others. Though they might, for instance, monitor their language more closely when speaking to their students, the cognizance approach is still closest to the avoidance strategy in the way that the participants are not genuinely acting to negotiate the dilemmas. Jackie might be careful with her words when she spoke to the class that the South Sudanese student was in, but her actions fell under the avoidance strategy umbrella because she was not approaching the student or viewing his presence in class as an opportunity. Instead of inviting him to

share his potential knowledge of Sudan and honor his expertise in a way that could enhance all students' understanding of the text, she elected to circumvent confrontation and simply monitor her language to avoid any words that might bring conflict.

Authoritative approaches

All of the participants practiced authoritative approaches as a form of dilemma management. Single handed decision-making was, by far, the most commonly used dilemma management approach. Participants were the sole decision-makers for the majority of dilemmas that they experienced when they taught MCYAL. Another authoritative strategy that all of the participants used was the justification to others, where participants made a single handed decision but then justified that decision to others (beyond me, the researcher). Participant responses in this section are representative of the phenomenon.

Single handed decisions. Participants described how they managed dilemmas of multicultural young adult literature with the single handed decision-making approach. Findings reveal that the decisions that participants made seem to reflect what they valued or perceived to be important in their instruction of these texts. In the following participant responses, their personal agendas or beliefs seem to be inextricably tied with the decisions that they made.

Becky was frustrated by the students' lack of background knowledge when she was instructing the multicultural young adult text. She said, "I have just been finding in the past few years that anything that happened before, let's say, 2012, [*laughing*] the kids just have no comprehension of." She talked about how she resolved this dilemma: "So in this book, I am teaching about orphan trains, the 1920s, the beginning of the jazz movement, and so it requires me, I feel, to then go and teach some culture." When I asked Becky how she decided

what information to give them, she responded, “Based on my reading of the book, I felt like these were topics that were going to come up, historically.” Becky, among other participants, made the decisions of what background information her students should learn. Rather than using a higher level of dilemma management where she, for example, spoke with the students of what they didn’t know, she selected the topics on her own. Becky recognized that this approach might be problematic when she said, “I feel like I give—a lot of teachers do—we give, give, give kids a lot of answers, and I want them to come to their own conclusions and realizations, and I think that that can be done in a group.” Becky’s way of reconciling the fact that she was giving the students a lot of information was to put them in groups to promote discussion of that information. However, even within these discussions, she was the sole decision-maker of both the content and the mode of instruction. Her approach may be a result of her discomfort with not knowing how much the students would know. She said,

I have anxiety about teaching [*Bud Not Buddy* (Curtis, 1999)], and I already taught it last year. But I know that the kids are going to struggle. I know that they are going to struggle with it, so it is, like, in my head I am kind of deciding, ‘Do I see what they can do and maybe keep my standards high and see where they fall and see how the kids do? Or do I go into it assuming that they are going to struggle and plan for it that way? I haven’t quite decided. I have a few weeks to figure it out, but that is a big thing that I am thinking about.

Rather than conferring with the students, Becky took sole responsibility for the decision about how much and what content her students would receive.

All participants made single handed decisions about curriculum but those with more freedom, like Dave and Kayla, had more options. Dave, who had a lot of flexibility in his

curriculum, said, “I really just look for stuff. I try to mirror the curriculum as much as possible.” When Dave could not find nonfiction to mirror the curriculum because “there are just no books available in Spanish that [he] can use,” he “just decided to align it more with the social studies curriculum.” When he couldn’t afford the books, he used “DonorsChoose.” Dave crafted his curriculum with single handed decisions. He described how he searched for materials on the Internet: “All of those materials—I need to find all of them. And finding that stuff in Spanish is not easy at all. [And how do you do that?] Well, mostly on the Internet. And then I try to modify most of the reading. Because the stuff I find on the Internet is usually at a level that is a little bit beyond my students’ comprehension.” Similar to Becky, Dave also made decisions about what background material to show students. He said, “I mean, I could go on for years teaching about Civil Rights and things like that, but the specific thing about New Orleans and that whole community, I can’t think of the name of it right now for it, but usually I try to give them as much historical background as possible and that is the way that I set it up.”

All participants expressed the ways that they single handedly chose curricular materials. For some participants like Becky and Jackie, their choices were more limited and their curricula more rigid, but all of the participants’ decisions about what content they would include reveal what they wanted their students to discern from the multicultural young adult texts. These decisions excited many of the participants. For example, Dave said, “But when I am teaching the book *Colibrí* [Cameron, 2005], I can teach the kids about Latin America, I can teach them about Guatemala, I can teach them about the Revolution. There are so many more little nuggets [than another book].” About *Devolver al remitente* (*Return to Sender*) (Alvarez, 2010), he said, “I want kids to talk about what it means to be an immigrant and the

positive pieces of that and the negative pieces of that.” When Dave approached a controversial scene that “goes over a lot of their heads,” he said, “So there is a big choice for me to say, “Do I talk about this or not?” And I do, usually. Unfortunately, one of the big problems of this book is that because the chapters are so long, there is not a ton of time to really delve into it.” Dave made decisions about the texts, the content discussed, and the supplemental materials, and when acquiring books was a problem, he said he “dealt with it and got [the texts].” His freedom reveals his personal agenda of what he perceived the students should know.

Like Dave, Kayla had freedom within the curriculum. She said, “Nothing really is required. They have a suggested unit on Moodle and you can follow things there, but they are just assignments and resources.” As stated in a previous section, Kayla mentioned that if the 11th grade became a half semester course requirement that she didn’t think there would be room for *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007). When I asked her if she would be able to order similar (multicultural young adult) texts if she received approval, she said, “I think so. Yah. I think I would just kind of just do it with my own class. It wouldn’t be something that I would tell everybody else teaching the 11th grade that I was doing. It really depends on who is in front of me.” When I asked if her position as department head influenced that ability, she said, “I think I feel a little bit more brave in a way. But no one else can really just order texts. They could probably go through me and request, but we just don’t order texts here.” Though it is unclear *why* Kayla’s department didn’t often order texts, what is clear is that she had the power to seek approval for more multicultural young adult texts. She said if she did teach a similar book, it wouldn’t be something that she would tell everybody else about. Similar to Dave, Kayla had the power, and the texts that she single

handedly chose to teach reveal what she values in literature.

The ways that some of the participants organized their graphics also revealed a single handed approach to their dilemma management. Lisa made a goal circle in the middle of her poster and described her overall approach to the dilemmas: “So the things in the middle are the things that I am confident that I can address and fix...not necessarily fix...but I can navigate and use...and things that I am excited for.” She described another portion of the arrangement, “These are things that I know I can keep in mind while I am teaching, that I can address and that I can do it competently.” Lisa took a proactive approach rather than a passive approach and was determined to single handedly address dilemmas, so they could move to the goal portion of her poster. After Lisa sorted her dilemmas on the poster, she exclaimed, “But I like this! Now I know what I want to do! [...] Yes! These are things that I need to be better at.” In the second interview, when I asked her if teaching the text was more or less challenging than others, she said, “Less challenging. And a lot of it is because of the interview. I was able to sort my thoughts and reflect before I started [*laughing*]. It really kind of streamlined me to know the things I definitely wanted to hit on. And yah, they are loving it.” She was excited by her own progress and said, “I like this! I am impressed with myself. So I am here and feel like I am almost there. Still want to be better.” The interview process seemed to push Lisa into a mode where she wanted to resolve the dilemmas on the post-its.

At the conclusion of Lisa’s interview she expressed how participating in the study helped her teach the multicultural young adult text unit. She said,

This definitely—like I said before—this definitely helped me organize my thoughts. I loved doing the interview before because this put all of my concerns right on the board. And I knew—because I moved—a bunch of these—that I wasn’t prepared to

teach lack of knowledge, content knowledge. It really made me go home—I was driving home that day and thinking, “Oh man. I need to do some reading.” So, yes. It really got me kind of psyched up to do it. It got me ready to go, and it really encouraged me to do more research, for sure. Yah, it was awesome.

Lisa’s words reveal the ways that she took responsibility for the dilemmas. They were hers to solve, and she proactively made single handed decisions in ways that aligned with her desire to improve her instruction.

Participants accepted responsibility for the dilemmas when they used the single handed approach. Oser (1991) described that this strategy defined the teacher as the “expert” (Oser, 1991, p. 204). A closer examination of the participant comments seems to reveal that the decisions that the participants made were reflective of what they valued as important in the classroom. The decisions that the teacher participants made about texts, content, and materials reflected what they believed the students should know. The teachers did not engage interested parties—students, administrators, parents—in this particular decision-making approach.

Justification to others. Following a single handed decision, participants felt the need to justify their decisions to others—students, teachers, parents, administrators. Though all participants used this approach, some participants used this approach often. I highlight Katherine and Laura in this section because these two participants were very different in their awareness of their White identities, but they both justified their decisions to others quite frequently, according to their interview responses.

In the last section, participants described how they had to think carefully before they spoke to their students while teaching multicultural young adult texts. Katherine expressed

similar thoughts:

I do have to say I definitely think a lot more before I speak. And the kids kind of look at me sometimes like, ‘Miss, you know...you are not just speaking.’ And I do explain that to them. People have different beliefs, values, and morals. So sometimes when you are teaching things, you do have to be cautious. Or when you are talking to somebody. So it kind of led into a conversation where it is not that I am trying to look stupid or not know what I am talking about like they were probably thinking—I explained to them that I didn't want to offend anybody, and this is part of being a grownup and learning how to not offend people. And sometimes you may offend them even though you try not to. So it actually turned into--I think that is another reason why I liked the book so much because I was able to bring in more life experiences and life lessons.

Katherine worried that her students would think she was “trying to look stupid” or didn’t “know what [she is] talking about,” so she justified her cautious wording to her students. She believed that her conversation with them led to a life lesson, which went along with what she said she valued most as a teacher: “to try to give back to [her] kids.”

Katherine also shared that there were some sections of *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson, 2014) that she skipped when she was reading: “I kind of skipped over certain parts because it was about the Adam and Eve. And I was like, I could totally see this going in the wrong direction.” She skipped these sections because of her fear that students would perceive them sexually. She explained,

Well for me, the Adam and Eve of her being taken from his rib, and then they want to get into the sexual part. So for me, I am just like, I don't even want to go there

because their mind goes totally the wrong way. [...] Not understanding it and then just going off in a totally wrong direction that leads to sex talks and things like that. I am not having those conversations.

I asked her if she told the students that she was skipping it. She said, “Yes. And actually they appreciate...some of my students who don't like to talk about those things that aren't really about the kissing and this and that appreciated it and said, ‘Thank you.’ Because they knew that that was where the other kids were going to go.” She also admitted that other students weren't happy. She said they responded, “‘Oh come on, Miss!’ or ‘Let's not!’” Katherine skipped sections and justified her reasoning to the students. Rather than confront a potentially controversial section, she opted to avoid it and explained this to them.

Katherine described that students responded to this justification by wanting to talk about issues of race—issues that she did not agree with. Her response was another form of justification—she allowed them to talk but placed boundaries on their conversation:

You know, I actually sometimes will let them have their conversation. And they just have to, like, sometimes just get it out. It's, like, [*irritated voice*] ‘Okay. We are going to talk about this for five minutes. We are going to keep it appropriate. I am going to say my side. You are going to say your side. And we are going to be done with it.’ I mean, the kids know that they can talk openly in here as long as they don't push the boundaries. [...] I do try to keep them in that boundary where if I feel like it is getting to be inappropriate, I will stop it. But sometimes I just, ‘Let it out. Say what you gotta say. And let's move on. Can we make it better? Is there ways to make it better? Or is this something that is out of our control?’ So then we have that little discussion, and then we just move on. It is almost like the boys are better than the

girls and that whole conversation.

Katherine revealed that she did not agree with the students' perspectives about race. She allowed them to say their "side" and then she said hers. She limited the conversations to a point that she felt was appropriate. Katherine maintained her role in the authoritative position in the classroom, and she trivialized the students' concerns by telling them the issues were out of their control and similar to a "boys are better than the girls" debate. Participants used methods of justification, like this, to maintain their role in the authoritative position when discussing topics that they felt were unimportant or uncomfortable.

Katherine's students were reading a text set in the Civil Rights era, and students continually made connections to current events. She said, "Just the shootings. You know of the White officer shooting the Black student...of the Black child. The kids will be like, 'Why are they doing that? That's racist.' It's always this, this, and this." When I asked her what role race or ethnicity played when she was teaching multicultural young adult literature, she said,

So I do try to teach them—it is not that the races have their set rules. Sometimes it is the rules of society, in general, and you know, following certain traffic laws and things like that. So I do try to teach them that it doesn't always come down to your race and culture. Sometimes we have to follow things because the government tells us. Or like I said it is the social norm that it is not polite to do. So I do try to broaden their horizons in terms of that.

Katherine's dilemma is that students continually try to make connections with police shootings. By teaching the students about "following certain traffic laws" and "follow[ing] things because the government tells us," she was implicitly saying that those individuals who

were shot were not following certain laws. Katherine felt that sharing these viewpoints would “broaden their horizons.”

When I asked Katherine how her race or ethnicity affected the way she taught multicultural young adult literature, Katherine answered in a way that reveal how she justified her beliefs to her students:

I try not to see color. I mean, I have been like that since I was a little girl. So I try to go in there with a positive attitude. Like, “Listen, I am White. You may be African American. But I don't agree with what Whites did. I think that everybody should be treated differently. And unfortunately, that happened in history. We are at a better place. How can we keep from making history not repeat itself?” So I try to see the positive in it.

Katherine's words reveal that she perceived that because she didn't agree with what “Whites did” in history that the students should not connect her White identity with the actions of White people in the past. She also shared her view that this impacted the students' grandparents rather than the students themselves: “And I do try to tell the kids, ‘You know what? You are right. I am not African American. I don't really maybe understand what your grandparents went through.’ So I do try to be honest with them and not just turn a blind eye to it.” Katherine justified her Whiteness with the students by trying to show them that what happened was in the past.

She believed that, for the most part, her students respect her, but she was concerned with the number of times that racism came up, particularly when she taught multicultural young adult texts. She shared,

I mean, my kids are very respectful of me, so I feel like I can say that to them. But

you still have your kids who are like, [*whiny voice*] "Oh, that's racist." or "Cause, I'm Black." You know, so I joke because one of my students who wears sweatpants everyday and said, "No it's not. It's because that's 'cause you wear sweatpants." You know, just trying to joke. I mean, 'cause I don't want to give into it. So I am like, "Get away from that! Come up with something new!"

Katherine's conversation with the students reveals that she did not allow students to associate their race with any issues they are having. She said that she didn't want to "give into it." She felt that this was her role as a teacher, and she explained, "So if I can get one kid from stopping to say, 'It's because I am Black,' or 'Racist,' you know, and if we can make our own joke about it and laugh about it, then, I mean, I am hopefully doing my job [*laughs*]." This was not something that Katherine was wholly comfortable with, and she admitted to me: "Even when I said it back, 'Oh it is because you wear the sweatpants,' I was a little bit nervous at first, but he laughed." Katherine felt uncomfortable by the students' connections to their race.

She told students that their perceptions of racism were inaccurate. She explained, "I think being in [District name], you know, unfortunately, these kids have that mindset that you know, it is Black and White. And it is like, 'We're in the same place. We are at the same level. I mean, I am your teacher, so you have to be more respectful, but we are all human beings.'" Katherine was frustrated by the students' perceptions and reminded them that in today's world, all races are on the same level. She also reminded them that she was their teacher—reaffirming her position of power and thus, knowledge about the topic. She, once again, told them about the historic nature of racism and justified the racism in the text as something of the past:

Unfortunately what happened in the past is something horrific, but like I said, we don't want to repeat it. So trying to get them away from the racist comments and [...] just trying to really get them away from that—even though I can't change them overnight, it is a work in progress. So I would say that...just when they hear about Martin Luther King—"Oh this is racist." or "This was that." Just trying to get them to understand what happened, why it happened, and not be so negative just to say, "Racist this," or things like that.

Katherine knew that she would not change the students' views immediately, but she felt that this was a "work in progress." Within all of Katherine's comments in this section, she explained how she controlled the content and discussions that her students had in the classroom when they were reading the multicultural young adult text. She justified her views to students while simultaneously reminding them of her role as the teacher. Even when Katherine stated that she allowed students to have open conversations about issues that concerned them, she placed boundaries on their conversations and limited the time that they were allowed to speak about the topics.

Within the phenomenon, Laura represents another teacher who justified her decisions related to teaching MCYAL to others. However, her motivation and her opinions about race differ greatly from those of Katherine. She didn't like the new, scripted curriculum which did not include the multicultural young adult texts that she valued, so she said she, "Told the woman from central office, 'We are doing the best we can. We received no training. And we are going to do what we want to do.'" Laura told the woman, her superior, that she and the other English teachers would "do what we want to do." She wasn't completely confident whether her decision would be accepted and said, "So I am not really sure about this, but if

that is the case, then I can just inject my own stuff into [Curriculum Name] and call it a day, hopefully.” I asked her if she would do this without them knowing, and she responded loudly, “That is...Even with them knowing! You know?” About text selection and teaching her preferred texts rather than those prescribed by the curriculum, she said, “So I never lie. I am never going to lie and say I don’t teach this book. If they ask me, I tell them. If they say no, I challenge. And I won’t stop teaching it. I’m not going to! [*laughing*].” She added, “And if it they have a problem with it, then it sucks to be them. I am not going to stop teaching what I teach.” Laura did not fear her administration and ignored the scripted curriculum openly.

Laura was passionate about what she perceived to be best for the kids. She seemed to be willing to go to any length to continue teaching the texts that she desired. She said, “I will continue teaching what I teach and if it becomes a problem, then they will have to remove me from my classroom to get me to stop teaching it. And that is just it [*laughing*].” Laura also justified her decisions to parents. She said, “I do send home a letter at the beginning of our previous unit about some of the discussions we are talking about, but it doesn’t have to do with multicultural literature. It is more of those tough topics.” Laura’s language reveals that she also justified her decisions to the parents of her students.

When I ask her to give advice to a new teacher facing any challenges or dilemmas, she said, “If it is curriculum or administration or adults that are giving you the issues, go with what you believe in, and if what you believe in is that your students need to read MCYAL books, then don’t change your mind.” Laura, the teacher who focused her *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) unit on “Where were all of the minorities in the 20’s?” and asked her students to critically examine the “Chin-Kee” character in *American Born Chinese* (Yang,

2006), valued specific topics in her classroom. She refused to use the scripted curriculum and justified her decisions to administration.

Katherine's and Laura's comments, which represent the range of views in the phenomenon, reveal that teachers with very different perspectives of texts and topics for discussion will justify their decisions to others. Oser (1991) calls this an "incomplete discourse" because the teacher "accepts his/her personal responsibility for settling the problem, and s/he subscribes to the task of balancing justice, care, and truthfulness in each new situation. S/he justifies his/her viewpoints and commits him/herself to a good life (as a legitimate interest on behalf of the students) and a just environment" (p. 205). When teachers use the incomplete decision strategy, Oser believes that they are justifying their views for what they believe is a just environment. Katherine perceived such an environment to be a colorblind world. The truth that she believed strongly was that racism exists only in history. She was motivated to convince her students of this. Laura's truth was quite different. She perceived injustice and was determined to use texts and talk about topics that she valued as important to her students—potentially at the cost of her job. When the teachers within the phenomenon used incomplete conversations to justify their decisions, they were promoting their personal agendas and justifying those agendas to the individuals around them.

Conferences with others

All of the participants described decisions that they made with the help of others. They sought input from other people and made decisions based on this insight. For this section, I have selected participant comments that are representative of the wide range of ways that they both sought and used the feedback from others to make their decisions. The first section described how they had what Oser (1991) described as "complete conversations"

with other adults, and the second section includes “complete conversations” that they had with students.

Complete conversations with other adults. The participants sought input from other adults when they made decisions about teaching multicultural young adult literature. These adults included other teachers, administrators, parents, community members, their own family members, and friends. Some of the participants even asked for my advice on certain dilemmas (I did not provide insight because it might influence their decisions and skew the study findings). The following participant comments are representative of the phenomenon.

Some participants described the complete conversations they had with administration in their management of dilemmas. Laura, who placed strong value on MCYAL, explained that when she lacked the resources to teach the texts that she desired, she met with administrators. Her purpose was “Usually to push back but also provide solutions.” She talked about the value of providing solutions in meetings with superiors: “I think that if you are going to meet with somebody about a problem that you are having, you can’t just go in and moan about it. You have to have a solution. So normally, it is, ‘This is a problem I am facing. This is a possible solution. Is this okay if I do this?’” Rather than simply complain about curricular restrictions or other dilemmas, Laura approached conversations with her administrators by providing potential solutions for her problems and garnering their approval in advance.

The majority of complete conversations that participants described involved conferences with other teachers. Lisa believed that complete conversations between colleagues needed to happen early—as early as in teacher education programs. She described, “I think I would have liked to have had teachers come in—current teachers who

did this—to come talk to us [...] Small group discussions would have been really awesome where I could have asked the teacher if I was nervous. You know, maybe bring in the ‘multicultural expert.’” Lisa wanted her college education to continue after she graduated with text recommendations: “And I would just always love—even after I graduated—just recommendations for quality texts. Because like I said before, there are so many YA texts that come out every year, I don’t know which ones to read and which ones to bother with.” Like many of the teachers, Lisa wanted more knowledge about multicultural young adult texts to select high quality literature for her students.

Based on her comments, Lisa relied on others’ opinions for many of the dilemmas she experienced. She talked about the dilemma of not focusing enough on the illustrations in her book, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) and said, “Oh, I just need to be better. I just need to talk to the teachers who are better at teaching than me and learn. [...] All of my best ideas come from other teachers. [*laughing*]” In a later interview, she talked about how teachers “shared a couple of resources” with her about the illustrations. She also wanted to bring in outside resources—people. She said, “I would like to bring in outside resources. Speakers. Anybody. If you know anybody let me know [*whispered*]. Anybody who is willing to come and talk to them and teach them anything. They can only listen to me talk so much.” To solve the dilemma for which she did not have enough knowledge, Lisa relied on others. When I asked her to give advice to a hypothetical teacher who faces challenges, she said,

I would tell them to look in their department, talk to other teachers. The best resource that new teachers have is in veteran teachers who have been in the same dynamic in the same district for a long time who can give them good advice. And of course, the

department head is always a good resource. But if you want the real, legit information, you talk to the other teachers.

For veteran teachers, she suggested: “Use the teacher network, the people that you know who are friends of friends. Because I am always willing to answer questions and have people in my room—do whatever we need to do. We need to stick together.” Lisa relied on other teachers to help her with her dilemmas. This was an approach she discussed often in her interview responses.

Similarly, Becky sought conferences with other adults when she was instructing MCYAL. She wanted to feel more comfortable dealing with issues of race and ethnicity and perceived that talking with other teachers would help her navigate dilemmas. She said,

I know one of the girls that I teach with is looking to having this program come in to talk about institutionalized racism and how the faculty talk about it. I think it would be so uncomfortable, but I think we need to be made uncomfortable and to talk about these things because, you know, I can talk about it with my fiancé or with my dad, but they just don’t...until you are in this teaching environment and sitting in those conversations, you just don’t—I don’t think people can understand, I guess.

She felt uncomfortable and knew that her colleagues experienced similar discomfort, as well. She wished teachers felt more comfortable discussing issues of race and ethnicity. She said that no one has these discussions “out loud” and wondered, “But isn’t that a problem—an issue—that we don’t really have a dialogue about that? I don’t know if people are afraid. Because maybe that is something a college preparatory course—let’s put it all on the table. Let’s talk about our misconceptions and our misunderstandings and our worries, and let’s get it out there.” When she was arranging her post-it notes, she considered how this fit in her

second row of greatest to least challenging. She described, “It is in the second row, but I see them as somewhat related because my discomfort with my own privilege kind of plays into discussion that I would like to have with my colleagues. And it is most difficult because it is a challenge and it is something that I really can’t talk about. So that is what makes it most difficult.” Not talking about race and ethnicity frustrated Becky. She yearned for these conversations. Becky admitted that she has a lot of trouble negotiating issues of race and ethnicity. She said,

I have trouble negotiating that, to be honest. And I think because I don’t know a place where I can talk about it, I think, is what makes it more difficult. I don’t know what I am...I think I am thinking about it and being very thoughtful in reflecting upon what I do day to day and how I act. But I don’t know beyond that what I am doing, and perhaps I should do more. But I just want to have some conversations with colleagues about it.

She wondered if she was doing the right things in her classroom when she taught MCYAL and was unable to confer with others about this. As a result of her experience of being a participant in the study, Becky enrolled in a seminar about race and diversity. She said, “It has made me a lot more reflective. I have a lot of things I am thinking about. And like I said, I signed up to go to this seminar, so I am really excited for that. I think I was very honest today with things I have not really said out loud to many people.” Becky wanted to talk about issues of race and ethnicity with her colleagues because she saw the great potential they might provide. She explained, “If we all were to talk about the challenges together, we might be able to come up with some solutions or at least a deeper understanding.” The professional development that her school provided lacked these opportunities. She said, “I have never had

a professional development where we have had constructive conversations about diversity in education and in literature. I did have a college class—I think it was called Diversity in Education—and I don't think they required us to do enough.”

Other participants used conferences with colleagues to support the decisions that they were making about MCYAL. When she had dilemmas, she listened to colleagues to see if these issues were widespread. When her students weren't creative on their projects that she assigned at the conclusion of the multicultural young adult text, she said, “I think it is just what I am hearing around school. I am hearing from other colleagues.” When students didn't do well on a student-centered task, she said, “And you explain it and explain it to them. And I know it is not just me. Because when I have discussions with my colleagues I am hearing the same thing from them.” When I asked her what she would recommend to teachers who face challenges, she advised, “Go and find colleagues that you can talk it over with. See if anybody else is using the same book and experiencing the same thing.” For teachers in urban classrooms, she said,

I think in that case, the team approach is even more important [*laughing*]. Because I really think that there is strength in safety. That if you are having a problem, it really helps to hear that somebody else...you know you are not isolated. It is very easy for us teachers to turn everything on ourselves. “This is because I am a bad teacher.” or “I am at fault.” or “I am not good enough.” And when you talk to your colleagues and everybody is experiencing something similar, you go, “All right, this isn't about me. This is about something outside of me. Something bigger. We can all deal with this together. We will problem solve.”

Marcia's comments seem to reflect both a passive acceptance approach and a complete

conversation approach. She conferred with colleagues to find comfort that she was not alone in the dilemmas she encountered while teaching MCYAL. She seemed to believe that a dilemma was acceptable if it was occurring with multiple teachers. Only her last two sentences (“We can all deal with this together. We will problem solve.”) align with the complete conversation approach because they move beyond passive acceptance.

Marcia also used colleagues for support when students shared their home lives. When a student made a connection with the text about his cousin who was killed in a shooting years previously, Marcia sought advice from a colleague. She said, “I let him talk about it. He wrote about it. I responded more like, “I’m sorry to hear that,” and filed it away.” She opted not to talk more about this connection with the student because she said, “I talked to my Social Studies colleague who usually knows. She is very well-connected in the city, so she really knows everything. So I am sure if it had been fresher, if it was something that had just happened yesterday, that would have been a totally different...we would have had to do something different.” Marcia decided not to talk further with the student because the shooting was not recent and because her colleague confirmed this detail. She added, “But just because he was young when it happened doesn’t mean that it is still something that isn’t very much there for him and his family. And again, I feel like we have to be very delicate and very careful with the way we touch on these things.” Marcia confirmed with another teacher that the shooting was not recent, and she made the decision not to talk further with the student. This is, perhaps, aligned with her philosophy in which she stated: “I don’t believe in bibliotherapy.” After conferring with a colleague, Marcia did not see the student’s connection as something she wanted to discuss further with the student, so she “file[d] it away.”

Other teachers conferenced with other colleagues for planning to instruct MCYAL.

For example, Kim didn't have enough background to teach *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004), so she shared how she designed her lessons: "My co-teacher and I pulled resources [...] on the internet and from a couple of textbooks that our instructional coach—we work with an instructional coach—and she gave us a couple of resources for this to help us." When selecting texts, she worked with other colleagues: "We were pulling books and ideas and things that we wanted to talk about, and we both agreed that doing a unit on a region of the Middle East would be particularly interesting and beneficial for our students." Kim, her co-teacher, the history department, and her instructional coach "wrote [the] whole curriculum over the summer on [their] own." The interactions helped improve the curriculum. For example, Kim said,

The instructional coach helps us design the smaller units. We will sit with her. We will meet with her and say, "This is what we are thinking. What can you add to this?" or "Do you have any suggestions for an assessment?" or "What do you know..." She is awesome with just knowledge—like, history knowledge. So we will kind of pump her for that information, and she will give us a lesson.

The conversations helped Kim because the "text was probably more difficult than other texts because of its style and because of the confusing historical background that you need to know to understand it." When Kim struggled, she said, "I talk with my co-teacher and our instructional coach who has helped us plan some lessons." During our interviews, she even brainstormed other people she might talk with to garner enough background knowledge to teach the multicultural young adult text. She said, "I could go talk to librarians. I am sure they are very informed about what is new and what I may be able to use." Kim's advice to a teacher facing challenges reflects her reliance on complete conversations as an approach. She

told the hypothetical teacher, “You can always fall back on colleagues. There are ways to make it work in the classroom.” Kim saw these conversations as a strength. All of the participants had complete conversations, but Kim talked about them most often.

When she considered how teachers might be better prepared to teach MCYAL, Kayla suggested that college programs provide complete conversations for teachers. She said, “It would be cool to have a college program—if they could swing it—to bring in some of the authors as a panel [...]for the students that are there. I think that could be cool for them to talk about their experiences and how they would go about teaching it.” In this comment, Kayla is suggesting that teacher preparation programs open up the conversation to authors to allow them to provide insight about the texts.

In Oser’s (1991) theory of complete conversations, individuals value the opinions of others as useful for managing dilemmas. All of the participants had complete conversations, but some relied on them more heavily than others. In a complete conversation, the individual does not see him or herself as the sole decision-maker. Participants like Marcia used complete conversations to affirm their beliefs about specific dilemmas. Participants like Laura, Lisa, Kim, and Kayla, considered how these complete conversations would allow for more effective instruction in teaching MCYAL.

Complete conversations with students. All of the participants—some much more than others, also described the ways that they participated in complete conversations with their students. They asked their students for advice and input before they made decisions about how to teach the MCYAL that they used during the study. The participants highlighted in this section represent the range at which the participants conversed with their students as a form of dilemma management.

As a way to think through dilemmas centered on teaching MCYAL, some of the participants asked their students for feedback. Katherine said, “You know I sometimes resort to a few students to get their insight on it and then, you know, I will ask them—‘I didn’t say something that may have offended you or whatever?’” Rather than ask for their input in advance, Katherine’s approach is reactive. Katherine described a moment when she reached a controversial section of the book. She said, “I started to read it, honestly. Then I was, like, ‘Nope. Can’t do this.’ So we kind of just skipped it.” I asked her if she feels like she confronts most challenges by figuring them out on her own. She responded, “Yah. And I would like, actually, my kids to kind of help me with the feedback of the challenges, but when I am in the moment and on the hot seat and have to put on the show for my students, I am like, ‘Yah, I am just going to make that decision by myself.’” Katherine’s decision here is single handed, and it sheds light on the dilemma management process that she went through in her head. She wanted her students to help her in a complete conversation, but when she was “in the moment and on the hot seat,” she elected to skip the section without their input.

Some of the participants relied heavily on student input as they navigated dilemmas. When Lisa felt that she lacked knowledge about the texts, she said, “I have to remind myself that I am thirty-one, but the kids in the room are seventeen, and they just know more [...] certainly about the culture and traditions and things like that.” When I asked her what she did about that, she responded, “I ask them questions. I just try to learn as much as I can.” In the first interview, Lisa worried that her students would lack knowledge about cultural appropriation, for example, and in the second interview, she said,

It is going great. The kids love it. I love it. They know way more than my kids did last year. We started talking about cultural appropriation last week, and they knew

everything! I didn't have to tell them anything at all! I had all of the stuff with Zindaya and Kylie Jenner and Amanda Stenberg ready to go, and they told me everything.

Lisa used a constant feedback loop with her students to navigate dilemmas. She sought out and valued her students' opinions.

Dave not only conferenced with his students and solicited their insights, but he provided them with opportunities to conference with each other, based on their experiences with immigration (because all of his students were newcomers to the United States). When he encountered the dilemma that his "Kids don't talk about crossing the border illegally," he provided them with the space to "talk about how this is a reality for many people." As a form of dilemma management, solicited former students, as well, to help him with these discussions. He said, "I try to bring in—not necessarily while I am teaching this particular book—but during the year, I will bring in kids who share a similar past as the kids that are in my classroom and they talk about their experiences being undocumented and things like that." Dave's approach extended Oser's (1991) theory because he was doing more than conferring with students about the dilemma. He was asking students to confer with each other in order to help them feel more comfortable talking about immigration.

Dave opened up conversations with his students to help them seek support in each other. He reminded his class that "we are a family and that they are all living in a very similar situation." He asked them questions about immigration to help them see, "Oh, wow. I am not the only one." Dave allowed his students to talk to each other to help them find others who experienced similar discomfort in their immigration status. He also conferred with them about dilemmas like the book's length. When he recognized that the book was too long, for

example, he said, “Yah, you know I may talk with them a little bit about it and see if they have any suggestions.” In a later interview, he said how he did end up seeking their input. About the book length, he explained, “There were a couple of days towards the end where the chapters are mega-long. And when one chapter finished, the students were upset that it was done, and they wanted more. So I just let it go.” Dave valued his students’ opinions and not only sought their advice but helped them find both support in each other and in his former students.

The participants featured in this section represent the varied perspectives that all of the participants had toward conferring with their students. Katherine expressed that she wanted to confer with her students, but she sometimes made decisions on her own when she was in the “hot seat.” She conferred with students in a reactive way. Rather than asking for their input in advance of or during a lesson, she would check in with them after a lesson to see if she had “offended” them. Lisa asked her students a lot of questions to try to learn as much as she could, and she valued her students as more knowledgeable in many areas than she. Dave not only conferred with students, but he asked them to confer with each other as an extension to Oser’s (1991) theory. In this approach of complete conversations, a teacher “presupposes that each student and every other person who is concerned and involved is—in a deep sense—a rational human being who is also interested in and capable of balancing justice, care, and truthfulness” (p. 205). The range of responses across the participants reveals the different levels to which participants deemed their students to be capable for participation in the management of dilemmas.

Pedagogical approaches

An emergent theme that did not align with Oser’s (1991) model was that participants

navigated dilemmas pedagogically. Though this approach could map on with single handed decisions or complete conversations, as some of the decisions were made with others or in authoritative ways, the approach was pedagogically focused rather than socially based. Participants used the following pedagogical techniques as a form of dilemma management as they considered how to use their multicultural young adult texts in the classroom with students: instructional strategies, discussion, rapport, student connections, and teacher preparation. Below, I highlight each of these pedagogical strategies to provide a brief representation of the pedagogical strategies that all of the participants said that they employed.

Instructional strategies. Participants used specific strategies in their classrooms to navigate dilemmas. These varied greatly from participant to participant. I provide two examples to show different strategies that participants used. As a way to help students make connections with the text (a dilemma that was not saturated across participants) and also avoid making the students feel like they were being singled out given their shared racial or ethnic background of a main character in the novel, Dave used a pre-reading activity. It included “twenty-six statements” of “top issues” from the book. Some of these included: “I know somebody who has been physically abused,” and “I am undocumented.” Dave said, “They didn’t have to check anything. Because I didn’t want them to feel like they were being targeted. But I wanted them to count how many things they could connect with. The highest was, like, fourteen out of the twenty-some-odd. But all of the kids definitely had a lot of connections with them.” Dave used these “I statements” to engage his students and connect them with the text. Because they included controversial statements, he did not require them to physically write on the paper.

When Kim didn't know enough about the background of *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004), she said, "I went online, and I actually found another teacher's PowerPoint providing background information on the Iranian Revolution. And so I took that and modified it to what I wanted to present to my students in order for them to be able to understand." Kim used an existing PowerPoint to build her knowledge about the topic and modified its content to fit the needs of her students.

Teacher participants used instructional strategies to help them with the dilemmas they encountered while instructing MCYAL. Dave generated a pre-reading activity of "I statements" to negotiate dilemmas of student-text connections and singling students out based on their shared racial or ethnic background with the text, and Kim modified another teacher's PowerPoint when she battled a dilemma of her own lack of knowledge about the culture of the text. Throughout my conversations with the teacher participants, they shared a wealth of instructional strategies that they used each day to negotiate the dilemmas that they faced while using MCYAL in their classrooms.

Student connections. Teacher participants described the ways they helped students make connections as an approach to resolve dilemmas. Using a variety of modes and strategies, participants ensured that students made connections with the texts to address myriad dilemmas.

When Laura's students laughed because they didn't understand the purpose of main character, named Chin-Kee, in *American Born Chinese* (Yang, 2006), Laura helped them understand his role through an activity designed to help them make connections. She said, "We actually do an activity where we create our own Chin-Kee. Where we create [our own Chin-Kees to show] what comes along with who we are. So, like, my character is usually

super nerdy and has never faced any problems in her life and comes from a really rich family with a dog and a picket fence.” Some people wouldn’t understand the activity, she said:

“‘And some people might say that that is like, ‘That’s a downer. You shouldn’t be having your kids do that, and it’s going to make them feel depressed.’ But if you don’t identify what people think of you, you can’t come up with positive ways to counteract it.” The students began to understand Chin-Kee’s purpose. Laura said that they responded,

“Oh! So this is a manifestation of all of the stereotypes that follow this person around because of the way they look.” And because they are ethnic minorities, they know that. My Black male students know that just by looking at them, the person that is like their Chin-Kee is a robber, smokes weed, drops out of school, carries a gun. They have their own Chin-Kee.

When students had difficulty understanding the stereotypes that a character represented, Laura designed an activity to help them make connections with the character.

Participants shared the ways in which their students struggled to understand the background knowledge of the text. The teachers helped students make connections in order to assist with this dilemma. Dave said, “I think that is the biggest challenge for this book [*Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2010)] is getting kids to sort of be more aware of what Central American and Mexican students are going through when they come to this country.” First, he asked them to read articles to begin to understand what the immigrants were going through. About the articles, he said, “One was about reasons for leaving a home country, reasons for coming to the United States, and then difficulties of being an immigrant. And they had to go through those articles and write down and take notes on those three topics and then write an article about being an immigrant.” By doing this, Dave described, “I wanted them—in the

introduction—to relate it to the book. The kids that were able to do that.” His reasoning for asking them to make connections and write about being immigrants, a topic that was personal to them, was because: “They won’t enjoy this book nearly as much if they don’t know what is going on and if they can’t make connections.” He described that he “loved” this book because of the opportunities it afforded the students:

I love how the students can connect to the cultural piece because they are coming from a different culture from the mainstream culture here. [...] The major thing about a good book is that usually there is some very large conflict that kids are going to relate to—my students are definitely going to relate to. It makes it juicy and exciting. And I love the way that kids can respond to that through their own lens, and we will do a lot of activities putting my students into the shoes of the characters in the book.

To help students make further connections, Dave also invited a “guest speaker to come in to talk to the students [from] a Latino community action group.” Because of the students’ discussions about immigration and in light of the threat of “deportation raids,” Dave said, “The kids were really worried [...] so they were talking to him and asking him all kinds of questions. And everybody was here for that and they all heard it, and they knew that there were kids who were really worried about what was going on.” The students who couldn’t directly connect with the content of the book were able to see their peers’ worries, and they were able to foster connections to the text by listening to their peers.

Kayla stressed the value of helping students consider what was happening in their home lives through connections with the text. She said, “I find that with these particular students in this particular school, making connections to the real world is key.” Helping students make connections was not difficult for Kayla, and she attributed this to the text. She

explained, “So what is great about this book is that it already does that for you, and for them to be able to talk about relationships, friendships—they’ve been through a lot in their lives, probably a lot more than I know, so just death and dying, tragedies, alcoholism, they are just real events that the kids, I think, connect to.” Participants helped students navigate the text and their home lives by valuing the connections the students made with the texts.

All of the participants described the ways they used student-text connections to navigate the dilemmas they experienced in the unit growing from the multicultural elements of the texts they taught. Laura connected the students to the narrator’s struggles with stereotyping, Dave highlighted the struggles that immigrants experienced by generating an immigration assignment and inviting a guest speaker, and Kayla ensured that students were able to develop connections from the text itself. Participants perceived that these connections offered opportunities for the students to relate to the text in valuable ways.

Discussion. As the teachers discussed their dilemma management strategies for multicultural young adult literature, an approach that emerged across all of the teachers was the use of discussion. This strategy was different from the “complete conversations with students” strategy because the teachers weren’t asking students for their input about a dilemma as a way to make a decision about the dilemma. Rather, teachers experienced a dilemma and elected to provide space for students to participate in discussions. These discussions were not about the dilemmas themselves, but instead, they are about the topics within the multicultural young adult texts.

Some of the participants who used discussion in their classrooms limited discussions about race and culture. The boundaries they provided seem to be related to the multicultural nature of the texts and the issues that they might raise (particularly given the teachers’ White

identity). Katherine, for example, used discussion as a way for students to discuss controversial content. As described previously, she would tell students: “[*Irritated voice*] ‘Okay. We are going to talk about this [the police shootings of black individuals] for five minutes. We are going to keep it appropriate. I am going to say my side. You are going to say your side. And we are going to be done with it.’ I mean, the kids know that they can talk openly in here as long as they don’t push boundaries.” She also said that she told students, “‘Let it out. Say what you gotta say. And let’s move on. Can we make it better? Is there ways to make it better? Or is this something that is out of our control?’ So then we have that little discussion, and then we just move on.” When Katherine used discussion, she structured the conversation for students on her terms and in a way that she was in control. She also only allowed specific topics to be discussed. She said,

When it comes to the home life problems, I definitely pull them aside. And that is more of a one on one thing. I don’t really let them take it to that level in class when it comes to home life. I know a couple of kids, especially, I would just stop that conversation. I mean, some things with the home lives, like making them go to bed earlier, being in by when the lights go out because bad things happen when it gets dark out, those things, that is one thing. But like I said, the home lives of drugs and alcohol or if there is abuse at home, I definitely don’t let them talk about that openly. Katherine felt comfortable with students sharing topics like their curfews, but she would not allow them to talk openly in class about more personal issues like drugs, alcohol, or abuse. Thus, Katherine shaped the conversations on her terms, and they were limited to topics of her choice.

With respect to the openness of conversations, Kim represented a slightly more open

discussion of controversial content. Her discussions were also teacher-directed but weren't as limited. Kim mentioned the nudity in *Persepolis* (Satrapi, 2004). I asked her if she discussed the scene in her classroom. She said, "We will talk about the scene in the context of the entire novel, in terms of if there are—if it connects to themes and ideas." In another torture scene, she asked the students to consider: "'Why did this author choose to put nudity in this particular scene?' and how that relates to dehumanization of people and oppression and humiliation and things like that." Kim modeled conversations for her students. She said, "I think that it is important to give students the background knowledge as well as potential vocabulary and terms and phrases that they might be able to use to discuss these things so that they don't end up saying things that are potentially offensive. And if a student does say something, that needs to just be addressed." Kim did not describe the ways that she limited the topics that students discussed, but she steered students toward discussing controversial material within the context of the whole text, and she modeled vocabulary for students to use in their discussions.

Participants also used more student-directed formats for discussion as a way to manage dilemmas. When I asked Laura what role race or ethnicity played when she was teaching MCYAL, she said, "It plays every role because I teach a very diverse group—not just in terms of skin color but in terms of culture, in terms of religion, in terms of citizens or not, in terms of income levels, and parent and family structure at home. It's a pretty inclusive group—very diverse." Laura saw this diversity as a strength. She said, "I think it is kind of cool because they can all add in perspectives that I never thought about, and I can just...this is truly a group where I can just guide their discussion instead of saying, 'Next question. Here is what you are going to say next.' I am not trying to drive them towards some bigger

point. They are taking it there themselves.” Laura managed these diverse perspectives by allowing for classroom discussions.

When she considered her philosophy, she said, “I value me not talking a lot. I don’t want to talk a lot. I want to be able to give my kids directives and let them go and see what they come up with.” This can be a struggle for Laura because she said, “In some classes, my students are so used to being spoonfed that it is a very big struggle [...] The less I can talk and the more they can talk amongst themselves, you know, with me, whatever, I am a happy camper. So their own leadership is what I’m focused on in my classroom.” When the students were learning how “Chin-Kee is basically every stereotype about Chinese people rolled into one,” they had a classroom discussion. In the open conversation, “One of my students actually brought up in class, ‘It’s like Medea because we think it is funny, but it is also extremely harmful.’” When I asked Laura to provide advice for a new teacher using MCYAL, her advice was: “Don’t act like the sage on the stage. And this more goes towards teachers who are White teaching a multicultural young adult book. And really use your students’ experiences as accesses rather than as deficits. And value them and use them to teach.” Laura positioned her students as the experts in her classroom discussions and allowed for an open format of discussion, particularly important given the ways in which MCYAL introduces dilemmas into the teaching experience.

These three participants represent the different ways that participants structured classroom discussions as a way to manage dilemmas. All of the participants allowed the students to have conversations in class in order to negotiate dilemmas, but the ways they organized the discussions differed. Katherine limited the topics that she allowed students to discuss, Kim was more open to topics but the discussions were teacher-directed, and Laura

positioned her students as experts and allowed them to lead the conversations. These discussions were a dilemma management approach that teachers shared frequently in their interview responses. Their approaches seemed to be tied to their Whiteness. As stated previously, Katherine perceived her White identity not to be impactful on her instruction, and she limited discussions about race in her classroom. Kim, who said, “I really just start off by being open and honest with my students. Apart from that, I don’t usually drag [my White identity] back into the teaching of it,” was open to topics about race and ethnicity, but directed the discussions. Laura, who very openly discussed her White identity with students and started off the year talking about what her skin “gets” her, positioned her students as experts and honored their voices.

Rapport. As participants navigated dilemmas of teaching MCYAL, teacher rapport emerged as a dilemma management approach. Though all of the participants seemed to express the value of rapport as a way to navigate dilemmas, the words and actions described by the following four participants reveal the very different levels of rapport within the phenomenon.

I highlight Marcia in this section because she seemed to understand that rapport is valuable, yet she elected not to actively use this approach. Marcia worried about her ability to connect with her students. She admitted, “I think partly that I open my mouth, and they know that I am not from around here. I think they are well-aware of that. I wasn’t raised here. I didn’t go to school here. And so, I am sure that that impacts the relationship that I have with the students.” When I asked her if there was anything she did about that, she said,

It is just there. I am usually straightforward with them. I am not here to be your best friend. I am here to be your teacher. I am here to help you read and write better. And I

try to make it fun and attractive, but not everybody is going to walk in and think that...and just like I've found, not everybody is going to walk in and think that something like this is fun.

Marcia also added, "You know, I guess I am getting old now, so maybe I don't feel as close to the young adults [...] I think, too, they look at me and they see an old lady. And that also, can possibly be a challenge. So, again. Letting them lead the discussions can be really valuable. And letting them. You know. They say really good things once they get into it."

Marcia shared the ways in which she allowed students to have open discussions, but some of her other responses show that the conversations were not as open as the conversations that other participants had with their students. She described,

There is a chapter, I think where Samson goes with a friend who is going to buy some drugs. And they, [*whispering*] "He bought drugs! He bought...!" And I said, "You are misrepresenting it. Yes, he went. They bought drugs," but I said, [*slamming fist repeatedly on the table*] 'Did you turn the page and read the end of the chapter?'

Because he walks away from it. [...] They go, "Oh, this isn't appropriate!" And then they just want to go into attack mode.

Later, Marcia described the situation again and said, "They were challenging me." Marcia's response to her students in the example that she described shows that her conversations are teacher-directed, and she became very frustrated with her students. She described another incident where a student said, "[*Marcia uses an angry voice*] 'That's why nobody likes you. Everybody hates you.'" After Marcia shared this, she added, "Then I kind of feel like maybe I should be looking for something else to do. Time to get out of this." She also commented, "There is a lot of negativity here for a lot of different reasons that are outside of the scope of

your study.” Marcia is included in this section because she expressed the value that rapport would add to classroom discussions, but her descriptions of student interactions and her perceptions of how she is separate from her students seem to reveal that there was not a strong rapport between Marcia and her students, which influenced her instruction of the text and disposition in the classroom.

When Jackie considered what she valued as a teacher, she said, “I value...and this is going to sound ridiculous...but education. At the end of the day, it is great if my students like me, but I don’t care as long as I am teaching them. I want them to learn.” She added later,

I feel like I have a fairly good rapport with the students. For the most part, we get along, they respect me, they do what I ask. I think the biggest thing in terms of teaching a multicultural novel is there is the separation between me and them in the simplest sense that I am White and they are not. So as much respect as we have for each other and as much as they listen to me, I mean that is still a major difference that is never going to change. So that is a challenge in teaching multicultural is making sure I am teaching it respectfully.

Jackie expressed the ways that she valued learning over connections with students. She felt that she had a “fairly good rapport” with students, but it seemed this was as long as they did “what [she] ask[ed].” Like Marcia, she perceived herself as separate from her students, but she thought this was due to their racial differences. She valued “respect” as important for her instruction of the texts, and she wanted to ensure that she taught it respectfully to students.

In her third interview, Jackie shared that her classroom rapport and respect was not as effective as she wanted it to be. Rather than focusing on dilemmas connected to the multicultural young adult text like race, culture, or privilege, she focused on student

behavior:

This week in particular, I felt like a failure. I feel for the most part that I have decent classroom management and procedures, and the kids are usually pretty good, and we can get through. [...] I just feel that in a suburban setting...and this is totally generalizing...that the kids are more respectful, and if they are not, then their parents are more apt to do something about it.

Jackie perceived that students in a suburban school would be more respectful of her. She described an incident where she said to the students, “Okay, I am ready. I am waiting. I am waiting. [...] I feel that when you are talking, I am respectful to you, and I listen to what you are saying. And I respond. But if I am standing here, and I am waiting, and you are talking, that is totally disrespectful. And I feel like I have earned the respect to be listened to.”

Jackie perceived that she had “earned the respect to be listened to.” She expressed the ways that she valued rapport in previous discussions, but her comments revealed that she valued her position of power. Her overall positioning for rapport was that she primarily wanted her students to respect her. This could be connected to her unwillingness to consider her position as a White teacher. Unlike Lisa, who is described below, Jackie’s sense of rapport is centered more on power and respect than a recognition that she has a story, too.

Lisa took a different approach and made connections with students through the power of her own story. She placed strong value on the connections she made with her students and the rapport of her classroom. She said, “I value the connections I make with my students the most. That’s why I keep coming here for nine years.” In order to make connections with her students and the content, she tried to increase rapport. She said, “I start telling them personal stories.” For Lisa, this rapport emerged as valuable when topics of race and ethnicity come

up in the classroom. I asked her about the role of race or ethnicity when she was teaching MCYAL, and she responded, “Oh my God. It’s the hugest role ever. So in the class that I will be teaching it with, I’m the only White person in the room. So I am very lucky to have a very strong connection with this group of students.” Lisa used her rapport with her students to bridge difficult conversations about race or ethnicity. Laura worked hard to build the rapport in her classroom. She said, “A lot of our activities we invite their families to, all of their siblings and stuff. Yah, we are very lucky to have an informal relationship with most of our students. They come to us all of the time. They are here before school, after school, during their study halls. Really, our team strives for the connection with them.” Beyond connecting with students’ families, Lisa shared sections of her personal life. She said that she made connections, and when I asked her if she drew upon the ways her personal life compared with the students’ lives she responded,

Absolutely, all of the time. I am very, very frank with them about the circumstances that I had growing up in high school and in college, and I think they really, really respect that because a lot of my students—just the fact that I am White—White is other. They are not the same, regardless of where they are from, regardless of how much money, education, family status. They just make a lot of assumptions based on skin color as we all do. And I like to let them know that probably what they think about me is not correct, and I like them to surprise me, as well.

Though Lisa is White, she provided personal connections for the students to understand that she did not fit the stereotype they may have of her. These “frank” conversations allow her to build rapport with her students. She described a scene in the book where she said, “I am reading to them, and I am crying. They are upset, and we are all upset together. And that is

how you bond with you kids. That is a teacher thing.” For Lisa, being a teacher is about making connections with her students. She described, “I feel that the basis of teaching is connection. It is kind of, almost a bragging point that I do know that much about every single one of my kids. You could point to a name on a list, and I could tell you so much about every single child. And really, I just try to learn. I like to ask them questions about what they do, their culture, things that they like.” Lisa built rapport with her students as a way to confront many of the dilemmas that they might encounter in a unit that includes a multicultural young adult title.

Dave had different life experiences that he perceived as helpful for him to build rapport. Not only did he live in Spain for ten years, but unlike all of the teachers, he had lived in the community in which he taught for eight years at the time of the study. He said, “Because I speak Spanish really well, I think that they, for the most part, sort of consider me part of their community.” Later, he said, “A lot of them look to me as a sort of male role model and sort of like this Papi type figure.” By living in the district, Dave perceived that he had become a part of the community.

Dave showed his students that he trusted and respected them. He said, “I like living in the community that my students live in. I don’t have any problem with my kids knowing where my house is and stuff like that. Because I like to treat the kids like they are adults—like they are not going to come walking up to my door. And if I had a relationship with them that was negative, it would be different, but I don’t.” Within his classroom, Dave also showed the ways he trusted them. He explained,

I think that teachers need to create relationships with their students. They need to create an environment of trust in the classroom. That is one of the big things that I do

from day one. I don't collect students' homework. I have them tell me whether or not they did it. I have them correct their own quizzes, and I have them tell me their own scores. And I talk to them specifically about how I trust them and how this is not about me. It is about them.

All of this rapport is for a purpose. He explained how it helps him with dilemmas: "Once you have that [rapport], then I feel like it is easier to be frank with students—so we are going to talk about poverty, and I am not just going to talk about poverty, I am going to talk about them because a lot of them are living in poverty." Dave is able to connect his students with issues that occur in the text that are relevant to his students. He not only speaks frankly with his students about their poverty, but he compared their situation to students in more affluent towns. He said,

And if we are going to talk about opportunity, I am going to talk specifically about how there are kids living in [affluent suburban town] and [affluent suburban town] and [affluent suburban town] that are going to have a much easier road to financial success. And because the students trust me and I trust them, I can say those things without offending them.

Dave valued his rapport with students, and by living in their community alongside them, he perceived that he was better able to know his students. As described in the previous chapter, he felt minimal discomfort teaching the multicultural young adult text. Dave described how he showed students that he trusted them by structuring his classroom in respectful ways and by speaking candidly with them about their poverty, a dilemma that was described by all participants.

These four teachers reveal the different ways that rapport may be used as an approach

for dilemma management. All of the participants expressed that they valued rapport, but their words and actions show that classroom rapport seemed to come at different levels, and teachers' words and actions seemed to reveal the varying degrees to which it was practiced.

Teacher preparation. The final approach for dilemma management—one that all teachers described in detail—was the ways in which teacher participants navigated dilemmas through personal preparation. The teachers described specifically how they responded to dilemmas by increasing their own personal knowledge. The following participants exemplify the different ways this dilemma management approach presented itself within the data.

Jackie experienced discomfort at the fact that she was not prepared to teach the required multicultural young adult text. She explained, “It is just that I feel like I don't know a lot about [the book] either that I would really have to do my homework before the lesson. You know, I know the premise. I know more than [the students] do. But if someone did know a lot about it and was like, ‘No you are wrong.’ [...] I would be like, ‘O...K... I guess I have to go home and do some homework.’” To prepare for her dilemma of a lack of knowledge, she began by reading the teacher manual. She said, “I read through the teacher manual to see what they wanted me to teach. And then I kind of used the teacher manual as a guide [...] So while I have no official training, I just do what I feel will reach the kids.” And when the teacher manual didn't provide enough information, she said, “Google [*laughing*]. I mean, it really is my best friend.” Jackie experienced discomfort in her lack of knowledge of the background of the text and worried that a student may “know a lot about it,” so she prepared for this dilemma by reading the teacher manual and searching on Google.

As stated in previous sections, Marcia had a lot of preparation. When I asked her how she might have been better prepared, she responded, “I don't know. I suppose...I mean, at the

level that I am at, at the doctoral level, and having done so much with critical social theory, I don't know. I mean, go back and read my *Life in Schools* [McLaren, 2003] again? Or get *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* [Freire, 2000] or any of those things?" However, when I ask her if she could have been offered more knowledge by the school, she answered, "Well, this district could always offer more of the right things [*laughing*], but I really feel like, as far as education goes, I have had a lot." All of the other participants shared the ways in which they continued to seek knowledge. Marcia's response was slightly different because she felt prepared but then added that her district could "always offer more of the right things."

Participants chose to respond to dilemmas by reading outside sources as a form of preparation. When Kim perceived that she did not have enough background of the region, history, and current events of the setting of her multicultural young adult text, she said that her response was:

I've tried to read as much as I can ... I found a magazine on the table the other day, and there was an article about the Middle East and trying to explain where that all came from and the different religious sects and stuff like that, so I would read that. I will—if the students ask me a question, and I don't know the answer, I will look it up for them, or I will look it up together with them.

She specifically described the ways that she sought knowledge alongside the students. She said, "I do research with them, so when they are doing research, I will hop on the computer and I will do some research, as well." She was not afraid to remind students that she was "not an expert" and that they were learning together. Kim expressed comfort in reading material that was unfamiliar to her. She said, "As someone who likes to learn from reading, [...] I am always eager to read something that makes me uncomfortable or kind of makes me aware of

something that I am not previously aware of.” Kim approached her lack of knowledge without fear, and she sought out new information to prepare her to teach the text.

Laura described the ways that she used experiences to help her prepare to manage dilemmas. She listed some of the experiences that impacted her: “In [professor name]’s class”; “I had those experiences in London”; “I am taking that class now for my TESOL certification”; “I’ve done some readings, like just research on my own, a lot of PDs, the [external PD name].” She felt that these experiences provided an amalgamation of knowledge for her, and she said, “I can’t pinpoint one thing that taught me how to conquer these or address them.” When I asked Laura what she recommended as an approach for negotiating challenges that may come with MCYAL, she said, “A research-based one. There is research on MC lit.” She felt comfort and confident in those who had prepared her. She described of her former professors, “If I ever had an issue, I would have reached out to old university professors who know the value of it and really gotten them to help me out and bring it to wherever you need to bring it: The Board, Central Office if the district has one of those.” The experiences Laura had in her education, in London, in an external professional development, and in her own research, allowed her to feel confident to negotiate dilemmas and seek others to support her in her instruction of MCYAL.

Conclusion

The dilemma management approaches described by participants reveal that teachers take myriad approaches to negotiating dilemmas of instructing MCYAL in their classrooms. All of the teacher participants used each of the dilemma management approaches described in this chapter. Though some teachers relied more heavily on specific dilemma management approaches, they each exercised different strategies flexibly to negotiate the multitude of

dilemmas they faced while instructing the multicultural young adult texts.

The dilemma management strategies described in this chapter did align—for the most part—with Oser’s (1991) theoretical model. I did not use Oser’s model for a priori or deductive codes, but my emergent categories and themes mapped onto Oser’s model. Participants used passive strategies in which they did not take full responsibility for the dilemma. These included an approach of passive acceptance, where participants took a defeatist approach to a dilemma, and it included an approach of cognizance, where participants said that they used awareness as an approach, but they didn’t take specific actions to remedy the dilemma. The passive approach corresponds with Oser’s avoidance strategy where “someone else would have to find the balance of justice, care and truthfulness” (p. 203) for the dilemma.

Participants also used authoritative approaches where they made single handed decisions and also felt the need to justify those decisions to others. These approaches, which I grouped under the authoritative theme, correspond with two dilemma management approaches described by Oser (1991): single handed decision making and discourse I, or incomplete discourse. In both of these approaches, the subject takes “personal responsibility for settling the problem” (p. 205), but in the latter, the participant justifies the decisions to others.

All of the participants described the ways they did or might confer with others about specific dilemmas. Within this theme, I found that teachers discussed how they might confer with other adults and their students. This approach corresponds with Oser’s (1991) highest level of dilemma management, discourse, II, or a complete discourse, where the teacher “acts similarly to one with a ‘discourse I’ orientation” but additionally, that teacher believes that

others are “rational human being[s] who [are] interested in and capable of balancing justice, care, and truthfulness” (p. 205).

Not included in Oser’s (1991) model are the pedagogical strategies that teachers used. These strategies were separate from, for example, the single handed approach, because the teachers might include or exclude others as they used these strategies in their classrooms. Thus, they did not fit under the umbrella of any of the previously described themes. The strategies that teachers used, specifically, included specific instructional strategies, student connections, discussion, rapport, and teacher preparation.

The teacher participants exercised different levels of Oser’s (1991) model and used them flexibly and not with one single orientation for managing all of their dilemmas. The data showed that the varied ways that the participants navigated these dilemmas seemed to reveal what the participants valued in their classrooms. I will reflect upon the layered textures of these dilemma management strategies and their potential connections to Critical Whiteness Studies in the discussion section.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study revealed that when White teachers were instructing a multicultural young adult text in their urban, culturally diverse classrooms, they experienced dilemmas related to their identity and knowledge, students' home lives and knowledge, book content, and curriculum and resources. To manage these dilemmas, participants used passive approaches, authoritative approaches, conference approaches, and pedagogical approaches.

Other dilemmas and dilemma management approaches

There were several dilemmas that were not saturated across participants. This study relied on emergent data, and though these categories might be significant for all of the participants, they all did not identify them as dilemmas during the semi-structured interviews.

Participants named a vast number of pedagogical issues (e.g. behavior, technology use) as particularly dilemmatic. Because these pedagogical issues differed greatly from participant to participant and because the participants most often explained that they weren't connected to the instruction of the multicultural young adult texts, these pedagogical issues were not included as findings.

Some participants described dilemmas of student turnover and attendance. They described how students rotated into and out of their classrooms on a daily basis for a variety of reasons—suspensions, course changes, district moves, absences—as particularly disruptive to instruction.

Participants expressed frustration with the length of their texts. Because almost all of

the participants read the majority of their texts aloud in class to students, the text's length—which they deemed to be either too short or too long—was identified as a dilemma. Because this dilemma was not saturated across all participants, however, it was not considered a finding.

Almost all participants named time as an influential dilemma—time to complete their school work at home, time required to prepare to teach the texts, time to teach the text within the curricular and semester guidelines. Time was mentioned across participants, but its contextual differences were quite different. Thus, I considered the nuances of the dilemma of time and collapsed the data into other dilemmas. For example, within the teacher knowledge theme of the findings, I discussed how teachers found it difficult to find the time to prepare for texts. Within the curriculum theme, I discussed how the teachers found the time required to teach the texts to be dilemmatic.

Teacher participants were also concerned with the rigor of the texts and the reading levels of their students. Some perceived the texts to be very rigorous while others felt they were easy to read. A few participants worried that their students would have difficulty with the reading level of the texts due to the background knowledge required, while others perceived the texts to be easy for students to access due to the text's lower reading level. Overall, most of the participants perceived the fact that the text was a work of young adult literature to be a positive aspect. Dilemmas pertaining to rigor or more generally to the fact that the texts were young adult were not saturated across participants, and thus, these concerns were not included in the findings.

Another dilemma that was not saturated was teachers' fear that students would have difficulty making connections to the text. Overall, most participants felt that their students

would be able to more easily connect with the text because it featured marginalized cultures. However, some participants worried that because that marginalized culture was not shared by all of the students' cultures that it would be particularly difficult for students to connect with a culture of color different from their own. This dilemma varied across participants and was particularly salient when teachers used a text that featured a culture that was very different from the cultures shared by most of the students in their classrooms. Because the vast majority of participants felt positively that their students could make connections with the text, this dilemma was not included as a finding.

Participants also described how their emotions influenced their instruction. For example, they described frustration, anger and other emotional reactions they experienced with respect to students and administration. All participants described both positive and negative emotions toward their overall work and their work with the multicultural young adult text, but their emotions did not act as a dilemma. Instead, it seemed that many of these emotions came as a byproduct of dilemmas. Thus, this category was not considered to be a finding.

Most of the participants did not see their gender as influential on their interactions with students or instruction of the texts. I asked participants multiple questions about their gender because I was curious if they perceived themselves in intersectional ways and how the gendered classroom might operate with respect to discussions of race and ethnicity. Several participants described that students seemed to be more respectful of male teachers, but other participants perceived that, as females, they could develop more nurturing relationships with students, and Dave described himself as a Papi figure (which I include in the dilemma management findings section about rapport). However, because most of the participants did

not view their gender as dilemmatic, this category was not saturated and is not included in the findings.

Participants also named a variety of dilemma management approaches that were not saturated across all of the participants. Oser's (1991) model includes a delegation approach where subjects delegate or transfer the management of a dilemma to others. Though some participants used this approach, it was not employed by all or even most of the participants. Also, some participants described the ways they used personal reflection as an approach for dilemma management. Some participants described how that reflection helped them better manage a dilemma, such as their identities. This was not an approach described by all participants, however, so it was not included as a finding.

The teaching context does (not) matter

This study reminds us that when we consider the dilemmas that teachers perceive with MCYAL in their classrooms, it is essential to consider the contexts in which they teach and the influence of their personal identities. Participants were bound by their contexts, and they remind us that factors like leadership, curricular guidelines, and text availability highly influence their perceptions of the texts and their teaching. All participants valued multicultural young adult literature as important for their culturally diverse, urban classrooms, but their ability to choose the text and the ways in which the school mandated the selection and teaching of those texts largely contributed to the teachers' emotions, perceptions, and instructional decisions in the classroom. This aligns with research that says that teachers must have freedom in order to effectively instruct in urban classrooms and that mandated curricula can be harmful to student learning and the teaching profession overall (Pargolis, Meese, and Doring, 2016). In the paragraphs that follow, I explore the relationship

between freedom and the participants' perceptions and awareness of their Whiteness.

Existing research encourages schools to allow for more book choices for students (Glenn & Ginsberg, 2016). My dissertation study, in which many teachers were using district-prescribed texts for whole-class instruction, suggests that teachers' freedom regarding book choices matters, too. Participants discussed often their (lack of) power to choose the text that they were instructing and the ways it influenced their emotions and dispositions toward the texts. Participants varied in what they perceived to be safe in texts—from controversial content to the culture featured. They described their decisions to use texts that did or did not match the cultures of their students and the resulting comfort this provided for their own dilemmas of identity, knowledge, and expertise. Teacher choice is particularly complicated in the ways that the findings show that even teachers who did choose their texts did not necessarily choose wisely. For example, several participants chose texts that did not relate closely to the experiences or cultural backgrounds of the students in their classrooms. Jackie, whose choices were limited, still chose to use *Dragonwings* (Yep, 1975) over a text about slavery, which she perceived to be too close to her students' ancestry. Lisa had much freedom and chose *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (Alexie, 2007) and explained that the Native American culture featured in the text made her feel like the “expert” in the room. The teachers' comfort levels with respect to the cultures within the texts remind us that given limited choices, teachers who value multicultural young adult literature may resort to texts that feature cultures different than the students in their classrooms because these provide safety and comfort. The study also reveals that multicultural young adult texts are not perceived equally and that teachers' perceptions toward controversial and uncomfortable content play a role in text selection and preference.

In other ways, this study shows that the teaching context and the teachers' freedom might not matter as much as one might assume. Participants' (lack of) awareness of their Whiteness seemed to influence their beliefs and instructional choices despite the rigidity of the context in which they teach. Within this study, participants' knowledge and perceptions of their Whiteness emerged regardless of their contextual situations. We know that urban youth experience highly regulated, structured education in sharp comparison with their suburban peers (Pargolis, Meese, and Doring, 2016). Three participants described the ways in which their scripted curriculum was limiting. However, these participants' reactions to this scripted curricula were also revealing of their perceptions of Whiteness. One participant, Jackie, did not perceive her Whiteness as particularly influential on her instruction. Haviland (2008) found that teachers may cite authority and assert ignorance to avoid personal discomfort. Similarly, Jackie attributed most of her dilemmas to rigid curricular requirements. Another participant, Laura, who had a heightened awareness of her Whiteness, elected to reject curricular requirements. She expressed a desire to do what she perceived to be best for her students at the risk of her job. These two teachers, who had varying levels of awareness of their Whiteness, made very different choices within their contexts. This reveals the ways that context may not be the only variable, despite some participants' eagerness to place blame on their contexts and continue the status quo.

Other participants described their freedom with respect to the curriculum and required texts. These participants expressed pleasure at their ability to morph their curricular guidelines to suit their needs, and the ways they chose to use that flexibility were particularly revealing of their conceptions of Whiteness. Dave, who was very aware of his White identity, intentionally designed conversations, chose texts, and modified resources to address issues of

immigration and privilege in his classroom. Kayla did not feel that her White identity influenced her teaching greatly. She did not use her power as department head to purchase or use more multicultural young adult texts in her classroom. Kayla described that these were options—but they were not options she chose. Further, she perceived that there would “probably not” be a place for the text in the curriculum if they moved to semester-long courses. These two teachers, who also had varying levels of awareness of their Whiteness, also made very different choices within their contexts. An examination of these more flexible contexts reveals the ways that participants were not always eager to include more multicultural young adult literature and conversations about race, ethnicity, and culture, given opportunities to do so.

An analysis of the previously described contexts offers that even in potentially powerless or powerful positions, the ways the participants positioned their Whiteness influenced the decisions that they made in their classrooms. Teachers who perceived themselves to be powerless still had some authority in their classrooms, and their enactments of that authority corresponded with the ways they positioned their White identities. Some of these teachers also believe they are powerless because of factors that are out of their control rather than acting positively toward factors within their control (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017). For example, Jackie blamed the curriculum for most of her problems in the classroom, but Becky, who taught in the same context and showed more awareness of her Whiteness, showed us how she supplemented materials and texts to allow for some conversations about race, ethnicity, and culture in her classroom. In contrast, other teachers who were in more powerful contextual positions did not always use those powerful positions in ways that might interrogate issues of race and privilege in the classroom. Kayla revealed that even though she

had the power to choose texts in her curriculum, she only included one multicultural young adult text, and she perceived it would disappear the following year if they moved to semesterized courses. All of the teachers, regardless of context, made single-handed decisions that filtered the material that would reach their students and the discussions that occurred in their classrooms. The single handed decisions by these White teachers to control the materials that reach their students remind us that the issues of race are systemic (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011). It shows one potential reason for why White culture continues to be pervasive in the framework and functioning of schools, particularly with respect to curricula (Apple, 2004; McLaren, 2003), and these teachers, who had the power to manipulate curriculum, did not always do so.

Teachers with more rigid contextual situations still found ways to infuse multicultural texts and critical conversations of race. For example, Laura opted to frame a portion of her teaching of *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925) on a critical analysis of why there weren't any "minorities" in the text. Becky compacted curriculum in order to have her "four shining weeks" to teach *Seedfolks* (Fleischman, 2004), a book that she perceived met the "cultural, economic, racial needs of the students." Despite the argument that teachers can and do manipulate curriculum and context in ways to disrupt the status quo, the findings of this study align with scholarship that expresses that "teaching needs to be structured to promote freedom" (Pargolis, Meese, and Doring, 2016, p. 798). For example, even though Laura chose to undermine the prescribed curriculum, she also shared the precariousness of her job security as a result of these acts of subversion. Further, participants who had more freedom expressed more positive emotions toward their work, and they were more positive toward the books that they were teaching, which is likely to influence instruction.

Interrogating where the power lies

Given the number of dilemmas that the teacher participants experienced, it would be impossible for them to use a complete conversation approach to every dilemma they encounter. However, teachers used authoritative approaches to specific dilemmas, and an analysis of their choices reveals the ways these decisions can be connected to how they positioned their Whiteness. Some teachers made authoritative decisions that denied overt discussions about race and racism in their classroom (Crenshaw, 1997). For example, Katherine limited the time that students could talk about contemporary acts of racism, and she corrected the students when they tried to connect this racism to contemporary issues, like police brutality. Other teachers intentionally conferred with students in an effort to decenter their Whiteness and interrupt the power inherent in both their White positioning and teacher positioning in the classroom setting. For instance, Laura invited her student who was a Bosnian refugee to teach the class about Syrian refugees. These two teachers remind us that teachers' awareness and positioning of their Whiteness emerged within all of the dilemma management approaches.

Participant responses reflected all of the levels of Nayak's (2007) paradigm: abolishing, deconstructing, and rethinking Whiteness, and participants moved discursively between the paradigms across responses and interviews. Within Nayak's abolishing Whiteness paradigm, Katherine, for example, wanted to erase her Whiteness with the colorblind perspective that she endorsed. Within Nayak's deconstructing Whiteness paradigm, Becky noted that she grew intensely aware of her Whiteness when she drove a homeless student in her new car. Whiteness is mutable based on context, and this incident exemplified how Becky felt more aware of her privilege. In an example of rethinking

Whiteness, Dave described how he discussed with students the ways in which their personal and collective pasts haunt the present and how he is privileged not to experience that inequity. Participants did not follow just one paradigm of Nayak's theory. Within and across interviews, at times they shared moments of tremendous guilt (like when Becky drove her homeless student in her new car) and at other times, they expressed that they didn't perceive their Whiteness to greatly influence their instruction (as in Kayla's responses about the ways that she perceived her White identity influenced her instruction of MCYAL). This extends the Nayak's theory in the ways that it shows that Whiteness is fluid, and individuals' beliefs may fluctuate across paradigms of Whiteness.

Further, participants who perceived their Whiteness to be a less challenging dilemma seemed to identify dilemmas that were not connected to race and ethnicity. For example, Jackie did not believe that her Whiteness and the multicultural aspects of the text were as challenging as curricular issues, student concerns, and her administration's evaluations of her. When I asked these participants to identify dilemmas that they were experiencing connected with the multicultural young adult texts, they often focused on dilemmas like the book's content or the students' work ethic. When I posed questions about how their race or ethnicity might influence their instruction or interactions with students, they said that they did not perceive that their Whiteness had a strong influence on these factors. Participants who recognized their Whiteness as a particularly large challenge described their Whiteness in most of their responses and continually expressed its impact on all of their dilemmas.

Some of the teachers provided space and time for students to consider the ways that race is endemic and systemic (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011) (like when Laura asked her students to interrogate American culture and privilege and wrote their responses on

the board); other teachers endorsed colorblind perspectives to their students (as in Katherine's descriptions of her rejection of student comments related to contemporary acts of racism). This reminds us that simply adopting a multicultural young adult text for instruction is not enough. Without culturally responsive practices paired with these texts, MCYAL can be utilized in ways that may be doing more harm than good. Oser (1991) elevates complete conversations as the highest approach to dilemma management, but this study shows that these communal conversations can afford White teachers opportunities to engage in White talk, which can lead to unproductive conversations that reinforce Whiteness and deficit-oriented perspectives—thereby giving teachers greater confidence and validation in their these perspectives (Borsheim-Black, 2015; Haviland, 2008; McIntyre, 1997). Thus, this study pushes back on Oser's dilemma management model by reminding us that placing trust and care in others does not necessarily lead to more just, equitable teaching philosophies. For example, Marcia used her conversations with her colleagues to affirm her negative beliefs about her students and her decisions not to approach a troubling, personal connection that her student made with the text. Though Oser promotes these conversations as the highest level approach to dilemma management, this study shows the ways that these conversations have the power to affirm deficit-oriented perspectives, particularly those that endorse the White teacher as the authoritative figure and sole bearer of knowledge within the classroom.

All of the teachers valued multicultural young adult texts, but not all of the teachers valued their students' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2005). An examination of some of the participants' perspectives affirms scholarship that has found that teachers still believe in the banking concept for instruction (Freire, 2000), where they remain in authoritative positions and fill their students with their knowledge. Marcia slammed her

fist on the table as she described that her students misinterpreted the text. Katherine said that she “can't change [the students' beliefs about racism] overnight, [and] it is a work in progress.” Some participants perceived that they held the knowledge, and the students should be the captive listeners and learners. Participants described the ways they made passive and authoritative decisions—decisions which denied their students' voices in the classrooms.

This study also offers hope. Some participants found comfort in the discomfort of their White identities and leveraged this discomfort to initiate honest conversations with their students. For example, Lisa asked her students directly if they want her to read the “N word” aloud. She reminded them that as the only White person in the room, she was asking them because they should have the authority to make that decision, rather than she. The study also extends Oser's (1991) model of dilemma management. Some teachers, like Dave, complicated Oser's model in culturally responsive ways. He trusted his middle school students to confer with each other about dilemmas. This rises above Oser's low-level delegation approach and also seems to be above his highest level, where subjects have complete conversations with others. Dave's relinquishment of his power and trust in his students reveals the ways that he valued his students' input in dilemma management; he allowed them to solve the dilemma amongst themselves.

Implications for theory

This study stretches the conceptual framework of dilemma management. To begin, it suggests that perhaps all conflicts result in internal negotiations for teachers. As noted in the conceptual framework, within English Education, scholars use myriad terms to describe teacher conflicts: *barriers* (Kist, 2007), *challenges* (Finders & Bush, 2003), *dynamics* (Stewart & Webster, 2011), *obstacles* (Finders & Bush, 2003), *rubs* (Meth & Anzo, 2012),

tensions (Beach, 1994; Meth & Anzo, 2012), and *threats* (Agee, 1999). Terms such as these imply that the conflicts are external to teachers. At the outset of this study, I planned to analyze whether the conflicts my participants described were external or internal to them. My intention was to name the external conflicts as “challenges” and the internal conflicts as “dilemmas” (Anderson, 2002) because these dilemmas focused on internal values and beliefs. As I analyzed the conflicts that teachers described, I noticed that the teacher participants internalized even the conflicts that I would ordinarily consider to be external challenges. For example, censorship might ordinarily be perceived to be an external force, yet some participants described censorship as a dilemma that was internal for them. Most of the participants never faced issues of censorship, yet they worried about censorship frequently. They wondered whether they should write controversial words on the board or skip pages. All of the conflicts described in the findings are described as dilemmas because the teachers internally grappled with each of them.

The study also shows how participants may not perceive these conflicts to be dilemmas with various alternatives. Lampert (1985) describes dilemmas as “problem[s] forcing a choice between equally undesirable alternatives” (p. 182). In my analysis of all of the participants, I discerned that all of the dilemmas described by participants offered at least two alternative choices. It is important for me to note that not all of my participants saw these alternatives. For example, Jackie believed that there was no flexibility in her curriculum, so she did not see a choice between two undesirable alternatives. She perceived that she had no choice but to follow the curriculum. As the researcher, however, I perceived that Jackie *did* have a choice. Her undesirable alternatives were: 1) follow the scripted curriculum, which resulted in her own and her students’ unhappiness, or 2) insert supplemental texts and lessons

(as Becky and Laura did) and risk her job. Thus, while my participants may have perceived some conflicts as challenges external to them, I see these conflicts as internal dilemmas with choices. My perceptions are based on the ways I saw other participants manage these dilemmas through flexible thinking.

This study also stretches Oser's (1991) dilemma management model. While there are five steps in his model, findings suggest that this model may be limiting. Thus, I generated two steps before the lowest level of Oser's model: passive acceptance and cognizance. These two steps represent more passive approaches to dilemma management, when participants did not actively avoid dilemmas. Instead, they took defeatist attitudes toward the dilemmas and perceived them to be beyond their control (passive acceptance) and expressed an awareness of dilemmas but did not actively work to negotiate them (cognizance). The addition of these levels to Oser's model is suggestive that individuals perceive some dilemmas to be external to themselves or not worthy of negotiation. This is different from Oser's lowest level of avoidance. Oser describes the avoidance approach to be when individuals avoid dilemmas and take no responsibility for managing them, but he also adds that these individuals elect to ignore the responsibility of managing these dilemmas. The participants in this study did not say that they were ignoring their responsibility of managing the dilemmas. Instead, they believed that these dilemmas were either beyond their control or sufficiently addressed through their (passive) cognizance of them.

The study also offers that the highest level of Oser's (1991) model can be extended to allow for a deeper understanding of dilemma management approaches. When teachers participate in complete conversations, they perceive that others are deeply involved and could have valuable input. Thus, they involve others in the management of the dilemmas. Findings

reveal that there were distinctions within the ways that the participants exercised this level of Oser's model. While all participants sought input from other adults and described many instances where they asked professional others for input, some participants repeatedly expressed the ways in which they asked their students for assistance in the management of dilemmas. Participants ranged in the ways that they involved their students in this dilemma management process. Marcia, for example, said that she should probably seek student input but did not describe how she actually did so. Katherine merely checked in with students after class to ask if she had offended them. However, Lisa gave her students the authority to make the decision about whether she should use the "N Word." Dave trusted his students to work with each other to manage the dilemmas and provide input.

In total, these findings extend theories of dilemma management because they suggest that teachers may be: 1) internalizing all conflicts, even those that are ordinarily considered external to them; 2) unaware that they have alternative choices to dilemmas; 3) practicing even more passive approaches than Oser's (1991) dilemma management model suggests; and 4) seeking input from both professional others *and* students, and their reliance on these approaches seems to suggest who they trust to negotiate the dilemmas.

Implications for practice

The #weneeddiversebooks movement is gaining traction in professional circles, but a significant challenge that remains for teachers and those who prepare teachers is how to address the dilemmas that teachers may be experiencing when using these diverse books in their classrooms. This study affirms scholarship that shows that the instruction of multicultural young adult texts is inherently dilemmatic given the issues of race, culture, and privilege that these texts embody. Findings suggest that teacher education programs must

focus explicitly on these controversial subject matters, and coursework should be more strongly aligned with the goal to prepare teachers with contextualized experiences (Williamson, Hammerness, Kosnik, Apedoe, & Thomas, 2017) to build their knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

This study supports scholarship that values field experiences that promote authentic, contextualized learning experiences in urban classrooms (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017). Based on the beneficial experiences described by participants, coursework might include helping teachers learn how to develop positive, reciprocal relationships with parents (Lisa). This might include modeling conversations to preservice and inservice teachers, providing recommendations for improving communication with parents (e.g. regular emails, phone calls, and meetings), and offering ongoing forums for parents and teachers to collaborate. Preservice teacher might also be afforded more opportunities to develop their learning experientially through study abroad programs, particularly in foreign locations (Laura). Teachers also have the potential to develop their contextual learning by residing—even temporarily—in the community in which they plan to teach (Dave). Districts might offer incentives or benefits to encourage teachers to reside in these communities. Participants described how authentic, contextualized experiences helped them better analyze issues of race and ethnicity, understand cultures different from their own, and build rapport with their students. Scholarship shows that students and parents of color value teachers’ abilities to establish relationships with their families and communities (Sleeter, 2017), and thus, in order to develop these relationships, teachers must come to know and understand the communities in which they work. Experiential learning offers great promise for teachers to build these partnerships.

Valuing student voices means offering them literature outside of the mainstream. All of the teachers of this study perceived MCYAL to be important for their students, but further conversations revealed that most used it in an additive way (Banks, 2004, 2009). Agirdag, Merry, and Van Houtte (2016) found that ethnic minority teachers tended to integrate multicultural content at higher levels than their White counterparts. The teachers within this study perceived MCYAL to be important, but further questions revealed that most only used one multicultural young adult text during the entire school year, and this text often did not match the races or ethnicities of their students. The majority of texts used in the classrooms within this study featured the White, dominant culture; this finding is consistent with existing scholarship (Stallworth et al., 2006; Stotsky, Traffas, & Wolworth, 2010). Teacher education programs might ask students to analyze texts included on syllabi and curricula and teach about the danger of using additive approaches of culture. Teacher educators might ask preservice teachers to engage in rigorous analyses of these texts to develop their understanding of these texts' potential for rich learning in the classroom. This might include using critical theory to analyze multicultural young adult literature. Appleman (2009) describes how teachers can help students of all levels develop and recognize their "intellectual flexibility" (p. 113) by engaging in personal, cultural, and political discourse about texts. Her work encourages teachers to help their students use literary and critical theories as lenses to more closely examine the texts and their world.

Participants described how their freedom to choose texts revealed the ways in which their schools operated to (de)professionalize teachers. The teachers of this study showed how they used a wealth of strategies to navigate curricular restrictions and minimal resources. For instance, Becky described how she worked to make space to include a text that she valued,

Laura explained how she approached her administration with potential solutions rather than complaints, and several participants provided suggestions for increasing access to texts—from seeking approval for internal funding to exercising external sources like DonorsChoose or GoFundMe. These strategies are important for preservice and inservice teachers to consider as they work to increase their confidence in the classroom. The participants of this study who had more professional freedom expressed more positive emotions toward their work. This reminds us that if schools provide supportive structures and ongoing development for teachers to prepare them to use MCYAL effectively and to engage in conversations about race, ethnicity, and culture in healthy, productive ways, then these schools should also place trust in their teachers to choose texts that are the best fit for their students.

When teachers deliberate about the texts that they will use in their classrooms, they should be prepared to consider the complexities that come with text selection. Many of the teachers of this study—Jackie, Kayla, Kim, Laura, and Lisa—used texts that did not reflect the cultures of their students. Teachers might be taught to interrogate their comfort levels and consider whether it is better to include texts that feature cultures that are different or dissimilar to the students in their classrooms (or perhaps, they can integrate both options). Teachers must be reminded of the ways in which they are filtering the material that reaches their students. Though they critiqued censorship from parents and administration, participant comments showed the ways in which the teachers were censors themselves. Marcia, for instance, opted to exclude books that made her uncomfortable because of their potential connections with her students' lived experiences. Lisa described that she did not include more MCYAL because she lacked the knowledge of quality texts that would stand the test of time. Teacher education and professional development programs might provide resources for

teachers to continually grow their knowledge of publications. This study showed that given this freedom, some teachers will choose not to include MCYAL, so teacher preparation programs might show how this literature can be valuable for students to explore. All multicultural young adult texts and topics were not treated equally by participants, and their perceptions toward controversial and uncomfortable content influenced their text selection and instruction. Teacher education and professional development programs might consider providing strategies for teachers to navigate this controversial and uncomfortable content. These might include modeling conversations about controversial content, sharing anti-censorship resources, and writing book justifications to be shared with parents and administrators. Kim provided suggestions for informing parents of controversial content and trusting students to skip any pages that make them feel uncomfortable.

This study showed that participant responses were imbued with deficit perspectives toward their students (Emdin, 2016) and that simply working in an urban setting does not in and of itself allow teachers to challenge their personal stereotypes and negative perceptions (D’Haem & Griswold, 2017). Evidence in scholarship shows that teachers, similarly to some participants in this study, tend to believe that problems that exist in urban classrooms are attributable to the students’ home lives, parents, and poverty (D’Haem, J., & Griswold, 2017; Sleeter, 2017). As Emdin (2016) describes, “The key to becoming an effective educator is acknowledging the differences between students and teacher and adjusting one’s teaching accordingly, which often requires nontraditional approaches to teaching and learning” (Emdin, 2016, p. 83). This study suggests that teachers can and do use nontraditional approaches to adjust their instruction to acknowledge the differences between them and their students. Laura, for example, joined her students in the creation of their own Chin-Kees to

discuss race and privilege frankly. Dave brought in a guest speaker to field students' questions about recent threats of deportation raids. The teachers of this study showed that critical conversations and nontraditional instruction is occurring in some classrooms and that multicultural young adult texts offer opportunities for these discussions.

The teachers within this study ranged in their knowledge and beliefs regarding the influence of Whiteness on schools. Marcia believed that teacher preparation programs must provide more critical social theory to their students, yet she was unable to reflect on how her Whiteness impacted her instruction—though she knew it did, in some way, influence her practice. Teacher preparation and professional development programs might consider providing teachers with a strong understanding of Critical Whiteness Studies and Critical Race Theory, in general. These theories could be infused in all classes to ensure an integrated understanding of the application of the theory to practice. Teachers might be asked to reflect upon the impact of their Whiteness on their instruction before and after their reading of articles and theories about race. Then, they could be asked to engage in discussions with their peers about the impact of their racial identities on their planning and instruction. Teacher educators or professional development leaders might ask them to consider their own perceptions and whether their beliefs align with some or all of Nayak's (2007) paradigms of abolishing, deconstructing, and rethinking Whiteness. Teachers could then apply this knowledge to their past and current perspectives. They might reflect on moments when they positioned themselves within each paradigm. For instance, they might explore a moment where they perceived Whiteness more fluidly (the deconstructing paradigm) and felt more White, based on the context. These critical analyses of Whiteness have the potential to provide a heightened awareness of Whiteness' impact on curriculum and instruction.

Applying the theories to practice seems critical to shaping and expanding teacher perceptions. Marcia reminded us that some teachers might be knowledgeable about critical theories but may not be reflective of how the theories influence their practice. Thus, teacher education and professional development programs might provide opportunities for teachers to directly apply these theories to specific lessons and units they (plan to) teach.

As teachers prepare to engage in these discussions about race, they must be reminded that this work is uncomfortable, and it requires a certain vulnerability. This necessitates personal and cultural confidence for teachers to ask other professionals and their students for help in the dilemma management process. Teacher educators might model the ways that teachers can seek input from their students, who might be the experts on some aspects of the multicultural young adult texts. An analysis of Oser's (1991) levels of dilemma management and the nuances of the highest level, complete conversations, might allow teachers to better understand their options for dilemma management and the potential benefits of seeking student input prior to making decisions. Teacher education and professional development programs might provide teachers with various sample dilemmas they might face, and as a group, they could discuss the ways they might seek input about these particular dilemmas. This requires a certain willingness to seek students' input related to aspects like classroom conversations, cultural content, and norms. Teacher preparation and in-service programs might foster this willingness by showing a positive classroom environment in action. This might include a simulated learning experience that places the preservice or inservice teachers as the students who have expertise in a subject. By modeling this experience, they might recognize why it is advantageous to consider their own students' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2005). Teachers could ask their students to engage in reader

response (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995) to help their students connect with the literature. This, in turn, has the potential to help the teachers learn from their students, as well.

Participants also showed us that teachers need opportunities that afford them the space and place to discuss what they are seeing in their urban experiences (D'Haem & Griswold, 2017). All of the teachers within this study desired an increase in quality opportunities to develop their learning professionally and in conversation with others. One of the participants even begged administrators for these opportunities and was denied. Multiple teachers described that their participation in the study allowed them to think through issues of race in ways that were productive for their classroom instruction. The study suggests that teachers continue to experience discomfort and guilt (Ohito, 2016) that go unacknowledged in their district placements. As is advocated in existing scholarship, this study offers that it is valuable for teachers to seek opportunities and strategies for addressing the home lives of their students (Alvarez, 2017; Barrett, Ausbrooks, & Martinez-Cosio, 2012). Findings suggests that teachers need to be provided with opportunities to think through these feelings, confer with others, and consider approaches for managing dilemmas. In order to develop critical consciousness, this might require teachers to embrace their discomfort and be emotionally open to supporting each other in learning communities (Ohito, 2016). Teachers might form book clubs to discuss and learn from both multicultural young adult texts and critical theories. As teachers gain knowledge about the richness of their students' homes and communities, it is important to ensure that these experiences are not miseducative. Providing teachers with and discussing articles that debunk common myths and misperceptions about urban communities would be a valuable part of these learning experiences. Quality professional development programs shouldn't simply provide space for teachers to talk.

Marcia reminded us that some teachers engage in White talk (Borsheim-Black, 2015; Haviland, 2008; McIntyre, 1997), which might affirm deficit-oriented teaching philosophies. Therefore, a quality professional development program will provide discussions for teachers specifically to interrogate White talk and its consequences; to analyze deficit-oriented perspectives; and to engage in frank, critical conversations about race, power, and privilege.

This study offers insight into the ways in which teachers may or may not be honoring student voices. Emdin (2016) suggests that very different approaches to teaching and learning must be adopted in order to prevent “classroom colonialism” (p. 14). Though some participants limited student talk, provided boundaries on topics for discussion, and skipped particularly controversial sections of their texts, other participants described the ways in which they allowed students to teach the class and provide insight into topics in which they, the students, had more expertise. This aligns with scholars who suggest that valuing voice in urban classrooms “means providing students with an opportunity to have their thoughts, words, and ideas about the classroom and the world beyond it heard and incorporated into the approach to instruction” (Emdin, 2016, p. 59). Teachers must be provided with strategies to responsively design their classrooms to allow students to share their expertise and draw from their funds of knowledge (González, Moll, and Amanti, 2005).

Implications for research

This work offers multiple opportunities for continued research. Teacher education programs have added multicultural and social justice components to required coursework, but participants perceived that these courses were not helpful in preparing them for the workforce. Further, most of the participants spoke of their students in deficit ways, despite this coursework (Sleeter, 2017). Further research might examine the multicultural

coursework that exists in teacher education programs and how specific experiences do or do not prepare teachers to emerge into culturally diverse, urban classrooms.

The study used a phenomenological approach for its methodology because it sought to explore what was occurring in the phenomenon: White teachers who use MCYAL in culturally diverse, urban classrooms. With an understanding of the dilemmas that these teacher participants experienced, researchers might next explore specifically each dilemma in focused studies. For instance, researchers might ask participants directly about their perceptions of their students' knowledge. Alternatively, researchers might also replicate this study with teachers of color to compare and contrast participant experiences with these texts.

Analysis of the data revealed that participants held many beliefs about what their students *should* know. This information included topics like background knowledge, life lessons, and racial inequities. Future research might explore the personal agendas of participants and what they perceive as important for their students and how this might influence their text and instructional choices.

Scholars might also explore the content of these texts. Participants were very particular about which texts that they preferred to teach in their classrooms. They differed in their perceptions about the topics that they deemed (un)safe. An additional research study might explore the specific textual sections noted by participants to better understand their perceptions of the content. Further, an analysis of the influence of the ways these authors are received by the public might be particularly illuminating. For example, Lisa and Laura both taught Sherman Alexie's (2007) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. A consideration of whether Alexie's popular reputation influenced their positioning of the text might yield powerful results about text selection and teacher comfort. In another example,

Marcia felt uncomfortable teaching most of the texts in her curriculum, but she felt comfortable with Sandra Cisneros' (1984) *The House on Mango Street*, an older text that is taught widely in schools. Considerations of controversial content and the texts' reception may provide valuable information about teacher perceptions.

The three teacher participants of this study who felt most comfortable discussing issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in their classrooms expressed the ways they connected with their students' backgrounds. Laura described her connection with the Asian culture; Lisa shared the personal, economic struggles of her childhood; and Dave lived for ten years in Spain. Each of these participants described the benefits of having these struggles, which they believed afforded stronger connections with their students. Future research might consider these kinds of lived experiences and their influence on teachers' dilemmas and dilemma management approaches.

This study explored participant perceptions, but it is important to examine how these perceptions influence teachers' actions in the classroom. The participants of this study described what they did in their classrooms, but it is critical to explore and observe their enacted behaviors within their classrooms. Further, researchers might examine student perceptions as they experience multicultural young adult texts that are instructed by White teachers.

Conclusion

This study reminds us that though culturally responsive pedagogical approaches exist in scholarship and literature, there is more work to be done to better prepare White teachers to use multicultural texts in urban classrooms. The teacher participants within this phenomenon differed considerably in their perceptions of the dilemmas that they

experienced, and participant responses revealed that their dilemma management approaches and classroom decisions were deeply entrenched in their personal philosophies of issues of race and ethnicity. Regardless of their awareness of their Whiteness, this study showed that teaching this literature is inherently dilemmatic, and that all participants managed multiple layers of dilemmas simultaneously. Given the fact that all of the teachers expressed discomfort and a lack of preparation to some degree, it is clear that teachers need to be afforded time and space to explore the dilemmas that they experience and dilemma management approaches that they use while teaching these texts.

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Appendix A. Semi-structured interview questions

Interview One Foundations and Anticipation Occurring within 1 week of the start of the unit

Introduction: I am interested in learning more about the dilemmas teachers associate with multicultural young adult literature. None of my questions are evaluative. Rather, I am interested in learning more about your thinking about the subject. All comments will remain anonymous, and any information that may identify you or your school will not be published. Some of these questions may feel repetitive, and this is to provide me with a rich understanding of your thoughts and experiences. As you talk, I will be writing on post-it notes. This will be related to an activity we will do at the end of the interview. Please know that any notes I take are not evaluative in any way.

How many years have you been teaching? What type of university did you graduate from (large, small, public, or private)? What grades/classes do you teach? How would you describe your student population?

How would you describe yourself as a teacher? As a teacher, what do you value most? What types of emotions do you experience toward your work and why? More specifically, what are your feelings about instructing this particular book?

How do you define MCYAL? Tell me a little bit about your feelings towards MCYAL.

Tell me a little bit about the multicultural young adult text(s) you teach this year. What makes it multicultural? What makes it young adult? Are these texts required by the school, or did you choose to teach them? Are there other multicultural young adult texts in the curriculum that you don't teach? Consider the content of the text. What makes this or doesn't make this feel like a safe text to teach? Do some texts feel safer to teach (content-wise) than others? Why or why not? How long have you been teaching this text? Do you feel that your education or school district has prepared you to teach this text? Why or why not? How much freedom do you have to choose your texts?

How do you plan to teach this text? [Also: Will it be a whole class, literature circle, independent reading, classroom library text?] Is this mode your choice, or is it required in your curriculum? How much freedom do you have in the unit design for this text—e.g. is it scripted? Why do you use this mode to teach the text? [Why do you teach this text? If it is a choice, what made you choose this particular text?] Why this text?

Tell me a little bit about any challenges or dilemmas you associate with teaching this text. If you have taught it before, have you had any challenges or dilemmas in previous years? What did you do (if anything)? Any other challenges/dilemmas? Thinking specifically about the fact that the text is considered to be “young adult,” what challenges or dilemmas might this cause or have

caused? What about thinking specifically about how the text is “multicultural”? What challenges or dilemmas might this cause or have caused?

Thinking about MCYAL, have you had any challenges or dilemmas related to any group of people within or outside of the school, in general? What did you do (if anything)? How have the students responded to the text in the past?

What personal, internal challenges or dilemmas have you had while you’ve taught MCYAL, in general? What did you do about these (if anything)?

What role do race or ethnicity play when you teach MCYAL? Do you feel like your race or ethnicity affect the way you teach MCYAL? Does it impact your interactions with students? Do you feel like your gender impacts your instruction of this text? Does it impact your interactions with students? Does the gender or ethnicity of your students seem to play any role in your instruction of the texts?

What is the race or ethnicity of the protagonist in the novel? What role does this play for your readers? For you?

What role, if any, does your urban school setting play in any decisions you make about this text?

Do you approach a work of MCYAL differently than other texts? Does it impact your planning or instruction in any way? Is it easier or more difficult to plan instruction for this text? Are there sections or aspects of this text that you anticipate may cause problems/concerns/frustrations?

Do you enjoy teaching works that are MCYAL? Why or why not?

During this interview, you listed of the dilemmas you associate with MCYAL. I have them on post-it notes here. Can you arrange these post-it notes in a way that makes sense to you? Please feel free to group the challenges/dilemmas, write on the post-it notes, or add challenges/dilemmas if any others emerge in this process. Why did you arrange them in the challenges/dilemmas way that you did? Looking across these challenges/dilemmas, are some of them bigger? How might you rank them? Resolved? How do you plan to negotiate each of these? What role does race/ethnicity play in this arrangement or in any of the challenges or dilemmas, in particular?

What one word or short phrase would describe your desire to use this text in the classroom?
What one word or short phrase would describe your confidence in using this text in the classroom?

Thank you for this interview. As you begin your unit, if anything strikes you or you encounter new challenges or dilemmas, please do not hesitate to email me. Our next interview will occur halfway through the unit.

Interview Two

Occurring halfway through the unit

Tell me a little bit about how the instruction of the text is going.

What challenges or dilemmas have you encountered while teaching the text? What did you do (if anything)?

During the last interview, one challenge or dilemma you mentioned was [challenge or dilemma]. Have you experienced this now that you have started teaching the text? How have you worked through (or been unable to work through) these challenges or dilemmas?

Have you experienced any unanticipated challenges or dilemmas? What did you do (if anything)?

Is teaching the text more or less challenging than you anticipated? Why?

Do you find that teaching this text is more difficult than other texts you teach? Why or why not?

What types of emotions do you experience toward your work with this text and why? What types of emotions do your students experience toward this text and why?

What challenges or dilemmas have you had with the students while you have taught the text? What did you do (if anything)?

What personal, internal challenges or dilemmas have you had while you've taught the text? How have you worked through these (or been unable to work through these)?

What role does race or ethnicity play when you teach MCYAL? Do you feel like your race or ethnicity affects the way you teach MCYAL? Does it impact your interactions with students? Do you feel like your gender impacts your instruction of this text? Does it impact your interactions with students? Does the gender or ethnicity of your students seem to play any role in your instruction of the texts?

Have you approached the text differently than other texts? Has it impacted your planning or instruction in any way? Are there sections or aspects of the text, specifically, that have challenges or dilemmas? Thinking specifically about the fact that the text is considered to be "young adult," what challenges or dilemmas might this cause or have caused? What about thinking specifically about how the text is "multicultural"?

During the last interview, you arranged the challenges or dilemmas in this way [hold up board]? Have the challenges or dilemmas changed? Would you remove any of the challenges or dilemmas? Would you add any challenges or dilemmas to post-its (offer post-it notes of a different color)? Does your grouping of the challenges change? Why did you arrange the challenges/dilemmas in the way that you did? How have you negotiated each of these challenges or dilemmas? How might you rank them? What role does race/ethnicity play in this arrangement?

or in any of the challenges or dilemmas, in particular?

During the last interview, you used the word/phrase [insert word/phrase here] to describe your desire to use this text in the classroom? What word/phrase would you use now? During the last interview, you used the word/phrase [insert word/phrase here] to describe your confidence of using this text in the classroom? What word/phrase would you use now?

Thank you for this interview. As you continue your unit, if anything strikes you or you encounter new challenges or dilemmas, please do not hesitate to email me. Our last interview will occur following the conclusion of the unit.

Interview Three
After teaching the text
Occurring within 1 week following the conclusion of the unit

Tell me a little bit about how you think the instruction of the text went.

Overall, what major challenges or dilemmas did you encounter? Can you tell me a little bit about these challenges or dilemmas? How did you respond to each of these dilemmas (if at all)?

Have you had any challenges or dilemmas related to any group, in general? What did you do (if anything)?

What personal, internal challenges or dilemmas have you had while you've taught MCYAL? How have you responded to these challenges or dilemmas (if at all)?

Have your feelings towards MCYAL changed while teaching this text?

What types of emotions did you experience toward your work this text and why?

Do you think you will teach this text again? Why or why not? Will you teach similar texts? Is this an option? Did you enjoy teaching the text?

How would you approach this text differently if you were to teach it again? What went well? What did not go well?

What role did race or ethnicity play when you teach the book? Did you feel like your race or ethnicity affected the way you teach the book? Did it impact your interactions with students? Did you feel like your gender impacts your instruction of this text? Did it impact your interactions with students? Did the gender or ethnicity of your students seem to play any role in your instruction of the texts? Did any challenges or dilemmas emerge due to the race or ethnicities in the text? Are there any controversial parts of the book? Do you feel more comfortable teaching a book that features this culture?

What role, if any, did your urban school setting play in any decisions you make about this text?

Consider the content of the text. What made this or didn't make this feel like a safe text to teach? Unsafe? Do some texts feel safer to teach (content-wise) than others? Why or why not?

Did you approach the text differently than other texts? Was teaching this text different from teaching a classic, traditional text? Were there sections or aspects of the text, specifically, that produced challenges or dilemmas? Thinking specifically about the fact that the text is considered to be "young adult," what challenges or dilemmas might this cause or have caused? What about thinking specifically about how the text is "multicultural"?

During the last interview, you arranged the challenges or dilemmas in this way [hold up board]? Did any of the challenges or dilemmas changed? Would you remove any of the challenges or dilemmas? Would you add any challenges or dilemmas to post-its (offer post-it notes of a different color)? Does your grouping of the challenges change? Why did you arrange the challenges/dilemmas in the way that you did? How did you respond to each of these challenges or dilemmas (if at all)? How might you rank them? What role did race/ethnicity play in this arrangement or in any of the challenges or dilemmas, in particular?

During the last interviews, you used the words/phrases [insert words/phrases here] to describe your desire to use this text in the classroom? What word/phrase would you use to describe your desire to use it again? During the last interview, you used the words/phrases [insert words/phrases here] to describe your confidence of using this text in the classroom? What word/phrase would you use now to describe your confidence to use it again?

What advice would you give to a new teacher who is using any MCYAL in the classroom? What advice do you have for a teacher faces challenges? What approach do you recommend? Does this advice change when you consider a teacher who is using the text in an urban classroom? Do you think the race/ethnicity of the teacher would play a role in their planning and instruction? How, if at all, do you think you could have been better prepared (in college or professional development) to teach this text or similar ones? How might colleges or schools better prepare teachers to teach MCYAL?

Has participating in this study altered your thinking or your instruction in any way?

Thank you for this interview. If anything strikes you and you want to share it, please do not hesitate to email me. After I have interviewed all of the participants and analyzed the data, I may call you to ask you a few clarifying questions over the phone.

Interview Four
After interviewing all participants
Phone interview likely occurring in June-August

Follow-up interview for clarification of responses that may arise as a result of data analysis or interviews with other participants.

Appendix B. Email prompts

Email One: during the first week of the unit (following the first interview):

Dear [Participant Name],

Good evening! I know you started your unit recently. I am checking in to ask you how it is going!

Thank you,

Email Two: 1-2 weeks following the second interview:

Dear [Participant Name],

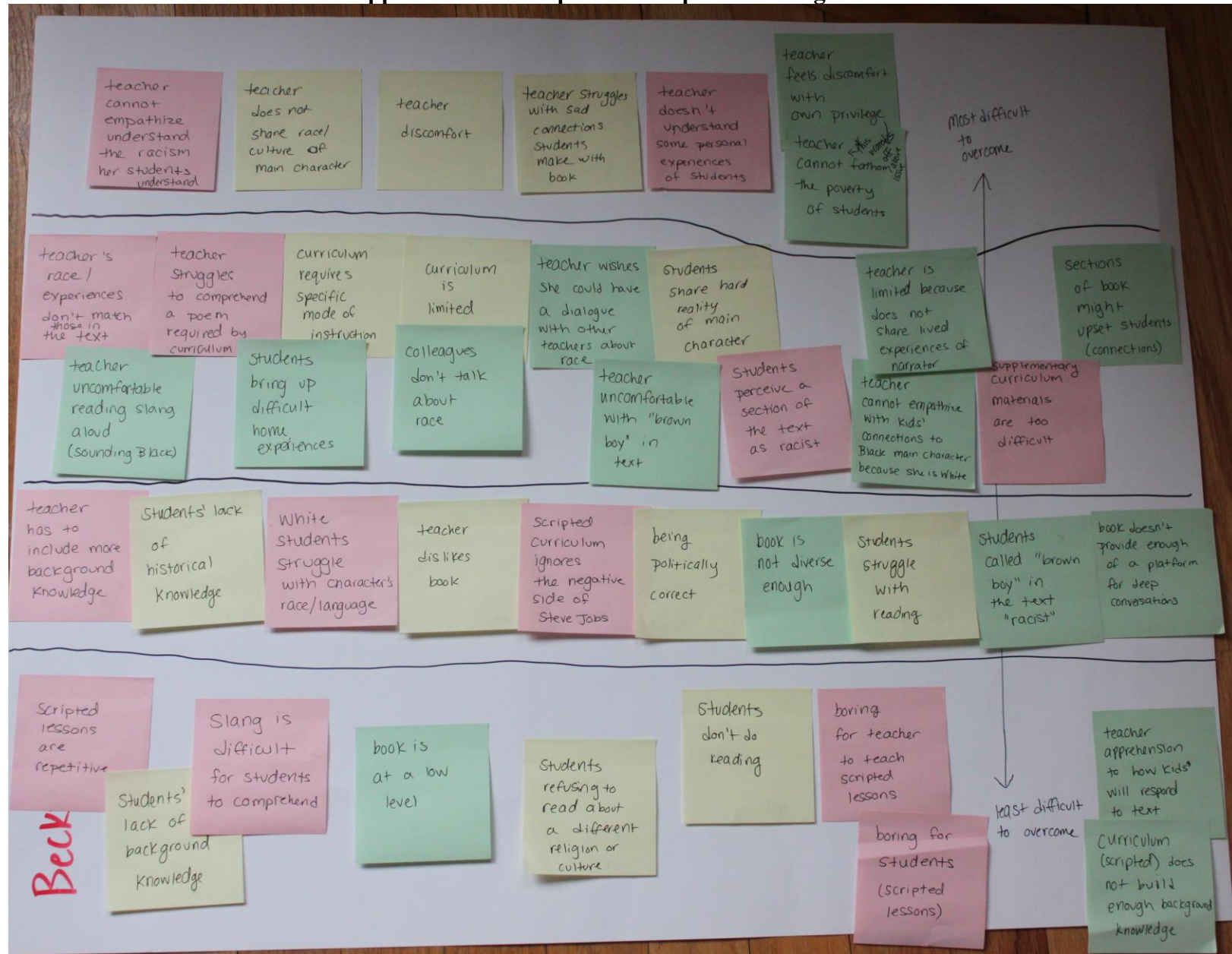
Good afternoon! I am checking in to ask how your unit is going.

Thank you,
Ricki Ginsberg

Appendix C. Participant quick reference guide

Name	# Yrs Teaching	Education	Sex	Age Level	Grade Text Taught	% Students of Color in School	Describe yourself as Teacher (direct quotes)	What do you value most?	Book	# Yrs Taught Book Previously
Becky	6	Small, private college	F	MS	6th grade Reading	75.6% (magnet)	hands-on; right next to the kids	Rapport	<i>Bud, Not Buddy</i> by Christopher Paul Curtis (1999)	1
Dave	13	Large, public university as English major; ARC program; TESOL certification later	M	MS	7th/8th grade Latinx newcomers (Humanities, Reading, and Writing)	91%	Creating relationships with students	Creating relationships with students	<i>Devolver al Remitente (Return to Sender)</i> , translated into Spanish) by Julia Alvarez (2010)	2
Jackie	8	Large, public university (Bachelor's); Small public (Master's)	F	MS	7th grade Language Arts	75.6% (magnet)	Type A; Pretty Strict; I don't do fun. I used to be really excited.	Education. It is great if my students like me, but I don't care as long as I am teaching them	<i>Dragonwings</i> by Laurence Yep (1975)	0
Katherine	2	Medium, public university	F	MS	8th grade Reading	66%	Outgoing and open-minded	To definitely value what I have and then try to give back to my kids	Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson (2014)	0
Kayla	9	Large, public university	F	HS	11th grade college-prep English	66%	Pretty strict and a lot of rules	I try to just teach them to be good people, and if there is a time, be on time. If there is a deadline, meet it.	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie (2007)	2
Kim	4	Large, public university	F	HS	10th grade co-taught, humanities class (World History/World Literature)	57%	Enthusiastic; love to learn as I teach; animated in the classroom.	The exchange between student and teacher; creating a strong relationship with my students	<i>Persepolis</i> by Marjane Satrapi (2004)	1
Laura	3	Large, public university	F	HS	11th grade (one section is an ELL cohort)	93%	Tough love	Good [administrative] leadership. We are lacking a little bit in leadership right now.	<i>American Born Chinese</i> by Gene Luen Yang (2006)	2
Lisa	9	Large, public university	F	HS	Remedial 10th and 11th grade freshmen repeaters	84%	Really good at connecting with the students, bringing them things that they care about, modifying the curriculum well to suit their needs.	The connections I make with my students	<i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie (2007)	1
Marcia	15 (28 if include univ. and sub. teaching)	Large public university (Bachelor's); Large ivy (Master's); Large public university (Doctoral Degree in Ed Leadership)	F	MS	8th grade English	59%	I like creativity; I am not the world's greatest disciplinarian.	I like creativity; I like to encourage them to write and to write creatively;	<i>We Beat the Street</i> by George W. Jenkins, Rameck Hunt, Sampson Davis, and Sharon Draper (2006) (all classes) and <i>The House on Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros (1984) (one co-taught section)	2

Appendix D. Participants' final post-it arrangements



Logistics ③
④

Chapters are very long

modifying materials takes up a lot of time

lack of time

state-mandated testing takes a lot of time

access to books (purchasing) (budgeting)

book shortage

teacher not liking book

chapters

book + chapter length

availability of books in the Spanish language

is long, difficult to add external activities to extend meaning

availability of interdisciplinary books

book is too long

Newcomers ③

Students not understanding how to be students

Students' adaptation to U.S. and school

Students' academic deficiencies

Students are newcomers and don't understand some of the content's weight

Students don't understand racism because they are confined to New Haven

new student (five years older) distracted the other students

① Values & culture
Students' various backgrounds

racism of students

students aren't aware of inequities they face / will face

racist comments made by students

diversity of cultures within the classrooms

Not all students want to follow along during read aloud

Students live in poverty

not as interested in reading / reading at home

Students relating to uncomfortable parts of the book

immigration raids

"heated" sections of the book

Students' reading comprehension is low

Students' reading level and comprehension is low

Student who shares the culture of character feeling uncomfortable

Students' personal lives (deportation raids impact students)

group discussions (some groups not interested in talking)

② Teacher's Background
⑤

teacher is from a white, male, privileged background

teacher discomfort with controversial content

teacher's race and early experiences do not match those of students

Parent discomfort with controversial content

teacher background is different from students' background

③ background knowledge

Students need historical background

book is not set in urban setting

Students don't understand the weight of African American themes in other book

No curriculum

finding lesson materials in Spanish

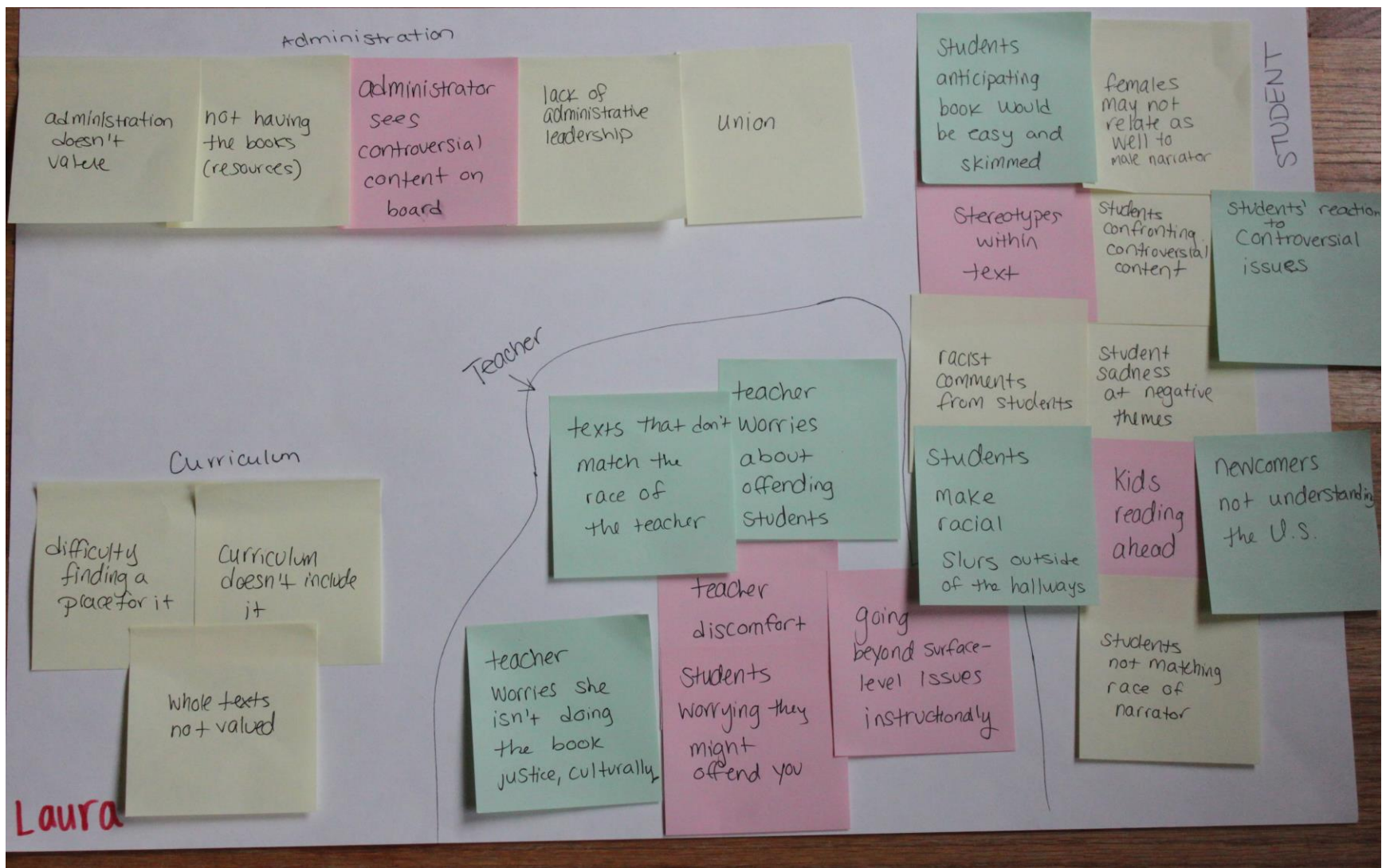
Dave











SUN

teacher's lived experiences differ than those of students

teacher lack of confidence because race doesn't match that in the book

Non-controllables that inform my instruction

Can't be controlled, but can be influenced

Board approval

teacher wants outside resources

Teacher wants to have more author background

I need to work on.

access to books

students don't read at home

students don't read at home

student home life affects homework/reading

three deaths cause teacher apprehension

teacher worries about own lack of knowledge and content knowledge

Other teachers don't have great resources to share (books, resource bank)

teacher is the only white person in room

students prefer nonfiction over fiction

Students have lack of knowledge about Native Americans

not prepared (education-wise) to teach about Native Americans

teacher confidence in multicultural aspects

teacher less open about her own race when compared to students' openness

Gonna be handled

students knowing more about culture

students do not return books

controversial words in text

students upset at injustice in book

teacher worries students won't grasp seriousness of book

feels like: not doing book justice (doesn't know enough about culture)

book is not long enough to accommodate discussions/projects teacher desires

teacher does not match gender of students

time constraints

teacher is the only person in room aware of culture

everybody (students & adults) unaware of Native American culture

controversial issues in book

teacher hesitation with content

teacher wants to focus on pictures

students upset at the way friendship is portrayed in the text

text sad

teacher feels didn't discuss cultural appropriation

diverse group of students

student is Lakota

Lisa

Biggest Challenges

Frustrated with District/ policies and allotment of resources

Limited Curriculum

school book buying tied to one publisher

district agenda (accountability)

book provided by district

district/state doesn't understand student needs

getting students to ask questions / engage

Curriculum is Eurocentric/ white bread

not enough books for students to take

Scarce resources

teacher needs technology

district has stronghold

district doesn't give enough time to prepare to teach these books

Students lack Creativity in work

Students struggle with vocabulary (all books)

Students refusing to participate in class activities (particularly creative)

Students not connecting to movie project because don't go to movies

stress on testing take away from book

Students engaging in classroom discussions (common this time of year)

Students not completing work

Marcia

Somewhat Challenging

admin. looking for flaws in teachers

Students don't read carefully

Students resisting assignments

Getting kids to read (all books)

Students struggle to grasp concepts of book

Students don't read at home (all books)

Sections of book that break language rules (The House on Mango Street)

Students prefer computers rather than written work

ELLs

Students within class are from diverse cultures

- in mixed classroom tough to get the peace and quiet

Student personal problems — some teacher unaware of

Student connects personally to shooting in book

Controversial issues (rape)

Students come to school on drugs

Students focus on controversial parts

poverty affecting engagement

teacher doesn't share experiences of students

Some multicultural young adult texts available are too controversial

book requires reflective thinking on part of teacher

Every Day

Students unable to ask questions and district wants this

Students can't handle the level of work expected by district/state

Rewarding Challenge I like working with ELLs

Sometimes hard to know how to address with early adolescents

Least Challenging

personal age

controversial section of a book

teacher's own education affects instruction

lack a lived experience

book sections written from adult perspective (We Beat the Streets)

adult theme requires too much time for this age level to understand

teacher gets bored with some available books in curriculum

Just wonder if I should move over and leave it to those who are younger and "hipper"

One text for all might not be best

If good piece of multicultural literature should draw me into the experience and teach me what it is about

teacher is not "from the world" of the books/characters

school consultants try to direct type of work of students

district focused on Lexiles

book dragged in past

Appendix E. Categories by frequencies

The following list displays the frequencies at which each category appeared in the data. While frequency levels do not provide significant information, reporting them may allow for an even deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Categories that were not saturated across participants are not included.

Research Question I: Dilemmas

Dilemmas of Teacher Identity and Knowledge

- **Teacher Identity**
 - Being White: 389
 - Teacher Discomfort: 175
- **Teacher Knowledge**
 - Expertise: 175
 - Preparation: 77

Dilemmas Specific to Students

- **Student-Home Concerns**
 - Students' Lived Experiences: 173
 - Student-Text Connections: 276
- **Student Knowledge**
 - Students' Lack of Knowledge: 243
 - Singling Students Out: 133

Dilemmas Related to Book Content

- **Teachers' Book Preference**
 - Teachers' Book Preference: 276
- **Controversy**
 - Controversial Content: 236
 - Political Correctness: 322
 - Censorship: 67

Dilemmas Connected to Curriculum and Resources

- **Curriculum**
 - Curriculum: 265
- **Resources**
 - Access to texts: 88

Research Question II: Dilemma Management

Passive approaches

- Passive acceptance: 123
- Cognizance: 38

Authoritative approaches

- Single-handed decisions: 367
- Justification to others: 86

Conferences with others

- Complete conversations with other adults: 184
- Complete conversations with students: 126

Pedagogical approaches

- Instructional strategies: 292
- Student connections: 55
- Discussion: 78
- Building rapport: 89
- Teacher preparation: 57