

PRIVILEGED PAGES:
CONTEXTUALIZING THE REALITIES, CHALLENGES, AND SUCCESSES OF
TEACHING CANONICAL BRITISH LITERATURE IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE
WAYS

Jeanne Dyches Bissonnette

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Approved by:

Jocelyn Glazier

Dana Griffin

Julie Justice

James Trier

Jeffrey Reaser

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ABSTRACT

JEANNE DYCHES BISSONNETTE: Privileged Pages: Contextualizing the Realities, Challenges, and Successes of Teaching Canonical British Literature in Culturally Responsive Ways
(Under the direction of Jocelyn Glazier)

Though research suggests a dichotomous relationship between transformative pedagogies and canonicity, these conversations often fall short of comprehensively nuancing the factors that shape these pedagogical and curricular tensions. Buttressed by foundational theories of culturally responsive pedagogies (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002), this collective case study advances the field and galvanizes the professional discourse around the canon by querying the extent to which teachers perform culturally responsive practices in the canonical British literature classroom—the most enduring and exclusionary curriculum of the secondary English domain—and examining the factors that inhibit, promote, and otherwise complicate these practices. Data collected from over five months of classroom observations and forty interviews amalgamate to tell the story of Sam, a white male in his fifth year of teaching who engages his predominantly African American students in race-related discussions almost daily; Geneva, an African American female with 14 years of experience who must engage culturally responsive teaching in more subversive ways and private spaces so as not to unsettle the parents, administration, and students at her predominantly white school; and Allison, a white female in her eighth year of teaching at an International Baccalaureate school who insists her provocative approach to pedagogy is merely “good teaching.” Data were coded for their

alignment with the 11 characteristics of the Multicultural Teacher Capacity Scale (Cain, 2015), a five-tiered progressive scale of culturally responsive teaching practices and characteristics. Deductive Qualitative Analysis (Gilgun, 2010) guided the investigation of the data. This work concludes by urging practitioners to critically reflect on the ways in which they might modify their instructional practices to better account for the incongruences between traditional curricula and their culturally and linguistically diverse students. Further implications, including the possibilities of a differentiated model of teacher preparation that supports literacy practitioners as they develop and hone the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to perform culturally responsive pedagogies in their classrooms, is also discussed.

I dedicate this dissertation to my dad, Dr. Heyward L. Dyches.

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CHAPTER 1: A CANON REVERED: INTRODUCTION

If the schooling experience should reflect and affirm the cultural backgrounds of its students (Appleman, 2000; Dewey, 1897; Galda, 1998), then the British literature curriculum has dismally failed those under its tutelage (Carter, 2006, 2007; Cook & Amatuucci, 2006). Texts housed under this canonical body often reflect a racial exclusivity, with the majority of authors sharing a common thread: they are white, Anglo males. Studies reflect the steadfast, loyal devotion many teachers express toward both their curricular standards (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015) and the teaching of canonical texts (Macaluso, 2013; Martin, 2014), which often serves as a means through which to acculturate historically marginalized students into mainstream society (Bloom, 1994; Coles, 2013; Shah, 2013). That the symbolic (Gay, 2010), hidden (Giroux, 2001) curriculum imbued within the British literature classroom often goes unacknowledged is perhaps unsurprising given that literature's social powers and dogmatic purposes remain largely unexamined in high school classrooms (Applebee, 1993; Morrison, 1992; Purves, 1991). But the grievances do not end there: the instructional practices (Applebee, 1996; Gee, 2007; Stotsky, 2010) typically employed to teach these canonical titles make few provisions for validating students' cultural capital (Bordieu, 1986) or their funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2013)—that is, their “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for ... individual functioning and well-being” (p. 72) in the schooling experience (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Gay, 2010; Gee, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999). These instructional incongruences may help explain the longstanding academic underachievement among students of color (see, e.g., the African American Male Task Force, 1990; Ogbu, 1981),

which continues today, with Latino, African American, and Native American students dropping out at nearly twice the rate of white and Asian American students (Public High School Graduation Rates, 2012).

Overview of Study

Predicated upon the supposition that there are likely unique challenges to teaching the racially exclusive British literature curriculum to a diverse student body, this study addresses the following research questions (see Appendix A):

1. In what ways, if any, are teachers engaging culturally relevant pedagogies in their British literature classrooms?
 - a. How do teachers define and practice culturally responsive teaching?
 - b. What factors inhibit culturally responsive teaching?
 - c. What factors promote culturally responsive teaching?

To answer these questions, I designed an ethnographic collective case study grounded in both critical race theory and the frameworks of culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy that informs our understanding of these issues.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical Race Theory

First articulated by leaders within the field of critical legal studies, critical race theory (CRT) emerged as a framework by which to both explicate and transform the inequitable conditions made evident and perpetuated by the justice system (Crenshaw, 1995). Though lauded for its commitment to dismantling racial hierarchies (Bell, 1995), subsequent researchers faulted the framework's failure to explore the sources of racial oppression, including social institutions, that historically and perpetually reproduced systemic inequities (Crenshaw, 1988). Two decades

after the theory's inception, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) penned "Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education," which delineated how, and in what ways, the theory lent itself to the field of education in particular. Since then, numerous scholars have offered their own interpretations of the theory within and beyond education (see, e.g., Alemán, 2007; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Kohli, 2009), though all of these pieces affirm that five foundational pillars undergird all CRT research. They include:

- a) the belief that race, and racism, are imbued within American society and therefore, can never be truly eradicated (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001);
- b) acknowledging that the experiential knowledge of those people belonging to historically marginalized populations is legitimate, valuable, and in fact wields great power in the efforts to teach about racial oppression and transform dominant views (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002);
- c) acknowledging that whiteness functions as the majoritarian story, the dominant perspective, and the ultimate property that confers economic and physical comforts to its members (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998) as well as a host of other privileges (McIntosh, 1988);
- d) understanding that CRT thrives on its interdisciplinary nature, first borrowing from the traditions of feminism, Marxism, and liberalism while simultaneously enriching them by providing another lens through which to understand complex intersectionalities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997);
- e) that all researchers who claim its orientation privilege social justice in their work (Solórzano, 1998). This means that scholars and activists who align their work with

this orientation must assume a critical stance toward liberalism, colorblindness, neutrality, and objectiveness (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Tate, 1997).

These tenets provide the foundation for critical race theory; however, further nuancing shows the ways in which these elements fuse to impact the educational realities students navigate. Social—and, by extrapolation, educational—inequity can perhaps be most comprehensively understood by examining the intersection of race and property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This intersection suggests that rather than confronting educational inequity as a violation of *human* rights, activists should instead argue these grievances to be a violation of *property* rights. This notion maintains that membership to a certain race—in the United States, the white race—grants a person certain physical benefits, or “real property,” such as attending a school with a higher per-pupil average expenditure. Understanding how identification with a certain race often leads to increased or diminished access to particular educational opportunities and experiences helps explicate the role race plays in the inequitable learning conditions that frequently pervade American schools (Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Thusly, understanding race as a phenomenon laden with property value reveals whiteness as a commodity that confers certain educational opportunities and experiences; conversely, because students belonging to historically marginalized groups do not “possess” whiteness, they may be denied those same experiences.

Curriculum presents another means by which to understand the intersection of property and race. While identification with a particular racial group may result in increased/decreased access to physical property (such as access to newer text books or a newly renovated school), the power of curricula stems from its intellectual property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This notion suggests that students are granted or denied access to certain courses and readings because

of their sociocultural identities and educational realities. One way intellectual property reveals itself is through the required secondary literature curriculum teachers and students engage. Particularly passionate literature teachers may “manically defen[d]” (Britzman, 2004, p. 258) their content; still other teachers chose not to deviate from the required readings because “it’s not on the list” (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006, p. 478). Regardless of teachers’ intent, these required reading lists implicitly honor the stories, experiences, and voices of people belonging to dominant groups (Applebee, 1993; Stotsky 2010). The British literature curriculum—the most exclusionary, historically entrenched, and longest taught installment of secondary literature—offers a particularized form of intellectual property as it uniquely marginalizes students who do not identify with its racially exclusionary curriculum (Carter, 2006, 2007; Cook & Amatucci, 2006). And, while white students may not necessarily identify with the themes and experiences of forwarded by British literature, they benefit—even without their knowing it—from the racial affirmation reflected in the readings (see, e.g., Carter, 2007).

Thus is my use of the critical race theory framework a deliberate one, chosen because it seeks to name and uncover the systemic nature and endemic qualities of racism in order to combat oppression. I view the teaching of British literature in American schools as being representative of a particularized, and historically honored, form of whiteness. Articulating the experiences British literature teachers face in actualizing culturally relevant pedagogies functions as the primary concern of this study, which I see as making visible otherwise unprodged systems of inequity (Wildman & Davis, 2012). Here, I apply critical race theory to understand how British literature teachers navigate the racially oppressive curriculum. I further extend the theory to understand the ways in which contextual realities as well as teachers’ own sociocultural identities impact their ability and willingness to deliver their content in culturally responsive

ways. Lastly, critical race theory privileges both agency and activism, which are the political underpinnings of this study and my work.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies

Perhaps the most powerful conduit through which to transform the educational experience for historically marginalized students lies in the promising practices of culturally relevant teaching. This framework seeks to theorize and combat both the problematic theories of genetic deficiency (Terman, 1916) and cultural deprivation (Bloom, Davis, & Hess, 1965), both of which employed deficit framing to explicate the historic underachievement of students of color. Unsatisfied with these findings, scholars considered instead a cultural differences model (Banks, in Gay, 2010) which sought to show how mainstream culture dismissed the cultural strengths historically marginalized students brought into the classroom with them. As an extension, culturally relevant teaching is a means by which to recognize and build on those strengths. In her germinal study of eight expert pedagogues, Ladson-Billings (1994) found that African American students thrived when their teachers utilized culturally relevant teaching practices, which she codified to mean actions that promoted students' authentic learning, cultivated their cultural competence, and developed their sociopolitical consciousness. Similarly, Valenzuela (1999) found that *authentic caring*, defined as those rituals that recognized students as valuable members of a classroom worthy of making rich contributions and capable of success, transformed the educative experiences for Mexican-American students at one Texas high school. This authentic approach to caring is a critical element of culturally responsive teaching (Antrop-González & Jesús, 2014; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Thus, understanding the culturally relevant framework and the proven practices that best realize its goals serves as a vehicle through

which to combat the inequitable conditions under which students of color disproportionately learn (Banks, 2004; Kozol, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Various scholars in the field conceptualize this pedagogy in different ways, with some terming it “culturally responsive” (see, e.g., Gay, 2010), others “culturally relevant” (see, e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Like Villegas and Lucas (2002), I use the terms interchangeably as I understand both approaches to be ones that align with McGee Banks and Banks’ (1995) call for equity pedagogies—that is, “teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society” (p. 152); executed with authenticity, these pedagogies are a pillar of multicultural education (Banks, 2004). For the purposes of this study, my own conceptualization of the tenets of culturally relevant teaching accord with the framework, or theoretical codes (Marshall & Rossman, 2010), of the Multicultural Teacher Capacity Scale (MTCS), a tool I describe in more detail in subsequent sections. Cain’s (2015) framework examined numerous conceptualizations of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, acknowledging the intersections and gaps in and among the literature. To that end, she theorized that teachers who are culturally responsive embody the following 11 characteristics, which she categorizes by *dispositions* (i.e., the values, attitudes, and beliefs that inform the ways in which teachers interpret knowledge and apply skills), *knowledge* (i.e., the characteristics that inform skills), and *skills* (i.e., the instructional practices teachers perform both in and outside of their classrooms).

Dispositions

1. Culturally responsive teachers embody *sociocultural awareness*. Teachers who are culturally responsive see themselves as cultural beings and thusly recognize the

sociopolitical contexts that impact their own experiences (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This insight allows them to acknowledge and address the cultural differences between their students and themselves (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Without this understanding of self, teachers may unintentionally miscommunicate, make faulty assumptions, and privilege particular experiences (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

2. Culturally responsive teachers *affirm students' cultural assets*. When teachers embody this characteristic, they view their students' cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005)—that is, their knowledge, skills, and talents—as an asset to their classrooms. They see their students' cultures as a means through which to help them access mainstream culture (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2002) and, by extension, the culture of power (Delpit, 2006).
3. Culturally responsive teachers are *committed to students' success*. Culturally relevant teachers have high expectations for all their students, regardless of their socioeconomic statuses. Gay (2002) argued that caring for students underscores this commitment such that teachers care so deeply for their students that they want them to achieve to their highest potential. This sentiment often mirrors the relationship between parent and child (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2006; Ware, 2006). However, Ladson-Billings (2006) asserted that it is important for teachers not to see caring as a proxy for authentic student learning.
4. Culturally responsive teachers see themselves as *agents of change*. This characteristic necessitates teachers' understanding the existence and pervasiveness of inequities while simultaneously seeing themselves as activists (Bergeron, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006;

Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally relevant teachers prepare their students to work as activists in both the classroom and beyond its walls (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Knowledge

5. Culturally responsive teachers *understand the sociopolitical context of schools*. These pedagogues understand the social, political and economic factors in society play a critical role in their students' lives, the educational system, and society as a whole (Bergeron, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2006; Paris & Alim, 2014; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Nieto and Bode (2012) found that many teachers are unaware of their sociopolitical realities on the local level, such as school board meetings and marginalizing policies. This characteristic also tends to the historical context of schools—such as understanding that students belonging to dominant groups are often tracked into more advanced classes, while students belonging to non-dominant groups are often placed into lower tracked classes.
6. Culturally responsive teachers *understand the impact of culture and context on students*. Teachers who understand the impact of culture and context on students acknowledge the historical and contemporary role of these incongruences and how they inform and impact students' school and school-related experiences (Gay, 2002; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Paris & Alim, 2014; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Young, 2010). An example of such incongruences may take the form of cross-cultural miscommunications (Gay, 2010; Gee, 2008), which can result in teachers (and, more broadly, school designs in general) privileging certain discourse patterns over others—to their students' detriment. Teachers must also work to connect how such culturally incongruent experiences impact students' academic achievement, thereby allowing for a more dynamic exploration of

how the past and present work in tandem to impact the degree to which students succeed in school (Paris & Alim, 2014).

7. Culturally responsive teachers *demonstrate experiential knowledge of school and students' communities*. This involves teachers acknowledging the relationships forged between students and their communities as well as the community-specific available resources that can help students succeed in school (Barnes, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2006; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014). Understanding and utilizing these resources, human and otherwise, helps validate students' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and likewise provides a means through which teachers can use students' backgrounds as a vehicle for learning (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Skills

8. Culturally responsive teachers *create a classroom community that embraces students*. When teachers create classrooms wherein students share power and enjoy fluid, equitable relationships, a student-centered community is being forged (Bergeron, 2008; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2011). Students in Howard's (2011) study attested to the power of these communities, attributing the classroom environment as a major factor in students' academic success. So too can these classrooms foster positive conversations around difficult, controversial issues (Bergeron, 2008).
9. Culturally responsive teachers *engage in critical reflection to guide practice*. This characteristic involves critically reflecting on one's teaching practices, which includes soliciting student feedback, in order to better understand how teaching practices may result in inequitable teaching conditions (Durden & Truscott, 2013; Gay, 2002; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard, 2003; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012;

Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Young, 2010). This self-critique is a difficult but critical component of enacting culturally relevant teaching (Howard, 2003; Young, 2010).

10. Culturally responsive teachers *foster the sociopolitical consciousness of students*.

Teachers must work tirelessly to help their students develop a critical consciousness of their classroom experiences and the world outside its walls. First espoused by Freire (1970), this critical consciousness is defined as helping students development the skills necessary to identify, discuss and ultimately take against the inequitable and oppressive forces that seek to marginalize them (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

11. Culturally responsive teachers *modify curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity*. In order to exhibit this characteristic, teachers must recognize that the classroom's curriculum and pedagogies often privilege the experiences of dominant groups (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Durden & Truscott, 2013; Emdin, 2011; Gay, 2002). Pushing back against these exclusionary practices often entails the deconstructing, constructing, and reconstructing of curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Rather than working to provide students with a neutrally-minded "equal" education in which resources and support are parceled out evenly amongst students, culturally responsive teachers supply their students with resources and support specific to their individual needs and, in doing so, work to provide their students with an equitable education (Secada, 1989).

The MTCS amalgamates key frameworks in the scholarship around culturally responsive teaching; in doing so, it provides a synergistic and comprehensive framework that dismisses the binary of a teacher either teaching in multicultural ways or not. Instead, the MTCS's 11 characteristics, and the levels therein, allow for a nuanced understanding of "the *extent* to which teachers are multicultural" (Cain, 2015).

Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) called for teacher educators to build on existing scholarship in order to develop research agendas that present the promising practices of the future. To that end, I use the MTCS's theoretical framework throughout my study, using it firstly to define culturally responsive teaching; secondly, to facilitate data collection; and lastly, to understand (and code) collected data. I hope this consistency will prove beneficial as I work to cultivate an understanding of how, and in what ways, teachers engage culturally relevant pedagogies in their British literature classrooms, a canonical body that has remained almost entirely intact since its inception over a century ago (National Education Association of the United States, 1893).

A History of British Literature in American Classrooms

Almost one thousand years the senior of its American literature counterpart (Abrams, 2000), British literature has historically dominated the teaching of literature in U.S. classrooms (Applebee, 1996; National Education Association of the United States, 1893; Stotsky, 1991, 2010). This subservience originated concurrently with the inception and institutionalization of English as a subject in the late nineteenth century (Tchudi & Mitchell, 1999). This “cultural heritage” model (Applebee, 1996; Bickmore, Smagorinsky, Ladd, & O'Donnell-Allen, 2005) emphasized that literature provided the means by which to create a common national identity that would benefit students while also fostering and preserving national values and traditions (Applebee, 1996). Enthusiasts of this approach to literature instruction posited that reading the “great works” provided a means through which to expose and transmit to the masses racialized notions (Kliebard, 2004) of moral and ethical values (Applebee, 1993; Bickmore, et al 2005). Harvard University's “Harvard Model” reified the ideologies at the heart of this tradition when, in 1874, it required all applicants to write compositions on either *Merchant of Venice*, *The*

Tempest, *Julius Caesar*, *Vicar of Wakefield*, *Ivanhoe*, or *Lay of the Last Minstrel*—notably, all authors are white males of Anglo origin (Harvard University’s Twenty Years of School and College English, 1896). Around this same time, the secondary divisions English I, II, III and IV emerged (Stout, 1921). The power of British literature titles and authorship was cemented when, in 1892, the National Education Association’s Committee of Ten disseminated a list of required readings for all college applicants, requiring British literature to be taught in every secondary grade level (National Education Association of the United States, 1893). Still today, in modern classrooms, English IV, or senior English, is often exclusively comprised of British literature (Applebee, 1990; Cook & Amatucci, 2006; NCDPI, 2010).

The Past, the Present — the Future?

British literature’s role in the genesis of the teaching of literature and its historical privileging is a matter uncontested. However, scholars offer different vantage points regarding its current power ranking in the secondary literature classroom. Some researchers suggest that the secondary literature curriculum has evolved to reflect its own American identity (Stotsky, 1991; 2010). Yet others have found that British presence has remained unyielding since the 1800s (Applebee, 1996; Schieble, 2014). Key national studies of secondary literature corroborate this assertion: 1907 (Tanner), 1923 (Hudelson), 1964 (Anderson), 1993 (Applebee), and 2010 (Stotsky). *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*, titles that populated the list over a century ago (Tanner, 1907), still reign supreme in secondary literature classrooms, though *Romeo and Juliet* is the most frequently taught text in secondary classrooms (Stotsky, 2010). Underscoring a history of American “bardolotry” (Fortier, 1992, p. 316), the Common Core State Standards (CCSS, 2010) is the first national curriculum to encourage the teaching of a Shakespearean play at each secondary level. Additionally, the latest national study of secondary literature showed that 25%

of the titles most frequently taught in secondary English classes enjoy British authorship—and even this finding is likely skewed given that the researchers intentionally left out English IV, which frequently houses British literature, in their national study (Stotsky, 2010). This omission was due to the fact that an exclusively British literature English IV curriculum is not uniform across the country (Stotsky, personal correspondence). Some states, such as California and Iowa, allow districts to select which the texts they include in a particular grade’s curriculum. Yet this omission means English IV classes that do require an entirely British senior English IV curriculum, such as North Carolina (NCDPI, 2010), were left unrepresented. Appendix B reflects the core selections disseminated to senior English teachers in Sykes County, North Carolina, which positions teachers to deliver an entirely white, Anglo, male curriculum if they choose to do so. Under this model, the majoritarian right to exclude the stories of others (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) is not only permitted, but expected.

Yet, these racially exclusionary policies contradict other mandates in the field. In 2006, the National Council of the Teachers of English (NCTE) released its “Resolution on the Essential Roles and Value of Literature in the Curriculum,” which recommended that “a wide range of high-quality literature representing diverse experiences and perspectives be integrated into all content areas, including reading instruction.” The more recently developed Standard Two of the *Standards for the English Language Arts* (2012), issued jointly by NCTE and the International Reading Association (IRA), states that “students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience” (p. 21). However, the degree to which the British literature curriculum presents a wide range of human experiences is certainly questionable.

The Socially Constructed Canon

Canons are socially constructed entities, meaning that historically, the interpretative community—and other stakeholders with a vested interest in the field—have determined which works merit inclusion (Lauter, 1991). Yet determining which works warrant the classification of “great” has long been a matter of contestation (Taylor, 2006). This ideological argument reached its pinnacle during the “canon wars” of the 1980s and 1990s, which saw a heated debate between those people who passionately defended the “great books” approach to teaching (Bloom, 1987; Bloom, 1994; Hirsch, 1988) and those who advocated for a more encompassing and culturally responsive literature curriculum (Banks, 1993). Interestingly, the emergence of critical white studies, an area of scholarship that seeks to show the oppressive qualities of whiteness in society (Frankenburg, 1997) and the literary realm (Morrison, 1992), has been attributed to this time of factious debate (Fishkin, 1995). Though many people contend that the “cultural left,” a group that advocated for the increased inclusion of multicultural voices in the secondary school literature curricula, won the canon war, the unwavering presence of British literature in secondary classrooms certainly complicates this assertion.

Worth noting is that whiteness has not been homogeneously experienced across time and space. For example, in the U.S., the notion of whiteness expanded in the 1940s to encompass white ethnicities such as Italians, Jews, and Irish (Brodin, 2012). Notions of whiteness become even more complex when history and geography factor into the discussion. Consider, for example, that while Dickens was both white and writing for white audiences, it is inaccurate to depict him as a product/enforcer of the literary whiteness I critique here—he was, for all intents and purposes, a man writing about his timely realities. That U.S. teachers teach these pieces from an American perspective of whiteness—one that privileges the stories of Anglo, white males at

the expense of other, more diverse multicultural voices—is perhaps more reflective of poor practice that some inherent and fundamental shortcoming of canonical British literature. Thusly, it is not canonical British literature itself, but its historical and current application in U.S. schools that merits scrutiny and critique.

Perhaps unintentionally, British literature courses often relegate students belonging to historically marginalized populations to the fringes of the English classroom (Carter, 2006, 2007; Cook & Amatuucci, 2006). One explanation for this polarization is that the British literature curriculum functions as a form of consequential racism—that is, one that reveres the stories, histories, experiences, and voices of the majoritarian population. Of consequential racism, Guess (2006) wrote:

Racial prejudices may decline overtime, yet more subtle patterns of discrimination persist, supported by the inertia of custom, bureaucratic procedure, impersonal routine, and even law. The result of racism by intent has overtime informed institutional cultures and practices that rest on assumptions of white superiority over non-white ethnic groups (pp. 651-652).

The often subtlety oppressive qualities of the British literature classroom hold with and affirm the culturally dismissive design of the American school systems (Gay, 2010; Gee, 2008) and consequently, place historically marginalized students in academically precarious positions (Purves, 1991). To counter and address this reality, my study provides an outlet for teachers to share their experiences relating their exclusionary curriculum to their culturally and linguistically diverse students; it aims to uncover how, why, to what extent, and in what ways teachers of British literature navigate their instructional spaces so as to disrupt inequitable conditions in their classrooms. Thusly, understanding how teachers navigate their British literature courses—from its curriculum to pedagogies—can help teachers, students, and researchers alike better understand how to help students succeed in this marginalizing space.

The cases that drive this study show that teachers often place differently on the continuum of culturally responsive pedagogy. This study reveals too that instruction perceived as culturally responsive in nature actually may not be. Revealed in the following pages are three cases: two teachers who, though contrastive in their sociocultural identities and classroom contextual realities, relate their curriculum in culturally responsive ways; and third teacher who, despite being an exemplary teacher, did not demonstrate the same dedication to delivering her curriculum in culturally responsive ways.

CHAPTER 2: EXPLORING THE HISTORICAL TRENDS OF BRITISH LITERATURE CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGIES: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In order to establish a context for answering the guiding research question of this study-- “In what ways, if any, are teachers engaging culturally relevant practices in their British literature classrooms?”—I systematically examined the literature around the topic. During an initial search, I inputted a combination of the search terms “British literature” and “culturally responsive” or “culturally relevant” pedagogy. However, this narrow search resulted in a limited number of articles—less than forty articles across several databases. My approach meant that any articles that detailed culturally responsive practices without explicitly naming them as such—such as germinal articles written by Morrell and Andrade-Duncan (2002) and Carter (2006, 2007)—were left uncaptured. Additionally, I realized that a more encompassing approach to the literature review would allow me to present a more complete portrait of the ways in which British literature has been taught throughout the years, and to situate culturally responsive approaches within this broader discussion. Thusly, I shifted my review to capture as many articles as possible related to teaching British literature in secondary school settings; then, I read and categorized the articles based on the pedagogical patterns detailed within them, which included culturally responsive approaches to teaching canonical British literature.

With these goals in mind, I began a revised review of the literature. I did not input “culturally responsive teaching”/ “culturally relevant teaching” as doing so would not have allowed me to capture articles written prior to the framework’s inception in the 1990s; furthermore, articles that did not explicitly reference the framework would have been missed. I

did not use years to exclude articles because I wanted to surmise all of the many ways in which British literature has been taught since its inception as a secondary subject. During my preliminary searching, I used two key articles (Carter, 2007; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002) to ascertain and address the shifting of subject terms under various databases. I selected these two articles because they explicitly addressed the palpable tensions between British literature and culturally responsive teaching practices, and I wanted to be sure the search captured them as well as similar articles. I selected key phrases that captured as many elements of the study's guiding question as possible, such as "British literature" and "secondary students." To represent canonical authorship, I input the term "Shakespeare," the most frequently taught author both presently and historically. Given that Shakespeare is the "de facto representation" (Coles, 2013, p. 51) of the overwhelmingly white, Anglo, male canon, understanding the strategies most used frequently used to deliver his works allows for both a deeper and broader understanding of canonical ideology, pedagogy, and content¹.

With these parameters in place, I turned to ERIC, Educational Full Text and ProQuest Education Journal because they are both discipline-specific databases, as well as the multidisciplinary Academic Search Premier, which houses journals in both the social sciences and humanities. As identified, the search terms, included below, were designed to a) capture as many discussions of pedagogical and curricular practices of British literature for secondary students in as many settings as possible and 2) standardize the search across databases. To that end, I conducted the following searches:

¹ I recognize that using these search terms allowed and disallowed the capturing of certain articles, and that is it possible that every salient article was not captured.

Table 1.

Database Information

Database	Search Terms	Hits
ERIC	(SU "English literature" or "British literature" or Shakespeare) AND SU ("English curriculum" or "high schools" or "curriculum development" or "secondary education")	831
Educational Full Text/ Education Index Retrospective (archived to 1929)	("English literature" or "British literature" or Shakespeare) AND (language arts or curriculum) AND (secondary or "high school")	117
Academic Search Premier	("British literature" or "English literature" or Shakespeare) AND SU (secondary education or "high school")	108
ProQuest Education Journals	all("English literature" OR "British literature" OR Shakespeare) AND all(("language arts" OR curriculum)) AND all(("secondary education" OR "secondary students" OR "high school"))	203

In order to gain a complete picture of the ways and spaces in which secondary students have been engaged with British literature, I did not limit my search to academic journals; instead, I widened my scope to include disseminated resources (such as those from The Folger Institute), studies related to after-school programs, and other venues not necessarily connected to the traditional English classroom. I ruled out any pieces that did not speak specifically to American students and/or students outside grades 9-12. I then read and analyzed pieces that related teachers' curriculum and/or pedagogies (n=244).

As I examined the articles, I applied another layer to the analysis: I read to uncover whether or not culturally responsive approaches were implemented in the lesson's delivery, even if the approaches were not explicitly worded as such. For this layer of analysis, I applied my own understanding of culturally responsive approaches to teaching, particularly as they related to the MTCS's characteristics. This allowed me to ascertain the characteristics of culturally responsive

approaches most prominent in the scholarly discourse around the teaching of canonical British literature.

In analyzing the texts, the following prominent themes, all focused on approaches to teaching British literature in secondary classrooms, emerged: text-centered, interdisciplinary, cinematic, performance, and culturally responsive approaches to teaching canonical British literature. In the following sections, I detail these approaches, and conclude the chapter by discussing the ways in which the findings from the review inform the study.

Text-Centered Approaches to Teaching British Literature

A sizable number of texts—about 18%—reflected text-centered approaches to teaching the British literature curriculum. These practices placed the process of textual analysis at the forefront of the English classroom. Typified by the New Criticism approach to reading, which sees meaning as inherently imbued within a text, with a student's primary purpose marked by investigation and analysis (Appleman, 2000), text-centered pedagogies require students to take notes, engage in multiple close readings, and orally relate their findings (Hook, 1940). Lagios (1957) provided an account of this approach when he wrote that during his class,

I required the pupils to write a critical evaluation of the first four novels, and of course, I had them take notes. Good use was made of the notes just before the entire class read Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native*. The four members of the special group shared the fruits of their labors with the class when they organized and presented a two period panel program on the development of the various phases of the English novel, so that the class would be able to visualize *The Return of the Native* in its proper niche in relationship to the novel of yesterday and today. The pattern followed in the preceding four novels was used in the remaining fourteen novels. When the four students had read all of the novels, each selected a specific topic and wrote a paper, taking into consideration all that he had read. (p. 502)

Later, Henry (1965) related a text-centered lesson that involved students analyzing the theme of death across five British poems, looking to understand how each piece's corresponding time period (i.e., Victorian, Romantic) influenced the poets' representations. While studying *Beowulf*,

Milosh (1970) required students to analyze the grammar of the text and attempt to speak the language of Old English. He wrote that the teacher “should go through them in class, word by word, then line by line, always with students participating in a group or individually. Gross mispronunciation should be corrected” (pp. 649-650). To better establish *Lord of the Rings* as “the last Victorian novel,” Stanton (1973) offered several suggestions for secondary English teachers, including prompts to guide students’ literary analysis. In working to improve the success of “culturally different low achievers” as they read British texts, Holt (1975) devised his “Hamlet Plan,” which consisted of a modern day prose adaptation and a learning guide for students that emphasized reading comprehension and figurative language. Veidemanis (1986) outlined a plan for teaching Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*; this lesson, divided into multiple segments, relied entirely on close reading and discussion to facilitate learning. These long honored text-centered practices still dominant secondary English classrooms (Bickmore, et al., 2005); the Common Core State Standards has too been faulted for its reliance on a text-centered approach to literature instruction (see, e.g., Schieble, 2014).

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Teaching British Literature

Another common approach to teaching British literature involved its pairing with other subjects to better contextualize material for students and deepen their understanding of the literature. These interdisciplinary approaches accounted for about 14% of the documents reviewed. While Fowler (1933) urged all teachers to work toward a unified curriculum, he wrote that literature teachers should lead the charge, working to make sure students’ interests were foregrounded in this interdisciplinary curriculum. The forms and combinations this approach to curriculum may take are seemingly endless. One such example came from merging the field of psychology with the British literature curriculum. Rappaport (1937) found that when students

engaged with the psychology of sibling relationships, instinctive drives, and social influences as they studied a George Eliot text, their scores on the final test in their literature course were higher than those students who did not. Anderson and Lauderdale (1985) reported that British literature students were able to engage in literary analysis when, upon assuming the persona of characters from *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, they then completed the Jungian typology-based Myers Briggs personality test. Students used textual evidence to substantiate their claims on the personality test, which necessitated their close reading of the text at hand. Students in Rothenberg and Watts's (1997) article, all of whom were diagnosed with learning disabilities, benefitted from a scaffolded, interdisciplinary approach to teaching *Macbeth* which first began with students studying a 1050 map of Scotland and discussing its geographical features. The conversation then shifted to an examination of religion, warfare, clothing, and the culture of the time period, context that helped bolster students' engagement and comprehension. Calling upon kinesthetic approaches to interdisciplinary teaching, Moore (2011), a high school dance teacher, required students to familiarize themselves with *The Tempest*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *A Mid-Summer Night's Dream* in order to justify their choreography choices. He found that asking students to consider how the plays translated to the ballet helped them avoid superficial experiences with the text and perform their craft with authenticity. Perhaps the unlikeliest combination of all, mathematics and British literature have also been successfully coupled. While teaching *Julius Caesar*, Seo (2009) used geometry to help students understand the senators' positioning during Caesar's murder. She found that using mathematics in her English classroom helped students who may have otherwise struggled with reading and writing better comprehend and engage with the text; additionally, it challenged all students to engage in critical, interdisciplinary thinking. In contrast to the text-centered approaches, which revered the

literature above all else, these approaches acknowledged that supplemental means—even entirely different subjects—could help support students working to engage the curriculum. These interdisciplinary methods helped students learn about other fields and more fully engage with canonical British literature.

Cinematic Approaches to Teaching British Literature

Cinematic approaches—that is, ones that use visual recordings and representations of the studied play to enhance students’ experiences with British literature—also emerged as a common practice and accounted for about 12% of the literature reviewed. Camp (1968) argued that Shakespeare’s plays should be studied in tandem with film study in order to truly ascertain the dimensions of the plays, their characters, and the genius who wrote them. Veidemanis (1979) wrote that the biweekly broadcasts of *The Shakespeare Plays*, the BBC-TV/Time-Life Television event which included *Julius Caesar*, *Henry VIII*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *Measure for Measure*, *As You Like It*, “promise[d] to provide the most immediate access into the reality of the total Shakespearean world modern audiences have ever been given” (p. 53). Consequently, she argued that teachers should use these productions to substitute more frequently taught Shakespearean plays, and to enrich discussions on those studied in class. Holstein’s (1996) teacher’s guide, filled with pre-viewing and collaborative activities, sought to provide resources for those teachers looking to incorporate the 6-part broadcasting of Eliot’s *Middlemarch* into their classroom. In an effort to expedite their ability to locate cinematic materials, Albert (1965) offered teachers an annotated bibliography wherein he detailed numerous films teachers could use as they taught Shakespearean works. Christel (2000) replicated these efforts and modernized the selections when she generated a filmography comprised of 41 cinematic texts to use when teaching 11 of Shakespeare’s plays as well as study guide questions for teachers to use in their

classrooms. Using this visual media in conjunction with the study of British literature has proven to be a time-honored tradition.

Performance-Based Approaches to Teaching British Literature

Performance based approaches to British literature instruction—that is, those pieces that explored ways in which students could “act out” British literature so as to enjoy a more meaningful connection with the canon—comprised roughly 19% of the reviewed articles. Inspired by Giroux, Freire and Dewey, Gonzalez (1999) worked to create more democratic directing conditions in order to cultivate a more participatory environment for secondary students during a youth summer theatre production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. This participatory environment granted students more autonomy in the decision-making process and, according to Gonzalez, ultimately fostered feelings of empowerment. Similarly, after students’ mastered the plot of the story, Graham (2002) encouraged students to “play” with Shakespeare by selecting, rewriting, and performing a scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. To guide students’ scene selection, Graham asked them to consider if they wanted to engage with themes of romance, comedy, or even fight choreography. She reported that students’ confidence grew when they were encouraged to take ownership of the language and make their own artistic choices. Vogelsinger (2005) found that students’ in-class interaction soared when students enacted various scenes from British author Agatha Christie’s *The Mousetrap* using a reader’s theatre style; in an attempt to make sure all students participated in the dramatic process, students who preferred not to act out these scenes were charged with outfitting the characters in various costumes.

Gillen (1992), describing his Baltimore students as “mostly poor and Black” (p. 64), used a performance-based approach to teach his students *Macbeth*. One student, Michael, who played the Thane of Ross in the performance, spoke openly about his accidental killing of another young

man in retaliation for a friend's near murder. Gillen wrote that, "in the violence of the life Michael lives outside of school, power, money, prestige and respect are the objects" (p. 66). Though the performance became a way to engage the student in thematic discussions he found relevant to his life, it bears mentioning that Michael's cultural background was discussed only in terms of its perceived negative characteristics (that is, poverty, violence, and death). By and large, these performance-based approaches reflected that when students engaged in performance-based approaches to British literature, their comprehension and appreciation for the curriculum flourished.

Culturally Responsive Approaches to Teaching British Literature

In addition to a few of the articles referenced above, a number of articles—roughly 28%— illustrated culturally responsive approaches to teaching British literature; that is, teaching practices that acknowledged and affirmed students' cultures, backgrounds, and experiences, and used these entities to foster students' academic achievement and sociopolitical consciousness (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In working to identify and organize articles related to teaching British literature in culturally responsive ways, I elected to further tease out the themes that emerged from the articles, given that "culturally responsive" can take on many forms. For my part, in order to capture the themes reflected in the articles about teaching British literature, I read and organized the articles into groups that aligned with one or more of the 11 characteristics of culturally responsive teaching that guide this study (Cain, 2015). Worth noting is that while articles with culturally responsive elements were peppered throughout the previous sections, what I present here are those articles that centralized culturally responsive teaching practices. For example, Gillen's (1992) article mentioned how a performance-based approach to *Macbeth* empowered one African American student to share his own experiences growing up in a

violence-plagued community. However, foregrounded in the article was the value of performance—that the student shared his experiences was only a product, not the goal, of this pedagogical approach. To that end, what I present here are those approaches that centralized one or more characteristics of culturally responsive teaching as outlined by the MTCS. It is important to note that these themes/articles are rarely exclusive of each other: the subjects often overlap, particularly with regards to fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness (characteristic 10) and modifying curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity (characteristic 11), a conversation I take up in a forthcoming section.

Create a Community That Embraces Students (Characteristic 8)

Approximately 22% of the articles reviewed—the greatest percentage in the review—spoke to using students' personal experiences and feelings to enhance their study of British literature. This student-centered approach to literature instruction has roots in Dewey's Progressivism (2007), which sought to tap into students' experiential knowledge in order to improve curriculum relevance. Progressivism split starkly from traditional approaches to schooling, which largely championed the text-centered, cultural heritage model form of instruction. In honoring students' experiences and voices, teachers worked to create a warm British literature classroom that made provisions for incorporating and projecting students' storied existences.

In a rare mention of students' characteristics, Reisin (1993) wrote of her students' experiences with text rendering, a practice wherein they dialogued with one another using only quotes from *Macbeth*. Then, they re-wrote their multicultural versions of their dialogue, which were often inspired by their own home language and cultural backgrounds, which included Greek, Jamaican, Spanish, and African American; at the project's conclusion, students

assembled a class scrapbook of their dialogues. The author wrote that through the experience, students “increased their knowledge and appreciation of Shakespeare, of the diverse cultures in our society, and of themselves” (p. 53). Smagorinsky, Carter, and O’Donnell-Allen (2007) found that forging personal connections with the curriculum dramatically improved students’ literary engagement. Their study followed Rita, a British literature student, as she shared her experience coping with a friend’s suicide while reading Keats’ “When I Have Fears That I May Cease To Be.” Another such example is Jolley’s (2007) I-Search project. While studying *Beowulf*, Jolley asked her students to search for representations of heroism in their environments, scrutinizing everything from the news to their peers. Students then crafted papers detailing their own personal definitions, and examples, of heroism. Teaching in a self-described “ghetto” in Queens, New York, Pearl (1986) wrote that her Black students, who were “entitled to share in the best of our traditions” (p. 23), authentically engaged with canonical texts when they were encouraged to compare/contrast their own lives and experiences with those of Pip’s from *Great Expectations*. They did this through journals and whole class discussions.

In order to address previous classes’ difficulties of engaging with *Othello*, Dulaney (2012) used a prop box filled with a bridal veil, skull, handkerchief and other objects to inspire deeper connection with the text. To do so, she asked students to first play with the materials, then create a graphic organizer to help them record their own emotive connections with the materials. These tactics helped assuage her students’ trepidation toward reading the play. Fritzer (1996) reported that her students willingly shared their own social foibles when reading the works of Jane Austen, which helped to foster classroom conversation and textual engagement. During a study of *Hamlet*, students first used their own experiences to justify images on Laertes’ “body biography”; this pairing of the personal with the canonical helped students more fully understand

the character's motivations (Smagorinsky & O'Donnell-Allen, 1998). While teaching *Romeo and Juliet* to her English as Second Language (ESL) students, Straughan (1996) used picture books, explicit vocabulary instruction, and video clips to help prepare her students for their reading of the play. She read aloud the plot summary several times, so that when the time came to analyze the play itself (which she broke down into small passages), much of the plot tension had evaporated, allowing students to focus on the language. All of these strategies called upon students' personal experiences in such a way that helped them access what might otherwise be deemed an irrelevant body of work.

Foster Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness (Characteristic 10) and Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy to Confront Issues of Equity (Characteristic 11)

In addition to articles that presented approaches to teaching British literature that cultivated a classroom community that embraced students, the review also revealed that six percent of articles detailed ways in which teachers fostered sociopolitically-oriented conversations and, in doing so, modified their British literature curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity, both aspects of culturally responsive (Banks, 1998; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2006). These approaches are essential given that when teachers account for and affirm their students' diverse sociocultural backgrounds and lived realities, they help develop a more participatory democracy—that is, one that enables students to understand the vantage points of others and work as activists in their personal spheres to effect greater good for all people (Westheimer & Kahne, 1998). Because I reserve characteristic 11 to talk about curricular and pedagogical choices specific to British literature, a body of work to which this literature review is entirely devoted, I have elected to talk about characteristics 10 and 11 in tandem. In short, by seeking to foster students' sociopolitical consciousness in the British literature classroom, a teacher simultaneously modifies her curriculum and pedagogy to confront

issues of equity. To that end, I offer three subsections that address ways to deliver British literature in culturally responsive ways, particular with regards to developing students' sociopolitical consciousness and modifying curriculum and pedagogy for equity. These approaches include ones that foreground discussions of gender, media, and race.

Foregrounding Gender. About two percent of reviewed articles explored ways in which to incorporate gender studies, an interdisciplinary field that examines gender construction, identity, sexuality, and representation, into the British literature classroom. Cox (1991) intentionally crafted units for *Pride and Prejudice*, *Taming of the Shrew* and “The Clerk’s Tale” to facilitate discussion around issues of domestic violence that continued even during his teaching, and broaden his discussion to invite students to engage in matters of male/female perspectives. Alsup (1993) shared the practice of pairing lesser-known poems with Shakespearean plays. She saw this as an act of “re-visioning” canonical texts, a strategy that promised many benefits, one of them being helping female students access the male-dominated plays. In “Rethinking Masculine Studies: So What Do We Do About *Beowulf*?”, Pigg (2005) problematized hegemonic masculinity, noting that teachers should frame the discussion of the text as a deconstructive critique—one that works to “check masculine ambition” (p. 19). Additionally, he argued for explicit discussion of the role of women in the epic, noting that their roles were more nuanced than typical classroom studies reflect.

Another lesson married an old British version of *Pygmalion* with the popular *My Fair Lady* to challenge students to examine the different presentations of Eliza Doolittle (Fowler & Pesante, 1989). Ressler (2005) presented a case for reading canonical texts in socially just ways by having his students challenge the heteronormative gender roles presented in *Romeo and Juliet*. He incorporated explicit discussion of these issues, culminating in writing workshops, to

support students as they grappled with acknowledging and analyzing heterosexism, heteronormativity, and misogyny. In these articles, the teachers demonstrated their understanding that ours is a patriarchal society that marginalizes those who do not identify as a heterosexual male. Moreover, the teachers in these pieces work to develop their students' social and sociopolitical awareness—marks of culturally responsive teaching—in order to identify and combat these oppressive realities.

Foregrounding Media. When students analyze and critique media-produced texts and images to understand their ideological underpinnings, they engage in critical media literacy (Beach, 2007). This approach allows students to “read” and make sense of the world around them by examining the media that infiltrates their lives and to craft media that pushes back against the exposed oppression, activities that hold with the sociopolitical nature of culturally responsive teaching (Banks, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Carey-Webb (2001) wrote that discussing with students the ways in which mass media serves the interests of certain groups at the expense of marginalizing others should mark the secondary English curriculum. To that end, he mentioned how, while studying *The Tempest*, newspaper and magazine articles facilitated discussion and helped to connect the play to Rodney King and race riots. While studying *Jane Eyre* in Arias's (2008) class, one student decided to write an essay wherein she examined the images of women and girls in popular music videos. Excited to share her findings with her classmates, the student reported that her analysis showed the ways in which women were constantly objectified, which was at odds with notions of females as empowered and strong. Johnson, Augustus, & Agiro (2011) presented another strategy when they wrote of using social media to teach *Othello*: after participating in a discussion around the uploading of fights to Youtube, the authors noted the students' ambivalence about the media's role in the perpetuation

of negative behaviors and images. Using iMovie, Cabat's (2009) students created "Yak-Traks"—audio commentary (often provided by the director) that can be heard as a movie plays. During these "Yak-Traks," the students discussed the political machinations behind Polanski's omission of Malcolm's optimistic speech at the end of *Macbeth*. Taken collectively, these strategies helped engage students in their curriculum, but also allowed them to develop a critical awareness and social consciousness of the world around them. Additionally, these strategies provide a means through which for students to see their own experiences reflected in the canon—even if only peripherally.

Foregrounding Race. Also found in the literature were ways in which teachers foregrounded race to engage students in discussions meant to cultivate students' sociopolitical consciousness—no easy feat, given that many teachers avoid discussions of race in the classroom (see, e.g., Haviland, 2008; Macaluso, 2013), or only further marginalize students when they do engage these conversations (see, e.g., Borsheim-Black, 2015; Carter, 2006, 2007). Many of these articles made mention of the sociocultural incongruences between the British literature curriculum and teachers' culturally and linguistically diverse students, allowing me to surmise that one driving force behind the practices explored in these articles involved intentionally modifying the curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of racial inequity, a key characteristic of culturally responsive teaching (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In one example, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) engaged their African American students with Coleridge, T.S. Eliot, Donne, and Shakespeare by pairing canonical poems with raps. This approach allowed students to access the material by calling upon texts with which they were familiar and comfortable, but also provided them with a means to access mainstream culture, while also problematizing issues salient to their lives (such as police brutality). To push back

against the racial rigidity of the British literature curriculum, Grayson (1995) detailed a lesson using the narrative of Olaudah Equiano, a Nigerian man kidnapped from his home and forced into slavery. Upon buying his freedom from a British Naval officer, Equiano wrote his narrative and was a key figure in the movement to abolish the slave trade. Grayson's article presented the singular example of a teacher incorporating a canonical British author of color.

Concluding the Literature Review

Taken holistically, the reviewed literature reflected that historically, British literature teachers have delivered their content via text-centered, interdisciplinary, performance-based, cinematic, and culturally responsive approaches. Sometimes, these approaches embodied culturally responsive aspects, but these tenets were not uniformly centralized in the discussion. Analysis revealed that only twenty-eight percent of the reviewed articles pertained to teachers' culturally responsive approaches. Important to note is that the majority of these articles involved teachers' working to create a classroom community that embraced their students (characteristic 8). Also implemented, though with less frequency, were those approaches that fostered students' sociopolitical consciousness (characteristic 10) and demonstrated curricular and pedagogical modification to confront issues of equity (characteristic 11). The review likewise revealed the rarity of teachers' examining their own sociocultural positionalities (characteristic 1), affirming their students' cultural assets (characteristic 2), functioning as agents of change (characteristic 4), engaging in critical reflection to guide their practice (characteristic 9), and/or moving their students toward action-oriented projects, all foundational aspects of culturally responsive teaching (Cain, 2015). That culturally responsive teaching is implemented both infrequently and partially is perhaps indicative of the marginalization of these practices (Sleeter, 2012), a particularly harrowing discovery given that students—particularly those of color—often

experience sociocultural marginalization when placed in British literature courses (Carter, 2006, 2007; Cook & Amatuucci, 2006).

Evident from the literature review are the ways teachers, in some cases, change the traditional British canon, as well as ways they do not. The reviewed approaches frequently privilege the text over all else, and make limited attempts to account for students' diverse cultural backgrounds and/or learning needs. Note that in the previous section on race-centered culturally responsive teaching practices, only Grayson (1995) offered a canonical text written by a British person of color. What motivates teachers' text selections has long been a matter of scrutiny in the field of English education. A recent study of secondary English teachers' text choices found that 90% of surveyed teachers noted *some, a lot, or complete autonomy* in choosing the texts they select for their students, though the same study found that these choices are profoundly influenced by state and local policies (Watkins & Ostenson, 2015). Yet despite these perceived freedoms, teachers often avoid substituting canonical works for a variety of reasons, including a fear of backlash from parents, administrators, colleagues, and students themselves (Stallworth, Gibbons, & Fauber, 2006). A lack of content knowledge of the authors and titles taught has also been cited as a reason for this aversion (Stallworth, et al., 2006); Nieto (2004) posited that teachers balk against multicultural literature because they fail to truly understand the diverse learning needs of their students, and how these cultural differences impact students' learning. Teachers are also reluctant to teach literature about which they may be unfamiliar. Other teachers believe it to be their duty to teach their historically marginalized students the great works of the British literature classroom (see, e.g., Cook & Amatuucci, 2006) in order to help them gain access to the culture of power (Delpit, 2006) despite the fact that canonical literature and its pedagogies often only further marginalize certain groups.

Educators have voiced concerns over substituting and supplementing their canonical curriculum, fearing doing so will diminish the literary integrity of the course. While discussing the teaching of canonical texts with secondary English teachers, Macaluso (2013) reported one teacher's position on the matter, who said "I don't want to see things get dumbed down just for the sake of getting someone of color in front of the kids... there has to be that balance of literary merit. I don't want to sacrifice that just to appear to be catering to, you know" (p. 15). Teachers have also reported feeling concerned that teaching non-traditional texts in lieu of classical pieces would put college-bound students at a considerable disadvantage (Bigler & Collins, 1995). This allegiance to canonical texts further drives and substantiates the need for an examination of culturally relevant practices in this, the most racially exclusive content area of all.

Despite these shortcomings, the literature reviewed above shows that some British literature teachers *do* practice culturally relevant teaching with their students (see, e.g., Alsup, 1993; Cabat, 2009; Cox, 1991; Grayson, 1995; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Pigg, 2005), boldly engaging questions such as "where are all the Black people?" (Cook & Amatucci, 2006, p. 234), a question indicative of the many "British literature incident[s]" (p. 239) teachers and students encounter in this exclusionary space. To what can we attribute these disparities in approaches to teaching the British literature curriculum? Why, how, and in what ways, do English teachers select texts and employ pedagogies that honor their students' cultural identities and broaden their appreciation for others (Stallworth, et. al, 2006) in a classroom space that stubbornly excludes the voices and experiences of historically marginalized students? What factors inhibit teachers' willingness and ability to teach in culturally responsive ways? Which factors promote these instructional approaches? This study seeks to address these voids in the research around culturally responsive pedagogies in the British literature classroom.

CHAPTER 3: INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING AND CANONICAL CURRICULUM: METHODOLOGY

This study examines, and aims to elucidate, the challenges, successes, and realities of performing culturally responsive pedagogies in an exclusionary curricular space. To that end, the following questions drive the study:

1. In what ways, if any, are teachers engaging culturally relevant pedagogies in their British literature classrooms?
 - a. How do teachers define and practice culturally responsive teaching?
 - b. What factors inhibit culturally responsive teaching?
 - c. What factors promote culturally responsive teaching?

In uncovering the answers to these questions, this study contributes to the scholarship around the tensions between culturally responsive teaching and canonicity.

Research Design

In order to investigate these issues, I turned to qualitative studies. This research approach helps contextualize and explain the motivations behind specific phenomena (Mertens, 2010); qualitative studies are often intentionally designed and implemented due to an absence of, or shortcoming in, existing theory—or to explain phenomena already occurring (Merriam, 1998).

Of qualitative research, Creswell (2009) wrote:

[This] process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the data. [Qualitative research] focuses on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation (p. 4).

Because social phenomena, such as culturally relevant teaching, often prove difficult to quantify and challenging to assess, many researchers have turned to qualitative methods to better understand its complexities (see, e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001, 2009). So too does this study, which seeks to uncover the extent to which British literature teachers are engaging in culturally relevant teaching practices, and how their lived experiences, dynamic positionalities and socially constructed knowledge factor into these perceptions and actions. Qualitative methodology provides the means through which to explore, explain, and produce theory where currently none exists, all objectives of this study.

The selected mode of inquiry for this study is a case study, an inquiry process that allows a researcher to explore an event, issue, process, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2009). The unit of inquiry, or case, is an entity bounded by time, events, and processes (Creswell, 2012; Yin, 2013). Stake (1995) defined a “case study” as being “both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry” (p. 136). Yin (1994) described case study research as an empirical inquiry wherein a phenomenon is scrutinized in a particular context in which the case exists or presents itself (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Case studies allow for close insight if not an expansive (or extensive) exploration of a topic—both a strength and a weakness of the research design, given the depth of the analysis if not the quantity of the cases.

This study is an ethnographic case study, a design chosen because it privileges the depth, rather than the time span, of the collected data (O'Reilly, 2008). This design deviates somewhat from the standard notions of ethnography typical of anthropology which necessitate long periods of study and participant observation (Brewer, 2000). Though conventional ethnographies require long-term commitments, ethnographic case studies are commonly employed for shorter lengths of time, and in an effort to better understand a particular phenomenon (Stake, 1995). Like Geertz

(1973), I hope this ethnographic approach will help readers understand and contextualize the embedded, and more inconspicuous, elements of the various cultural phenomena at work in the study, and how they intersect, conflict, and complicate one another. This format stands apart from other divisions of case study research, such as explanatory or exploratory, in that it provides a means through which to contextualize issues in wider contexts.

Mine takes the form of a multiple, or collective, case study, wherein one issue is scrutinized by using several case studies to illustrate the phenomenon and elucidate its nuances (Yin, 2013). Each case study—here, a particular teacher—tells a multifaceted and nuanced story, due to both classroom context and the participant’s own dynamic and complicated positionality. Here, the ways in which teachers engage in culturally relevant teaching practices in the secondary British literature classroom despite their many obstacles issue serves as the study’s “quintain” (Stake, 2006)—that is, the phenomenon under scrutiny.

Many aspects of this study emulate those made famous in Ladson-Billings’ germinal texts *The Dream Keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (1994, 2009). In these longitudinal ethnographic studies, Ladson-Billings worked with community-nominated teachers to understand what being a successful teacher of African American students entailed, breaking with the traditional scholarship that framed these students in deficit terms. Instead, she focused on uncovering the ways in which teachers honored and incorporated their African American students’ cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005) in order to promote student achievement. Here, I see my multiple case studies not unlike the portraits of teachers presented in her book in that these cases show the successes, challenges, and realities of teaching in culturally responsive ways.

Participants

Recruitment. Common to case study research is purposeful sampling whereby participants are targeted due to their meeting specific criteria (Yin, 2013); in this case, this type of sampling involved targeting teachers who sought to teach British literature in culturally responsive ways. My aim was to identify cases whose teaching aligned with my understanding of culturally responsive teaching of British literature. To gather this pool of teachers, I reached out to personal contacts in the field (principals, assistant principals, teachers, literacy coaches, school counselors, parents, etc.) through emailing (see Appendix C). As a former English teacher in the area, I benefited from my many former colleagues still working in the field. Once I received these nominations, I emailed each English teacher individually. In this email, I introduced myself and provided an abbreviated narrative about my previous teaching experience and current work. I explained the scope of the study, including its research questions, parameters, and expectations for participants.

Critical to this selection process was participants' self-identification as culturally relevant teachers. This self-described orientation allowed me to ascertain the degree to which teachers truly understood, embodied, and executed teaching practices consistent with the framework of culturally responsive teaching. In the recruitment email (see appendix D), I described culturally relevant teaching practices to ensure teachers understand my own conceptualization of these practices. Though the theoretical framework of the MTCS (see Appendix E) undergirds my work, in this email, I condensed my definition of culturally relevant teaching as those teaching practices that 1) *cultivate and privilege caring relationships between teachers and students*, 2) *reflect high expectations for students so that they authentically learn and engage with material* 3) *utilize students' cultures as a vehicle through which to improve their academic achievement*

and validate their lived experiences, and 4) challenge students to identify issues and sources of inequity and work to combat them. These four pillars comprehensively reflect almost all of the 11 characteristics of the MTCS; additionally, I wished to minimize the number of characteristics so as not to overwhelm participants as they decided whether or not their teaching practices met the criteria listed. Only teachers who agreed to the study *and* identified as a culturally relevant pedagogue were considered for candidacy. In selecting participants, I attempted to show a breadth of contrastive experiences by selecting teachers from backgrounds different from each other, which holds with Yin's (2014) definition of theoretical replication, a process that allowed me to generalize to theoretical propositions and in doing so, produce nuanced results. This deviates from literal replication, which occurs when cases are designed to corroborate each other.

Because I wanted to fully immerse myself in each case study, my sample size was three teachers; too many cases would preclude the sustained, concentrated engagement I desired. Additionally, all three teachers taught in the same county, which allowed for a shared understanding of the ways in which the county's contextual realities impacted each teacher's practice. Important to this study is that I conceptualize myself as a participant-observer, a positionality I take up in the forthcoming "researcher's role" section.

Research Sites. The study occurred in Sykes County, North Carolina, a county in the central region of the state. Because the student demographics often varied widely from school to school in Sykes County, there was great potential for the gathering and analysis of rich data—which in turn allowed me to paint vibrant pictures of the unique challenges and successes teachers encountered in teaching their students British literature. I used the North Carolina School Report Cards—which reflects data based on 5 domains: school profile, school performance, school indicators, school environment, and personnel (North Carolina School

Report Cards, 2014)—to illustrate the context of each of the research sites, an important element of case study research (Stake, 2005). Selecting diverse school sets allowed for a study of the ways culturally relevant teaching practices shifted due to varying contexts, which included student demographics, communities, and other sociopolitical factors.

Data Collection

Bounded by both time and activity, case study researchers employ a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995) in order to gain insight into the issues at hand. Yin (2009) wrote that the data collection for case studies should likely include documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations, and physical artifacts. I used all of these materials in my data collection procedures, as articulated in the following subsections.

Table 2.

Data Collection Procedures

Procedures
Phase 1 (August 2015)
<p>Solicited community nominations from contacts in the field (See Appendix C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacted community nominated teachers via email (See Appendix D) • Interviewed community nominated, self-identifying culturally responsive teachers of British literature (See Appendix F) • Began Researcher's Log
Phase 2 (August 2015- December 2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed participants' classrooms on weekly, rotating basis (See Appendix A) • Used Culturally Responsive Instructional Observation Protocol (CRIOP—see Appendix G) • Collected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Documents: teaching materials and assignments b. Artifacts: classroom walls, desk spacing, etc. • Conducted Weekly Post-Observation Interviews (n=36, 12 for each participant; see Appendix H) • Continued writing in Researcher's Log
Phase 3 (December 2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collected Participants' Narrative Sketches (See Appendix I) • Conducted Focus Group (see Appendix J)

Throughout the study, I collected various forms of data to help provide the study's substance. In Table 2, I have detailed these procedures; following the table, I provide a narrative of these activities.

Phase 1 (August 2015)

To begin to identify purposefully sampled culturally relevant practitioners of British literature, I emailed various Sykes County educational stakeholders in summer 2015. This included reaching out to teachers, principals, and literacy coaches whom I knew personally, but also contacting people I did not know but who were in leadership positions, such as the county's senior administrator for secondary English. In the email, I explained the definition of culturally responsive pedagogy and asked for the names and email addresses of any teachers who seemed to meet this criterion. I emailed all 17 people nominated; in this recruitment email, I explained the parameters of the study and defined culturally relevant teaching. I alerted them that by participating, they were self-identifying as a culturally responsive teacher. I explained that the study involved two stages, and that participating in phase one did not require a commitment to phase two. I explained the Multicultural Teacher Capacity Scale assessment, a component of the initial interview, and informed them they would be asked to complete the assessment during the session. Lastly, I asked them to bring in three biographical objects that revealed in some way their approach to and understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices. This upfront purposeful sampling helped insure that the selected participants employed some degree of culturally responsive teaching practices in their British literature classrooms. I did not offer incentives for participating in the study. Ultimately, I interviewed five teachers, and used interview and artifact data to make informed decisions as to who best met the description of being a culturally relevant teacher of British literature classrooms; I determined which teachers

to select for phase two based on these interviews. In order to document my reflections as well as guard against my biases, I recorded my experiences/impressions related to the study. I began these reflections during this phase of the study.

Phase 2 (August 2015-December 2015)

Before beginning classroom observations, I aligned the CRIOP with the MTCS in order to provide a consistent data collection/analysis throughout the study. However, it did not prove to be a rich source of data in the way I anticipated. A protocol with dozens of possible categories, I realized quickly my inability to accurately discern what was occurring during the observations given that my post-observation interviews revealed to me each teacher's intent behind observed behaviors, actions, and comments. In short, I relied upon these post-observation interviews to elucidate my findings from classroom observations—I could not code the observations reliably without this follow-up conversation. Upon recognizing the incompatibility of the tool, I began writing extensive observation notes that documented the teacher's behaviors, actions, and comments. These observation notes guided the follow up questions that allowed me to discern the motivations behind the observed behaviors. Then, after interviewing the teacher, I returned to the observation notes and coded based on what the teacher revealed to be his/her motivations behind behaviors, actions, and comments I observed.

As understanding the intent behind many of the teachers' pedagogical and curricular choices was mostly indiscernible by observation alone, I used the weekly post-observation interviews as moments to question teachers' motivations. Post-observation interviews occurred after every observation and helped me better understand the extent to which teachers embodied the entirety of the MTCS' characteristics. While two questions—*What did you do today that reflected culturally responsive teaching?* and *What factors impacted your ability and willingness*

to teach in culturally responsive ways?— marked each post-observation interview, I tailored all other questions to address various issues/matters that arose during the observation. This allowed me to uncover the intentionality that drove teachers’ pedagogical and curricular actions. Due to the sequential approach often applied to the teaching of British literature, I was able to observe teachers working with a variety of texts—from the earliest text, *Beowulf*, to the more recently written *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, which allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of teachers’ curricular and pedagogical realities. During stage two, I continued to reflect in my researcher log to become more aware of my biases.

Phase 3 (December 2015)

Stage three of the study involved all participants gathering to discuss their culturally responsive teaching realities across their contexts. In suggesting this phase of the study, I believed that this cross case conversation would produce rich, important dialogue, and provide another means by which to triangulate the data. Prior to the cumulative focus group, participants crafted a short narrative sketch intended to provide an illustrative example that helped the other participants understand the writer’s culturally responsive teaching practices, and the factors that complicated, compelled, and inhibited his/her work. Each participant (myself included) read his/her sketch and provided copies to other participants. We used these materials to begin our focus group session. This narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) provided another lens through which to understand how teachers’ experiences impacted their teaching of British literature in culturally responsive ways.

Secondly, I printed copies of a document Sykes County created and disseminated county-wide that promised to help teachers learn how to “chart your course through cultural responsiveness.” Designed as a literacy resource, teachers were not required to apply the

approaches the document espoused (though teachers must show evidence of literacy instruction to satisfy a standard on their state teacher evaluation). I wanted the teachers to engage the document as my own interpretation of the document was that it presented a simplified, uncritical approach to culturally responsive teaching practices. For example, the document encouraged teachers that making eye contact with and a firm hand shake “go a long way” with students—an utterly false appraisal of cross-cultural communication (see, e.g., Gay, 2010). Yet, the document avoided entirely, among other matters, conversations of sociopolitical consciousness or the importance of teachers’ working as agents of change. I surmised that I would learn a good deal about teachers’ understanding of culturally responsive teaching by their documenting their reactions to the document—what faults and accolades they voiced would provide a deeper way into understanding their nuanced, complicated practices and beliefs. Allison, who shared the document with me during phase two of the study, had read the document prior to the focus group; Sam and Geneva had not. In an effort to ascertain teachers’ understanding and perception of culturally responsive teaching practices, I asked them to read, annotate, and respond to the document. As a group, we discussed our reactions, which I document in later analysis sections.

Data Analysis

To begin my analysis, I transcribed all recorded data from interviews, observations, debriefings, and the focus group discussion. I also took notes that described the classroom materials that decorated the instructional space of each teacher. These materials allowed me to relate the degree to which each teacher and his/her students enjoyed a culturally responsive and affirming classroom culture. All data were hand coded, meaning that I read, highlighted, and wrote notes by hand to help support data analysis.

Deductive Analysis

During the analysis phase of the study, I used a priori deductive coding analysis using pre-determined codes— that is, codes the reader would expect to see in the study based on previous research (Creswell, 2009)—as I worked to answer question 1a. *How do teachers define and practice culturally responsive teaching?* These a priori codes came from the MCTS and include, as mentioned earlier, evidence of

1. Sociocultural Awareness
2. Affirmation of Students' Cultural Assets
3. Commitment to Students' Success.
4. Self-Identifying As An Agent of Change
5. Understanding of the Sociopolitical context of schools
6. Understanding of culture and context on students
7. Experiential knowledge of school and students' communities
8. Commitment to creating a classroom community that embraces students
9. Engagement in critical reflection to guide practice
10. Fostering the sociopolitical consciousness of students
11. Modifying curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity

I employed deductive qualitative analysis (Gilgun, 2010), a theory-guided approach to data analysis. Though the codes for this analysis were largely pre-established, my intent during this iterative process was to extend as necessary the codes I have, and to show the gaps therein.

The MTCS further divides these 11 characteristics into five progressing levels: *nascent*, *emerging*, *progressing*, *advancing*, and *transformational*. Because the levels are cumulative, teachers must have met the descriptors under a given level in order to progress to the next tier. While these descriptors shifted somewhat based on the particular characteristic's description, largely, they followed a particular pattern. *Nascent* comments and behaviors reflected that a teacher had not yet acquired a particular disposition, knowledge, or skill characteristic. For example, a teacher who dismissed the phenomenon of white privilege would have attendant comments identified as Sociocultural Awareness—Nascent. *Emerging* comments reflected that a

teacher was perhaps aware of certain realities or phenomenon, but did not capitalize on this understanding. For example, if a teacher believed that all students enjoyed cultural capital, but did not provide opportunities for students to incorporate those assets into the classroom, the comment would have earned a code of Students' Cultural Assets—Emerging. Comments and actions that aligned with the third tier, *progressing*, saw teachers moving from awareness to acknowledgement in order to create new realities. For example, a teacher who acknowledged the importance of experiencing students' communities and sought to engage in these opportunities would see her actions coded as Experiential Knowledge of School and Students' Communities—Progressing. *Advancing* orientations required social action, and often invited students' participation. For example, I would have coded a teachers' requesting students' feedback as she began to rethink her classroom management, engagement, and curriculum as Classroom Community that Embraces Students—Advancing. To qualify for a *transformational* orientation, teachers needed to utilize their critical understanding of themselves and society to intentionally effect change—an activity often described as one to which students should also contribute. For example, if a teacher and her students discussed the hegemonic qualities of the British literature curriculum—then worked collaboratively to reconstruct its content to make it more salient to students' lives—the action would have earned a code of Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy for Equity—Transformational.

Inductive Analysis

For my investigation of questions 1b and 1c, which called for analysis around the factors that both inhibited and promoted culturally responsive teaching practices in the canonical British literature classroom, I turned to inductive analysis. Because there were no pre-existing codes on which to rely to help me understand the ways in which teachers perform culturally responsive

pedagogies in exclusionary curricular spaces, I generated emerging codes—that is, those that encapsulated unanticipated, unusual, and interesting findings (Creswell, 2009)—to help me identify and categorize the challenges that teachers face in delivering their curriculum in culturally relevant ways. Ultimately, this approach allowed me to generate grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) as I analyzed and formulated an understanding of the tenuous relationship between culturally responsive teaching and British canonicity. Grounded theory provided the opportunity to portray the nuanced, and particular, challenges this curriculum presents, which research to date has superficially and haphazardly touched on without fully problematizing.

Layers of Coding

Using this combination of codes, I utilized line-by-line open coding (Glaser, 1978). Once I completed this first iteration of focused coding (Charmaz, 2006), I reduced my data by employing axial coding (Mertens, 2010) as I worked to identify and articulate particular themes between codes. Lastly, I recoded, this time using selective coding (Gilgun, 2010), otherwise known as theoretical coding (Charmaz, 2006), to identify themes that emerged between the codes (both the a priori and emerging). Throughout the coding stage, I employed a constant comparative method whereby I examined how various related incidents compared, contrasted, and spoke to one another in an effort to suggest categories and properties while simultaneously crafting hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I did this by first coding for a singular characteristic across all data sources. I then re-read the data, this time looking to code the data based on the continuum of the MTCS. For example, this meant that while the first iteration of coding resulted in my coding salient all data for evidence of characteristic one, demonstrates sociocultural awareness, the second cycle of coding involved my further teasing out these characteristics into their *nascent, emerging, progressing, advancing, and transformational*

qualifiers. As I coded, I carefully considered the emerging patterns, making sure that the data was categorized consistently. When instances arose in a particular teacher's case in which the data were not consistently coded, I assessed how to reconcile the disparities, a consideration I then extended across all coded data. These coding practices, as well as analytic memo-writing, close readings and re-readings, supported my constant comparison of the data (Boeije, 2002). Important to note is that in my analysis, certain characteristics/factors overlapped, a finding I attribute to the MTCS's ability to capture the intersecting aspects of a person's sociocultural identity, a notion that suggests that the various elements of a person's identity—their race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, among other characteristics—are inextricably interwoven and thus always at play (Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008).

Early in the analysis phase of the study, I met with two researchers to ensure the reliability of my coding and analysis. One was Dr. Jocelyn Glazier, my advisor; the other, Dr. Jessie Cain, the creator of the MTCS. Each of us coded several pages of Allison's biographical interview, then met to discuss our analysis. From this conversation a critical element of the study emerged: how important was a teacher's *intent* as we considered the degree to which each teacher truly embodied and performed the characteristic of the MCTS we coded? For example, Allison discussed showing Hozier's music video for "Take Me to Church," during which images of two men kissing are juxtaposed with one of them being dragged and beaten. In the interview, Allison said she used the video because it provided elements of visual literacy she could use to teach argumentation. When I asked her why she showed such a provocative video—certainly one that most teachers would not incorporate into their classrooms—she insisted her purpose was solely to teach rhetorical devices using a song the students knew well. Initially, I coded the incident as 11, modifying curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity, as I understood

her provocative action to be one that invited a non-mainstream view into her classroom and generated conversation around the maltreatment people who identify as non-heterosexual often face. However, after my discussion with Drs. Cain and Glazier, I recoded the incident as characteristic eight, creates a classroom community that embraces students, because the *intent* behind the music video hinged on selecting a current song to develop and hone students' literacy skills rather reflected a manifestation of Allison's social justice orientation. After this discussion with the researchers, I returned to the data, this time working to unpack and reflect the *intent* behind the teachers' choices and pedagogical actions. In this regard, the extensive observations and interviews helped me gain a deep understanding of the teachers' choices and intent as I triangulated across the data set. Intentionality, in this study, matters. My use of the MTCS required my taking into account the role of teachers' consciousness with regards to their curricular and pedagogical actions. However, under a different framework, the data would likely look quite differently.

Within and Cross Case Analysis

Given that I had three cases to scrutinize, I first conducted a "within-case analysis" (Creswell, 2012) using the aforementioned codes and procedures. Such analysis involved identifying issues, challenges and successes specific to each case (Stake, 2003; Yin, 2013). Once I conducted a within-case analysis of each case study, I shifted to cross-case analysis, whereby I named and identified themes that transcended each case (Yin, 2013). This analysis allowed me to interpret, generalize, and otherwise make meaning of the findings across the cases. I once again employed a constant comparative method, only this time, looking across the cases to formulate categories based on similarities and differences in the analysis. Stake (1995) called these findings "assertions" while Yin (2013) termed them "explanations." I prefer Creswell's (2012)

description of these findings as “general lessons” that can help inform the teaching practices of British literature teachers as they look to implement culturally relevant teaching practices in their classrooms. In keeping with the consistency of the project’s framework, these findings were organized by each of the 11 characteristics of the MTCS. In subsequent chapters, I have developed a section for each characteristic, noting salient points related to the ethnographic interview, observations, debriefings, and focus group.

Counterstorytelling

In keeping with the tenets of critical race theory, I see my analysis as a form of counterstorytelling, whereby I show how, why, to what extent, and in what ways British literature teachers navigate their curriculum to improve their students’ experiences by teaching in culturally responsive ways. Counterstorytelling, one of critical race theory’s tenets, provides a space through which to subvert the dominant narrative and provide a voice to groups from historically marginalized backgrounds (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2005). Because I, alongside other researchers, see the British literature curriculum and the lack of scholarship around its relationship with culturally relevant teaching as reflective of the majoritarian stories of white, Anglo males—and whiteness in general— investigating and sharing what teachers do to successfully relate their curriculum to their diverse students bodies functions as a means through which to combat oppressive forces that seek to marginalize the voices of those belonging to “outgroups” (Delgado, 1989, p. 229). This detail is important given that while I see this project as meaningful for all students, its primary purpose is to work toward creating more equitable conditions for students of color.

Credibility

The duration of time allotted to this study—five months—benefitted all involved as we worked to forge relationships of trust with one another (Opie, 2003; Glense, 2011). Participants participated in periodic member-checks to ensure the data's accuracy (Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2013). During our focus group, I shared my findings with the teachers and solicited their feedback. Additionally, my many forms of data collection served as means by which to triangulate the data, meaning that I used the data sources to determine the consistency of a particular finding (Yin, 2013). I carefully attended to issues of cross case credibility, and worked to make sure that descriptions and findings were triangulated across the cases (Stake, 2013). Lastly, my own experiences as a British literature teacher helped establish my authority as I conducted and related my findings.

Authenticity and Trustworthiness

Establishing the authenticity of the research study was of utmost importance. This process entailed my accurate portrayal of participants' biographical experiences and classroom realities (Given, 2008). Providing detailed, thick descriptions of each observation (Geertz, 1973) allowed me realize these goals. Additionally, I paid attention to the impact the study and its findings could take on the wider social and political milieu (Given, 2008).

Cultivating authenticity improved the trustworthiness of the study. But the concept of trustworthiness is frequently debated, with few agreeing on its parameters, or who should determine what these parameters entail (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Acknowledging my positionality, which I do in a later section, helped establish the study's trustworthiness. Construct validity, or the extent to which the concepts of the case studies are assessed by its measures (Yin, 2013), likewise helped establish trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). To that end, I

have created a crosswalk (see appendix J) to reflect the degree to which the study's measures aligned with its research questions.

Establishing and owning my positionality (which I do in a subsequent section) helped create the trustworthiness necessary to bring the study to fruition (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I remained vigilant in acknowledging and addressing my own biases and dispositions, which might, if left unchecked, impact the study's trustworthiness and authenticity (Glesne, 2011). To effect this goal, I worked with other, more experienced researchers, who assisted me as I worked to relate my findings honestly, consistently, and without bias.

Transferability and Dependability

Transferability suggests how the study might be useful to others in the same situation or those who have similar research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Sometimes likened to generalizability, a staple of quantitative research design (Trochim & Donnelly, 2001), transferability relies on detailed description (Geertz, 1973) so that its design can be emulated in subsequent studies. The concept encourages readers to apply their own experiences to the finished study. Because multiple case studies will likely showcase various instances and elements of experiences, the hope is that readers will find commonalities that support and inform their own realities. Perhaps it will also prompt a reader to research another element of this phenomena that I have been unable to engage at this time.

In an attempt to establish the study's dependability—that is, the consistency and fidelity of the study's inquiry processes throughout its duration (Shenton, 2004)—I engaged the logic of replication (Yin, 2013) to preserve the integrity of the process. This involved the fastidious implementation of all research procedures across cases. To that end, I presented and explained all

stages of the research project and detailed any changes or deviations that occurred throughout its development. All research-related documents were stored, filed, and made readily available (Mertens, 2010). Closely aligned with dependability is the notion of confirmability, which ascertains the degree to which findings can be corroborated by others (Trochim & Donnelly, 2001). Given that my findings hold with earlier studies detailing the realities of performing culturally responsive pedagogies in British literature classrooms (see, e.g., Carter, 2006, 2007; Cook & Amatuucci, 2006; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002), I feel confident that the findings of future studies, which I detail in the “Future Research” section near the study’s conclusion, will align with my own as well.

Researcher’s Role

During this study, I worked as a participant observer, an approach commonly implemented when using ethnographic methodology (O’Reilly, 2008). In order to better understand teachers’ lived experiences, contextual realities, and the complexities of their positionality, I immersed myself in the experience of the study. This involved my observing once a week for five months, interviewing participants dozens of times, sharing classroom resources, helping students, teaching classes, and even assessing students’ performances (though this was specific to providing students with feedback on their graduation project in Sam’s class and on their modern day rewrite of *The Canterbury Tales* in Allison’s class). I taught lessons in each of the teacher’s classrooms, which I designed by first taking into account the teachers’ preferences and objectives. I weighed in on classroom conversations only when I felt I had something important to contribute, and usually, my comments were ones that were fueled by an attempt to make the conversation more culturally responsive—for example, by explaining the concept of “meritocracy” to Sam’s students as they read and discussed an article on the unemployment gap

between high school students. I also shared resources with and among the teachers. This collective of experiences allowed me to fully immerse myself within the cases, a key element of participatory observation approach to research; this entrenchment allowed me to confidently paint vibrant portraits of the teachers and helped us to forge a relationship of trust, a critical element of the study given the deeply personal nature of this research. My five years as a British literature afforded me an opportunity to engage with participants in a meaningful way: I understood many of their struggles, challenges, frustrations, and successes. I hope these common experiences helped my participants accept (and trust) me as a researcher, peer, and member of their classrooms. I operated under the belief that data collection can help inform instructional practices and should not be exploitive of my participants (Smagorinsky, 1995). When teachers asked me questions—even difficult ones, as Sam did during one post-observation interview—I did my best to answer them honestly, even if it meant creating discomfort for both of us.

I am deeply passionate about this topic. During my time as a teacher, I came to believe that culturally relevant teaching practices wielded the power to radically transform the educational experiences for students. I saw, year after year, that such teaching practices profoundly impacted the climate of my class and the success of my students. While I certainly do not profess to be a paragon of culturally relevant teaching, I did teach in culturally responsive ways, even if I did not know research labeled them as such. I also found that culturally relevant teaching practices were not uniformly implemented in all of my colleagues' classrooms—in fact, few teachers truly engaged these pedagogies.

For five years, I worked as a British literature teacher to students from a predominantly African American background. I taught many content areas of secondary English—from American literature in junior English to literacy strategies for freshmen—and found the British

literature curriculum to be the most challenging to teach in culturally responsive ways. This assertion was consistently corroborated during my informal conversations with my colleagues, and even with my students. Many semesters, I taught classes entirely devoid of white students. I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge the curriculum presented while simultaneously acknowledged that certain realities of my school—class size, drop-out rates, gang issues, teacher turnover—were occurring at a rate disproportionate to that of other schools in the area. The longer I taught, the more aware I became of the many educational injustices to which my students were subjected. However, I saw this as more institutional than systemic. And I certainly did not problematize the phenomena of whiteness that was at play in the school and in my classroom's curriculum. My time in graduate school has equipped me with the knowledge and language to articulate—and the platform to oppose—these issues, a mission I have, in writing this study, finally realized.

I am a white, middle-class female. I acknowledge the privileges imbued with this positionality (McIntosh, 1988), and the benefits I enjoy as a result of this affiliation (Harris, 1993). However, I work constantly to critically reflect on this positionality and to function as an ally. I realize too the irony in arguing for changes in secondary teaching practices and teacher education when I am, in fact, representative of the very entity that has led to education's embarrassing homogeneity (Ladson-Billings, 2006). However, I believe that my racial recognition (Frankenberg, 1997) allowed me to execute this study at once conscious and critical of how my own positionality impacted my work.

While I believe (and hope) that policies should be revisited so that the British literature curriculum becomes more inclusive—why *shouldn't* the voices of Rushdie, Woolf, or Oronoko join in chorus with Shakespeare, Donne, and Keats?—canonical history gives us little reason to

hope that this will occur. This, coupled with my own experiences as a teacher and teacher educator, have led me to believe that working to inform and better teachers' pedagogical and curricular approaches is the most meaningful way to expend my energy and thereby combat educational inequities for all children. I see this not as a forfeiture, but keeping in accordance with racial realism (Bell, 1992).

These experiences have brought me to this study. I cannot ignore that my own experiences and positionality impact my work. Nor do I want to. I am confident, however, that my self-awareness helped me design, execute and complete my study with integrity. To uphold my study's integrity, I utilized a research log to document and reflect on how my experiences and positionality impacted my research; additionally, I periodically engaged and coded with established and trusted researchers to make sure that I am being as objective as possible.

Limitations

Case studies are not without their faults. Even the most well executed case studies leave certain questions unanswered and areas unprobed (Stake, 2013). Several constraints, or boundaries (Yin, 2013), played a significant role in the development of the study. Sometimes, case study findings lead to inaccurate revelations or oversimplify complex situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1981). Time is, as always, a concern. Time would not allow me to engage in the longitudinal ethnographic inquiry I would have preferred. However, I am confident that in the time allotted, I collected meaningful, rich data capable of saturating codes (Mertens, 2010).

Another common critique of case studies is that using a single case proves problematic when trying to generalize (Kennedy, 1976). To this, Yin (2014) answered that case studies are based on identically replicated experiments that examine the same phenomenon under different conditions. He went on to write that

Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample,' and in doing case study research, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalizations) and not to extrapolate probabilities statistical generalizations. (p. 21)

Perhaps a larger sample size would have allowed me to more fully capture the characteristics of the population at hand. But, because of time, my being the only researcher, and my selected research design, this was beyond the scope of this particular study.

The MTCS also presented certain limitations in my observation, coding, and analysis procedures. Though I used the MTCS as an analysis tool that helped me understand teachers' intentionality with regards to their culturally responsive teaching practices, the MTCS was originally designed to function as a self-assessment for teachers wishing to understand the extent to which teachers are multicultural. Thusly, I relied heavily on teachers' articulated intentionality to make sense of their practices. Additionally, I found that certain omissions in the levels somewhat complicated my coding and analysis. For example, characteristic 10, foster students' sociopolitical consciousness, does not provide a space for teachers' openness to *student-facilitated* conversations of equity, something both Geneva and Allison brought up on several occasions. Accordingly, I had to make choices with regards to how I should code and analyze certain aspects that the tool did not capture.

Additionally, I knew one of the teachers involved in the study. Allison and I have been friends for several years, though we had not connected for a couple of years prior to the study's start. This relationship complicated the study somewhat, and made my coding with other researchers to insure and maintain reliability all the more important.

The reliability of my coding measures presented another concern, because as the primary instrument of the study (Mertens, 2010), it is possible that I overlooked certain elements worthy

of scrutiny. It is also possible that I miscoded something, or was inconsistent in some way, which would in turn impact the fidelity of the coding process. To address this, I have coded with other researchers to determine and ensure inter-rater reliability. Also, I conducted periodic member checks throughout the study, culminating with our focus group during which I shared my findings with the participants and asked for their feedback. Participants agreed that my findings presented an accurate analysis of their realities.

The cumulative focus group also presented certain concerns, given the sensitive and personal nature of the topics discussed (Berg & Lune, 2011). Morgan (2013) raised the point that the focus group format requires participants to divulge their own personal experiences with the entire group, which can stymie conversation. Also, ethical concerns arise given the possibility that participants may not honor the confidentiality of the discussion. However, I found that my participants being strangers actually proved an advantage in the focus group setting because their lack of familiarity compelled them to be explicit in sharing their classroom experiences and realities, a benefit documented in the literature (see, e.g., Agar & MacDonald, 1995).

Problematizing Mirror Making: An Emerging Vision

I conceptualize this project as a way to talk back to the majoritarian story of the secondary English classroom—British literature—by presenting a counterstory of sorts that explores the ways in which teachers navigate a hegemonic, but time-honored, set of stories. In conceptualizing my study in this way, it becomes a way to “do” critical race theory, which seeks to project marginalized voices over those of the dominant group (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2005). In some ways, I see this study as the means to an end: my experiences, and those of other British literature teachers, corroborate (albeit informally) that enacting of culturally

responsive teaching in the British literature classroom presents challenges that are unlike those in other English courses.

In this study, I examine the role teachers' biographies play in their ability and willingness to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy, which presents a novel angle through which to view this phenomenon. My role as participant-observer enriched the study; my own experiences and interactions with participants established my participants' trust in my reporting of their work, but this role also complicated the data somewhat, a discussion I revisit in the following chapters. Having researched, documented, and shared my work, other researchers can begin to build on this work by developing and implementing new studies that provide a means through which to actualize these pedagogies and scrutinize, and answer, these challenges. Acknowledging these difficulties, and sharing these pedagogical and curricular ideas, is critical in the fight for transgressional teaching (hooks, 1994).

CHAPTER 4: CONSCIOUSLY CREATING AND EMBRACING DISCOMFORT: SAM'S CASE

Over the next three chapters, I set out to determine answers to the question guiding this study: *in what ways, if any, are teachers engaging culturally responsive teaching practices in their canonical British literature classroom?* To answer this query, I first turn to the MTCS, which offers the dispositions, knowledge, and skills of culturally responsive teachers as 11 individual characteristics; by placing teachers' observed actions and insights along the MTCS's continuum of *nascent, emergent, progressing, advancing, and transformational* levels, I am able to offer a five-tiered approach to my deductive analysis. I take care to capture each characteristic in relation to each teacher, a conversation I present by identifying the trends that emerged across the case. While I discuss teachers' approaches to their curriculum and pedagogy throughout each of the 11 analyses, pedagogical approaches are largely privileged in my analysis of characteristics one through ten. During my analysis of characteristic 11, modify curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity, I specifically analyze and present ways in which teachers did (or did not) deliver their British literature content in equitable ways.

Having explored my initial research question, I then shift to unpacking the myriad factors that inhibited and promoted teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices. These amalgamated conversations allow for a nuanced understanding of the ways in which each teacher realized and intentionally employed culturally responsive teaching practices in his/her British literature classroom.

The Context

Dupont High School

Located in the southeastern portion of Sykes County, Dupont High School was built in 1997 as a technology and leadership magnet school. In 2014, approximately 1,700 students attended Dupont; of these students, 55.3% qualified for free and reduced lunch. A recent report found that 91% of its students belonged to historically marginalized populations, almost double the state's average of 49%². Of this 91%, 73% of students identified as African American, 12% as Hispanic, and another 5% as two or more races. This percentage has shifted dramatically since the school's opening 18 years ago, when roughly half the students identified as white and the other half identified as students of color. Over half of the community's residents live below the poverty line. Additionally, news outlets have labeled the area a "food desert" (USDA, 2011)—that is, an area in which healthy, fresh foods are often difficult to access and obtain.

A perceptible energy and warmth resonated throughout the school. The school's pride was its girls' varsity basketball team, which has enjoyed state-wide recognition. Other sources of pride were its graduates who played on professional sports teams. Dupont prided itself on fostering community outreach: from working with little league teams to shadowing a middle grades English teacher, Dupont seniors contributed to their community as they worked to complete their graduation projects, a required project assigned in English classrooms. They were a community of students and teachers that extended membership, even to an outsider like me. One day while walking to Sam's class on my way to an observation, I was caught in a sea of students during a class change. A group of girls immediately started chatting with me, questioning where I'd bought my dress, and asked me to take a snapchat picture with them. (I

² In an effort to maintain the county's anonymity, I have elected to present each school's statistics comparative to the state's averages.

obliged). When I saw the same students throughout the study, they always waved enthusiastically and smiled. During the semester, several students emailed me, asking for homework help and college advice. One student called my husband to talk with him about enlisting in the United States Army. Undeniably, Dupont extended to its teachers, students, and staff something special and real: an invitation into a *community*.

Despite its many attributes, a sense of heaviness osmosed the Dupont-community landscape. Upon taking the exit for Dupont, a closed, boarded-up pawn shop sat a short distance away from the street. A regional low-cost grocery store and a nationwide fast-food restaurant faced the closed pawn shop, both of which always appeared busy. One of the area's police stations was couched between these two establishments. Cars sluggishly pulled into one of two gas stations, one of either side of the road. This group of stores and restaurants spanned roughly 100 yards; a person would need to venture several miles in either direction to come across a similar stretch of businesses. After passing through this small section of businesses, residential communities lined the streets. Police cars patrolled the area constantly, and on more than one occasion, I witnessed traffic stops.

During the duration of this study—from August-December 2015—there were several murders in the Dupont community. One was a police officer involved shooting; another involved the murder of twenty-four year old during a drug deal gone awry. These atrocities emerged as the community was still reeling from a particularly devastating crime in July that involved an area man who had been an outspoken advocate for ending gang violence in the area. Two weeks removed from data collection, a recent Dupont graduate was murdered. All of the victims were African American.

These events bore down on the already overwhelmed teachers at Dupont High School. Teacher morale at Dupont High School was painfully—and palpably— low. Several factors contributed to this downtrodden environment. At a faculty meeting early in the school year, administration informed Dupont High School teachers that the school has been designated an autism spectrum school, meaning that students labeled with the disorder would soon be bussed to the school in order to receive services. The decision puzzled and upset many teachers who already felt overwhelmed at having the highest special needs population in the county. The multiple recent shifts in administration, including regular principal turnover , had rattled the teachers’ sense of stability. Personnel issues plagued the school. In December, 11 new teachers were hired to compensate for those who left mid-year. Most of the incoming teachers only recently graduated college, though some were lateral-entry teachers.

One of the reasons personnel issues plagued the school was due to the number of physical altercations that occurred at the school. During my second week at Dupont, Sam shared with me that a school-wide fight had broken out earlier in the week. Before the bell rang signaling the beginning of first period, concurrent fights erupted in the gym, lunch room, and great hall areas. Faculty and staff members were advised to link arms and create a sort of human chain to deescalate the situation and prevent the fights from spilling over into other areas of the school..

The Classroom

As I approached Sam’s classroom on the day of our first observation, I read a sign on his door: *Everyone is welcome here, everyone belongs*. I pushed open the door to find Sam bustling about his room, making ready his materials for the day’s lesson. Never stopping his work, he looked up, smiled, and welcomed me to his classroom. Following his suggestion, I sat down behind his desk; I took the opportunity to survey the many student cards hanging on his wall.

"You are the craziest, most outspoken teacher I've ever had. You pushed me so hard last semester. You believed in me and supported me the whole way. I really wish you were my English teacher all four years." From another student: "Thanks for being the push I needed." Numerous accolades from his colleagues, awarded to him at various faculty meetings, lined his wall, as did student art. In the back, banners of various colleges and universities were taped to the walls. A separate poster showed the names of students and the colleges to which they committed to attend. Several desktop computers lined the back of the classroom, resting on tables on which Sam often perched while talking with his students. A picture of Sam with his partner and two of their friends sat on a bookshelf near his desk. In the back, bookshelves lined the room, with titles such as *Harry Potter* pressed irreverently against ones such as *The Importance of Being Ernest*.

The Classes

Today and most days, Sam's students' desks were grouped in pairs. A media cart with a projector jutted out from the wall at the front of the room, technology Sam called upon frequently. As I set up my notes for my first observation, I watched Sam interact with each student who walked in his room. I mean this literally: no student passed through the door to whom Sam did not speak. Despite the early time—it was 7:12 in the morning, and the students required galvanizing—Sam smiled, laughed, and ushered them in. Students looked at me behind Sam's desk—some moved past, uninterested by my imposition, while others asked me good-naturedly what I was doing there—but all eventually found their seats, rifling through their papers and chatting with their peers in the precious final moments before class began. The bell rang, and twenty-six faces peered at Sam expectantly. A quick survey of the room told me I was the only white woman there.

“Y’all ready to do this thing?”

Even the sleepiest faces offered a grin. Class began.

During the study, Sam taught three English IV classes. His first period was his academic, or standard class, terms used interchangeably to refer to students tracked into the lowest level of English; his third and fourth periods were honors-level sections, courses tracked beneath the Advanced Placement level. Classes lasted 90 minutes. Sam’s 67 students identified as Black (n=54), white (n=4), Hispanic (n=4), Asian (n=2), or two or more races (n=3). His first and fourth periods were small, with 16 and 21 students respectively, but his third period had 30 students. One of his 67 students had been labeled behaviorally and emotionally disabled (BED); another student was diagnosed with clinical depression. A third student was labeled an English language learner.

“If They’re Not Uncomfortable, You’re Not Teaching Them”: Sam’s Story

I first met Sam in fall 2014 when I was conducting a pilot study for my dissertation, the point of which was to understand how teachers working in the same school setting defined and performed culturally responsive teaching practices. A former colleague of mine and current assistant principal at a high school in Sykes County informed me that Sam was an exemplary teacher and one who would offer rich contributions to the pilot study. One of the goals in conducting this preliminary study was my desire to meet possible participants for my dissertation; in Sam’s case, this goal came to fruition.

When I interviewed Sam in fall 2014, I knew immediately I wanted him for this study. He surprised me with his unflinching honesty as he talked about the realities of teaching at Dupont High School. Time and again, he discussed his students, who he unfailingly referred to as his “kids,” and how much he enjoyed working with them. He also discussed explicitly his

positionality as a white male teacher of predominantly African American students, and offered the ways in which he felt the county had marginalized students at his school.

Having spent many hours with Sam talking with him about his teaching practices and the experiences that accounted for his leanings, I came to learn a good deal about him. Sam grew up in a small, rural county in North Carolina. His was a happy and full childhood: his parents were still married, and he had two siblings. His close-knit family dynamic rendered him acutely aware of potentially inflicting damage to his family when he discovered he was gay. He worried that coming out would ostracize him due to his Methodist upbringing; he also expressed anxiety over deviating from the hetero-normative expectations of the sports community to which he subscribed. He cried when, after coming out to his parents, they hugged him and said “Sam, it’s okay. We’ve been waiting for you.”

Illustrating Sam’s Case

Sam’s case provides an intricate look into the tensions and successes that arise between white teachers and their historically marginalized students; further, it allows for a study of the ways in which canonicity further, and more deeply, impacts these realities. In this section, I unpack the ways in which Sam engages culturally responsive teaching practices in his British literature classroom. To that end, Table 3 offers a comprehensive look at Sam’s culturally responsive teaching characteristics as reflected on the MTCS.

This table provides a holistic illustration of Sam’s approaches to culturally responsive teaching as observed during the study. Important to note that the characteristic most commonly observed in practice reflected the ways he performed culturally responsive teaching; prominent characteristics included his grasp of his sociocultural awareness, commitment to his students’ success, understanding of the impact of context and culture on students, and his dedication to

fostering his students' sociopolitical consciousness. With regards to his disposition characteristics, Sam was a teacher acutely aware of the privileges conferred to him due to his positionality as a white male, Sam frequently used his sociocultural awareness (characteristic one) as leverage by which to inspire sociopolitical conversations with his students. He marveled at the resiliency of and cultural attributes of his students, thereby affirming their cultural assets (characteristic two). A sense of pride marked his unwavering commitment to his students' success (characteristic three).

Table 3.

Coded Instances of Sam's MTCS Characteristics

	Self-Assessment	Nascent	Emerg-ing	Progress-ing	Advanc-ing	Transform-ational
1. Demonstrate Sociocultural Awareness (n= 26)	Progressing	1	1	1	19	4
2. Affirm Students' Cultural Assets (n= 5)	Progressing	0	5	0	0	0
3. Committed to Student Success (n= 22)	Transform-ational	0	0	8	9	5
4. Function as an Agent of Change (n= 5)	Transform-ational	0	0	0	3	2
5. Understand Sociopolitical Context of Schools (n= 0)	Progressing	0	0	0	0	0
6. Understand Impact of Content and Culture on Students (n= 21)	Progressing	1	0	3	17	0
7. Demonstrate Experiential Knowledge of School and Students' Communities (n= 3)	Progressing	0	3	0	0	0
8. Create Classroom that Embraces Students (n= 46)	Advancing	0	0	46	0	0
9. Engage in Critical Reflection to Guide Practice (n= 9)	Progressing	0	1	1	5	3
10. Foster Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness (n= 30)	Progressing	0	0	30	0	0
11. Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy for Equity (n= 15)	Advancing	0	0	4	10	1

Sam's knowledge characteristics provided another lens through which to understand his work as a culturally responsive teacher. Sam referenced conversations in which he intentionally engaged his students in provocative conversations meant to stimulate their critical analysis of classroom prejudice, bias, and inequities, evidence of his functioning as an agent of change, characteristic four. While he did not discuss the sociopolitical context of schools (characteristic five), Sam did focus on the ways in which culture and context drastically impacted his students (characteristic six), who he believed were constantly subjected to marginalization due to their sociocultural identities. From attending football games to organizing student events, he took care to join experiences in the Dupont community (characteristic seven), though these experiences happened infrequently.

With regards to his skills characteristics, forging personal relationships with students and creating timely, relevant lessons allowed Sam to create a warm classroom environment for his students (characteristic eight). And, while Sam's multifaceted approach to culturally responsive teaching afforded for a rich study of the nuances of culturally responsive teaching, perhaps his most distinguishing characteristic was his propensity for, and desire to stimulate, personal growth—even growth that challenged his normalized assumptions. Sam's growth along the continuum for characteristic nine, engages in critical reflection to guide practice, was an important aspect of his case. With regards to characteristic 10, Sam utilized various supplementary texts to foster students' sociopolitical consciousness, and even invited the Dupont community's state representative to come speak in his classroom. He toiled to modify his curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity (characteristic 11), conversations that often drove the day's lesson given his students' willingness to engage the topics. Important to note are the characteristics least frequently observed in Sam's data; these included the limited number

times he affirmed his students' cultural assets, the paucity of comments reflecting his understanding of the sociopolitical context of schools, and the difficulty he experienced in supporting his students to work as change agents. In the following sections, I build on the above description and provide close analyses of Sam's practice of culturally relevant teaching as revealed through an examination of his data.

Measures of Sam's Culturally Responsive Teaching Characteristics

Sociocultural Awareness (Characteristic 1)

"I know you're all looking at me like hey, what does this white guy know about this issue? I may not completely understand your struggle, but I see your struggle."

To Sam, owning his positionality as a white male was foundational to his work at Dupont. He understood that he enjoyed a myriad of benefits because of his skin and gender, and often shared his reflections with his students, particularly when they were discussing controversial, divisive issues. On more than one occasion, Sam articulated to his students that he recognized his privileges; this ownership allowed for a more nuanced conversation of the conversation at hand. During one observation, Jason, a third period student who identified as bi-racial, shared his disgruntlement over having to select one race on his testing materials prior to taking the PSAT. He wondered aloud why he had to check a box for race/ethnicity when he belonged to two. Sam shook his head, offered a quiet "I don't know man. Never had to think about it. It's a great comment though; thank you for sharing it. Did anyone else have a similar experience?" The class then discussed ways in which they had felt othered by the test, with numerous students chiming in with their own experiences, and other students admitting they, like Sam, had never considered the conflict that the one-box-check might provoke. Sam consistently demonstrated an *advancing* orientation to sociocultural awareness. This meant that he was aware of his identity in relation to others and could articulate the ways in which he had been

marginalized or privileged; it likewise involved his examination of how his life experiences and identity impacted his culturally and contextually shaped perspective. During our ethnographic interview, Sam admitted that

A lot of times when I'm teaching I'm like "Crap. I'm a middle class white American and I'm assuming they understand this reference or this analogy." So as I break down the material I try to say "Okay guys, give me some of your feedback. What does your culture offer? What's going on in your culture? What recent events inform this issue?"

Sam's ability to acknowledge his own experiences, and that they were often times at odds with his students' realities and the dominant cultural capital schools honor (Delpit, 2006), showed that he converted his sociocultural awareness into an understanding of how his sociocultural background might marginalize his students. During the post-observation interview, when I asked him to discuss what he believed classified as "culturally responsive teaching," he answered

It's broader than race. Culture is more than just based off the color of your skin. They're communities within communities. Your culture can be living in poverty. Finding yourself and understanding...being a homosexual is a completely different culture and a completely different set of rules, so much more than people understand because they can't, they're not in it, so for me that's what I try to bring into my classroom, for me culture is more than race, its more than your community or your religion, and sometimes kids do push back on that.

Here, Sam expressed that culture is a complex intersection of identities and realities, and that he viewed himself as one such cultural being. This language contrasted with that of many white teachers who often see themselves as culture-less and neutral (López, 2003; McIntyre, 2002; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005).

During a post-observation early in the study, Sam expressed a desire to talk with the students about white privilege. However, Sam was concerned about pushback from the white students in his classes, and worried that he might upset one of the students by broaching this issue. In discussing the conflict, Sam said, "I just have to figure out how I'm going to teach that without...it's a very fine line." Sam trailed off, stopping short of articulating explicitly his fear of

upsetting white students. Thus, while Sam was able to acknowledge his own privileged position in society, he felt constrained by the classroom dynamics and potential fallout of upsetting the white students. I take this conversation up in greater detail in subsequent sections.

Affirm Students' Cultural Assets (Characteristic 2)

"These kids are fighters."

Sam not only recognized that his students' realities and experiences often differed drastically his own, but he celebrated—and marveled at—the skills and knowledge his students gained as a result of these experiences. Instead of framing his students in deficit terms, a route research shows many white teachers take when teaching their non-mainstream students (see, e.g., Comber & Kamler, 2004; Hyland, 2005), Sam instead elected to focus on the strengths his students brought with them to his classroom. In one of our post-observation interviews, Sam told me about Darius, a young African American male in his fourth period class. Darius's mother and father were both incarcerated, and, without a permanent home, Darius had bounced from house to house, staying with different people every night. Yet, he continued to come to school. "That kid," Sam said, shaking his head, "I love that kid. He's amazing. What he's been through..." Sam trailed off, letting his wonder of Darius hang in the air. I coded the majority of instances of characteristic two as ones that reflected an *emerging* orientation to affirming his students' cultural assets because while Sam understood that all of his students had cultural capital and intentionally sought ways to identify the myriad forms of cultural capital his students enjoyed, he did not create opportunities for them to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and talents, actions required to align with the *progressing* level of the characteristic.

During the ethnographic interview, Sam shared with me that "So many of these kids have such an amazing story and come from such a different spot in life." That his students often came

to his classroom having navigating many types of experiences was, to Sam, admirable; these experiences, once shared out, only served to enrich and fortify the classroom dynamics. In describing what he perceived to be his students' cultural capital, Sam commented, "A lot of the kids...have loving parents. They have great support systems. I think the Dupont community takes care of its own; I respect that." Here, Sam recognized and honored the familial supports of the students. After detailing the aforementioned school-wide fight that had happened earlier in the week, I asked Sam to discuss the factors that led to the fight. I was surprised when Sam offered, "you gotta respect some of these kids, the way they just go through their day to day." He shared that, because of the realities many of them faced, "so much of their energy is put into their appearance, being the tough one, standing apart and not following into the line." Intrigued by this comment, I asked Sam to elaborate. He offered that, "Our kids don't give up. Our kids, in every sense of the word, they are trained to fight to survive, if I want something...I gotta react." He contrasted his students with those at a predominantly white school in the county, saying that his students' sense of resiliency was far superior. That Sam phrased what he perceived to be his students' fierce need to preserve their sense of selves as an attribute rather a detriment allowed me to code these comments as instances of cultural asset affirmation. Yet, while he recognized their realities and experiences as beneficial and important, Sam did not necessarily affirm students' cultural assets in the most positively-framed ways.

Demonstrate a Commitment to Students' Success (Characteristic 3)

"If a kid leaves knowing the plot of or the archetype character, great. But more importantly I want them to leave my room feeling a sense of pride and empowerment in themselves in who they are and their abilities to confront life and its challenges."

Characteristic three was one of the MTCS characteristics I documented most frequently in Sam's case. While I coded several comments as *transformational*, Sam fell most consistently

under the *advancing* level of the characteristic. Comments that fell under this advancing umbrella involved acknowledging a commitment to helping students develop the skills necessary to succeed outside of the classroom. One such example occurred when Sam, wishing to jolt his seniors into understanding the realities of college, emailed a former professor and asked for a prompt to which Sam had once responded during his time as the one of the professor's freshmen composition students. The prompt asked students to examine the epistemological stances made apparent in *Frankenstein* and thread the underpinnings of foundational works of philosophers like Hobbes and Kant throughout their analysis. The students were, of course, properly horrified. After some initial pushback, students used their phones, the classroom computers, and their peers' help to outline and write their own response to the prompt. Sam proudly reported that they "got it done" despite their initial resistance. But it is important to know that this comment reflected a limited view of success—one where "getting it done" represented success. Perhaps most intriguing was that Sam felt his students were *capable* of completing the rigorous, difficult assignment, and supported their efforts during the tenuous process.

Similarly, as students worked on their graduation projects, Sam mentioned that he wanted the students to be able to use their resumes outside of the classroom as they applied for jobs. He spent class time going over the important facets of a resume, and offered ideas for making the document stand out. Later in the semester, a guest speaker came to talk to the students about the importance of college, and the tools for managing finances once situated on a campus/university. "I couldn't afford college," Sam told his students the day before the presentation. "You need to be here to participate in this conversation." For Sam, the notion of "success" was not confined to merely performing well on in-class assessments—it involved empowering students to master the skills needed to thrive once they left his classroom.

Function as Agents of Change (Characteristic 4)

“The questions were borderline inappropriate, but I was like you know what? I want you to ask. That pushed them out of their comfort zone, but it also gave them background into the world is not going to stay where you’re at.”

During our initial interview, Sam shared an anecdote that revealed a *transformational* orientation to characteristic four. The story involved his facilitating a sort of impromptu in-class seminar during which a student who identified as transgender allowed her peers to ask her questions about her gender evolution. Sam shared

I had this transgender student last year that the kids...could not wrap their brains around. I pre-asked this student can we have a discussion, ‘cause I want to help you, she said I don’t know. She came back and said she did want to do this, I want to help my classmates. It was SUPER uncomfortable for the kids, ‘cause she walked in—uh, his name was Donovan but her name was Farrah. And so I said “I want to see Farrah.” She had her heels on, her purse, her hair and make-up were done. She walked in and owned it. She walked in and said “Hi, I’m Farrah,” and she introduced herself to every student. Senior year. Oh my god, it was so uncomfortable. You could see the football players just like “naw naw naw” and I was like okay...let’s see how far we can get in this 90 minutes. She let them ask questions. And by doing that, they were able to get the things they were scared of asking...and by this point this was February, so it was a safe space for them. The questions were borderline inappropriate, but I was like you know what? I want you to ask. That pushed them out of their comfort zone, but it also gave them background into the world is not going to stay where you’re at...you don’t have to like it, but you have to respect it.

Sam recognized the bias and discrimination many of his students directed at Farrah due to her non-traditional positioning on the gender spectrum. Sam’s intent behind facilitating this conversation was twofold: he wanted to help Farrah feel more secure and safe in his classroom, and to challenge and disrupt his students’ biased and discriminatory behaviors and beliefs. That conversation, though difficult, awkward, and potentially detrimental to Sam’s career—he worried that the nature of the conversation would horrify parents and administration— was, to Sam, absolutely worth the risk. When I asked Sam what effect the exchange had on classroom climate, he replied

Oh my god, it changed so much. I mean, it was a two part thing. It was helping the students understand Farrah and helping Farrah understand herself. Watching her own that room and you could tell certain questions she would look at me and I said it's okay, go for it, helped her identify some of her own understanding of it...One extreme and sometimes uncomfortable example. I was crazy uncomfortable that day. I was thinking like oh my god, is a parent going to complain about this? Maybe I went too far? But in my mind I was like no, this has to be done.

Here, Sam embraced the discomfort of the conversation because he saw engaging the issue as a critical element of his students' success, both on the personal and academic levels, in his classroom. Because Sam worked *with* his students to challenge bias and discrimination—and provided an opportunity for an empowered Farrah to act as an agent of change—I coded this commentary and another like it as *transformational* because Sam invited, and even challenged, his students to participate in the disruption of these discriminatory behaviors. However, while it is a powerful example, important to note in that I only coded two instances of Sam reflecting a *transformational* approach characteristic four.

Whereas Sam also self-assessed as *transformational* for characteristic four, my analysis showed that Sam more consistently demonstrated an *advancing* orientation to functioning as an agent of change. This amounted to Sam working to disrupt and take action on his own (*advancing*) versus having incorporating his students in the process (*transformational*). It's important to note, however, that instances of this characteristic were limited in the data. One *advancing* comment, shared below, demonstrates how Sam addressed and responded to instances of bias, discrimination, and/or inequity in his classroom. Sam shared that

Every now and then I had a kid who said “fag” and “that’s so gay” and I said what’s wrong with that? Explain to me. I caught him off guard. He said I didn’t mean you Mr. W, I said no no no, I’m a part of that group you just listed. I said how would you feel if I said “that’s so Black” and stereotyped you? Would you be offended? I wasn’t mad.

Here is one instance in which Sam pushed back against his students' discriminatory practices by asking them to consider how they might be impacted by similar language. He made a point to

attest to his “not being mad,” an important element to the conversation given that relationships provided the foundation for these critical conversations. Sam’s ability to identify the prejudice imbued in the comment and his willingness to correct the student may be attributed to his own identity as a gay man. In this way, his own history of marginalization directly and intimately impacted his approach to culturally responsive teaching.

Worth noting is that all instances in which Sam acted as an agent of change involved prompting his students, not his colleagues, peers, or administration, to re-consider and re-orient their language, beliefs, and actions, a conversation I take up again the chapter seven.

Understand the Sociopolitical Context of Schools (Characteristic 5)

Characteristic five tends to the degree to which teachers’ understand that social, political and economic factors in society play a critical role in their students’ lives, the educational system, and society as a whole. A closely related but different concept altogether, characteristic six tends to the more immediate impact of policies and procedures on a particular group of students. I see characteristic six as the proverbial “trees”—that is, the immediate realities facing students—while I conceptualize characteristic five as the proverbial “forest”—that is, the pervasive, historically entrenched policies, laws, and procedures frequently implemented nationwide and even internationally— that directly impacts the manner in which the trees shoot up, sway, bend, and break. Thus, characteristic five examines these factors from a more historical and comprehensive lens than characteristic six.

My analysis of characteristic five poses a stark contrast to characteristic six’s. Over all data sources, I did not code any instances of Sam addressing the sociopolitical contexts of schools. While he frequently critiqued the systems that oppressed his students, Sam did not seem to consider the “bigger picture”: the more historically and pervasively entrenched potential

culprits behind his students' marginalization. Instead, he saw the issues encountered as ones specific to Dupont. In this way, Sam offered both a nuanced and intimate understanding of his own students' sociopolitical realities without connecting these experiences to the larger narrative of the sociopolitical nature of schools in general.

Understand the Impact of Context and Culture on Students (Characteristic 6)

"Sykes County has done you wrong."

Remember that in contrast to characteristic five, characteristic six presents a more centralized and intimate understanding of the ways in which policies and practices directly impact a teacher's students. While Sam did not demonstrate a developed orientation to characteristic five, he did reflect such an orientation to characteristic six. Unabashedly, Sam shared his concerns over the many ways in which he believed Sykes County had marginalized the students at Dupont High School. During one class discussion, a student asked why so many substitute teachers had taught her during her time at Dupont. To her question, Sam offered this candid response:

A lot of teachers leave midyear. Subs leave. New teachers come in fresh out of college. Our students have become acclimated to that--our school is [expected to be] on the same playing field as other schools in the county but here it's a different ball game.

During our post-observation interview, I asked Sam to elaborate a bit on this point; he responded with

Keeping teachers, and keeping highly qualified teachers, [is a problem at Dupont]. A lot of our teachers are lateral entry teachers this year, a lot of our teachers are fresh out of college, there's something to be said for that, we're a low SES school and we don't draw veteran teachers, we take, and I say this because I sat in our interviews, we were just grabbing whoever we could grab, I remember asking "Well don't you want to see if we can get someone with experience," and the previous principal was like "Winters, this is what we have," and how sad is this for our school that we're hiring these underqualified teachers or fresh out of college teachers in such big numbers, not one or two, we have 25 brand new fresh out of college, that's a lot of new teachers.

This quote shows that Sam both identified and critically analyzed the various sociopolitical factors that shaped his students' learning experiences. He recognized that his students often learned under the tutelage of novice teachers, or substitutes when the novice teachers left, and that this issue affected schools primarily populated with students belonging to low SES groups at a rate disproportionate to those schools primarily comprised with students belonging to middle to high SES groups (see, e.g., Ingersoll, 2001; Simon & Johnson, 2013). Sam's statement, made toward the end of the study, showed his potential for, and perhaps movement toward, becoming *transformational* as he began to create opportunities for his students to understand how these myriad factors directly impact their learning experiences and outcomes. I coded the majority of Sam's insights under the *advancing* descriptor, meaning that he critically analyzed issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and religion, and considered how they shaped his students' learning experiences. These comments also showed his ability to identify the ways in which certain cultural groups are (or are not) marginalized through curriculum, policies, and practice.

In one instance of this orientation, one of Sam's students, Darius, an African American male, offered that he often felt like people judged him based on his urban style of sagging his pants. In a post-observation interview, I asked Sam the intent behind his engaging the conversation. Sam wanted his student to think about "why you're automatically gauged as a thug or criminal because of what you're wearing...they're great kids. But why does society have that stereotype against them?" Sam also worried aloud that his students were not exposed to other perspectives because of the lack of diversity at the school. He lamented that Sykes County had "done [the Dupont students] wrong," and noted that recent policies and changes, such as the

cessation of mandatory bussing and sending the school's technology lab to another school in the area, had adversely impacted the Dupont community, making it the county's "forgotten" school. By intentionally fostering sociopolitically-oriented conversations with his students, Sam hoped to challenge the forces that led to his students' inequitable learning experiences.

Demonstrate Experiential Knowledge of School and Students' Communities (Characteristic 7)

"You gotta meet them where they are."

While Sam did offer a handful of comments demonstrating the experiences he had in the school and students' communities, these instances were few and far in between, making characteristic seven one of the MTCS characteristics Sam least frequently displayed. During the ethnographic interview, Sam shared that he often attended Dupont football games on Friday nights. His intent was more than merely to cheer on the team: one of the purposes behind his attendance was to connect with parents, and particularly with the parents of children who were struggling academically in his class. He detailed attending the games to scope out the audience for a particular parent of a football player. Attending the game not only helped Sam develop a presence in the Dupont community, but also gave him another strategy to help his students succeed in his class (characteristic three). Sam believed that these interactions helped him forge bonds with the parents, and also allowed him to engage in informal, but important, discussions around students' academic success. However, while Sam enjoyed participating in experiences in the Dupont community, he did not seek ways to intentionally connect his classroom to the community, nor did he critically reflect on his own role in the community, qualities required to advance on the MTCS continuum.

As the student government advisor, Sam often collaborated with students on activities for Dupont students. One instance entailed his acting as the faculty organizer of the senior "block

party,” an occasion during which students listened to music, ate, danced, and socialized with each other and the staff. The event was a huge success, and the students and faculty alike congratulated Sam on what a terrific job he did organizing a community event for the school. Sam’s last mention of authentic experiences in the Dupont community occurred when he bought a “Before I Die” board for his students. The board, which has gained popularity throughout the country, is a large chalkboard that communities build together and position in a central location so that passers-by can write a goal they would like to accomplish before they die. Sam’s students erected the wall in the community the year prior to the study; Sam attributed his not engaging in the activity again this year due to finances—he paid for the board last year, and could not afford to do so again. These experiences, though limited in their number, showed that Sam sought opportunities to bond with the Dupont community by planning and attending community events, and used these moments to build relationships with other stakeholders in the community.

Create a Community That Embraces Students (Characteristic 8)

“It’s all about relationships. Relationships, relationships, relationships. I can’t say it enough.”

Sam intentionally worked to create a warm environment in which students could work collaboratively to master the content. His dedication to the characteristic marked his case: it was the characteristic for which I coded the most frequently. His commitment to fostering an inclusive environment was made evident when students developed and performed a script meant to serve as a social critique while reading *The Importance of Being Ernest*; they also worked together on essays, literary analyses, and numerous other projects. Sam also used thematic elements of his curriculum to foster students’ sharing of their own experiences. For example, early in the semester, Sam’s students developed an essay detailing how their own religion compared/contrasted with the Christian doctrine made evident in *Beowulf*. Later, students wrote

a poem titled “The Beowulf in Me,” an activity that allowed them to consider their own heroic characteristics in light of their understanding of the archetypical characteristics of Beowulf.

While reading *Macbeth*, students worked in groups to order fifteen crimes (all of which occurred during the play) in order of severity. As a group, they had to come to a consensus of the ordering; Sam encouraged them to use their own experiences/beliefs to rationalize their choices when debating with the group members. Heated discussion promptly ensued, and continued when groups shared their reasoning with the rest of the class. Sam used this opening activity as a way to pique students’ interest in the play, but also to help them understand how their own experiences might inform their responses to the text and its characters. Sam maintained that establishing a relationship with his students was key to ensuring their academic success. I coded the majority of his comments/behaviors as *progressing* in nature, meaning that Sam was aware of and implemented community-building strategies. Sam did not seek his students’ feedback on classroom management, engagement or curriculum, which precluded his moving along more advanced spaces on the continuum.

Engage in Critical Reflection to Guide Practice (Characteristic 9)

“I’ve never really seen my privilege until working at Dupont.”

At the mid-way point of the study, Sam experienced a critical encounter with one of his former students. During his planning period, Sam wrote passes for students late to class. One day, Sam told one perpetually late student that if she couldn’t get to school on time, she would be unable to hold a job, and consequently, would likely end up on government assistance. Two of Sam’s colleagues, both African American females, overheard the exchange and voiced their concerns to him, to which he replied that the confrontation made him

More annoyed than anything. I have a relationship with the student and she clearly wasn’t offended, I was like “listen, you’re messing up and you need to fix it, this is the road

you're on," she was agreeing with me, like "yeah yeah Mr. Winters," like alright, stop cussing out teachers, stop being late, now go to class, and then it was over, and the other teachers walked up after and said "Mr. Winters, you can't talk about EBT and food stamps," and I said "why," and they said "because you're white and male," and right away I got defensive, I was like whoa, "you're telling me I can't say EBT or food stamps because I'm a white male," and they said "well you have to understand some of these parents," ok explain, and they said "well it looks bad," and I said "well could you say it," and they said "yeah we could say it," and then isn't that a double standard? Aren't you making it more of a race issue, and I was saying "you're not going to class, you're not doing what you need to be doing issue, you guys are making it into a racial issue, I'm not mad, I'm irritated," so I walked away and I let it go.

Here, Sam voiced his understanding of both him and his student being racialized beings, but noted too his belief that race did not play a role in the exchange. I coded this moment as *emerging* given that Sam acknowledged but failed to fully examine the ways in which race, class, and other power differentials factored into the exchange. Sam talked heatedly about the encounter for several minutes—his retelling of the event, and his hurt over his treatment, is reflected in most of the transcription from this particular post-observation interview.

As we neared the end of the interview, Sam asked me my opinion: had he handled it okay? Did I agree with him? What would I have done? I inhaled deeply: I'd been worried that he might ask me this question as I was uncertain how he would receive my response. I felt conflicted: while I wanted to share my insights with Sam, I worried that doing so might offend him, which could then lead to him removing himself from the project. Admittedly ambivalent about my choice, I told him that I disagreed with his belief that we can ever remove race, as well as other manifestations of power, from any given situation. That even by meaning well, teachers—particularly those who belong to mainstream (and often dominant) groups—can perpetuate certain inequities, or act on certain prejudices. I suggested to Sam that in that moment, and despite the existing relationship between him and the student, he was a white male authority figure telling an African American female she would end up on food stamps. No matter how

well-intentioned he was, certainly ideologies pulsed like a current throughout the exchange, and even made themselves apparent in his reaction to it.

As I talked, Sam looked baffled. Aghast. Crestfallen, and then embarrassed. Even as I talked, I felt anxious that what I was saying might have dire consequences for me as the researcher benefitting from Sam's welcome. When I finished speaking, I was met with silence. A *long* silence. Sam opened his mouth to speak, then shut it again. Looking at his hands, he offered a quiet "my mind is blown." Sam shared that he'd never once considered the idea that perhaps the student's silence *wasn't* indicative of her "being okay" with his comments, but instead, only of their strong relationship and her desire not to further upset a teacher she liked—in short, that their relationship actually *hindered* her being honest with him about how his comments hurt and offended her. The small shakes of his head, and periodic, quiet "wows," affirmed his reflection. This critical encounter between the two of us marked a turning point in Sam's analysis and reflected on teaching. In chapter seven I speak more about my engagement with the teachers/relationship with regards to CRT. After this conversation, he made five comments that I coded as characteristic nine, and each showed growth away from the *emerging* descriptor.

With the exception of one comment, all of the *advancing* instances to characteristic nine occurred *after* the critical encounter with the student Sam warned of a life of governmental assistance. These subsequent statements demonstrated Sam's reflection on his pedagogical and curricular choices to uncover implicit and explicit bias and deficit-based thinking. A month after the incident, Sam shared with me that "it's so important to reflect." He went on to say that "when we started the process and I was like oh yeah, I'm doing these things, and now that we're going through it and now that I'm reflecting I'm like oh man, there's so many ways to change and grow." Sam's willingness to ask *me* difficult questions—and to thoughtfully consider my

answers—supported his move to more advanced spaces on the continuum for characteristic nine. When, after conducting some preliminary analysis of his case, I realized his placement on the continuum had shifted since the “food stamp incident” with the student, I asked Sam to comment on my finding. Sam offered that

I definitely learned a lot from that experience, and did a lot of reflection, analyzing and definitely realizing like word choice, and on one level I know I have this relationship with the student, and I’d love to say that anytime I say something to a student even if I offend them they’re going to tell me, but at the same time maybe they won’t, maybe they’ll hold it in because they respect me and ...don’t feel comfortable saying “Mr. W, that was wrong,” or “that hurt my feelings,” my goal now is to break down the wall where they can say “hey Mr. W, can we talk about that?” and I can be receptive enough to say yeah, let’s talk about it, and open enough to say [I’m] really sorry about that.

Here, Sam recognized that his positionality, and the prejudices and biases inextricably bound to his identity, directly bore down on his interactions with his students, and in fact played a critical role in their schooling experiences. During the focus group, Sam admitted that, “I’ve never really seen my privilege until working at Dupont. That’s been a good thing. That’s where it comes in for any new teacher out there is understanding your own culture. Now I’m starting to learn.” His acknowledgement that he should not only more carefully consider his own positionality, but also invite students to critique his approach and then use this conversation to modify his pedagogy, demonstrated his growth toward engaging in critical reflection to guide his practice.

Foster Students’ Sociopolitical Consciousness (Characteristic 10)

“I’d be doing these kids a disservice to act like these challenges aren’t out there.”

In perhaps the most obvious display of his commitment to fostering his students’ sociopolitical consciousness, Sam was receptive to my coordinating with Representative Sarah Meeks, the Dupont community’s district representative in the North Carolina House of Representatives, to have her come speak to his third and fourth period classes. In preparation for

the talk, Sam asked his students to research various local policies and laws that had recently been introduced. Students then used their findings to generate questions for Rep. Meeks.

Rep. Meeks electrified the room when, in her opening line, she asked the students “have you guys ever heard of the ‘Black lives matter’ movement?” Surprised by her question, students were initially silent, but their incredulity quickly gave way as they began to offer insights into the movement and its reflection of and relevance to their lives. She told the students she had been arrested for her work as a civil rights activist during the 1960s. Students leaned in closer when she discussed how she had asked her third grade teacher to move her from the back of the class, comprised entirely of Black students, to the front of the class, comprised entirely of white students, “because I wanted to learn.” Throughout the talk, she discussed various policies up for debate in the house—from body cameras for police to merit pay for teachers—and asked the students’ to weigh in. She invited the students to visit her at the House to observe her debating several key issues, and told them she would use their class conversation to shape her arguments. The episode with Rep. Meeks was indicative of Sam’s orientation to characteristic ten throughout the study: though he consistently engaged his students in discussions of equity and sociopolitical consciousness that impacted them on both a personal and community level, Sam did not position his students to design and implement action-orientated approaches to these issues, actions required to place on the more advancing spaces on the MTCS.

One way Sam generated sociopolitically-oriented conversation was through his deliberate use of informational texts. For example, Sam invited his students to select a news article to share with the class that they felt were important, timely, and relevant. In reflecting on the assignment, Sam noted that he wanted his students to carefully consider “what cultural stereotypes are out there, what they’re up against.” Later, Sam elaborated further, saying that “I’d be doing these

kids a disservice to act like these challenges aren't out there.” This comment came after Sam read an article on the unemployment gap between high school students of color and white high school students. In another lesson, Sam's students examined two articles that reported on the same issue; one piece came from CNN, the other, Fox News. Sam asked his students to examine the presentation of the material in order to understand the ways in which media created and perpetuated prejudice.

Sam also used his British literature curriculum to engage his students in discussions of inequities that impacted them. During one lesson, Sam's students examined William Blake's poetry, during which the atrocities of child labor often emerges, and investigated current instances of this abuse. Students then created project boards where they linked Blake's poetry with the current sociopolitical issues of their choosing. Thus, Sam's approach to fostering his students' sociopolitical consciousness spanned numerous modalities, but rarely moved students toward action-oriented projects.

Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy to Confront Issues of Equity (Characteristic 11)

“I always try to make the literature relevant to the students, and I ask ‘Can we find examples today?’ Of course we can. So often with British literature, the students come in thinking ‘this doesn't apply to me, this is so old,’ proving to them these issues we read about are still very relevant today, they're battles we're still fighting. Can we find those battles? Why do they still exist?”

From the ethnographic interview to the focus group, Sam bemoaned the difficulties both he and his students faced in trying to engage the British literature curriculum. Despite these canonical hardships, Sam successfully crafted ways to read the content while also incorporating topics salient and of interest to the students. During one coded example, Sam's students read “The Ballad of Birmingham” (Randall, 1965), a Civil Rights era poem that details the real-life bombing of a historical African American church in 1963. Students read Randall's poem in

tandem with British ballads, and drew comparisons between the pieces. Sam later recounted the class discussion generated by pairing the asynchronously written poems, saying

We talked about how far we haven't come, one of the stem questions was can you think of a recent event and everyone said yeah, the shooting at the church, it was phenomenal listening them talk about we have made this progress here, we have a Black president, but look at what we can't do.

Here, Sam's students connected a young white male's recent shooting of nine unarmed churchgoers praying at a historically Black church in Charleston, South Carolina with their British curriculum. These seemingly unrelated topics helped Sam clear a "way in" for his students to engage the British literature curriculum by connecting the content to issues both timely and relevant to the students' lives. I coded all instances of Sam's modifying his curriculum and pedagogy as *advancing*. This meant that he analyzed his curriculum, sought opportunities in his curriculum to teach through an equity lens, and ensured that these changes met content standards. Consistently, Sam showed himself to be both aware of the marginalizing forces of the British literature curriculum and conscious of how he might push back against its exclusionary properties.

In another discussion, Sam and his students investigated Macbeth's murderous spree and discussed the factors that allowed him to avoid punishment for so long. The students, and Sam as well, discussed how Macbeth enjoyed certain privileges as a white man in the upper class of his Scottish society, and that this station allowed him to execute his devious plans with little questioning. While teaching *Beowulf*, Sam lamented aloud the "all white canon" he must teach; he asked his students to forward their own ideas of heroism, suggesting that Martin Luther King, Jr., presented a prime example. Another student offered Malcolm X. For Sam, these discussions were critical in order to help his students gain access to what he explicitly named as an

exclusionary curriculum. In this regard, Sam modeled a critical analysis of the curriculum for his students, calling attention to the experiences and voices privileged in the curriculum.

Factors That Inhibit Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices in the Canonical British Literature Classroom

Over the course of the study, several constraints adversely impacted Sam's ability and willingness to engage culturally responsive pedagogies while teaching his British literature curriculum. These patterns included difficulties with the curriculum, group dynamics, fear of punitive backlash, and time, limitations explored in more detail in the subsequent sections.

Curriculum

On thirteen different occasions, Sam mentioned the particularized difficulties British literature presented. During his ethnographic interview, Sam reflected that, "British literature is hard across the board to teach. I think it's hard at any school with any culture background... you're going back to the Anglo Saxon period, like 449—trying to get the kids to understand the conceptualization of culture is hard enough, let alone how it develops." He went on to say that, "by the time we're done with *Beowulf* they're thankful for Shakespeare." During one classroom observation during which Sam taught Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale," students visibly struggled with not only the language of the poem, but also making sense of the piece's themes of death as release. It was the only time during my observations that the students fell silent during classroom discussions. During our ethnographic interview, Sam affirmed that teaching British literature was "100% the hardest curriculum I've had to teach."

Sam also noted the importance of finding supplementary texts—articles, TED talks, and the like—to help engage his students with the British literature curriculum. He said that, "one of the biggest challenges with Brit lit, if you're going to find articles that are relevant, that takes some time." He echoed this exasperation after I taught a lesson on othering (Nyoni, 2012) to his

students. To open the lesson, the students and I read an article about Jane Elliott, an Iowa teacher who, during the 1960s, conducted an in-class experiment to help her elementary students understand the motivations behind the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr (Bloom, 2005). We then used this discussion as a way in to discuss the motivations behind, and the consequences of, the creature's othering in the Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1996). After teaching the lesson, Sam shared that while he struggled to identify informational texts to tie into the literature curriculum, citing that that the texts' themes seemed so far removed from what students faced today, the lesson gave him some ideas for how he might incorporate informational pieces into his instructional rotation.

Fear of Punitive Backlash

Over the span of the study, Sam mentioned seven times feeling concerned that his teaching practices, if they became too explicitly equity-driven, might result in his facing punitive fallout. Sam shared that during the class seminar in which he invited Farrah, his student who identified as transgender, to share her story with her classmates, "I was thinking like oh my god, is a parent going to complain about this? Maybe I went too far? But in my mind I was like no, this has to be done." Though he admittedly dreaded the potential fallout of the class-wide discussion, ultimately, Sam still engaged the conversation, believing that the benefits of the exchange outweighed the fear of backlash from parents.

Another factor that played into Sam's willingness to engage certain instructional practices involved his sense of the draconian climate under which North Carolina teachers must perform. A recent study found that the state is the 49th worst state for teachers (Bernardo, 2015). The state has recently ceased providing a pay raise for acquiring a master's degree, attempted to revoke teacher tenure, and eliminated its nationally-lauded Teaching Fellows program. These

factors directly impacted Sam's professional self-efficacy and sense of agency. When I asked him about the ways in which he might move his students to undertaking action-oriented projects—a more advanced placement on the continuum of characteristic 10, foster students' sociopolitical consciousness, than he had fallen, Sam answered with

I think about too how we can push back as students and teachers, but do you think with the state of education and the lack of respect teachers get or the lack of say we have in our classrooms, that makes us timid? You think about the teacher who read *The Prince and Prince* and was terminated, that was him pushing back saying we no longer live in a society where every child has a mom and dad, that's not our society anymore, but we also in North Carolina where some people don't want to accept that the children don't fit into that generic type of family, that nuclear family doesn't exist, it makes me wonder do more teachers want to push back but are afraid to because of cases like that, which is just a travesty in my opinion because how do you evolve the students, how do we mold the world into a better place if we stay stagnant?

Here, Sam conveyed his conflict over wanting to push his students towards action, but feeling that such an orientation could prove problematic for a teacher working in the present conditions. After Rep. Meeks' talk, Sam and I discussed potential sociopolitical projects inspired by the conversation. But Sam showed signs of consternation when I suggested that Sam, his students and I write letters to the Sykes County School board about the rate of teacher attrition at the school, or about diversifying its literature curricula. When I asked him what caused him to shy away from engaging these issues on a more public platform, Sam responded that he feared "[the] politics, ruin[ing] my reputation, [being labeled a] disgruntled employee, there are so many things you can be labeled with just for doing something you really believe in." Again, Sam demonstrated how his fear over punitive measures impacted both his ability and willingness to engage in certain aspects of culturally responsive pedagogies both in and outside of his classroom.

Group Dynamics

While Sam's students by and large welcomed and offered contributions that enriched their classroom conversations around issues of equity, certain elements of the classroom dynamics impeded Sam's culturally responsive teaching practices. Across the data, I coded ten instances in which Sam mentioned the ways in which group dynamics negatively impacted his willingness to probe certain issues. When we discussed a lesson during which Sam had his students read an article about police brutality, Sam brought up the notion of white privilege, and how he wanted to further the discussion of privilege when his students read *Macbeth*. Sam shared

I just have to figure out how I'm going to teach that without...it's a very fine line. They have opinions, they have things they see that they want to get out. And it's creating that safe space. But then you also have—out of the corner of my eye I could also see Daniel, kinda shoot up, like he's the only white student in the room...So in a sense I think Daniel would be the only white kid in the room, and how would that affect him? And I don't even know. I don't know what his opinion would be. But it's going to be interesting to find out his perspective versus the rest of the class's.

Here Sam articulated the tensions between his students of color, who want to engage these issues of inequity, and his one white student, Daniel, who Sam worried would likely express anger over the conversation. White students' disgruntlement over discussing race in the literature classroom has been documented (see, e.g., Thomas, 2015); these rebuffs, and the fear of chastisement from parents and administrators alike, can lead to the silencing of certain important issues. Further complicating the situation, Daniel was labeled as behaviorally/emotionally disabled and periodically erupted in vocal displays of anger. For example, Daniel threw a book and shouted "motherfucker!" at the beginning of the study, a reaction triggered by some unobservable occurrence. Acutely aware of this designation, Sam hesitated to engage in a classroom conversation that while potentially fruitful, could provoke anger as it challenged Daniel's

position as a white male with privilege; however, the knowledge that his diagnosed anger disability might only exacerbate this resistance also loomed in Sam's mind.

Sam acknowledged that facilitating conversations around issues of equity were easier to broach in his third and fourth period classes than in his first period academic level course. He stated that, "I'm constantly acknowledging that, you know I am a white guy, and sometimes that does make you nervous when you're posing certain questions...I'm more careful with first period." This heightened sensitivity stemmed from the fact that Sam sometimes experienced pushback from his first period students who, as Sam described, belonged to a lower SES category than his third and fourth period honors students. Sam shared one experience in which an African American student, Tray, told him "'you're a white guy, you don't know the struggle,' [Tray] will outright say that, so as a teacher I'm thinking okay, I gotta be careful how I phrase that because I don't want him to think that I'm saying I directly understand how you're feeling." When I asked Sam how the exchange made him feel—Tray made the comment in front the class—Sam answered with

I agree with him to some extent, I'm like "you know what man...you're right. It is different for me. I acknowledge that. Does that mean we can't talk about it?" He said "well no." I said "I'm a white guy you're a Black guy, I'm a white guy admitting that there are certain privileges given to me that you don't get. I can acknowledge it. I don't agree with it. Does that weigh value?" He said "well yeah, but you're still getting the privileges." That's where you do get those tension and nerves you're like oh crap how am I going to like turn this you know. [Tray is] saying I get what you're doing and I appreciate your trying to understand but on some level you can't.

Thus was Sam's willingness to broach certain issues stymied somewhat by not only the racial dynamics between him and his students, but by the socioeconomic contrasts, too. Sam's difficulty negotiating his own positionality of privilege with his students' membership to historically marginalized groups is a tension documented in the research examining how literature teachers engage their marginalized students on issues of equity (see, e.g., Borsheim-

Black, 2015; Thomas, 2015). The tensions between well-meaning white teachers and their historically marginalized students can leave students feeling isolated in and by the classroom discussion, a problem only exacerbated by the exclusionary properties of the British literature curriculum (see, e.g., Carter, 2006, 2007; Cook & Amatucci, 2006). Interestingly, Tray's comment caused Sam to experience what he perceived as a loss of control over the classroom discussion; on impulse, Sam then sought to redirect the conversation back to a discussion of equity that did not include a public examination of his privileged positionality. Interestingly, Sam's identity as a man identifying as gay seemed to position him to work as an agent of change with regards to facilitating more equitable conditions for Farrah, his transgender student, but his lack of Black identity seemed to stymie the extent to which Sam felt comfortable engaging issues related to race.

Time

The final obstacle that inhibited Sam's ability to deliver his content in culturally responsive ways was time. During a post-observation interview, Sam described the relationship between a lack of resources and time, saying "we are super rushed to get through *Frankenstein*, which I really hate because there are so many other activities I'd like to do, we have to be done by next Friday to pass them on to the other teachers because the resources just aren't there right now." Because of the scarcity of books, Sam felt rushed with the texts, and thusly was unable to offer his students deep and sustained engagement.

Time also prevented Sam from pressing his students to examine some of their own biases. While reading "The Wife of Bath's Tale," Sam and his students discussed the act of rape, and the fact that the maid raped in the story neither speaks nor is mentioned again following her assault. Her rape, Sam offered, functions as little more than a plot device in the tale. Together

with Sam, the class engaged in a vibrant discussion of justice, and whether or not it was served given the knight's eventual marriage to a beautiful, faithful woman at the tale's conclusion. During the discussion, Jasmine, a student in Sam's first period, questioned, "Well, what was she wearing?" Sam rolled his eyes and told her that wasn't the question she should be asking, but stopped short of exploring *why* her query was problematic. During our post-observation interview, I questioned Sam about why he did not attempt to disrupt Jasmine's implicit belief that a woman's rape could be attributed to what she was wearing. He acknowledged that while he recognized (and disagreed with) the ideology made evident by her statement, he was cognizant of time and felt that he needed to move the class on to the next activity—they had spent more time of exploring the role of justice in the tale than he intended. Time, then, emerged as another critical factor that impeded Sam's ability to teach in culturally responsive ways.

Factors That Promote Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices in the Canonical British Literature Classroom

Though a variety of factors inhibited Sam's ability and willingness to engage culturally responsive pedagogies while teaching his British literature curriculum, still other factors actually supported Sam's efforts to teach in multicultural ways. These entities—biographical experiences, informational texts, and group dynamics—are detailed in the sections below.

Biographical Experiences

The data suggest that Sam's biographical experiences played a critical role in his ability and willingness to teach in culturally affirming ways. I coded thirteen biographical mentions that better positioned Sam to work as a culturally responsive teacher of canonical literature.

Sam's discussed how his own poor performance in certain content areas in school informed his understanding of his students, particularly those who struggled to meet mainstream markers of success in the English classroom. In detailing the difficulties he experienced taking

math classes, Sam stated “thank god I really wasn’t good at everything because it’s helped me understand [the students who struggle in my class].” But Sam’s academic difficulties weren’t confined to the math classroom—he expressed that he also had difficulty succeeding in his British literature classes in college, and found his American literature classes infinitely easier and more enjoyable. During his ethnographic interview, Sam recalled thinking “get me through this Shakespeare course.” That Sam struggled to master the nuances of British literature allowed him to more fully recognize and address the challenges the curriculum presented to his own students, and modify his instruction accordingly.

Sam’s marginalization as a man who identified as gay also undergirded his pedagogical choices. During one of our post-observation interviews, I asked Sam to reflect on the factors that accounted for his willingness to teach in culturally responsive ways, to which he responded

I think one of the reasons I teach like this is because so much of what happened in high school was not relevant to me and my life. I often sat there and thought, why aren’t we talking about the fact that two men can’t love each other? Why aren’t we talking about the fact that I don’t have the same civil rights as the person sitting next to me? Why aren’t we talking about how I can’t take another guy to prom? I have these questions, why aren’t we discussing it? These are real issues in the world, why aren’t they being talked about? Why are we talking about this stuff that I don’t relate to? Obviously I had a love of literature but there were topics that should have obviously been placed in there, so I think about that when I bring in these topics for the kids.

Sam’s personal experiences as a member of a non-mainstream group resulted in his awareness of the inequities around him, and likewise made him more open to broaching certain complex issues with his students. While Sam noted that the marginalization he experienced due to his sexual orientation increased his willingness to broach complicated matters with his students, I did not observe him explicitly talking about his own marginalization with his students.

That Sam grew up with parents who perceived college as an imminent reality also shaped Sam’s high expectations for his students. On numerous occasions, Sam discussed the importance

of college, and created opportunities for his students to participate in activities and conversations that would prepare them for their future collegiate endeavors. Time and again, Sam demonstrated authentic critical caring for his students, a way of caring that sees the notion of relationships and academic excellence as inextricably intertwined, particularly with regards to students of color (Antrop-González & Jesús, 2014).

Informational Texts

Informational texts provided another means for Sam to teach in culturally responsive ways. I coded four examples of Sam incorporating news articles into his lessons to generate discussions around equity—or lack thereof. One instance involved an article on the unemployment rate between white high school students and high school students of color. Sam also discussed an activity in which he had students examine two articles on the same topic—one written by CNN and another by FOX news—to ascertain media presentation and bias. Sam also invited students to select and bring in their own news stories to share with the class. He reported that many of the students’ stories were “race cases.” He lauded the activity for providing students with an opportunity to acknowledge that “racial bias...exists, and [explore] why do they think it exists, what has society done, and just getting them to think about that.” For Sam, informational texts allowed him to make relevant a curriculum that otherwise offered few curricular opportunities for students to see their own experiences reflected and affirmed.

Group Dynamics

While group dynamics often factored into Sam’s ability and willingness to implement culturally responsive teaching approaches, ironically, classroom dynamics sometimes inspired and compelled these exchanges. I coded ten examples during which Sam referenced ways in which conducive classroom dynamics fostered critical conversations. In discussing his response

to a student asking about police brutality, Sam told me “You’re daggone right, we’re gonna go there. You saw, the kids were ready to go.” And it’s true—throughout the course of the semester, students seemed to crave the opportunity to discuss issues impacting them. Often times Sam’s class felt like a group therapy session, with the students—and, at times, Sam and myself as well—offering our own tales of marginalization, resistance, and empowerment.

Sam’s students also played a critical role in his development as a culturally responsive teacher. Their willingness to push back against Sam’s position as a white male—and Sam’s eventual receptivity to their insights—dramatically influenced the way Sam viewed himself and his pedagogy. During our focus group, Sam offered that

What's changed for me, I think why I say “white privilege” is because my kids call it out as they see it. I have 30 Black kids in front of me, and they say, “No, this is what it's like, and this is what I see happening.” So for me, it's completely different than you guys, because every day I'm hearing it and they're pointing out what it is. A lot of it, I've learned. I was like holy crap; I didn't know it was perceived this way. My students do a good job of that, expressing what it is and what it looks like.

Sam also acknowledged how his students’ identification with historically marginalized groups allowed them certain dialogic freedoms atypical of the secondary classroom. With Allison and Geneva, both teachers at schools with larger populations of white students, Sam shared

I must admit that I'm lucky enough to teach in a school where many conversations are not off-limits. I think a large part of this freedom is the demographics that I work with. I work with predominately low-income African American students. I can't quite put into words why it's easier to have certain discussions, but it is.

Sam’s relative ease in broaching racialized issues with his Dupont students showed that working with students who predominantly belonged to non-dominant groups afforded certain benefits to him as a multiculturally-minded pedagogue. Because his students largely identified with non-dominant groups and expressed a voracious desire to talk about issues so often ignored or

silenced in their educative experiences, Sam was able to more freely engage in discussions of inequity.

Unlike first period's Daniel, the presence of a single white student in Sam's fourth period honors class, Jon, did not complicate Sam's ability to deliver the material in culturally responsive ways. Sam reported that

Jon is usually agreeing with the [African American] kids in there...he has a stutter or gets flustered when he talks, so he's very careful when he speaks, but in his writing when he reflects, he's aware of these issues, like today we was nodding his head... kind of like the same reaction I have, heck yeah it exists, whereas with Daniel he's on the opposite end of the spectrum and he's going to say well no, racism doesn't exist.

That Jon's beliefs around racism and issues of equity frequently aligned with Sam's allowed Sam to feel more empowered to teach in culturally responsive ways—including broaching discussions around whiteness and its role in creating and perpetuating racism—in his British literature classroom. In fact, the two men engaged in a sort of solidarity—as two people willing to engage in discussion around the privileges conferred on them, and from which they benefit, as white males. Of his white students coming to terms with their privilege, Sam offered that “I don't want them to feel bad about it, but I want them to acknowledge they have it and that it's there. Now how can you use it?” Sam's willingness to engage his white students in the multicultural conversation shows his to be a multi-faceted commitment to culturally responsive teaching.

“There's So Many Ways to Change and Grow”: Concluding Sam's Case

Sam's story was one of growth. He worked, albeit not without growing pains, to convert his sociocultural awareness (characteristic one) into meaningfully undertaken critical reflection (characteristic nine). Aware of the privileges conferred to him as white male, Sam recognized that despite his good intentions and many successes, he sometimes erred in his approach. However, that he sought out opportunities to have critical conversations with me—to gain a

broader, richer understanding of his practice— showed his potential to continue his growth as a culturally responsive British literature teacher, a conversation I revisit in chapter seven. While he did not problematize the systemic, historical sociopolitical realities of schools (characteristic five), he demonstrated a pattern of critical analysis of the more localized factors that marginalized his students and impacted their learning outcomes and experiences (characteristic six).

Sam's growth along the continuum for characteristic nine, engages in critical reflection to guide practice, proved an interesting finding of this study given that he was the only teacher who demonstrated evidence of the skill. The degree to which Sam fostered his students' sociopolitical consciousness (characteristic 10) also merits examination. While Sam frequently intentionally facilitated discussions to prompt his students to consider matters of inequity facing them, and the sources behind this oppression, he fell short of positioning his students to *act* on their knowledge. This aspect of culturally responsive teaching has long been documented as one of the most challenging aspects for teachers to realize (see, e.g., Ladson-Billings, 2006; Payne & Laughner, 2013).

As detailed, various factors inhibited Sam's willingness and ability to deliver his content in culturally responsive ways. Some of these limitations included the curriculum's textual difficulties, age, and cultural remoteness. In one post-observation interview, Sam, frustrated after having spent hours trying to help with students get through a Keats' poem, sighed and said "it's just so damn hard." Fear of punishment from administration, parents, and students also impacted Sam as he considered which conversations and activities he would engage with the students. Sam admitted that fear of fallout stopped him from having his students write letters to the school board or local newspaper about various issues they discussed in class. Group dynamics

suppressed the exploration of certain controversial topics, particularly with regards to how white students would react to the nature of the topic. Class also came into play as Sam acknowledged feeling more confident talking with his honors students about issues of inequity because they often shared the common ground of belonging to the middle class, a connection on which he was often unable to rely with students in his first period academic course. Lastly, and not surprisingly, time emerged as an element that influenced Sam's ability to engage in and elaborate on culturally responsive classroom discussions. Under the constraints of time, Sam sometimes did not problematize students' comments; he also expressed feeling like he needed to rush through certain aspects of his curriculum because he needed to share the books with another teacher. Through these findings, we come to understand that even teachers who wish to engage culturally responsive teaching practices may meet challenges that thwart their good intentions.

Despite these impediments, Sam cited other factors that prompted and allowed for him to teach in culturally responsive ways. That Sam has himself intimately experienced bias and prejudice due to his sexual orientation shaped his acknowledgement and willingness to combat inequity. Sam expressed feeling disenchanted with his own high school experiences, wondering when he would read a story that reflected his own experiences. This remembered marginalization empowered him to find innovative ways to engage his students with a curriculum that once made him also feel isolated and othered. The use of informational texts also provided another means for Sam to expand his curriculum and pedagogy in order to situate relevant and timely issues of equity in his classroom discourse. These texts, mandated by the CCSS, helped Sam add another layer to his arsenal of culturally responsive teaching practices.

Lastly, group dynamics conducive to culturally responsive conversations also allowed Sam to broach certain sensitive topics with his students. In his fourth period, the group dynamics

were such that Sam felt conversations around cultural inequities could be engaged without fear given that the one white student in the course often agreed with his peers when they shared the inequitable conditions manifest in society. Also, the fact that most of the students belonged to historically marginalized populations, and therefore shared common experiences of oppression and bias, fostered a collective group receptivity to engaging in these critical conversations. But these classroom conditions were not entirely organic—to some extent, they relied on Sam’s insistence that *all* his students respect *all* students, as evidenced by his inviting Farrah to facilitate a class-wide discussion about her evolving gender identity. Embracing discomfort, and inciting disequilibrium (Rich, 1980), allowed Sam to challenge his students’ academic expectations for themselves, but also provided the means for him to help his students develop into more thoughtful, socially conscious, and empathetic young adults. Though Sam felt the ubiquitous, unrelenting pressure to apply safe, traditional teaching methods when teaching his British literature curriculum, ultimately, he believed that culturally responsive teaching “has to be done.” So he does.

CHAPTER 5: MEDIATING SOCIOCULTURAL, CANONICAL, AND CONTEXTUAL TENSIONS: GENEVA'S CASE

Context

Mountain Valley High School

Located in a suburban area of Sykes County, Mountain Valley High School was a large school serving roughly 2,300 students in grades 9-12. At the time of the study, 67 % of its students identified as white, 16% as Black, 11 % as Hispanic, 2% as Asian, and 4% as two or more races. Its affluent community was reflected by the relative small percentage of its students who qualified for free and reduced lunch—only 18% at the time of the study, far less than the state's average of 54%.

The town of Mountain Valley has grown significantly over the past few years, due in part to its being consistently labeled one of the best places to live on various national surveys. Turning off on the exit for Mountain Valley, a sign alerted drivers that the area had recently been awarded the accolade. The multi-lane road which was almost always bustling but rarely crowded with cars seemed to invite travelers to explore its offerings. The lush greenery of the area—several portions of the community were still undeveloped, and thusly seemed to simulate a sort of suburban farm-feel— was interrupted by occasional strip mall stores such as Target, Harris Teeter, and Chic Fil A. Further away from the highway, Mountain Valley's downtown area was quaint and small, housing several locally owned stores. Houses in the area, though affordable, cost more than in other suburban areas of Sykes County, a testament to the quality of life the area promised.

To arrive at Mountain Valley High School, I first drove through a two-lane road with large homes on either side. A police officer supervised the traffic of the elementary school that stood adjacent to Mountain Valley High. The expansive parking lot held four tennis courts, and opened up to a large traffic circle lined with guest parking as well as a prized parking spot for both the teacher and staff member of the year.

Walking into Mountain Valley High School, I was struck by the cleanliness it emanated—no small feat given the hundreds of students who frequented its halls. Administrators, teachers, and resources officers often engaged in small, private conversations on the perimeter of the lunchroom. Even during lunch, students were often bent over their books studying either independently or with the group at their table. Almost every corner provided a recycling bin for various forms of waste. Signs informed passers-by that the school was a “BYOD School”—that is, a “bring your own device” school, meaning that students’ technology was welcomed in the school. An elevator, a popular means of travel for the students, faculty, and staff navigating the school’s three floors, constantly dinged. Teachers and students often looked at my visitor’s badge quizzically, but no one inquired as to the motivations behind my presence.

Though the school’s principal, Mr. Montgomery, was a relative newcomer to the school, he was an experienced administrator, and quickly earned a reputation for being fair, attentive, and cordial to his faculty and staff. The summer the study began, under the leadership of the assistant principal, the English department read several pieces of research related to classroom pedagogy and literacy practices; together, teachers were asked to co-design and implement performance-based assessments. Teachers of the same grades met frequently in professional learning communities to discuss their classroom practices, challenges, and successes. During various mandatory teacher training sessions for activities such as the PSAT, teachers were

frequently rewarded with treats such as donuts and coffee, efforts undoubtedly employed to mitigate teachers' disgruntlement over the infringement on their time. My sense of the school allowed me to surmise that Mountain Valley High School was a school at which many teachers desired to work.

The Classroom

Walking to Geneva's classroom, I read a sign on her door that prompted students to "Ask Me About College!", and detailed the institutions at which she had received her undergraduate and master's degree. Beneath this information, secondary questions on the sign told passers-by that the most interesting job she ever held was working as the graduate student advisor of the Asian Student Union and that being a stay-at-home mother was her dream job. On the hallway wall facing her door, Geneva had hung dozens of her students' visual depictions of various vocabulary words learned over the course of the semester.

Inside the classroom, Geneva's paired desks together so that students could work collaboratively when the opportunities arose. Desks dominated the landscape of the classroom—indeed, there appeared to be no possible way to squeeze in another desk if the need arose. This physical confinement stemmed from the fact that Geneva's class sizes were larger than ever before, a fact she attributed to a shrinking budget that resulted in the hiring of fewer teachers. Geneva's classroom was rather sparse; while books lined the bookshelves on the side of classroom, little color, or student work, hung from its walls. This scarcity stemmed from the fact that Geneva shared the room with another teacher, and wanted to be respectful of not "claiming" the shared space.

Often, I would arrive before the observation's start time to set up my materials. I cannot think of one time that I did not come in to find Geneva spending her lunch with a student. These

many lunch periods entailed her providing students with tutorial support, allowing them to make up missed assignments, or simply providing them with a quiet space to do their homework. Every time a student popped her head in, Geneva greeted the student warmly, and asked how she could help. But students didn't just pop by during lunch—on occasion, particularly affectionate students peered in Geneva's classroom and issued a hearty "Hi, Mrs. Williams!" Geneva's rolling eyes suggested a mild annoyance by the intrusion, but the slight smile that she wore revealed her delight in the ill-timed attention.

A certain sense of reliable routine marked Geneva's day-to-day classroom instruction, practices that I came to understand to be some of the ways Geneva performed culturally responsive teaching in her British literature classroom. Though her practices were consistently implemented and literacy-based, they were not ones that necessarily held with English teachers' traditional approaches to classroom instruction: Sam and Allison, for example, did not implement a similar routine. Geneva began each class by having her students participate in Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) for ten minutes. Geneva did not place any restrictions on what students read, so at any given time, students perused magazines, young adult literature, news articles on their phones, or a text assigned for the class. At the conclusion of each period's SSR, students wrote down the "Daily Quote," written under the daily agenda, in their personal notebooks. Then, they spent five minutes responding to the quote—agreeing with, questioning, or rejecting its premise. Geneva's somewhat unconventional shift to a literacy-based approach to instruction was the product of her reading Gallagher and Allington's (2009) *Readicide*, a text that compelled her to evaluate her teaching practices, hitherto ones that affirmed the importance of understanding the canonical literature of the classroom above all else. As a result of her engagement with the text, she all but divorced herself from her curricular allegiance and instead

moved toward fostering her students' reading and writing skills, a shift discussed in detail in subsequent sections.

The juxtaposition of her two daily agendas produced one of the most striking, perceptible tensions of Geneva's story, and presented a concretized example of the factors that shaped her ability and willingness to teach in culturally responsive ways. On the left side of the board, her agenda for British literature; on the other, her agenda for her African American literature course, a class she was teaching for the first time. Though both agendas listed the schedule for each day's lesson, with SSR and the Daily Writing expectation delineated for both sections, the similarities stopped there. While the British literature agenda housed Shakespearean quotes, references to canonical British literature, and Daily Writing prompts with quotes from speakers of myriad cultural backgrounds, the African American literature agenda only reflected quotes of African Americans. An intriguing essential question, "In what ways does literature portray differing cultural perspectives," was written at the top of the African American literature course's agenda. This essential question contrasted with the one housed on the British literature agenda, which read "What qualities does a hero have?" Throughout the study, the contrasts between these two sets of curricula expectations made themselves manifest, with one promoting and the other inhibiting Geneva's culturally responsive teaching practices.

The Classes

Geneva taught two sections of standard English IV, meaning that the students were placed into the lowest track available at the school. However, while scholarship shows the disproportionate rate at which students belonging to historically marginalized populations are tracked into these lowest-level classes (see, e.g., Oakes, 1985), at Mountain Valley High School, white students were the majority in both of Geneva's English IV sections, a reality likely related

to the fact that most of the students at Mountain Valley High School were white. Geneva taught 32 and 34 students in her first and third periods respectively. Of Geneva's 66 English IV students, 32 identified as white, 24 as Black, nine as Hispanic, and one as two or more races. This group of students reflected a more balanced diversity than Mountain Valley as whole. None of her students were English language learners, spoke English as a second language, or were diagnosed with a learning disability.

“I Just Have to Be Careful”: Geneva's Story

I first met Geneva during her ethnographic interview in the summer of 2015 shortly before classes began. The senior administrator for secondary English in Sykes County asked her contacts in the county if anyone knew of a teacher who fit the description detailed in my recruitment email. A cooperating teacher for the district emailed me Geneva's name. Without having met me, she agreed to the interview.

On the day of the interview, Geneva met me at her school's administration office, and escorted me upstairs to her third floor classroom. I was struck initially by her height—closing in on forty years old, she stood about 5'11. Her evenly-applied voice reflected her self-described calm, mellow nature: I never once heard her raise her voice. Our small talk en route to her classroom was easy and fluid; Geneva had a natural way of putting people at ease. She seemed, even in those initial moments, thoughtful and deliberate with her word choice, pausing several seconds before answering many of the “get to know you” questions I peppered her with.

Illustrating Geneva's Case

During our interview, I quickly ascertained that Geneva was indeed the culturally responsive teacher she was nominated to be; I was admittedly thrilled to tell her story, particularly in light of the limited number of portraits of culturally responsive African American

teachers in the literature (see, e.g., Foster, 1999; Irvine, 2002). She was the study's only person of color. But her sociocultural identity was just one of many factors that shaped her story.

Geneva's case, depicted numerically in Table 4, illustrated the many complexities that arise when a teacher wishes to teach in culturally responsive ways, but feels she must be cautious in doing so.

Table 4.

Coded Instances of Geneva's MTCS Characteristics

	Self-Assessment	Nascent	Emerging	Progressing	Advancing	Transformational
1. Demonstrate Sociocultural Awareness (n= 18)	Transformational	0	0	0	17	1
2. Affirm Students' Cultural Assets (n= 0)	Advancing	0	0	0	0	0
3. Committed to Student Success (n= 22)	Transformational	0	0	12	8	2
4. Function as an Agent of Change (n= 9)	Advancing	0	0	2	7	0
5. Understand Sociopolitical Context of Schools (n= 3)	Transformational	0	0	0	3	0
6. Understand Impact of Content and Culture on Students (n= 8)	Advancing	0	0	0	8	0
7. Demonstrate Experiential Knowledge of School and Students' Communities(n= 1)	Progressing	0	1	0	0	0
8. Create Classroom that Embraces Students (n= 48)	Advancing	0	3	40	5	0
9. Engage in Critical Reflection to Guide Practice (n= 0)	Advancing	0	0	0	0	0
10. Foster Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness (n= 14)	Progressing	0	0	14	0	0
11. Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy for Equity (n= 4)	Advancing	0	0	0	4	0

This table provides a holistic illustration of Geneva's approaches to culturally responsive teaching as observed during the study. Her case was marked by her sociocultural awareness, her

commitment to students' success, and her desire to create a classroom that embraced her students. Specific to her dispositions, Geneva was a teacher acutely aware of her sociocultural identity (characteristic one) as an African American woman teaching in a mostly white school; consequently, she shared that she took painstaking care to mind what she said, and what she taught, so as not to unsettle the students, parents, and administration at Mountain Valley High School. She did not explicitly affirm her students' cultural assets (characteristic two), possibly because so many of them identified as white and thusly enjoyed mainstream dominance without her doing so. She showed her commitment to her students' success (characteristic three) by shifting her pedagogy away from an allegiance to canonical literature, and instead worked to develop and hone students' literacy skills to help foster their college and career readiness. While she attempted to promote the success of all of her students, Geneva's commitment to her African American students' success, however, was transformational in nature. While this concern for her African American students converted to her work as an agent of change (characteristic four), these conversations were largely engaged in private spaces, another reflection of the constraints placed on Geneva due to her sociocultural identity and teaching context.

With regards to knowledge characteristics, while Geneva infrequently discussed the sociopolitical contexts of schools (characteristic five), she demonstrated an understanding of the ways in which her students of color were impacted by both the context and culture of Mountain Valley (characteristic six). Geneva found it difficult to have experiences in the students' communities (characteristic seven), which she attributed to time limitations: between mothering her children, teaching, and taking graduate courses, she simply did not have many opportunities for leisurely activities.

Understanding Geneva's MTCS skills provided another lens through which to understand her culturally responsive characteristics. Through her sharp wit, one-on-one conversations, and supplementary materials selected with her students' interests in mind, Geneva toiled to create a warm classroom environment for her students (characteristic eight). Like Sam, this characteristic emerged in Geneva's data more than any other. With regards to characteristic nine, engage in critical reflection to guide practice, though she was aware of her sociocultural positioning, she did not critically reflect on her pedagogy to uncover deficit-based thinking, another finding that may be attributed to the fact that most of her students belonged to dominant groups. In order to foster her students' sociopolitical consciousness (characteristic 10), Geneva deliberately selected informational texts that challenged her students to consider various issues of equity; however, like Sam, she did not move her students toward action-oriented projects. While Geneva sought ways to modify her curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity (characteristic 11), she admitted feeling limited in what she could do given the curriculum's racial exclusivity; she did not feel protected by the curriculum the way she did in her African American literature course. Just as the proliferation of certain MTCS characteristics helped to tell the culturally responsive practices that marked her instruction, so too did other characteristics occur more rarely; these include affirming students' cultural assets, understanding the sociopolitical context of schools, demonstrating experiential knowledge of the school and students' communities, and engaging in critical reflection to guide practice.

Geneva discussed feeling that she lived "separate lives," a comment that conjures the theory of double consciousness, which provides a means by which to situate Geneva's story into theoretical discourse. Of double consciousness, Du Bois (1994) wrote

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks

on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

Du Bois (1994) took care to explain that this strife did not mean that African Americans wished to alter their ethnicity; rather, “He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face.” A profound love for her sociocultural identity, complicated by an acute awareness of her marginalized positionality, distinguished Geneva’s case. Geneva’s story—one of being a person of color teaching an entirely white curriculum in a mostly white high school—is detailed below in eleven analyses specific to each of the MTCS’ characteristics.

Measures of Geneva’s Culturally Responsive Teaching Characteristics

Demonstrate Sociocultural Awareness (Characteristic 1)

“I’m a Black teacher teaching British literature, whatever that is.”

A marked sense of self permeated Geneva’s case. Consistently and constantly, Geneva shared her understanding of her sociocultural identity, and the tensions produced by the chaffing between her positionality and her contextual realities at Mountain Valley. During the ethnographic interview, Geneva and I discussed the degree to which she affirmed her students’ cultural assets. Her response, however, allowed for an important insight into her sociocultural awareness:

Something came up in class—I know what it was. Kelly Gallagher does this thing, he talks about using graphs so kids learn to read things other than just words. The first couple of weeks I picked one that was like the incarceration between whites and non-whites and how it’s disproportionately large. The next one was something else about race. And I had to catch myself. And I think by the third week, I said “don’t worry, this isn’t going to be ‘the Black teacher doin’ all this Black stuff,’ I’ll get to something else, this is just what I found for today,” and then the next week I picked one on like street racing or something like that. So I had to consciously make that choice not because I

didn't think it was relevant but because in my classroom I didn't want it to be "she's always talking about Black people, she's always talkin' about stuff." I didn't want that either.

This quote encapsulated the tensions Geneva negotiated daily at Mountain Valley High School—that is, the pressures between her desire to stimulate conversations around equity and her understanding of the ways in which this activism might be perceived because of her positionality as an African American female. Here, Geneva expressed her desire to broach certain sociopolitical issues, which she frequently introduced into her classroom through informational texts, but tapered these conversations when she sensed her students' growing reticence to the topic. Geneva fretted that her actions might be interpreted as agenda-driven sociopolitical aggression; thus, she constantly self-monitored to make sure she was not approaching any indelible boundaries of conversation. My analysis revealed Geneva to have an *advancing* orientation to her sociocultural awareness, meaning that she articulated the ways in which she had been marginalized as a result of her sociocultural identity.

Early in our ethnographic interview, Geneva discussed her non-combative nature. She stated frankly that people often prejudged her because she was Black. When I asked her to expand on this comment, she offered

I feel kinda like...I have to be "the Black woman," I have to be "the model." I have to dispel any kind of idea you have about "people like me" because they are so prevalent in society. All this garbage on t.v. with all these reality shows, it's like guys... is that a stereotype of Black women? Sure. Is there a reason why that stereotype exists? Yeah, most stereotypes there are. But don't throw all of us into that boat because that's not me at all. Mostly it's just in how I conduct myself and I want that to come across for them. To equate "well she's not like that." I might not always say that verbally but I conduct myself in a way that they can see that.

Geneva felt that her actions were frequently generalized to represent her race. Consequently, she took care not to engage in behaviors that might be perceived as aggressive or combative, as she believed that such reactions would reflect negatively on not only her race, but Black women in

general. This realization of her compounded marginalization first dawned on her when she took a women's history class in college. "I never separated the two until that class," Geneva reflected. "I could see almost how I was almost a double negative now, shoot, I'm not a Black woman, I'm Black *and* I'm a woman." Later, she shared that "I am a Black woman living in a world that unfortunately is showing that I am not valued as much as others."

Her sociocultural awareness allowed Geneva to navigate the racial realities of her school in such a way that Geneva believed she was able to achieve the results she sought without offending or alienating her from her white colleagues. During one of our post-observation interviews, Geneva shared that she felt she was able to engage in certain discussions with her white colleagues because, as she said, "I speak the language." When I asked her to elaborate on her meaning, she offered "[it means] not to be offensive. To get your point across without the neck rolling and the things that people expect a black woman to do and be loud and talk all crazy, I know how to not do that." Time and again, Geneva detailed an intimate understanding of the complexities between her sociocultural identity and her contextual realities at Mountain Valley High School, which she was seemingly able to navigate by not conforming to what she assumed others perceived to be stereotypical behaviors of Black women.

Because of the many difficulties she negotiated due to her marginalization as a woman of color, Geneva also voiced her reaction to color-blind discourse—that is, the notion of not "seeing" race. People who subscribe to this ideology claim not to view people as racialized beings, an idea that, according to Bonilla-Silva (2006), undergirds white privilege and fallacious notions of neutrality. This framing diminishes the importance of people's cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, 1995). Of color-blind discourse, Geneva offered, "I hate that [language]. See me. I'm not invisible, I'm not transparent, I'm not clear. See me and recognize

me for who I am. Don't ignore my color because that is a lot of who I am as a person." Here, Geneva offered a direct response to the notion that her sociocultural identity should be overlooked; instead, she believed that acknowledging this identity was a critical way of affirming her cultural identity.

Affirm Students' Cultural Assets (Characteristic 2)

Despite Geneva's strong sense of self as woman of color, the data suggested that she rarely explicitly affirmed her students' cultural assets. Such actions required her to demonstrate an understanding that all students have cultural capital (knowledge, skills, and talents) that are valuable in the classroom.

Thus, though Geneva identified herself as *advancing* for characteristic two, my data analysis did not hold with this assessment. In our ethnographic interview, Geneva admitted that "I don't think I explicitly discuss [students' cultural assets] because I don't want to be the Black teacher who's always talking about Black issues." Here, she demonstrated that her sociocultural identity precluded her from being able to confidently weave in students' cultural assets into her pedagogical practice. With regards to affirming the cultural assets of her students' of color, Geneva felt pressure not to engage these discussions for fear of backlash from the Mountain Valley community.

Demonstrate a Commitment to Students' Success (Characteristic 3)

"You are the only two Black guys I have, and I'm not going to let you fail this class."

Geneva's commitment to her students' success permeated the data; pertinent comments emerged 22 times during the study. Geneva demonstrated a *transformational* commitment to her students' success—in particular, to her African American students—on more than a few occasions across the data. This required her to communicate her belief that her students could be

successful despite their circumstances, demonstrate high expectations, and to actively challenge factors that create failure for some students. During the ethnographic interview, Geneva recounted the following exchange between her and two of her African American male students:

It came to the point where they were both failing, one had a D and one had an F. And they had to come to tutorial during lunch, and it was just the three of us in here, and I said “Let me tell you something. You are the only two Black guys I have, and I’m not going to let you fail this class. You can’t do it. You can’t fail... you two better buckle down, if you gotta come in here during tutorial, you better turn this work in, you better start doing something, because you’re not going to fail, you cannot, you’re the only two in here. I can’t be the Black teacher who failed the two Black kids. I’m not going to let you do that to yourself. You could be my son... you’re in this situation now, where you are the minority, there’s already the stigma that you’re in an honors class, and they weren’t dumb, they were really smart, they were missing work, not turning stuff in, one kid was sleeping. So I said “you’re the only two Black kids in this class. You better pull it together. You better get a move on because this isn’t going to work for me. You can’t fail.”

Geneva’s insistence that her students were not *allowed* to fail displayed her deep commitment to their success. Here, she recognized that certain factors often worked against students of color that prevented their success; she later admittedly that “I want all kids to succeed, but darn it, if I can get more black kids to succeed, that would make me feel really good.” Later in the interview, she mentioned calling another African American student’s aunt, his primary caregiver, to alert her of his academic performance and about his sleeping in class. These actions revealed Geneva’s high expectations for her students, a dedication augmented with regards to her African American students because she recognized and intimately understood the barriers and circumstances many had to circumvent in order meet mainstream markers of success. Geneva did not share any instances during which she extended these same conversations to her non-African American students.

Geneva identified herself as *transformational* for characteristic three, for my part, I coded the majority of Geneva’s comments as *advancing*, meaning that she not only promoted student

success in her classroom, but also equipped and empowered students for long-term success outside of her the classroom as well. Geneva noted a shift in her pedagogy when, after reading *Readicide* (Gallagher & Allington, 2009), she realized that she no longer wanted to teach her students to revere the literature above all else. She shared that

I've started to tell the kids listen, unless you're an English major, you're not going to be in college reading novels and sitting around and discussing them. English class will be nonfiction, you'll be doing a lot of writing, this is pretty much it as far as literature and those kind of discussions go. So let me try to move you a little past that.

Geneva believed that classroom instruction should be designed with an eye to the future—that is, the realities that awaited the students once they left high school. She told me of the many recent graduates who returned to Mountain Valley to visit her, and the staggering number of them who lamented that they did not realize how rigorous college would be. These ruminations compelled Geneva to create a variety of opportunities in her classroom for students to develop their literacy mastery. This included her students reading and sharing *New York Times* articles weekly, reading the texts of their choice during the daily SSR, and responding in the journals to the daily quote. Additionally, she had students interview someone who had recently applied to college so that they could gain a fuller, more accurate picture of the process. For Geneva, class instruction was designed to help students move past both the allegiance to the curriculum and the classroom itself and equip with the skills necessary to thrive in their college and/or career settings.

Function As an Agent of Change (Characteristic 4)

“First, do you know who you’re talking to? Second, do you know who you are?”

Despite her acute awareness of the contextual realities placed on her due to being an African American working in a mostly white school, Geneva found ways to confront issues of inequity and injustice in her classroom. Some of these moments involved Geneva disrupting her

white students' normalized assumptions. During our ethnographic interview, Geneva recounted an episode during which a white student made a comment about her hair.

I came into class one day and I had straightened my hair... and the student said "Oh, it looks so nice." And then I came in the next day and this kid said "Oh, what happened to your hair?" and I said "Hmm. What do you mean 'happened' to it? So what you're saying is it's more attractive in its European style, straight, than it is in its African, kinda curly texture?" And he started turning red and I said "Oh, I'm just kidding with you," but I'm really not. You know? So I said "I appreciate your saying my hair looked nice yesterday, and I know you're not saying it looked bad today, but to phrase it as 'happened' to it as in 'My gosh what went wrong?' That's what you want to be careful of." And just making them realize those kinds of things is really what I enjoy about teaching.

Here, Geneva challenged her to student to carefully consider the Euro-centric notions of beauty he upheld. Conversely, he implicitly subscribed to the belief, and (perhaps unknowingly) communicated his perception, that the hair texture of African Americans was inferior to the hair texture common to people from European descent. That she took time to explain the underlying assumptions made manifest by his comment, and that these ruminations offended her because they marginalized her own sociocultural identity, demonstrated Geneva's belief that her identity as a teacher involved more than merely teaching students the content.

Geneva identified herself as *advancing* for characteristic four; my understanding of Geneva's work as an agent of change largely aligned with her self-perception. I coded the majority of her comments/actions as those that demonstrated an *advancing* orientation to functioning as an agent of change, meaning that she responded to instances of bias, discrimination, and inequity within her classroom and school.

Interestingly, Geneva's work as an agent of change shifted based on the situation and contextual realities at hand. In one instance, Geneva worked to re-orient some of what she perceived to be problematic behaviors of her African American students. She detailed an incident in which she overheard three African American students repeatedly using the word "nigga"

outside of her classroom. Geneva walked into the hall to confront the students, telling them that “I don’t subscribe to the belief that because we’re Black we can use that word. I don’t like it, don’t use it, don’t use it around me. Period.” To Geneva, using the “n word,” even colloquially and within the African American community, required correcting. Geneva also shared a moment during which two African American students told her that they “didn’t like Black people.” Alarmed, Geneva responded with “First, do you know who you’re talking to? Second, do you know who you are?” This generated into a conversation during which Geneva encouraged her students to consider the deficit beliefs their statement reflected, and to think carefully about their perception of their community—and of themselves. In this way, Geneva’s commitment to working as an agent of change allowed her to engage her African American students in critical conversations and the ideologies behind their beliefs, a particularly important—and bold discussion—given the PWI in which she and her African American students worked.

One instance I observed involved Geneva correcting homophobic reactions to Chaucer’s description of the monk from “The Monk’s Tale” as “gay.” When students snickered—some even mumbled inaudible comments to their peers— Geneva abruptly looked up from her text and offered a clipped “Can we not do that? We’re absolutely not going to snicker. No.” During our post-observation interview, I asked Geneva what motivated her to correct her students. She replied that it was 2015, and there was no room for such behavior in her classroom. That Geneva elected to correct students’ reactions rather than ignore them as normal classroom antics revealed her commitment to working as an agent of change. Yet, it bears mentioning that Geneva did not take the conversation further by explaining to students the reasoning behind her correction and/or the problematic qualities undergirding their discriminatory behavior; additionally, she did not invite her students to acts as agents of change themselves.

For Geneva, functioning as an agent of change was one of the most rewarding aspects of her work, a sentiment she related when she told me that “I enjoy teaching because I want to make them question things, make them look at things a different way.” Her dedication to disrupting her students’ deficit thinking revealed her to be a formidable agent of change. She extended this advocacy to all of her students. In the focus group, Geneva offered that “Being relevant to the students in my classroom, no matter the color, is extremely important. I have felt left out, on the outside of the norm, and I have made adjustments. I try to make sure that my students don’t feel that same isolation.” Thus, Geneva’s sociocultural awareness and her willingness to act as agent of change were inextricably linked.

Understand the Sociopolitical Context of Schools (Characteristic 5)

“And if it’s something about Black history month sometimes they’ll say ‘When we going to have white history?’ Take your pick, you’ve got a lot to choose from, so please.”

During the study, Geneva mentioned, but only sparsely (n=3), ways in which her understood the sociopolitical contexts of schools. Recall that this characteristic differs from characteristic six in that it offers a more historically-situated approach to understanding students’ experiences in the classroom. During one observation, Geneva shared with her students a daily quote from Pablo Neruda, selected because of it being Hispanic Awareness month. In the post-observation interview, she admitted to me that she had held her breath upon announcing this fact, concerned a white student would complain about the absence of a white history month. Geneva’s ready response would have been

January, March, April, May, June, July, take your pick, and that usually shuts them up. I think it’s important that we, I mean it’s a thing, it’s not something I made up, so if our country says this is a time we’re going to set aside for Hispanic awareness month. And if it’s something about Black history month sometimes they’ll say “when we going to have white history?” Take your pick, you’ve got a lot to choose from, so please.

Here, Geneva expressed an understanding of fact that while certain months were designated a time for celebrating the accomplishments of various race/ethnic groups, the stories, histories, and contributions of whites were celebrated year-round. Also, she expressed a willingness to share this privileged positioning with her students, despite their being reticent to admit their status. Though Geneva identified herself as *transformational*, I coded her comments for characteristic five as *advancing*, a descriptor that underscored her consciousness of the impact of local and national events and policies on her students. Transformational would have required Geneva to participate actively in activities meant to disrupt inequitable sociopolitical realities, and to involve her students, colleagues, and administration in taking action too.

Geneva and her students also queried historic policies that impacted their realities at Mountain Valley High School. She shared that “We were talking in [African American literature]—some things have just been so ingrained into what we do, you just don't think about it. But that is a good question. Why couldn't British literature be replaced with something else?” Here, Geneva demonstrated an understanding of British literature’s pervasiveness, and the ways in which it enjoyed a virtual unquestioned dominance in the secondary English classroom. But this understanding was not limited to curricula: during her ethnographic interview, Geneva expressed an understanding of the fact that students of color are often excluded from higher-tracked classrooms, and how this marginalization impacted the students.

Understand the Impact of Context and Culture on Students (Characteristic 6)

“[The African American students] have no choice but to see color.”

Geneva was able to apply and extend her own sociocultural awareness to recognize and understand the ways in which students’ positionalities impacted their schooling experiences. I coded her comments as *advancing* in nature given that she critically analyzed sociocultural

issues and could identify the ways in which certain groups were marginalized or privilege through curriculum, policies, and/or practices. Given the overwhelming whiteness at Mountain Valley, Geneva worked to find ways to encourage her white students to examine their own privileges. In a post-observation interview, she shared that

The sad part is that white students are not seen as having color or culture. Technically aren't we all people of color? My responsibility is exposing them to other cultures because it is very easy to live in a society if you are white where you don't interact with many minorities if any depending on where you live.

This comment reflected Geneva's sense of the ways in which white students perceived their cultural identities as neutral. Importantly, she felt obligated to help her white students recognize their privilege so they "won't only focus on [themselves]." But her understanding of the impact of culture and context extended to her African American students as well. As a woman of color, and a parent to school-aged children, characteristic six resonated with Geneva. She recognized the difficulties her students of color faced as they navigated attending a high school comprised mostly of white students—realities she too had to maneuver. As we discussed these effects, Geneva offered that her students of color "have no choice but to see color" when they surveyed the room to find themselves in the minority in all of their classrooms. With regards to her African American students, Geneva expressed an internalized desire to see them succeed; a sense of "come on, we gotta do this, we gotta win," that 'we' kind of thing," drove her efforts. Here, Geneva's own experiences as a woman of color allowed her to show solidarity with her students of color as they worked to navigate an institution that did not offer a culturally affirming and/or conducive experience.

Geneva's participation in the school improvement team, a group of teachers and administrators who met periodically to scrutinize data in order to better understand the realities of Mountain Valley High School and work to improve the issues identified, allowed her a close

examination of the ways in which culture and context impacted Mountain Valley students. She offered: “I see the numbers on the subgroups and the gap between whites and non-whites and that bothers me.” She lamented that “I’m not probably doing as much as I could, [but] I don’t know what else I could do.” Here, Geneva recognized the disparities between her students of color and white students, but felt limited in what she could do to help bridge these gaps, another instance of her expressing the tensions between her sociocultural identity and her contextual realities at Mountain Valley.

Demonstrate Experiential Knowledge of School and Students’ Communities (Characteristic 7)

“Either I’m at work or I’m at home; there’s not much time for much else.”

Across all data sources, I coded one example of Geneva demonstrating her experiential knowledge of school and students’ communities. This singular comment came during the ethnographic interview when I asked Geneva to self-assess the characteristic. She noted that while she believed it was important to experience the school and/or students’ communities, an *emerging* orientation to characteristic seven, her personal obligations often precluded her from these activities. A single mother to five children, Geneva shared that her responsibilities to her young children made extracurricular experiences in the school and/or community all but impossible. Geneva’s identified herself as *progressing* for characteristic seven.

Create a Classroom Community That Embraces Students (Characteristic 8)

“My classroom is an opportunity to teach somebody about something other than the book, even if it’s just in establishing a relationship... just present hey, here’s another example, another way of looking at the situation.”

For Geneva, forging relationships with her students emerged as perhaps the most rewarding aspect of her job, a sentiment expressed in Geneva’s comment “that’s what teaching is to me, it’s not about standing up in front of the kids talking, it’s about forming those

relationships.” This ease for creating positive relationships emerged time and again in the data: I coded 48 instances during which Geneva reflected this characteristic. The mutual affinity between Geneva and her students was revealed during one observation when Paul, a white male who sat near me in the back of the room, continued to text on his phone even after Geneva asked him to put the phone away. From the front of the room, and without looking up from the book she was reading for SSR, Geneva quietly quipped “Paul, I can't wait to take that phone from you.” Looking up, Paul responded with “you'll have to get it from me first.” A class issued a collective “Ohhhhhh!” at his response. A poised Geneva looked across the room and replied “Paul, I think you need ankles for basketball, right?” The class dissolved in laughter—Paul included. In a display of good-natured acquiescence, Paul tucked his phone into his pocket. A few minutes later, Geneva said “you know I'm just messing with you, right?” as she circulated while students completed a vocabulary activity. A grinning Paul nodded. Here, Geneva demonstrated her ability to build a sense of community in her classroom, and showed how she relied on these connections to effectively manage students’ off-task behaviors.

Though I coded many instances of Geneva’s orientation to characteristic eight, the vast majority of Geneva’s comments classified as *progressing*. These actions and insights showed that Geneva was both aware and intentional in her implementation of community-building strategies in her classroom. Qualifying actions ranged from her making jokes with students, having one-on-one conversations with students about issues that mattered to students (such as their sports teams, or their jobs), or selecting curricular materials she knew would appeal to a certain student. *Advancing* comments/actions would have required her to incorporate her students’ input on classroom management, engagement, and curriculum, actions I did not observe her performing.

Geneva's willingness to share her quick sense of humor with her students resulted in numerous bouts of classroom laughter. During one particularly comical exchange, Geneva read aloud various excerpts of *Macbeth*. She paused periodically to ask questions and summarize the section. After she detailed Macbeth's litany of transgressions, she offered "He's going straight to hell with gasoline drawers on!" The students erupted in laughter, but some were puzzled: they had never heard the saying prior to the exchange. A pattern emerged: almost all of the Black students in the class had heard the phrase, but the majority of white students had not. One Black student offered "well, it's obviously a Black thing," which Geneva repeated so everyone could hear. Geneva's sense of humor provided for a community-building moment in which everyone laughed, but also had a space—even if only a brief one—to consider culturally-specific idioms.

While her orientation to her characteristic eight was largely *progressing* in nature, I coded several instances of Geneva demonstrating an *emerging* orientation to creating a warm classroom community. These instances involved Geneva's students working collaboratively to achieve academic mastery of a particular content. During my first observation, students teamed up to complete an activity Geneva titled "Admitted or nah?" Students read excerpts of students' college essays and worked in groups to evaluate student essay and decide as a group rather or not the student should be admitted to the college to which they had applied. Geneva reminded students they needed to provide reasons behind their answers. Students talked heatedly about their choices, which they later shared with the rest of the class. During another activity while studying *Beowulf*, students selected their individual heroes and then worked with two peers to craft a group presentation of their three selected heroes, which they then presented to the class. While group work was not a staple of Geneva's classroom, students responded well to these

periodic collaborative opportunities. Geneva looked to these classroom moments to help build a sense of community with her students and help engage them with the topics at hand.

During one observation, Geneva corrected students who were snickering over the word “gay,” an incident detailed under characteristic four, function as an agent of change. However, my post-observation interview revealed a second intent behind this comment: to show support of two of her students who identified as bisexual and gay. Geneva corrected the students’ laughter with a stern ““Are we still laughing because someone said the word ‘gay’? Come on. Come on now” in order to ensure that her students did not experience distress. This incident reflected an *advancing* orientation to characteristic eight as she demonstrated an understanding of the ways in which students voices were affirmed and (dis)respected in her classroom. For Geneva, her classroom space provided a means by which to encourage students to “not just be wrapped up in my people, but wrapped up in everyone’s people.”

Engage in Critical Reflection to Guide Practice (Characteristic 9)

“Critical reflection. I’m interested in that.”

During the focus group, I shared my emergent analysis with the teachers. One of my findings was that critical reflection was infrequently performed, a finding Geneva resisted somewhat. She noted that

I scored myself high on that one. I feel like I have to be very careful about what I do address and how long the conversation goes on because I am in a predominantly White school, town, county... state, country. I think I have to be careful because I don't want someone to say that I'm trying to put forth my own agenda. I try to make sure that, if those things come up, that it's the students who bring them up. If I do bring up something—like the police officer—I have to make sure that conversation doesn't take up too much time because I don't want it to be perceived as that I'm always making things about race, or race baiting.

Though Geneva identified herself as *advancing* for characteristic nine, I elected to code this, and many other similar comments, as an *advancing* orientation to characteristic one, *demonstrates*

sociocultural awareness. I made this decision because I did not see Geneva's reflections as ones that moved her toward becoming more aware of and willing to address personal biases that could lead to disparate learning experiences and outcomes for students. Moreover, she was not reflecting on her positionality or attempting to problematize any deficit views of students in order to create more equitable conditions for her students, all of which mark characteristic nine. What I perceived instead were limitations placed on Geneva that impacted her ability to teach in culturally responsive ways *because* of the complex intersections between her sociocultural identity and her contextual realities. Thus, while Geneva intimately understood her own marginalization, ultimately, I did not code any instances of characteristic nine for Geneva.

Foster Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness (Characteristic 10)

"Bringing in the NY Times articles gives me an opportunity to [promote student's sociopolitical consciousness]. Just being the Black teacher."

During my first observation, Geneva's students read the *New York Times* article "Key and Peele Ends When Nation Could Still Use a Laugh." Famous sketch comedy artists, Key and Peele wrote and performed socially conscious satire. In the article, several of Key and Peele's skits were detailed, including one in which a young Black male wore a hoodie with a white face to protect him from police brutality. The article mentioned Trayvon Martin, a young African American male who was shot while walking through a predominantly white neighborhood. His hoodie became a national symbol of race and (in)justice, particularly as directed at Black males (Curry, 2013). Geneva asked students to consider how satire sheds light on important issues, a question to which they responded in their journals. Upon completing their responses, students engaged in a class-wide discussion around the matter. For Geneva, informational texts allowed her to broach certain topics she would not otherwise have attempted to discuss. Reading these intentionally selected informational texts perhaps presented the most defining element of

Geneva's pedagogical intent; they served myriad purposes, including sharpening her students' sociopolitical consciousness, cultivating their twenty-first century (and CCSS-endorsed) non-fiction literacies, and exposing them to new perspectives. Geneva identified herself as *progressing* for characteristic ten, a self-assessment that aligned with my own understanding of her case.

Informational articles also provided a space for Geneva to cultivate her students' empathy for people who represented different cultural backgrounds and realities from their own. Geneva reflected, "I don't care if you're 30 and never read Faulkner, who cares? But if you can read the *New York Times* and have a discussion and learn how to be sensitive to others who are different from you, that's more important to me." This desire to expose her students to viewpoints differing from their own charged her work as a culturally responsive teacher. Frequently, Geneva expressed her reliance on students to initiate certain conversations of equity. During the focus group, Geneva shared that "Friday, they bring in news information. In one class, a student brought [the police brutality incident] up, and I was like, 'thank goodness' because it was an opened door for me to pursue it." Thus, while informational texts provided a catalyst for the conversation, the depth of the conversation fell to the students given that Geneva felt more hesitant to facilitate discussion around the topic lest she others perceive her as classroom politicizing.

In November, after having conferenced with Geneva about the lesson, I taught a lesson on othering. One of the aspects of the lesson involved my showing a brief documentary on Emmett Till, the young African American boy who was mutilated and murdered for whistling at a white woman in the 1960s. We connected his story to Othello's, the play Geneva wanted me to introduce to the students, by reading excerpts from the play that described various characters'

reactions to Othello and Desdemona's inter-racial coupling. We discussed the presentation of Othello as sexually voracious "black ram" and how that compared to Desdemona's description as a "white ewe." I mentioned to students that historically, some white men have used what they perceive as the sexual mistreatment of white women as grounds to justify violence committed against Black men (see, e.g., Najmi, 1999). In an uncharacteristic show of classroom explicitness, Geneva piped up (and later repeated in our post-observation interview), that "Shakespeare did this hundreds of years ago and it's still continuing, this idea that Black is wrong, or crime; Blacks are criminalized even in 2015." She went on to describe the dichotomies of Blackness, juxtaposing the adoration heaped on rappers such as Jay Z with the injustices and brutality many Blacks endured. Geneva reflected that she wanted her students to consider how "in one sense, you idolize people, and in the other sense, you're demonizing them." Interestingly, in this instance, a staple of the canonical British literature curriculum, *Othello*, buttressed and compelled Geneva's argument, and allowed her to sharpen her students' sociopolitical consciousness.

While Geneva's classroom was a space in which sociopolitical consciousness percolated, it was not a space that supported direct action. Geneva, like Sam, struggled to provide opportunities for students to develop action-oriented projects, elements foundational to the *advancing* and *transformational* descriptors of characteristic 10. The impediments to these action-oriented projects are discussed in detail in chapter seven.

Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy to Confront Issues of Equity (Characteristic 11)

"I feel [bad] because you're here to see cultural literacy and British lit and I'm not doing British lit like I should be, we're in the middle of Beowulf, but I don't know, class just isn't just about literature to me anymore."

Though she did not perform characteristic 11 frequently (n= 4), my coded instances of Geneva modifying her British literature curriculum to account for issues of equity amounted to her analyzing her content to ensure it met content standards and intentionally including varied perspective, an *advancing* orientation to the characteristic. Early in the semester, Geneva's students read news articles of modern heroes during their study of *Beowulf*. Each hero article told the story of a person of color; several of the heroes were female. In groups, students read news articles that detailed heroic feats then compared and contrasted their news article with Beowulf's heroic characteristics. When I asked Geneva the intent behind her selecting heroes belonging to non-mainstream groups, she offered that "[they don't] fit what people see as a hero." When I asked her to elaborate, she offered "I think it's necessary. When you're in any area you have to see other stuff. And here that other stuff is perspectives from people who are not white." That Geneva intentionally incorporated the voices and experiences of people belonging to historically marginalized groups *while* delivering core British literature readings showed the strategic underpinnings of her classroom instruction. In detailing the assignment, Geneva shared that

There's the school secretary who talked the guy down before he started shooting people, ...one was Charles Ramsey who saved those women in Ohio, one was Martin Luther King Jr. So tomorrow I'm going to talk specifically about each story. because I picked Ramsey because he doesn't fit what people see as a hero, he wasn't out trying to save the world, he wasn't trying to be Martin Luther King, his interviews were hilarious with the way he comes across as a regular guy just sitting there eating his Big Mac, I mean is he a role model? Probably not, he's got a menial job, he's a dishwasher, but he hears this woman screaming for help and decides to help her and ends up these women have been there for ten years. Just to talk about being a hero doesn't have to be someone who lives this saintly life, you can make the right decision at the right time and be a hero.

Here, Geneva elected to incorporate heroic examples that were entirely non-white, a consciously undertaken action. She wanted to expand the notion of "the hero" to provide a more inclusive, modern, and nuanced definition. Geneva articulated this commitment to bringing in multicultural

voices, saying that “When you’re in any area you have to see other stuff. And here that other stuff is perspectives from people who are not white.”

Toward the midway point of the study, I asked Geneva a question common to all of our post-observation interviews: *What did you do today that was culturally responsive?* She sighed deeply and laughed. When I asked her the cause behind the sigh, she replied

I... [feel badly] because I feel like you’re here to see cultural literacy and British literature and I’m not doing British literature like I should be, we’re in the middle of Beowulf, but I don’t know, class just isn’t just about literature to me anymore. It’s about a lot of things so I think using that quote again, using the Simon Bolivar, is helping them. How much they’ll remember, but maybe someone will say oh I’ve heard of that before, one kid actually knew the dates for Hispanic Heritage month, so the quote is relevant, and ...it really is about the relationships I’ve established with them, and talking about things they’re comfortable talking about, I don’t know if they get to do that in other classes.

This quote demonstrated complicated feelings toward her canonical pedagogy: firstly, that there’s a “right way” to teach British literature, presumably one that honors the literature required of the course; and secondly, that her pedagogy is marked by a commitment to bringing in diverse voices (as evidenced by the multicultural daily quotes and hero articles) and fostering a sense of community in her classroom. Thus, Geneva instantiated a commitment to modifying her curriculum to confront issues of equity by both acknowledging and moving away from her former allegiance to it.

Additionally, the canonical literature selected for the day’s lesson played a key role in determining the tone of the conversation Geneva struck with her students. Geneva mentioned wanting to have her students read excerpts from Olaudah Equiano’s slave narrative (2001). In the narrative, (which is frequently anthologized in many secondary British literature text books, such as the one Sykes County English teachers used), Equiano recounts his abduction from his African village, his torturous years in slavery, and his eventual escape. He moved to England, where he spent the remainder of his life speaking out against the institution of slavery.

Interestingly, Geneva had never heard of the narrative until I introduced it to her, but seemed receptive to teaching it later in the semester. She told me that if she if she taught Equiano's story, she would make a point of saying "contrary to everything we've read so far, here's something by an African who was living in England because at some point they did get there, most of them not voluntarily." Here, Geneva demonstrated that she was willing to model critical analysis of who and what was privileged in the British literature curriculum, but her willingness to broach the subject increased when the lesson's accompanying literature thematically lent itself to the conversation.

Factors That Inhibit Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices in Geneva's British Literature Classroom

In my analysis, certain patterns emerged that revealed the factors that negatively impacted Geneva's ability and willingness to teach her canonical British literature curriculum in culturally responsive ways. These themes included the exclusionary properties of curriculum, the tensions between her sociocultural identity as an African American woman and the constraining factors of predominantly white institution, classroom dynamics, and time.

Curriculum

An Inaccessible Content. The most frequently cited factor that precluded Geneva's ability to deliver her content in culturally responsive ways came from what she perceived to be the British literature curriculum's impenetrable constraints related to its racial exclusivity, age, inaccessible themes, and archaic language, a concern she expressed 16 times. During the ethnographic interview, Geneva shared that "[the students] think Shakespeare is stupid." She detailed how they struggled to understand the archaic language, a difficulty that only exacerbated their disdain of the curriculum. In addition to its being "old and white," time, as well as its racially exclusionary properties, also surfaced when Geneva described the difficulties of the

curriculum. Though Geneva maintained the importance of bringing in multiple perspectives that differed from the students' general experiences, she lamented "I don't know how you can flip Brit lit in any other way." Later in the study, Geneva ruminated on the day's lesson in which we discussed the racist ideologies rampant in *Othello* and extended the conversation to modern examples. In our post-observation interview, Geneva offered "that's the kind of conversation we need to have. There isn't always the place for that in English IV." Again, Geneva alluded to the limitations of the curriculum, and her difficulty fostering certain conversations because of its required content. During the focus group, Geneva once again complained about the curriculum, offering that

I don't think there's much you can do with the literature. If you're going to change things up, it has to be those supplemental things that you pull in. *Macbeth* is *Macbeth*. *Beowulf* is just *Beowulf*. But it's in making those outside connections.

She discussed feeling concern over modifying her curriculum to discuss issues of social injustices and inequalities, such as when she used graphs to present the incarceration rates between racial groups. Her fear stemmed from the fact that "it wasn't British literature, it wasn't spelled out for me to do in the curriculum for me to do, it was something I was doing in the classroom and I didn't want it to blow up in my face." Geneva attempted to modify her curriculum to provide for culturally responsive teaching practices, but often felt restricted by its content.

Racial Rigidity. That Geneva also taught African American literature during the duration of the study provided numerous contrastive insights into the curricular boundaries she negotiated. During the initial interview, I asked Geneva if she often discussed issues of equity with her students, to which she replied "In British literature, no. I think I'm going to get into it more in this African American lit class." This dichotomy permeated the study as time and again,

Geneva discussed how she could broach certain conversations more easily in her African American literature class because the content “just sorts of lends itself to those discussions.”

When, at the end of the study, I asked Geneva if she felt safer teaching her African American literature class, she answered with

I can't just come in [my British literature classroom] and say, "There was another African American in Minnesota who was shot and killed by the police. Let's talk about that." In African American Lit, I can. It really is [about the curriculum]. It really is. You said “protected”; I guess I feel safer jumping off that cliff with them because that's, to me, the basis of the class.

Though she expressed numerous problematic factors presented by the curriculum, its racial restraints emerged as perhaps the most difficult to overcome. Conversely, the content of her African American course provided Geneva with a buffer to foster the types of conversations she wanted to; without this same curricular protection in her English IV classroom, many conversations were not introduced.

Teaching Identity

Sense of Self. Geneva’s identity as an African American woman working in a predominantly white institution also impacted the culturally responsive approaches she was willing to employ. Twelve times, Geneva offered a comment that reflected her belief that her sociocultural identity and teaching context compounded her ability and willingness to teach in culturally responsive ways. During the focus group, Geneva reflected that

I feel like I have to be very careful about what I do address and how long the conversation goes on because I am in a predominantly white school, town, county... state, country. I think I have to be careful because I don't want someone to say that I'm trying to put forth my own agenda. I try to make sure that, if those things come up, that it's the students who bring them up. If I do bring up something—like the police officer—I have to make sure that conversation doesn't take up too much time because I don't want it to be perceived as that I'm always making things about race, or race baiting.

Geneva recognized the incongruences between her sociocultural identity and the contextual realities of her PWI; this awareness resulted in her strategic, careful approach to culturally responsive discussions. Her caution resulted in her relying on her students to introduce certain conversations. Even when students did facilitate the conversation, Geneva still fretted over the amount of time spent engaging the issues. Thus, the tensions between Geneva's sociocultural identity and Mountain Valley played a key role in her ability and willingness to teach in culturally responsive ways.

Fear of Punitive Measures. These sociocultural and contextual tensions conflated in such a way that made Geneva fearful of the consequences she might face if people perceived her as “race baiting.” She reflected that

It's never going to be just sitting around talking. I can't do that because that's not safe, for you to go home and say, "We were talking about this." It has to be in relation to something. Even in African American lit. That's why I pull the plug on them sometimes. I say, "We can continue this discussion, but let's introduce this text into the discussion."

The notion of “safeness,” for Geneva, was inextricably bound to her fear over how others might respond—and take issue with—her culturally responsive pedagogies. During our final post-observation interview, I asked Geneva to expound upon what my preliminary analysis found to be a theme of her case: that tensions between her sociocultural identity and contextual realities stymied her culturally responsive teaching practices. Geneva affirmed the finding, and candidly offered

I'm afraid I guess, afraid to have that experience with a parent calling or me being called to the office, I'm not a confrontational person at all, so I'm not doing anything that would draw that kind of attention to myself, that's why I always have in mind, well, this was the intent so if somethings said it's like well, no, it's not like I set up my tent and started preaching about this was what we were talking about. I need to stay employed.

She asserted that “I'm not a confrontational person, not revolutionary,” and that she didn't “want

to rock any boats.” Geneva’s fears of administrative pushback, and even losing her job, directly impacted her willingness to engage culturally responsive pedagogies in her British literature classroom.

Sustaining Collegial Relations. Geneva also expressed concern over how taking a more assertive stance on issues of equity could negatively impact her relationship with her peers. She admitted that “I...like for people to like me, and I like being the coworker that people can work with, and I don’t want to be the angry black woman, the snapping my fingers and twisting my neck in some meeting.” This rumination showed that Geneva to be acutely aware of her positionality as a woman of color working in a predominantly white context, and that this consciousness impacted the pedagogical risks she was willing to take, particularly as they might chaff her collegial relationships.

Group Dynamics

A third pattern showed that classroom dynamics also impeded Geneva’s culturally responsive teaching practices. Coded instances (n= 10) detailed the ways in which interactions between students, or between Geneva and the students, impacted classroom discussions.

Racial Dynamics. While discussing the Key and Peele article on police brutality, Geneva’s students largely remained silent. In the post-observation interview, Geneva reflected that she “hit a brick wall...[I] had to drag it out of them.” During the focus group, Geneva compared the conversations in her classroom to those in Sam’s classroom. She offered that

When I have [culturally responsive] discussions in my class, I only get a few kids who participate. Some kids are “oh well,” and they’re not paying attention. We were talking about the police officer who just got convicted of those rape charges, and it was just really the few minority students I have in the class who were contributing. I do sometimes feel like I want to ring a bell—we have to pay attention here because this is life. This is what you’ll experience when you walk out that door. So they’re probably not as open as your class to talk about those things, and I don’t know why.

Here, Geneva described the difficulty she experienced promoting conversation around the article, which detailed a white police officer's many sexual assaults against young African American women. Those students who did offer their insights predominantly belonged to non-majoritarian groups, a facet of the conversation that frustrated Geneva. Likely, the fact that so many of Geneva's students were white and seemed unwilling or unsure how to engage in these racially underpinned conversations played a role in their lack of participation.

Class Size and Climate. Geneva also noted that she often had a more difficult time getting her third period students to participate than she did her first period students. Geneva hypothesized that class size could be one of the culprits. Her first period class seemed more receptive to discussion; Geneva wondered aloud if this was because "there's just too many kids in third period." This large class size, Geneva believed, led to more off-task behaviors and challenged her ability to engage students in the discussion the way she would prefer. Some students in the third period class were "just rude," according to Geneva. She detailed what she perceived to be students' sense of entitlement, and how these attitudes impacted the classroom climate. For example, Geneva resented when her third period students chatted over her, ignoring her at the front of the room; she mentioned also dealing with students angry over their grades – the same students who refused to complete their work when it was due. These atmospheric tensions made it difficult for Geneva to fully engage the culturally responsive teaching practices she might have otherwise.

Time

From having to account for instructional time lost to the PSAT, PLAN (the NC tenth grade writing test), and midterms, Geneva discussed feeling unable to plan and implement certain instructional activities due to a lack of time, an issue I coded four times. While her British

literature students did not take the tests (juniors and sophomores, respectively, completed the tests), her senior students lost instructional time due to extended periods for the other students to test. Nearing the end of the first quarter, Geneva admitted to feeling “overwhelmed” by all of her obligations. She said that “I always start off really well, really strong, and then I’m just like... yeeeeeah...it wasn’t any decision I made not to do it, I just didn’t get around to it. School, work, kids.” Geneva noted that her personal realities impacted her ability to realize her culturally responsive pedagogical aims. Having authentic experiences in the community was difficult because “I have five kids, I don’t get out that much. I’m at work and at home. We don’t get out and do a lot of things within the community very much so I guess I’m not really making that kind of tie with the kids.” At the study’s conclusion, she apologized for doing “very little culturally responsive instruction,” a shortcoming she attributed to her “running on fumes”—she had a major project due for one of her graduate courses that evening, and her grades were due on Friday. She had taken her son to the emergency room over the weekend, too. All of these dimensions of Geneva’s life converged in such a way to impact the culturally responsive approaches she was able to both design and implement, not the least of which was the demands motherhood placed on her time.

Factors That Promote Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices in Geneva’s British Literature Classroom

Though a myriad of factors hindered Geneva’s ability and willingness to instantiate culturally responsive teaching practices, certain factors supported her efforts. These elements, detailed in the following sections, include biographical experiences, the CCSS, and her desire to see African American students succeed.

Biographical Experiences

A History of Navigating Mostly White Settings. Across the data, I coded nine instances during which Geneva mentioned biographical experiences that informed her approach to culturally responsive teaching. During our ethnographic interview, Geneva shared that throughout her life, she frequently navigated the realities of being the only, or one of the only, people of color in her educational settings. But, at 39 years of age and with 14 years of teaching experience, Geneva saw her history as a person on the fringes as an asset, particularly as she sought ways to continue to strategically promote conversations around equity at Mountain Valley High School. In discussing how her past experiences impacted her work, she offered that

I love who I am, and I am totally fine with it, again, because I've been the minority in a lot of situations in school and as the teacher, I had to get comfortable quickly with who I was and what that meant and again at this point in my career, hey, let's talk about it, let's go.

Geneva saw her history of navigating setting predominantly comprised of white people as one that allowed her to successfully work at Mountain Valley High School. In the focus group, Geneva shared that

To me, being culturally responsive comes naturally. As an African American woman in a predominantly white field, I have grown accustomed to being the minority. I attended a Catholic school my entire life and went to a predominantly White college in New Jersey. I understood what it meant to live separate lives, to a certain extent. I was clearly aware that there were two Americas—two realities that I had to master in order to be successful in my career and in my community.

Geneva believed that her marginalization as an African American was compounded by her identity as a woman. In her ethnographic interview, she said that said taking a course in feminism in college revealed to her she was marginalized as both a woman *and* a person of color. Geneva not only recognized the “double burden” (Firestone, 2003) of being marginalized for both her racial and gender identity, but how these elements of her identity would likely be

perceived by her colleagues in the predominantly white institution in which she worked. On numerous occasions, she discussed the importance of presenting herself in such a way that other would not perceive her as “the angry black woman,” a trope at odds with her self-described “totally non-confrontational” personality.

New Literacy Studies (Gee, 2008; Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Street, 1997), a theory that suggests that the manner in which people use language is indicative of their varied and nuanced ways of knowing and understanding the world—that is, their social epistemologies (Heath, 1983; Scollon & Scollon, 1981)—provides another lens through which to understand Geneva’s case. The theory espouses a “culturally sensitive account of literacy that rejects static and homogeneous views of the literacy practices of cultural communities” (Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009, p. 213). Thus, in order to fully understand literacy practices, language and literacy must be understood as amorphous entities that take on numerous forms and meanings, which shift based on the contexts in which they are used (Street, 1997). Gee (2015) untangled D/discourses, writing that “At any moment we are using language we must say or write the right thing in the right way while playing the right social role and (appearing) to hold the right values, beliefs, and attitudes. Thus, what is important....is saying (writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing combinations...what I call Discourses” (p. 171). Big “D” Discourse differs drastically with little “d” discourse—the latter signals language-in-use, a more traditional understanding of the term. From their home to professional contexts, people belong to multiple Discourse communities, which they seamlessly, and often unknowingly, shift between as the situation merits. While discourse is a component of Discourse, the latter is “always more than just language” (p. 171).

Geneva used her understanding of how others might perceive her to her advantage, as evidenced by her asserting that she knew how to “speak the language” necessary to thrive in, and often times despite, her predominantly white institution. Geneva was adept at Discourse shape-shifting; effortlessly, yet knowingly, she moved from one Discourse community to another (Gee, 2006), as evidenced by her explicit discussions around how she talked differently with her African American students and parents in comparison to how she engaged her mostly white colleagues and students. In addition, having navigating the same realities herself, Geneva knew what her marginalized students would need to be successful in an environment mostly comprised of whites. Her refusal to let two African American students fail as well as her use of particular discourse patterns to engage them showed that she used her D/discourses in intentional ways to support their success. That she recognized the need to, and was successful at navigating multiple social realms, allowed Geneva to participate more fully in culturally responsive practices—to an extent, of course.

Informational Texts

“Overt isn’t my MO,” Geneva laughed during one post-observation interview. Given this preference, informational texts allowed a way for Geneva to teach in quietly culturally responsive ways. The CCSS privileges the role of informational texts in the ELA classroom, suggesting that the curriculum seniors engage be comprised roughly of 70% informational articles and 30% literature. Though this approach has been widely critiqued (see, e.g., Schieble, 2014), Geneva used this requirement to her culturally responsive advantage: this insistence on informational texts emerged as a factor that assisted rather than hindered her work as a culturally responsive teacher. I identified three ways Geneva used informational texts for culturally

responsive purposes: to foster students' sociopolitical consciousness (n= 8); to create classroom community (n= 4); and to equip students for long-term success (n=3);

Fostering Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness. Informational texts allowed Geneva to coax her students into certain conversations she would not have otherwise initiated. When I asked her if, and how, she broached sociopolitically-inspired conversations with her students, Geneva offered "Bringing in the *New York Times* articles gives me an opportunity to do that. Just being the Black teacher." This comment, which again highlighted the constraints Geneva experienced as a woman of color in a mostly white school setting, demonstrated the important power informational texts wielded in mediating the tensions between Geneva and her predominantly white institution. During a later interview, Geneva and I had the following exchange:

Geneva: I try to pick stuff that's current so that if there's ever a problem that's my backup, well, this is what's going on right now.

Jeanne: So you'd use an article to talk about police brutality, for example?

Geneva: Exactly, absolutely. I'm not stepping in that without something.

These comments reflect the complexities of Geneva's situation: as an African American female teaching an all-white curriculum at a predominantly white school, she felt that informational texts provided her with a buffer from punitive fallout. Thus, informational texts specifically, and the CCSS specifically, allowed Geneva and opportunity to disguise—but also actualize—her culturally responsive intentions.

Creating Classroom Community. Geneva frequently used informational texts to engage her students with the curriculum. She intentionally selected certain articles because she knew her students would enjoy the topic. For example, she incorporated a piece on the FIFA soccer scandal because two of her students loved soccer. During a different lesson, she brought in an

article on female scientists because she knew a few of her female students aspired to enter the field. Another article detailed the plight of the United States Army's first two female Rangers, a piece she believed her students interested in a military career might enjoy. In this way, Geneva's incorporated informational texts to help foster a sense of classroom community by inciting conversation around issues that mattered to her students.

Equipping Students for Long-term Success. Lastly, Geneva employed informational texts as a pedagogical tool for equipping students with the skills necessary for long-term success. She noted that unless students elected to be an English major, they would not read and discuss literature much after leaving high school. Instead, Geneva wanted her students to focus on the *skills* they could gain in her classroom. One of the most critical ways Geneva sought to cultivate these skills was through having students read news articles; this allowed them to engage issues pertinent to their lives, and also gave them an opportunity to engage reading materials that would align with what they would encounter outside of the classroom.

Desire to See African American Students Succeed

Laced throughout the study were Geneva's periodic but powerful mentions of her commitment to helping her African American students succeed, comments I coded for on seven occasions. These conversations involved her not just being committed to, but insisting on the academic success of her African American students (n= 3); communicating successfully with African American parents/guardians (n=2); and the role of private spaces in allowing these conversations with both African American students and parents/guardians (n=4).

Demanding Success. In her germinal study examining desegregation's impact on the learning experiences of students of color in one rural North Carolina county, Siddle Walker (1993) found that African American teachers frequently exhibited a particular form of care

toward their African American students; these caring relationships dramatically impacted both the students' educative experiences and successes. Similarly, Geneva demonstrated a particular form of care for her African Americans students which manifested itself in her commitment to their academic success. When one African American student started to fail her class, Geneva warned him that "boy, you better get it together, I'mma call your mama right now." During a tutorial session, Geneva confronted two African American students who were both failing her English IV class. When it was only the three of them in her classroom, she reminded them that "You are the only two Black kids in this class. You better pull it together. You better get a move on because this isn't going to work for me. You can't fail." Geneva admitted that while she wanted all students to succeed, this desire was compounded for her African American students; this desire was rooted in her understanding of the ways in which these students were disproportionately marginalized by various factors in both schools and society.

Engaging with African American Parents. Geneva's sociocultural identity provided her with a conduit through which to transform the academic success of her African American students. During our ethnographic interview, Geneva discussed calling the aunt of one of her students to talk with her about the student's academic troubles. As she recounted the exchange, Geneva code-switched to African American Vernacular English, a non-standard form of English often viewed as a sub-standard form of English (Rickford, 1999). When the aunt began interrogating the child while still on the phone with Geneva, Geneva laughed and said "I wanted to have a go at [the student]." Later, the aunt shared that the student's parents had both abandoned him, and that she was doing her best to make sure he succeeded in school. With a solemn shake of her head, Geneva told me "I don't think she'd've talked to a white parent like that." To help her African American students meet some of the mainstream markers of success

necessary to thrive in society, Geneva not only held her students to high expectations, but, seeing parents/caregivers as integral components of the students' educational success, initiated conversations with them, too.

Private Spaces. Informal relationships and conversations independent of academics also helped foster a sense of African American community between Geneva and her students. In discussing how she approached her African American students differently than her white students, Geneva shared that

I joke around with [the African American students] one-on-one more so. The first group I had, they'd kinda hang out after class, I had them last period, and they never seemed to be in too much of a rush to leave, we'd talk, like hey, you going to church this weekend? What church you go to? They'd talk to me like "What you cook today?" They talked to me on a more personal level, but I wouldn't say I sought them out, it just kinda happened that way.

This statement revealed the organic way in which Geneva's African American students gravitated toward her. In this informal moments after class, Geneva and her students discussed non-academic aspects of their lives and community. When the opportunities arose, Geneva nourished, participated in, and recognized a sense of African American community between her and her students. Privacy helped foster this opportunity.

Note that all of the above instances detailed in this section occurred when Geneva was alone with African American students or their parents/guardians. Geneva reflected on these private spaces, saying that "I think I do talk to [the African American students] in a more sort of Ebonics sort of way when we have those opportunities." In this statement, and throughout the study, she showed her reliance on these infrequent but important private moments to both foster a sense of community with and to promote the academic success of her African American students. That these exchanges were frequently engaged privately can likely be attributed to the fact that both Geneva and her students were attempting to forge a sense of community in a

predominantly white institution, certainly no easy feat. These spaces provided safe, intimate opportunities for Geneva and her African American students to discuss freely issues and matters specific to their community. Foster (1999) found that successful culturally responsive teachers demonstrated cultural solidarity, affiliation, connection to the African American community. While Geneva demonstrated all of the characteristics Foster (1999) documented, she frequently relied on private spaces to *perform* these behaviors, sensing that this space was more conducive to, and less hostile than, her predominantly white classroom.

“It’s Not Just About Literature to Me Any More”: Concluding Geneva’s Case

A complex, profound understanding of her sociocultural awareness permeated Geneva’s case. She understood acutely the ways in which she faced marginalization due to both her racial and gender identity. Time and again, she expressed a deep commitment to equipping students with the skills fundamental to their success in college and/or their future careers. Geneva admitted this hope was particularly acute with regards to her African American students. Additionally, Geneva worked to create a warm classroom environment, which she achieved through joking with students and incorporating materials she knew they would enjoy. Informational texts were instrumental in mediating tensions between her sociocultural identity and her attempts to foster students’ sociopolitical consciousness.

Affirming students’ cultural assets proved problematic for Geneva as she fretted that an explicit acknowledgement of these attributes who result in her being labeled the teacher “always talking about Black stuff.” She attempted to work as an agent of change, but stopped short of engaging her students in the conversation and prompting them to engage in transformative behaviors. Her sociopolitical understanding of schools, though infrequently documented, showed her to have an evolved understanding of contextual realities. She did not query her own deficit

beliefs/biases about her students or examine how these attitudes might shape her instruction, which left her with no evidenced examples of critical reflecting to guide practice. Like Sam, Geneva fostered conversations around sociopolitical issues, but did not move her students toward action-oriented projects. Her dedication to fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness was complicated by her sociocultural awareness, and her concern that she might face certain repercussions if her pedagogy became too provocative. Frequently, Geneva sought ways to modify her British literature curriculum and pedagogy for equity, but believed that such transformations were risky given the content's racial exclusivity.

Geneva more freely engaged culturally responsive practices in private spaces when she was alone with other African American students/parents; she viewed her sociocultural identity as a cultural asset that allowed her to initiate and participate in conversations that ultimately impacted her students' academic success. Geneva's ability to seamlessly shift from one Discourse community to another allowed her to situate equity and race in the broader conversation. These effortless transitions provided her with a means to both engage with her African American students in private spaces and also participate in Mountain Valley High School collegial groups/teams without being perceived as "an angry Black woman." Her sense of double consciousness, and the ways in which she was marginalized because of her identity as an African American female working in a predominantly white institution, impacted both the culturally responsive strategies she employed and the extent to which she initiated, sustained, and avoided certain conversations. For Geneva, culturally responsive simply "goes with the territory."

CHAPTER 6: PLEDGING ALLEGIANCE TO THE CANON & MAINTAINING THE “NEUTRALITY” OF GOOD TEACHING: ALLISON’S CASE

Context

Arena High School

A public magnet school located in the northern area of Sykes County, Arena High School houses students belonging to grades 9-12. Arena High School provided the most diverse presentation of students’ racial backgrounds of any school in the study. Its students reflected a balance of demographics: 50% of Arena High School students identified as white, 30% as Black, 12% as Hispanic, and 4% as Asian and two or more races. At the time of the study, of its 2,600 students, 29% qualified for free or reduced lunch. The school adhered to an A/B schedule, meaning that classes met every other day, which in turn allowed for students to engage in 90 minute periods for the entirety of the school year. A recent national survey listed Arena High School as one of nation’s best high schools, noting its International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) program as key elements factoring into this decision.

Centrally located in Sykes County, Arena High School’s community was, like its students, a diverse one. While many communities (particularly those closest to the school) were more affluent, just a few miles away, apartments provided a means for people with lower-incomes to live in the area. Along the several main roads that surrounded Arena High School were many different restaurants, grocery stores, churches, and medical facilities. Two large shopping malls were just a ten minute drive away. A synagogue and a Catholic church were

located within a half mile of the school, a visual representation of the multiplicity of cultures that the community celebrated.

Upon entering Arena High School, a long hallway stretched from its front doors to its main office. In the middle of the foyer, a bronze statue of the school's mascot welcomed visitors to Arena High School. Numerous trophies and pictures lined both sides of the walkway, proudly displaying evidence of Arena's history of successful athletic endeavors. Just on the other side of the glass casing stood the school lunchroom. There, I frequently saw students performing various cleaning tasks in small groups, leading me to think this assemblage of students was part of Arena's occupational student program which aimed to prepare qualifying students for professional work. Immediately across from the lunchroom was an open-area, carpet lined lounge space reserved exclusively for seniors. There, students perched on bean bag chairs and read, studied, or chatted with friends. A sign warned hopefuls to have their ID ready if they wished to occupy the space.

My walks to Allison's classroom were pleasant. The halls were quiet, and, when I encountered a fellow passer-by, I was almost always greeted with a smile—even if the passer-by was a student bent over her phone. On occasion, faculty members stopped to ask if they could assist me, and when I declined their help, assuring them I knew the way, they often accompanied me on my walk anyway. My walks allowed me brief glimpses into teachers' classrooms, during which I almost always saw teachers circulating among their students rather than sitting behind their desks. After admiring the literacy-infused student work samples of math students hanging on the hall across from Allison's room, the teacher—who I had never met prior to the encounter—allowed me to snap pictures to share with the teachers at the school at which I was a literacy coach, and even emailed me her template for the lesson. These experiences allowed me

to sense that Arena High School both emanated and extended warmth, even to an outsider like myself. Students and teachers alike seemed to truly enjoy participating in and nourishing their school community—theirs was a learning and working environment to which they were proud to belong.

The Classroom

When I entered Allison’s classroom on the day of our first observation, I felt a tug of nostalgia: I had observed Allison once before for a graduate course; having found her teaching to be exemplary, I anticipated the opportunity to study her practice for a more sustained period of time. While I knew, and could attest to, her teaching prowess, I looked forward to peeling back the layers of Allison’s culturally responsive teaching identity.

Allison’s classroom welcomed me, and all of its visitors, with walls splashed with student work, bookshelves stuffed with books, and pictures hanging throughout the room. Her desks were in groups of four, with two desks facing two desks, though having her desks in pairs was the most common layout (and Allison’s preference). Her dry-erase board reflected her daily agenda, but its most striking feature was a space on the lower right hand side that alternated scrawled phrases such as “STORIES ARE...” “HEROES ARE....” and “THIS I VALUE,” with dozens of post-it notes orbiting around the given phrase, each filled with a particular student’s insight. Pictures of Allison’s doppelganger, Audrey Hepburn, dotted one corner. Beside her desk, where I often sat while I observed, Allison had hung pictures students had made for her, including one silly picture in which a student had cut and pasted Allison’s head, along with friends from the class, on a band of motorcycle riders. I frequently had to rearrange her many lists, post-it notes, and stacks of papers to carve out a small place in which to write my observation notes. A prom invitation extended from one student to another hung on Allison’s

wall; its endearment of “Bae-owulf,” a pun using the word “bae,” a vernacular endearment, delighted Allison. A clearly loved teacher, the room reflected the mutual affinity between Allison and her students.

The Classes

During the study, Allison taught two sections of English IV International Baccalaureate (IB). The IB program allowed students to participate and benefit from a rigorous, Advanced Placement-like program that prepared them for both college and the international realm. The IB program standardized the courses/experiences of IB students worldwide; upon graduating, students earned an IB diploma, an esteemed and lauded conferment. Students from across the county trekked to Arena because of its IB program.

One interesting aspect of the IB English IV curriculum was that its teachers were not required to teach an entirely British literature curriculum. While teachers were still required to teach the district decreed core readings, IB teachers like Allison enjoyed much more freedom to select the texts that they wished their students to engage. For example, Allison’s students read Atwood’s (1986) *The Handmaid’s Tale* prior to beginning a study of British literature that spanned several months. However, during the duration of the study, Allison’s students read various canonical British literature pieces such as *The Canterbury Tales*, *Macbeth*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.

Between her second and third period English IV IB classes, Allison taught 56 students. Thirty-four students identified as white, 12 as Black, three as Asian, and two as Hispanic; no students identified as two or more races. No learning or emotional/behavioral disabilities were identified.

“It’s Just Good Teaching”: Allison’s Case

I first met Allison during our undergraduate careers. As pre-service English teachers, she and I forged a friendship that has endured throughout the years. When I first observed her a few years ago for one of my graduate classes, I marveled at her pedagogical dexterity—seamlessly, she shifted from activities that used students’ visual literacies, digital literacies, and canonical texts to deepen both their understanding of and engagement with the content. So when, during the recruitment phase of this study, more than one community member offered her name as an exemplary model of British literature teaching, I wasn’t surprised. I anticipated greatly the opportunity to work with her closely over the study’s duration.

I was not disappointed. Simply put, Allison was one of the best teachers I’ve ever seen. My own observations were validated when, at the mid-point in the study, her colleagues voted her Arena High School’s Teacher of the Year. During the study, district teachers observed Allison so they could ascertain some of her best practices to take back to their headquarters. Allison’s classroom was a frequent stop of magnet tour groups, teams of parents and students considering Arena for the student’s high school career. Allison also mentored a student teacher, who came to her classroom on Fridays; another pre-service English teacher came to observe her throughout the semester as well. These visitations allowed me to surmise that Allison’s expertise was both acknowledged and celebrated across the county. Her passion for her content and students was palpable, generative, and seemingly unmarred by the many attacks waged against North Carolina teachers in recent years.

In high school, Allison toyed with majoring in art education, but settled instead on English education. However, her penchant for art osmosed her instruction: Allison frequently incorporated visuals into her lessons, sharing with me that she subscribed to the notion that the

idea of “texts” encompassed a myriad of modalities. Some of her most notable instructional practices involved asking students to apply various literary lenses to their “reading” of Lava soap advertisements; listening, and interpreting, various snippets of classical music to craft a Grendel-esque monster; and re-writing and performing modern day Canterbury Tales. When she lectured, she did so sparingly, and with such charisma that we (here, I included myself with her students) often did not realize we were on the receiving end of direct instruction.

But Allison proved a complex case. While she was unquestionably one of the strongest pedagogues I have observed, her approaches to culturally responsive instruction were complicated, and her motivations often difficult to untangle, particularly at the start of the analysis phase. Ladson-Billings (2006) wrote that culturally relevant pedagogy should both acknowledge and use students’ sociocultural backgrounds as a vehicle through which to transform their schooling experience. Accessing students’ culture, then, powerfully mediates the tensions between culturally and linguistically diverse students and an educational system that often relegates them to the fringes of the educational system. But Allison favored a neutral approach to pedagogy—one that saw her teaching practices as ones that were good, and served the needs of *all* students, an orientation at odds with that of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Given these dichotomies, the reader may question: why, then, was Allison selected for this study? Recall that Allison was both community-nominated and self-identified as a culturally responsive teacher, a precursory acknowledgement she made prior to her ethnographic interview (see Appendix D). Her ethnographic interview intrigued me: she was performing rather provocative acts of pedagogy, and ones that aligned with the aims of culturally responsive teaching. However, my classroom observations and attendant post-observation interviews

revealed a lack of culturally responsive intention on Allison's part: while she performed seemingly bold acts of teaching while teaching her British literature curriculum, these acts were undertaken to promote students' academic success and engagement with the material, not to promote cultural responsiveness. Thus, she did not take her pedagogy to the proverbial next step in linking how her practices could, and should, seek to engage her students' myriad sociocultural backgrounds; in fact, she frequently seemed utterly opposed to doing so.

My second reason for including Allison in the study pertained to the relevance and generalizability of her story, and the ways it both situated itself within and offered a close empirical examination of the larger educational milieu. White, monolingual females continue to dominate the teaching profession despite the fact that K-12 students continue to reflect a wider array of cultural and linguistic diversity (Boser, 2014). These incongruences prove troublesome given that research shows that white teachers tend to view their teaching practices and beliefs as apolitical, neutral practices that do not privilege or marginalize certain groups of students (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Picower, 2009; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). Thus, unraveling Allison's pedagogical approaches allowed me to portray the realities *many* white teachers and their *many* culturally and linguistically diverse students likely encounter with regards to the incongruences between teachers' practices and their students' sociocultural backgrounds.

Illustrating Allison's Case

Given these tensions between her pedagogical actions and expressed intent, Allison's case benefitted greatly from my constant discussion with the creator of the MTCS (Cain, 2015). Because of these conversations, I was able to better understand the role of intentionally in culturally responsive teaching, and how these motivations illuminated Allison's teaching

practices. To that end, what follows is an analysis of the ways in which Allison *intentionally* oriented her pedagogy toward culturally responsive purposes. Table 5 offers a holistic picture of her culturally responsive teaching practices.

Table 5.

Coded Instances of Allison's MTCS Characteristics

	Self-Assessment	Nascent	Emerging	Progressing	Advancing	Transformational
1. Demonstrate Sociocultural Awareness (n= 9)	Progressing	1	7	1	0	0
2. Affirm Students' Cultural Assets (n= 1)	Emerging	1	0	0	0	0
3. Committed to Student Success (n= 24)	Progressing	1	23	0	0	0
4. Function as an Agent of Change (n= 2)	Emerging	0	0	2	0	0
5. Understand Sociopolitical Context of Schools (n= 2)	Progressing	0	2	0	0	0
6. Understand Impact of Content and Culture on Students (n= 10)	Emerging	10	0	0	0	0
7. Demonstrate Experiential Knowledge of School and Students' Communities (n= 2)	Progressing	0	0	2	0	0
8. Create Classroom that Embraces Students (n= 41)	Emerging	1	19	21	0	0
9. Engage in Critical Reflection to Guide Practice (n= 1)	Progressing	1	0	0	0	0
10. Foster Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness (n= 15)	Emerging	7	8	0	0	0
11. Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy for Equity (n= 5)	Progressing	4	0	1	0	0

Allison's approach to culturally responsive teaching was marked by her desire to create a warm classroom environment that embraced her students. But her embodiment of this singular characteristic was her only true affiliation with culturally responsive teaching: her insistence on

the neutrality of her teaching practices prevented her from achieving more developed spaces on the MTCS. With regards to her dispositions, Allison demonstrated an awareness of her sociocultural identity (characteristic one), but this sense of self was largely acknowledged in superficial ways. While she acknowledged on occasion her sociocultural identity as a white, middle class female, she stopped short of querying the ways in which this positionality impacted her teaching practices and, consequently, her students' experiences. Allison preferred to see her students as academic, rather than cultural beings (characteristic two); for her, students should be "seen" and supported in terms of their academic abilities and needs rather than for their sociocultural backgrounds. While Allison was committed to her students' academic success (characteristic three), particularly with regards to ensuring their high performances on their end-of-year IB exam, she did not consider or challenge the factors that frequently create failure for some students. While she believed herself to be an agent of change (characteristic four), Allison admitted that her feelings of discomfort sometimes resulted in her choosing not to confront issues of interpersonal discrimination.

In terms of her knowledge characteristics, Allison demonstrated a developing conception of the sociopolitical context of schools (characteristic five). However, Allison expressed disdain for discussions that foregrounded sociocultural identities and realities, seeing these conversations as ones that separated and divided students rather than empowered them, an important aspect of characteristic six. Allison revealed herself to be adept at characteristic seven, having experiential knowledge of school and students' communities, given that she enjoyed both participating in and facilitating experiences in both the students' communities and the Arena High School community.

With regards to her culturally responsive teaching skills, the third domain of the MTCS, Allison again proved a complex case. From telling jokes to delivering lectures laced with colloquial terms, Allison worked to create a warm classroom environment for her students (characteristic eight). This characteristic, coded more prolifically than any other, contrasted vividly with characteristic nine: I did not code any instances of her critical reflecting to guide her practice, an absence of action undoubtedly tied to her belief in pedagogical neutrality. An analysis of characteristic 10 showed that conversations and lessons that could have been coded as ones that fostered students' sociopolitical understandings were broached more because they were timely, which prompted me to code them as characteristic eight instead given that these inclusions were meant to help students feel more comfortable in the classroom. Lastly, believing that teachers should not use their classrooms as spaces in which to politicize, and that the curriculum held inherent value, Allison infrequently modified her curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity (characteristic 11). For Allison, her belief that teaching was a series of neutral actions and processes stymied her ability to embody certain MTCS characteristics; most notably, this subscription to neutrality hindered her ability to understand the impact of context and culture on students, engage in critical reflection, or promote sociopolitically-oriented conversations. In the following sections, I offer a more nuanced discussion of the extent to which Allison's teaching practices, and the motivations behind her pedagogy, aligned with the culturally responsive characteristics of the MTCS.

Measures of Allison's Multicultural Teacher Capacity Scale Characteristics

Demonstrate Sociocultural Awareness (Characteristic 1)

"I think everyone [has a culture], but I think sometimes it's necessary to acknowledge them; sometimes, it's not. I don't necessarily think it needs to be an all the time thing."

During the ethnographic interview, Allison discussed a formative experience in her teaching career: the summer before she began teaching, she worked as a camp counselor for a program that sought to promote the achievement of students belonging to historically marginalized populations. Allison recognized that, “I was as a 22-year-old white female from this middle-class family...and I was working with all of these students [belonging to historically marginalized groups].” Here, Allison was able to examine her own sociocultural identity, a rumination spurred on by the racial differences between her summer program students and herself. This was not the first time Allison noticed her own privileged positionality with regards to people belonging to less privileged backgrounds: in high school, Allison volunteered at a soup kitchen in her community. While she recognized the need in the community, she admitted that “I wasn’t struggling with that myself.” Here, Allison acknowledged that certain benefits were conferred to her due to her middle class background. During a different exchange, I asked Allison to describe her culture. She laughed, and offered “Avocados, Starbucks, all that. I think everyone [has a culture], but I think sometimes it's necessary to acknowledge them; sometimes, it's not. I don't necessarily think it needs to be an all the time thing.” These transactions, and six others like it across the data, revealed that Allison was able to examine her own sociocultural positionality, and how these factors impacted her sociocultural identity, but only in superficial ways. I coded the majority of Allison’s comments for characteristic one as *emerging*, meaning that she peripherally examined how her sociocultural factors influenced how she experienced the world, and also demonstrated a basic, though not nuanced, understanding of how these factors informed her sense of culture.

Affirm Students’ Cultural Assets (Characteristic 2)

“I would rather look at a student on an academic level.”

Allison's one expression of characteristic two reflected a *nascent* orientation to affirming her students' cultural assets. She offered that in lieu of acknowledging and addressing a student's cultural background, and ways in which this positionality shaped a student's educative experiences,

I would rather look at a student on an academic level, like oh, Billy moved up this week on the assessment. That's awesome, because Billy has been struggling. Not Billy moved up and it's because he's from, you know, Hawaii, or whatever.

This comment reflected Allison's inability to identify the cultural capital all of her students brought to her classroom; instead, her preference was for seeing her students as academic, not cultural, beings. This color-blind mentality—the notion that race can, and should, be overlooked (Bonilla-Silva, 2006)—is a teaching ideology to which many white teachers subscribe (Picower, 2009); this apolitical positionality insistence renders culturally responsive teaching all but impossible (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Worth noting is that this aspect of the MTCS came up once across all data sources, and only when I asked Allison a direct question regarding the characteristic, a finding suggestive of the fact that considering students' cultural assets was not a part of Allison's teaching repertoire.

Demonstrate Commitment to Students' Success (Characteristic 3)

“The level of success is adjusted depending on what I believe the student is capable of or able to achieve.”

While Allison was unquestionably committed to her students' success in her course, achievement was largely understood to be bound to, and defined by, a student's academic performance. While I coded multiple examples of this commitment across the data sources (n=24), the majority of these fell under the *emerging* descriptor, meaning that Allison believed her students were capable of success and that she had the tools to help them be successful in her classroom. However, Allison did not examine or challenge the factors that marginalized and

prevented academic success for some students, actions necessary to qualify for the *advancing* and *transformational* qualifiers of the characteristic, ones that Sam and Geneva frequently achieved. Thus, understanding her intent to be *progressing* in nature helped particularize the degree to which Allison's conception of academic success aligned with those of other culturally responsive teachers.

Historically, Allison's students have scored highly on the end-of-year IB exam; given this standard of excellence, Allison worked diligently to help her students develop the skills needed to perform well on the exam. I observed one such example early in the study when, after returning students essays, Allison spent instructional time having students deconstruct prompts and generate collaborative outlines. Students poured over their assignment, working together to craft a strong product, which they later shared during a class-wide discussion. When I asked her the impetus behind the activity, Allison offered that "I saw weakness in their writing so I just wanted to teach that in a way that I knew would be effective." Here, Allison altered her instruction to attend to the deficiencies in her students' writing, skills students needed in order to perform well in the course and outside of the classroom.

Allison also modified her text types to help her students develop and hone their literacy skills. She frequently projected images of famous works of art and asked students to analyze the picture just as they would a literary text—using the various literary lenses they had learned, such as the Marxist, feminist, or post-colonial lenses. Every time Allison gave students this assignment, conversation was both lively and rich. During a post-observation interview, I asked Allison her intent behind incorporating the pieces of art. She shared that "it's more accessible and easier to approach because it's like looking at pictures, when you start reading you like looking at the pictures, it's just a really neat literacy strategy, and then again using the exact

same skills, so we're able to hone those skills." Thusly, moving between visual and literary analysis proved a ripe opportunity for Allison to support her students' analytical skills, elements essential to their success in the course.

When we discussed her modifying her instruction to promote cultural responsiveness, Allison offered that "I will be aware of what you need and meet your needs, but if I have a good lesson, then you're going to push yourself to meet what I'm asking you to do." Here, Allison failed to problematize the ways in which students' circumstances (i.e., their socioeconomic statuses, language ability, and learning exceptionalities) impacted their academic achievement, and instead focused on how her own pedagogy sufficiently equalized the complex factors at play in her classroom.

Work As an Agent of Change (Characteristic 4)

"I'd rather let it slide."

Allison understood both the subtle and blatant ways in which interpersonal discrimination occurs in classroom settings. She demonstrated this understanding when she discussed using Hozier's music video for "Take Me to Church" to teach argumentation. Significant portions of the video showed two men kissing passionately. Speaking of her students, Allison wrote "you're not going to say, "gross" [when] you see the video. But I don't need to say [it]." Here, Allison acknowledged the dynamics that could potentially surface during the viewing, but believed that her grooming of the students through their positive and inclusive classroom community stymied their discriminatory comments. Put another way, Allison believed she didn't need to tell her students not to say "gross"—instead, she believed that her already established classroom dynamic was such that students would not make any derisive comments. Though Allison

acknowledged these discriminatory behaviors, and her awareness of them, she did not offer an instance in which she explicitly responded to one of these transactions.

But just because she was aware of these discriminatory behaviors did not guarantee that Allison corrected them. During the ethnographic interview, Allison and I discussed her orientation to and work as an agent of change. Allison admitted that “there’ll also be times where I might be uncomfortable and I don’t necessarily acknowledge that I’m uncomfortable with it; I’d rather let it slide. I think that is a detriment. And I’m aware of it, but I’m not addressing it.” Thusly, Allison revealed that her discomfort sometimes precluded her from functioning as an agent of change. Allison’s two comments for characteristic four were both *progressing* in nature, meaning that they showed Allison to be conscious of the ways in which interpersonal discrimination occurs. However, unlike Geneva and Sam, Allison did not discuss or demonstrate ways in which she had responded to these acts of bias and discrimination; nor did she involve her students in discussions of equity and challenge them to work as agents of change, as Sam did when he facilitated the class-wide seminar on transgender identity.

Understand the Sociopolitical Context of Schools (Characteristic 5)

“It’s a struggle.”

Recall that I described characteristic five and six as the proverbial forest and trees, respectively, given that characteristic six requires a more intimate, nuanced understanding of classroom students while characteristic five tends to the policies that have played a culpable role in engendering those more immediately experienced conditions. Recall too that though Sam did not offer any instances of characteristic five, he demonstrated a strong orientation to characteristic six—time and again, he related the ways his students endured marginalization because of their school context and culture. Inversely, while Allison mentioned explicitly

national and international policies that impacted her classroom's sociocultural composition, she did not consider the ways in which context and culture impacted the students in her class, another sign of her devotion to neutrality. During our ethnographic interview, Allison shared "that's always a complaint that we have—a lot of times, a higher level course will be more homogeneous. It will be traditionally white, middle- to upper-class, and it's a struggle [to bring in more diversity]." Allison acknowledged ways in which educational policies—here, tracking—impacted the diversity of students in her classes. Later in the interview, Allison discussed the IB program and its focus on pulling in international diversity in lieu of localized diversity. She offered that

What's really cool about the International Baccalaureate program is that there's this pull for students who have a diverse background. I had a student from Vietnam this past year, a student from France—that's part of it. We're not necessarily looking at our community in North Carolina, we're looking at it with more of a global mindset, which is neat.

Here, Allison lauded the IB program's international educative policy which sought to recruit and include international diversity at the expense of localized diversity. Instead, she saw its ability to pull in diverse *international* students as an asset of the program, and in doing so, failed to problematize the ways in which North Carolina's culturally and linguistically diverse student population was not represented in the program.

Understand the Impact of Context and Culture on Students (Characteristic 6)

"I think we get caught up a lot of times in what are we going to do for Black males, or for a Hispanic population, and I kind of bristle at that. I think we simply need to be good at what we're doing, love the content that we're teaching, and...the students will see that, they'll see a safe place, and they'll see a place of discussion and a place of challenge, but also of safely challenging what they don't agree with."

Allison treated her pedagogy, curriculum, and students as neutral entities. For Allison, sound pedagogy functioned as the key to mediating sociocultural differences in her classroom.

Explicit discussions of sociocultural differences made her “bristle” because they underscored a sense of “trying to divide.” “We’re failing our students if we’re not teaching to *all* students,” Allison maintained. While this statement highlighted Allison’s commitment to delivering her content in rigorous ways to all students, it likewise revealed her inability—and unwillingness—to examine how sociocultural and sociopolitical factors shaped classroom realities, particularly those of oft-marginalized students. Throughout the study, Allison returned to this idea of “moving beyond race,” a sort of post-racial discourse (López, 2010) that forwards the idea that the phenomenon of race no longer bears the same societal weight or hegemonic qualities that it has historically. Allison instantiated this belief when she offered “I think a lot of times we’ll look at race, ethnicity, or even gender, and I think we need to move beyond that and just simply I want my students to feel empowered to make a change.” I coded the entirety of her comments as *nascent* in orientation, reflecting her lack of awareness of the histories, struggles, and accomplishments of various groups (e.g., related to race, ethnicity, gender, SES, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) beyond dates and facts. While she recognized inequities that existed, she didn’t examine how those directly impacted the students in her classroom.

Allison’s unease discussing race—and insistence that she did not tailor her instruction to address her students’ sociocultural identities—permeated her case. During an early observation, Allison referenced the “othering” of Rafiki, the baboon in *The Lion King*, as a way to introduce the post-colonial literary lens to students. The inclusion generated conversation around the ways in which Disney movies often portray its characters in racist ways (Lippi-Green, 2012). When, in the post-observation interview, I questioned Allison regarding the intent behind her pedagogical choices, she offered “there wasn’t an awareness...of...a certain audience.” Thus, where she could have opened up discussion around the ways in which the media frequently marginalizes

students belonging to non-dominant groups, instead, Allison insisted she did not craft the lesson with a particular group of students in mind. A week later, Allison taught a lesson on Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1986) during which students examined the role language played in shaping readers' understanding of the oppressive, hegemonic realities women in the novel faced due to their sex and worked in groups to craft their answers. In our post-observation interview, Allison once again maintained that "there wasn't anything where I was trying to bring in different cultures or trying to teach things differently or in a more approachable way because of a culture or ethnicity."

Later in the same exchange, as we continued our discussion of the ways in which students' sociocultural backgrounds impacted instructional practices, Allison ruminated

I almost wonder if I were at Dupont if I would pander to a certain audience, or even at Mountain Valley, I want to teach well and teach what I love in the way that love to do it in an open environment and I'm not thinking "oh, everyone in here is white" or "oh, everyone in here is Black" and maybe that's because that isn't the case [here].

Here, Allison described how her pedagogy might shift depending on her students' backgrounds, referring to Sam's predominantly African American school and Geneva's mostly white school to contrast her school's balanced demographics. The prospect of modifying her instruction was, to Allison, evidence of "pandering," a term suggestive of the derisive quality of this modification. Allison echoed these sentiments—the equalizing powers of "good" instruction and the importance of not catering to any particular group—during the focus group when she shared with Sam and Geneva that "within the four walls [of my classroom], we're all equal and we're all coming at it on a level playing field." Again, Allison's insistence that the landscape of her classroom equalized her students' experiences, thusly creating a certain neutral play field of sorts, rendered her incapable of acknowledging the power schools' context and culture wielded in affirming, dismissing, or ignoring altogether students' multifaceted sociocultural identities. In

this way, Allison struggled to understand the ways in which classroom realities impacted students differently due in part to their sociocultural identities and once again affirmed a color-blind approach to pedagogy (Picower, 2009).

Demonstrate Experiential Knowledge of School and Students' Communities (Characteristic 7)

“Anything that they think is important should be important to you as well.”

Allison's care for her students extended to her willingness to spend her extracurricular time supporting her students in their many activities. While Allison discussed having authentic experiences in her students' and school community, I only collected two pieces of evidence relative to this characteristic. One of these instances involved her organizing an event at a local art museum for her students to see a *Canterbury Tales*-esque play prior to students reading Chaucer's work. Allison purchased the tickets on her own credit card and students paid her back the cost of the ticket. She teased students to come if they “want[ed] to snuggle with [their] boos under the stars.” Allison also frequently attended both school and community events. During the ethnographic interview, Allison shared the joy she gained from attending “the plays, events, anything that's student-led, a sporting event... I had a student do a poetry competition outside of school—it wasn't connected to school—and I went to that. I think it's really valuable.” For Allison, building a sense of classroom community often meant attending and facilitating events outside of the classroom, an undertaking her deeply enjoyed. While Allison sought have a presence in the community, she did not seek ways to connect her classroom with the community, and did not critically reflect on her interactions in the community in order to challenge assumptions, descriptors that align with more advancing spaces on the MTCS.

Create a Classroom Community That Embraces Students (Characteristic 8)

“If I have a student who is homosexual, I want him to see, well, I'm welcoming to you.”

Allison's commitment to cultivating a warm classroom community infused her case. During every lesson I observed, Allison teased, playfully chided, and laughed with her students, all of whom seemed to relish the light-hearted attention. However, as with characteristic three, demonstrating a commitment to students' success, another characteristic for which I coded prolifically, Allison's intent behind her creating a warm classroom environment vacillated between *emerging* and *progressing*, and never moved into the *advancing* and *transformational* descriptors. During one observation, she told her students "I'm going to need everyone to follow @BeowulfTrump like, now," joking about the necessity of following a fictitious Twitter account that married the political ideologies of the presidential candidate with the heroic tropes associates of the archaic Anglo Saxon hero. Her students laughed, then leaned over their phones, frantically searching to find the profile and laughing when they did. During her lively retelling of "The Reeve's Tale," Allison repeated the phrase "swiggity swasted" to highlight the drunken revelry that compelled the text forward. Students' enjoyment in her retelling of the story, a delivery accompanied by a drawing depicting the bed-switching that marks the story, was made evident by their constant laughing and unbroken engagement. When John, one of Allison's students, questioned why Chaucer's wife of Bath spoke so passionately of religion given her penchant for promiscuity, Allison retorted in a voice meant to project nasally erudition, "Well, John, the wife of Bath might say 'why would God have given us the goodies if He didn't want us to use them?'" In many ways, Allison's humor not only promoted a warm classroom community, but also served as vehicle through which to more fully engage students in the curriculum.

Allison frequently incorporated timely supplementary materials intended to pique her students' interest in the day's lesson. Allison shared that "we have to be aware of what's currently going on and what new things are being written and thinking about how to incorporate

that [into our instruction].” This affinity for current texts that “serendipitously” presented themselves was made apparent time and again during the study. During one such example, Allison’s students read Sinead O’Connor’s open letter to Miley Cyrus while studying “The Wife of Bath”; in the letter, O’Connor warns Cyrus about the extreme and rampant sexualization women in the music industry face, and implores her to resist the forces coercing her into exploitation. When I asked Allison her intent behind selecting the open letter to teach in tandem with “The Wife of Bath,” Allison said that “I believe in gender equality but I try to let the students express their, yeah.” Here, Allison hinted without explicitly articulating that she wanted her students to feel comfortable sharing their own experiences, opinions, and stances, but seemed to see this classroom openness as one at odds with her sharing her own beliefs. She expressed a concern for the discussion not to evolve into a “man hating conversation,” a comment she made on a few different occasions during the class-wide discussion of the texts. In the ethnographic interview, Allison offered that “I’m a great agent of change because I’m bringing in things that are relevant or contemporary, or ‘the now,’ and talking about why they’re important.” Interestingly, Allison misinterpreted the meaning behind characteristic four, functioning as an agent of change, to mean actions that in fact affirmed her students’ sense of community, when the characteristic in fact means working in intentional ways to disrupt discriminatory practices.

Allison utilized various strategies to foster a sense of community in her classroom. In discussing her motivations behind showing a video of two males kissing to teach argumentation, Allison admitted a twofold rationale: one, to teach the skill of argumentation, and two, to send an implicit message to her students who did not identify as heterosexual. Allison shared that “if I have a student who is homosexual, I want him to see, well, I’m welcoming to you.” During a lesson on the role of the monster Grendel in *Beowulf* and how monsters are both personal and

contextual entities, students talked in groups about their ideas. Allison said that she “purposefully selected open-ended questions that would allow students to talk about their own experiences, their own perceptions and opinions about what monsters are.” Allison’s affirmation of her students’ experiences and voices allowed her to foster a sense of warmth in her classroom that also helped her students engage in the material. During the focus group, she offered that the content is the foundation for me and the kids steer where we go with that.”

While Allison prolifically demonstrated characteristic eight, she did not seek student feedback to inform her classroom management, engagement, and/or instruction; instead, she relied on her own community-building practices to create this warmth. Thusly, while Allison embodied this characteristic, she demonstrated only teacher-led community-building strategies. This orientation harkened back to her belief in the importance of teacher neutrality, and the value of treating all students equally rather than equitably.

Engage in Critical Reflection to Guide Practice (Characteristic 9)

“I don't know if when I'm planning that unit, I necessarily need to think, "What am I going to do for my Hispanic population?"

Evidence of Allison’s embodiment of characteristic eight contrasted starkly with coded instances of her subscription to characteristic nine. Like characteristic two, affirming students’ cultural assets, engaging in critical reflection was one of the least frequently coded of Allison’s characteristics; her one coded instance revealed only that she did not engage in the process. During the initial interview, I asked Allison the ways in which she modified her curriculum and instruction to account for her students myriad cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Allison responded with

I would rather create a lesson or a unit that is engaging for all students. And in that, I don't know if when I'm planning that unit, I necessarily need to think, "What am I going to do for my Hispanic population?" I need to think of what am I going to do in my

classroom that's going to make it accessible. And then with that, if it's not working for my Hispanic students, then it's not a good unit. It's not a good lesson. I think when we're always asked to focus on a subgroup, it just takes away.

Here, Allison again affirmed the neutrality of her teaching practices and failed to examine the ways in which her own values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions may be transmitted through what and how she taught. She dismissed the necessity of querying her own positionality as well as her students', particularly with regards to how these sociocultural differences could marginalize her students and adversely impact their educative experiences. Because she did not participate in critical self-reflection, Allison missed out on opportunities to incorporate and address students' myriad identities, experiences, and realities; additionally, she did not consider the sociopolitical implications of her pedagogical and curricular choices or ways to change her pedagogy based on these reflections.

Foster Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness (Characteristic 10)

"I don't think I intentionally do it."

Allison's approach to fostering her students' sociopolitical consciousness proved an interesting analysis. While a few teacher-directed opportunities for students to discuss how issues of inequity impacted them and/or their communities were laced throughout her case, Allison seemed wary to word these approaches as such. In fact, she frequently maintained that her lessons, even those that certainly appeared sociopolitically-driven, were mostly intended to spark student-led conversation. This somewhat non-committal approach to characteristic ten first emerged when Allison detailed a previous lesson in which she incorporated Hozier's "Take Me to Church" video, which juxtaposes two men kissing while they're being violently beaten. When I questioned her intent behind the video's inclusion, Allison asserted that "the lesson for that day was simply argumentation. The lesson for the day was not homosexuality, gender identity, or

anything like that.” Allison’s vehemence that her instruction was not underpinned by a desire to generate conversations around the maltreatment of people belonging to non-mainstream sexual orientations often faced surprised me as the video seemed to be a provocative choice, and one that could open up a variety of consequences if a student, parent, or administration took issue with the video’s content. These conversations could happen, however, if students elected to generate them, a student-led descriptor not found on the MTCS. Despite her sometimes provocative approaches to pedagogy, Allison’s firm insistence that her instructional intent was academic in nature never wavered. This was initially difficult for me to understand: Allison was bringing provocative, socioculturally-rich materials into her classroom; however, she did not consciously engage the students in issues of equity and/or sociopolitical consciousness, leaving the realization of these conversations to the students’ discretion. Allison, like the white parent in Sleeter’s (2012) interview, saw multiculturalism as “something from somewhere else, to be brought out and tasted every now and then” (p. 14), a sentiment akin to Banks’s (2004) additive model of multicultural education, an approach that presents the traditional curriculum but adds in selected multicultural supplements and conversations. Because Allison reported her *intent* to be academic in nature, I did not code these moments as examples of characteristic 10.

As we discussed a lesson in which Allison’s students read about Senator Wendy Davis’s eleven hour filibuster undertaken to protect female reproductive rights in 2013, Allison attested that “it’s really important that [the students are] aware of what’s going on and they’re working to change that, or to at least be aware of it when they leave the classroom.” This exchange provided one of the few moments in the study in which Allison both acknowledged her desire to have students engage issues of inequity and, equally important, their responsibility to challenge these

forces. In discussing the ways in which she facilitated her students' sociopolitical consciousness, Allison offered that

I think exposure is necessary. Because when you're not exposed to something, it's scary to you, or you feel uncomfortable talking about it. But the more you're exposed, the more you're empowered to say I agree with this, disagree with this, or this makes me uncomfortable, or I don't know why you're this way, or I really empathize with how you are identifying yourself.

While Allison did not demonstrate an advanced orientation to characteristic 10, she did understand the importance of developing, and occasionally even sought opportunities to foster, her students' sociopolitical consciousness.

In engaging the continuum of the MTCS, an important void emerged between levels 10N and 10E, a gap made evident by Allison's discussing that students could discuss issues of inequity if they elected to engage the issues. Ultimately, I coded these eight instances of student-driven sociopolitical conversations as a *progressing* orientation to characteristic eight, ways in which Allison created a community that embraced students.

Modify Curriculum and Pedagogy to Confront Issues of Equity (Characteristic 11)

"My goal is understanding and appreciating the content, not understanding and appreciated gender equality."

Allison's reverence to canonical literature surfaced numerous times throughout the study; the tensions between her affinity for her content and the demands of culturally responsive teaching perhaps revealed themselves most prominently in the analysis of characteristic 11. Similarly to characteristic 10, had Allison described the intent behind her curricular and pedagogical decisions differently—and demonstrated the appropriate pedagogical moves—her orientation to characteristic 11 would have taken on an entirely different shape. While I coded five instances of the characteristic, four of them were *nascent* in orientation, revealing that Allison did not consider her content as a vehicle to examine issues of equity related to her

students and their communities. During one post-observation interview, Allison again avowed that “my goal is understanding and appreciating the content, not understanding and appreciating gender equality. I think it naturally happens because of the texts that are selected.” Again, the notion of student-driven conversations of equity emerged, this time pertaining explicitly to a modification of the canonical literature. When I asked her why she elected to focus on the wife of Bath’s marginalization as a woman and to incorporate modern materials that contextualized, and modernized, the same realities, Allison offered that “the lesson for the day was ‘The Wife of Bath’ and how she’s presenting gender...not gender identity.” Here, Allison had an opportunity to use her content as a vehicle to examine issues of equity related to students and their communities, but she instead voiced the priority to developing students’ literacy skills. Further, she did not explicitly address these issues with her students. She waited for students to initiate the conversations--and in most cases, they did not. This nascent approach to the characteristic showed that Allison did not see her content as a vehicle through which to examine issues of equity related to her students and their communities and thusly did not model critical analysis of the curriculum for her students or discuss with her students who and what was privileged in the canonical content.

Factors Inhibiting Culturally Responsive Teaching in the British Literature Classroom Curriculum

In addition to understanding the ways in which Allison performed culturally responsive teaching practices and characteristics per an analysis of the MTCS, my analysis revealed that certain factors impeded Allison’s ability and willingness to teach her canonical British literature in culturally responsive ways. These entities included canonical constraints, Allison’s teacher identity, and time limitations, discussions I take up in the following sections.

Curriculum

Allegiance. Throughout the study, Allison expressed a strong affinity for the curriculum. She believed that her “genuine love” for the curriculum helped the students engage with the content: seeing her enjoyment of the curriculum would, Allison believed, plant the seeds of canonical appreciation within her students and provide opportunities for discussions of equity to arise, should students choose to take up the conversations. However, her dedication to the content arguably hindered her willingness and ability to perform culturally responsive teaching. She affirmed her lessons were rooted in the literature, not in the sociopolitical conversations the literature could potentially bring to the forefront. And, while she herself recognized the exclusionary properties of the British literature curriculum, a conversation I take up in the following paragraph, she did not bring the conversation to the forefront of the classroom, relying instead on students’ independent recognition of the curriculum’s homogeneity. For Allison, the content was an entity to be appreciated and revered, not critiqued and deconstructed. Thus, in some ways, Allison was herself an inhibiting factor to performing culturally responsive pedagogies. She preferred to incorporate without fully engaging issues of equity and sociopolitical consciousness. Thus, her allegiance to her content precluded her from considering the ways in which her British literature content embodied a particularized form of curriculum potential, a philosophy that “depends on how a teacher uses the material, which in turn, depends on how he or she interprets what is contained in the material in a classroom context” (Deng, 2011, p. 238), which in turn led to curricular difficulty.

Allison’s desire to teach canonical literature as is, a decision informed by her love of the material, proved another curricular difficulty. Allison readily admitted that her British curriculum presented specific challenges that warranted particularized navigation on her part. Its

age, archaic language, and often inaccessible themes informed Allison's sense of the curriculum, and the realities of teaching it to her students. Its age in particular vexed students—during the ethnographic interview, she noted that the age of its works often made it difficult for her students to access, a tension with which she then had to grapple. Of particular consternation was *The Canterbury Tales*, a series of stories with which Allison's students seemed to struggle perennially. "They just don't get it," she lamented, though she thought the tales were humorous. The redundancy of the course likewise proved a challenge for Allison. She shared that "teaching the same core texts year after year is always frustrating."

Teacher Identity

Good Teaching as Neutral Teaching. The theme of sound pedagogy as universally appropriate, and one that sufficiently equalizes the educative experience for all students, marked Allison's case. On numerous occasions, Allison referred to instructional practices that could have been interpreted as culturally responsive as merely "good teaching" strategies, thereby impacting their coding and my sense-making of her case. During the ethnographic interview, Allison offered that rather than modify her curriculum and pedagogy to attend to what she called a "subgroup" of students, "I would rather create a lesson or a unit that is engaging for all students." Time and again, Allison discussed her pedagogy as "good teaching"—attestations that affirmed a belief in absolute democracy, which assumes that "kids are kids" independent of their cultures (Causey, et al., 2000). This "color-blind" approach (Cochran-Smith, 1995) suggests that a solid pedagogy is generally appropriate for all students (Nieto, 1998). These ideologies fail to account for the institutional, educational, and systemic structures that push minorities "so far behind the starting line [in so many areas of U.S. society] that most of the outcomes will be racially foreordained" (Hacker, 1995, p. 34).

This commitment to neutrality extended to Allison's understanding of how to appropriately present her own opinions, values, and beliefs to her students. Allison shared that

I believe in gender equality but I'm not seeking things that will allow me to bring my personal opinion into class, again, I'm looking at the context, content and text I'm teaching, and how I can best deliver that to my students, not necessarily how can I let them know who I am beyond that.

While Allison welcomed class conversations around sociopolitical issues, particularly if student-generated, she said she would participate, but only to an extent given that "my job isn't necessarily to voice my own opinions." Allison believed that her role as the teacher should take the form of neutral facilitator, one who coaxes contributions without necessarily providing her own. Interestingly, Allison mentioned her support of gender equality, but did not offer the same sentiment with regards to racial equality, which may help explicate her steadfast dedication to color-blind pedagogy.

Allison's articulated positionality contrasted starkly with scholarship that argues that teaching is never neutral (Freire, 1970; Gay, 2010; Kelly & Brandes, 2001; Picower, 2009). Refuting the apolitical nature of teaching, Giroux (1989) described teachers as "transformatory intellectuals," an orientation that requires teachers to "treat students as critical agents; make knowledge problematic; utilize critical and affirming dialogue; and make the case for struggling for a qualitatively better world for all people" (p. 4). Similarly, López (2003) faulted educators for their avoidance of race and racism, and argued that acting as though educational sphere were neutral was disingenuous, even dangerous. Hayes and Juarez (2012) further extended this argument, saying that not acknowledging perpetuates white supremacy. But, because teachers work in political environments that often stifle their voices (see, e.g., Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Waddington, 2011), perhaps this insistence on neutrality is simply a form of self-preservation. Regardless of the constraints placed on an educator, Warnock (1975) cautioned that "unless the

teacher comes out into the open, and says in what direction he believes...he will have failed in his duty as a teacher” (105). This scholarship, taken collectively, reflects Ladson-Billings’ (2006) idea that teaching *must* be culturally responsive in order to be quality instruction, an ideology that contrasts starkly with Allison’s beliefs that good teaching divorces itself from students’ sociocultural backgrounds.

Need to Control. Additionally, Allison expressed that perhaps her need to control the situation impacted her willingness to teach in culturally responsive teaching practices. During one post-observation interview, Allison shared that “I hate group things, I always feel like there’s a looseness to the class I don’t like.” She followed by saying that she tried to overcome her disdain for student collaboration, which she attributed to her sense of losing control, because “the students really enjoy it.” In the ethnographic interview, Allison shared that “I think sometimes I need more control than I’d rather allow my students to have.” This propensity for control emerged during observations and post-observation interviews. During one post-observation interview, Allison discussed the need she felt to dismantle the classroom’s group set up. She shared with me that “I know some teachers do tables all the time, for me I think the kids become really comfortable and we’re not having the conversations we should be as a classroom.” Here, Allison underscored the importance of having content-oriented conversations, which she felt group dynamics sometimes stymied. Despite her self-admitted need to control, Allison still created opportunities for her students to collaborate, but continued to assess the degree to which students stayed on task.

Discomfort. Allison was conscious that sometimes, she elected not to address issues in her classroom because these admonishments made her uneasy. She later stated that “I consider myself to be liberal, but I’m also conservative with some things.” This admission showed an

internalized obstruction Allison encountered in trying to work as an agent of change, characteristic four of the MTCS. Twice during the study, Allison discussed that her weaving in the works of rappers like J. Cole or Jay Z would appear disingenuous given her lack of knowledge about rap music; thusly, even though she believed in part that a significant number of her students would enjoy and benefit from particular conversations around issues that emerged in the songs, such as the criminalization of African Americans, her unfamiliarity with the musical content caused her to shy away from incorporating these materials into her instruction.

Time

Lastly, Allison described the limitations placed on her pedagogy due to time. As we discussed ways in which Allison might incorporate supplementary materials to make the canonical curriculum more accessible to her students, she acknowledged that “it's hard a lot of times when you're trying to reach the end of the year and you know what you need to get through to bring in additional things.” During one post-observation interview discussion of the factors that impacted her willingness and ability to incorporate culturally responsive approaches to instruction, Allison shared that “[when] I’m in the middle of teaching [required works]...I don’t have the time, so that’s part of it.” The tug of time forced Allison to move away from incorporating certain materials, deemed a luxury when other canonical texts needed thorough reading.

Factors Promoting Culturally Responsive Teaching in the British Literature Classroom

While the canonical literature curriculum, her teacher identity, and time limitations all impacted Allison’s ability and willingness to deliver her British literature instruction in culturally responsive ways, still other elements encouraged Allison’s culturally responsive teaching practices, particularly with regards to her creating a warm classroom environment (characteristic

eight) and promoting student success (characteristic three). These facets once again included the curriculum, as well as incorporating supplementary materials.

Curriculum

While in some ways, Allison's allegiance to the curriculum hindered her culturally responsive teaching practices, in other ways, this passion for her content spurred her toward culturally responsive approaches—largely, strategies that helped her promote classroom community, characteristic eight of the MTCS. After observing a lesson that asked students to write Twitter conversations, complete with hashtags, that reflected their understanding of the themes, plot, and characters of *Beowulf*, I asked Allison to share with me the intent behind her lesson. She responded with

I don't want to teach something I don't care about. I want to structure a lesson in a way that makes me excited to teach it...my love of the content comes through and they're excited, across the board year after year they come in excited to talk about it.

Allison believed that if her love of, and passion for, the content was made explicit, her students would also grow to love canonical literature. Thusly did she welcome the inclusion of various supplementary materials that would help mediate the tensions between the canonical materials and her students. Her love of the curriculum resulted in her working to modernize the curriculum in such a way that students could discern the timelessness of certain canonical themes as evidenced by current issues and events. Aside from encouraging her to find ways to honor her students' experiences, this love of the content also helped Allison forge relationships with her students; during one post-observation interview, she shared that "Wanting my love of the content to come through is one way that I strongly connect to students." In these ways, Allison's affinity for the curriculum actually drove her culturally responsive teaching approaches, particularly with regards to characteristic eight.

Another factor driving Allison's commitment to culturally responsive teaching was her IB curriculum. Knowing that an imminent IB exam loomed on the horizon seemed to intensify her commitment to her students' success, characteristic three of the MTCS. From collaborative essay writing to critically analyzing various modalities of text, Allison intentionally sought ways to equip her students for impending exam. Her own level of success in previous years also compelled Allison to make sure her students maintained the same level of academic excellence. However, Allison's dedication to students' success fell more on the emerging levels of the MTCS, as she did not problematize the ways in which certain students are better positioned for success than others.

Supplementary Materials

Frequently, Allison incorporated non-canonical materials into her lessons to help her students engage the canonical literature. This included clips from Jimmy Fallon's late-night show in which Fallon and Justin Timberlake speak only in hashtags; Allison used this clip to prepare students to write tweets related to the previous night's reading of *Beowulf*. She incorporated Sinead O'Connor's open letter to Miley Cyrus to generate conversations about language and gender as students read Chaucer's "Wife of Bath." On more than one occasion, Allison projected famous works of art—the artists and their subjects uniformly white— and asked her students to apply various literary lenses to analyze the text; then, she asked students to shift their analysis to the canonical work at hand. In this way, Allison used non-canonical works to buttress her students' understanding of and engagement with the material. However, it is important to note that almost all of these strategies aligned only with characteristic three, demonstrate a commitment to students' success; she did not forward these activities to sharpen

students' sociopolitical consciousness or to modify her curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity.

“For Me, the Content is Always the Foundation”: Concluding Allison’s Case

Though she self-identified as a culturally responsive teacher, through observations and interviews, I came to understand that Allison’s neutrally-minded, color-blind espousing teaching practices were not aligned with the aims of culturally responsive teaching. Despite these incongruences, Allison’s case tells an important story: her diverse classroom reflected demographics typical of K-12 classrooms, and her sociocultural identity reflected the demographics typical of K-12 teachers. Thus, her story is important to include and share as it reveals that good teaching does not necessarily mean culturally responsive teaching.

Allison’s case instantiated the bifurcated divisions between excellent traditional pedagogy and excellent *culturally responsive* pedagogy. In many regards, such as working to develop and hone her students’ multimodal literacies and differentiating her instructional practices, Allison was a study in expert pedagogy; however, in other ways, she provided a sustained investigation of the ways in which even strong teachers fall short of actively acknowledging and disrupting the hegemonic forces at play in their classrooms. She perceived her research-driven, award-winning pedagogy as “just good teaching”—that is, high quality, rigorous instruction that benefitted all students regardless of their sociocultural backgrounds. Whereas Ladson-Billings (2006) believed that good teaching *had* to be culturally responsive in order to merit the accolade, Allison believed that good teaching did not “pander” to students’ sociocultural backgrounds and, if high enough quality, would mitigate any issues or challenges students experienced either at home or at school. Ultimately, then, the key to untangling Allison’s case involved my learning how to reconcile her being an expert *content* teacher with

her being an emerging *culturally responsive* teacher. These complexities conflated to make Allison's case unique and important, particularly as her case likely reflected an orientation shared by many of the white, monolingual, middle class, heterosexual females who populate the teaching profession.

Allison was attentive and affirming of color-blindness, and saw her pedagogy's isolation from her students' myriad sociocultural backgrounds as an asset of her approach to teaching. Her preference for what she saw as neutral teaching seemed related to her limited understanding of herself as a sociocultural being, and how these experiences and qualities impacted her pedagogical leanings. She struggled to see her classroom as a ripe space for cultivating students' sociopolitical consciousness or her content as a means by which to promote conversations around inequity. Instead, she preferred to rely on students' arbitrarily opening up these conversations, which she then permitted. Despite these shortcomings, Allison demonstrated a masterful ability to create a warm classroom community. She was committed to her students' success, particularly as they worked to prepare for their imminent IB exam.

Allison's love of the curriculum emerged time and again during the study; it proved both a hindrance and an impetus to her ability to teach in culturally responsive ways. On one hand, Allison honored the canonical literature she taught and cultivated pedagogies that would support students' comprehension of the required texts; on the other hand, Allison's love of the content, and her desire to foster this love within her students, compelled her to find ways to engage her students with the material. Allison affirmed the importance of helping her students learn to love the content as she did, and saw her love of the content as a powerful means by which to engage her students with the content and support their academic success.

CHAPTER 7: CROSS CASE ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapters, I presented the stories of Sam, Geneva, and Allison, three British literature teachers in Sykes County. I strove to illuminate their culturally responsive teaching practices, and the degrees to which they embodied and performed the dispositions, knowledge, and skills set forth by the MTCS. In addition to understanding these 11 characteristics, I wanted to surmise those factors that both inhibited and promoted their ability to deliver an exclusionary curriculum in culturally responsive ways. This line of inquiry benefitted from the many forms of data collection I applied, from classroom observations, artifact collection, focus group discussion, and the post-observation interviews conducted with each teacher. As I examined teachers' beliefs and practices from these myriad angles, their nuanced realities surfaced. Cuffaro (1995) wrote that

For too long teachers have been described as faceless constants, not unlike furniture found in the classroom, mechanically enacting and implementing the ideas and plans of others. What was too often neglected or understood in these portraits were the conditions and systems that implicitly and explicitly silenced teachers and thwarted the emergence of imaginative teaching. (p. 9)

Here, I seek to project the voices of these teachers—to provide a platform to discuss the experiences that stymied, supported, and otherwise shaped their culturally responsive teaching practices.

While I have dedicated extensive space to examining each teacher's individual case, now, I shift to a cross case analysis of Sam, Geneva, and Allison's cases. In conducting this analysis, I seek to make sense of the important themes that have transcended the cases (Yin, 2009, 2014). These "general lessons" (Creswell, 2012) allow for an understanding of the ways in which

various factors, including canonicity, interact and, in doing so, impact teachers' practices. Also, I examine themes that elucidate differences across the cases as these disparities provide rich insight into teachers' approaches to culturally responsive teaching. To open this conversation, I begin by discussing the culturally responsive teaching characteristics, as defined by the MTCS, that teachers most commonly performed and embodied, as well as those characteristics most infrequently performed and embodied. Then, I shift to discussing the factors that inhibited and promoted the teachers' willingness and ability to teach in culturally responsive ways, taking care to note the similarities and dissimilarities across cases.

Before shifting to cross case analysis, I pause to highlight the roles each teacher played in the study. Sam and Geneva's practices largely reflected their dedication to, and attempts to perform, culturally responsive instruction in their British literature classrooms. They acknowledged their sociocultural awareness, understood the ways in which context and culture impacted their students, sought to foster their students' sociopolitical consciousness, and modified their curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity. Though they experience hindrances to enacting culturally responsive pedagogies, their intentionality was almost always oriented toward creating more equitable conditions for all students.

But Allison's case presented something of an anomaly. In answering the study's guiding question of "In what ways, if any, are teachers engaging culturally responsive teaching practices in their British literature classroom?", Allison tended to align with the "if any" segment of this query. While Allison proved to be a thoughtful, innovative teacher who used engaging methods to deliver her instruction, post-observation interviews revealed that a desire to teach in culturally responsive ways rarely motivated her instructional choices. Thusly, while she both self-identified and earned multiple community nominations for being a culturally responsive teacher, my

analysis proved this assertion to be largely inaccurate. These incongruences suggest that teachers' and community members' think, like Ladson-Billings' (2006) students, that good teaching and culturally responsive teaching are one in the same. Despite not reflecting the same dedication to culturally responsive teaching that Sam and Geneva share, Allison's case is important one to tell: as a white, middle class, monolingual female, she is representative of the K-12 teaching force (Boser, 2014). Thusly, understanding her practices and motivations likely reveals the instructional preferences and beliefs shared by *many* teachers of British literature across the country. Because of her avoidance of certain culturally responsive practices, Allison is frequently absent from the subsequent discussions I take up around culturally responsive practices, particularly as I speak to those factors that promoted their development and application.

MTCS Cross Case Analysis

To illustrate the myriad ways in which Sam, Geneva, and Allison performed culturally responsive pedagogies in their British literature classrooms, I designed three graphs (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). These graphs allow for a visually compelling understanding of the cross case application of the MTCS. Note that the X-axis presents the MTCS's 11 characteristics; the Y-axis reflects MTCS levels where 1-*nascent*, 2-*emerging*, 3-*progressing*, 4-*advancing*, and 5-*transformational*.

These charts show holistically the frequency with which teachers performed certain characteristics: the larger the bubble, the higher the frequency. For example, with regards to characteristic one, demonstrate social cultural awareness, we see that Sam and Geneva both reflected mostly an *advancing* orientation to the characteristic, while Allison reflected a narrow conception of this characteristic as evidenced by her noticeably smaller bubbles that mostly fell along the *nascent* and *emerging* levels.

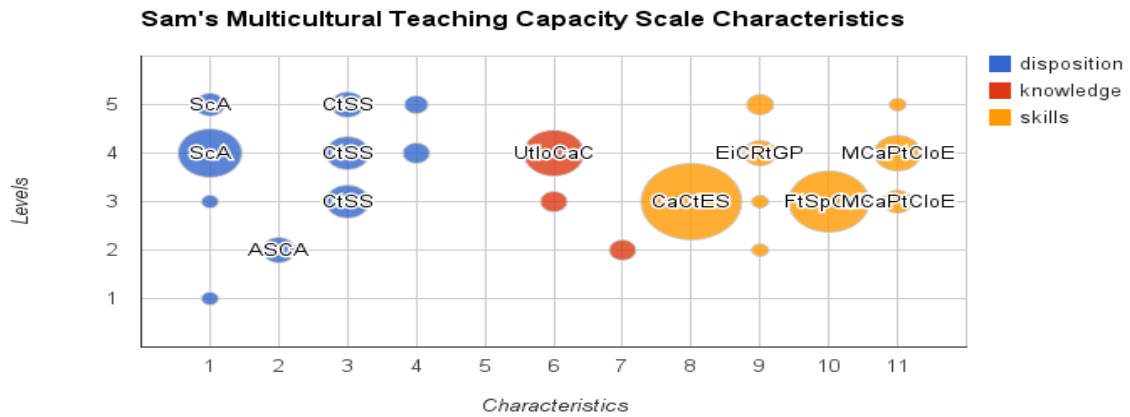


Figure 1. Sam's case.

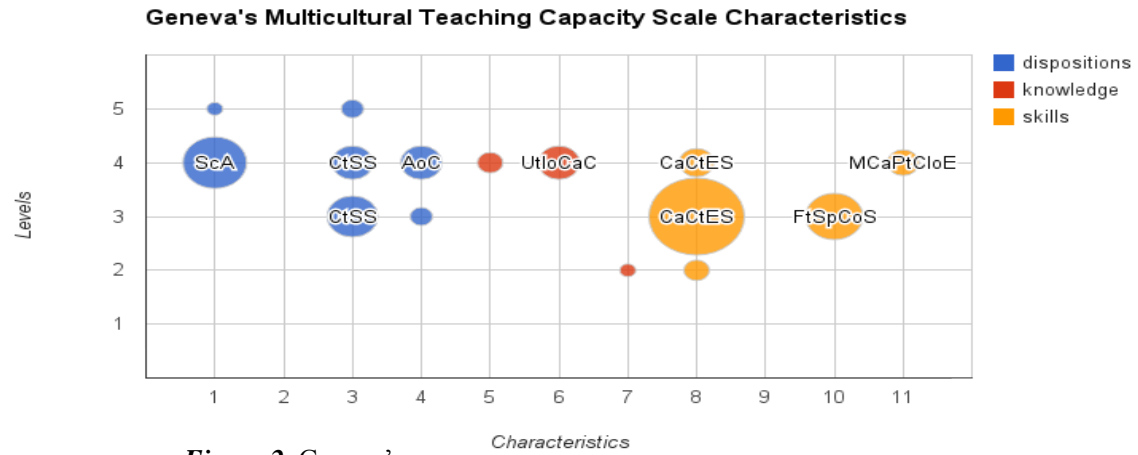


Figure 2. Geneva's case.

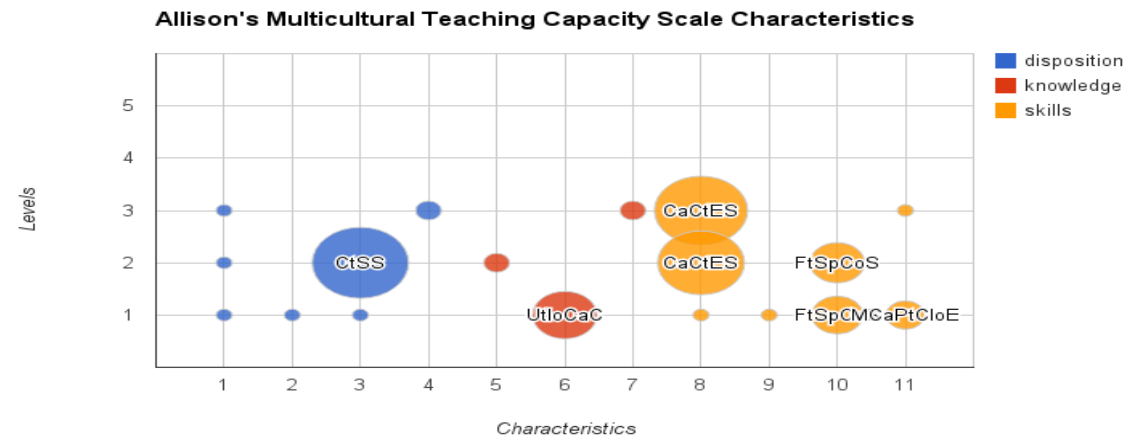


Figure 3. Allison's case.

While this study affirmed that there is no singular definition of, or way to perform, culturally responsive teaching in the canonical literature classroom, cross case analysis revealed that certain characteristics were more frequently and easily performed than others. The Venn diagram below offers a visual understanding of the ways in which the teachers' stories compared and contrasted with one another.

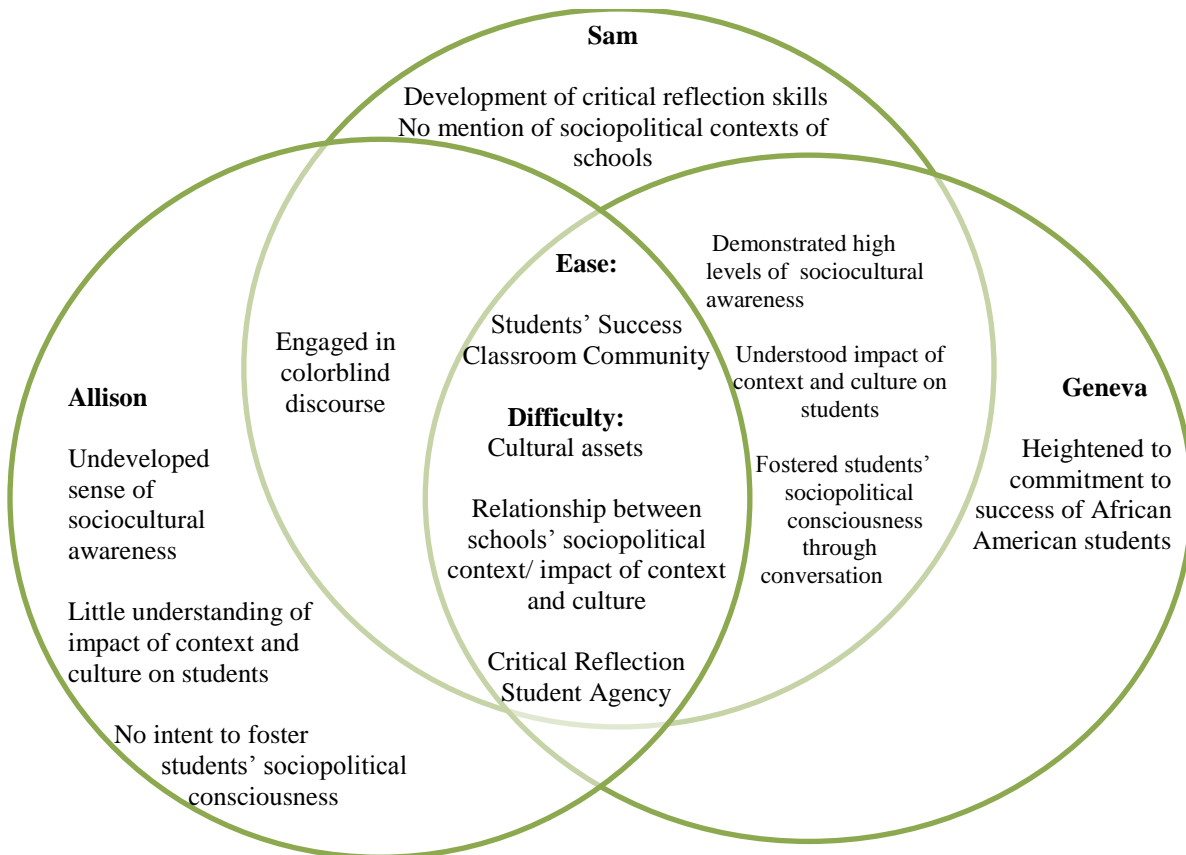


Figure 4. Cross case comparison of MTCS analysis.

The Venn diagram reflects that all three teachers demonstrated a commitment to students' success (characteristic three) and to creating a classroom community that embraced students (characteristic eight). Conversely, teachers uniformly experienced difficulty affirming their students' cultural assets (characteristic two); understanding the relationship between the sociopolitical context of schools (characteristic five) and the impact of culture and context on

students (characteristic six); engaging in critical reflection to guide their practice (characteristic nine); and fostering their students' sociopolitical consciousness (characteristic 10), particularly with regards to moving students toward action-oriented projects. In the subsequent sections, I further expound upon these findings by examining the ways in which the teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices both emulated and contrasted with each other.

Common Successes

Commitment to Student Success (Characteristic 3). Across the cases, teachers expressed a profound desire to see their students succeed, as evidenced by my 66 coded instances total of the characteristic gleaned from both observations and interviews for all three teachers. However, the teachers' commitments were not uniform in their intent. Sam and Geneva instantiated what Antrop-González and Jesús (2014) termed "hard caring," meaning that they "recognize[d] that students of color will not benefit from forms of caring that are not tied to the expectation of academic excellence" (p. 424). For Sam, this commitment was tied into the fact that many of his students had not been challenged academically in the way he believed they should have been. Thusly, he worked to hold his students to high academic expectations, such as writing rigorous college-level essays, doubling the length of their writing assignments, and demanding students to improve and resubmit their work when it was poor quality. Students appreciated the academic "push" Sam provided, as evidenced by the many cards and letters Sam hung on his walls. This dedication to his students' academic success was a commitment on which Sam prided himself, as evidenced by his saying lowering his expectations "wasn't going to happen."

Sam's approach aligned well with Geneva's, who believed that success involved preparing her students for college and career readiness. She demonstrated this commitment

through her literacy skills-based approach to her instruction, an acknowledged shift away from her canonical literature. Because she understood the ways in which school context and culture impacted students belonging to historically marginalized groups, student success was something she particularly wanted for her African American students, which she communicated when she cautioned two African American males in academic peril that “you can’t fail.” Like Sam, Geneva acknowledged that incongruences between schools and students’ sociocultural identities frequently impacted the academic success of students belonging to historically marginalized groups; her particularized concern for her African American students holds with the commitment to student success demonstrated by culturally responsive teachers (see, e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994; Irvine, 2002).

Allison’s commitment to her students took on a slightly different form: her students’ impending IB exam loomed in her mind. Consequently, she was cognizant of using her instructional time fruitfully to ensure her students were equipped the skills necessary to perform well on the test. Student success was a goal Allison wanted for all of her students, and something that she saw as independent from students’ sociopolitical background. ““I will be aware of what you need and meet your needs,” Allison shared, “but if I have a good lesson, then you’re going to push yourself to meet what I’m asking you to do.” Throughout the study, Allison revealed her belief that student success was a goal all students could achieve in her classroom, and that her creation of high quality, engaging lessons was a key impetus to this academic success. However, unlike Sam and Geneva, Allison did not recognize, examine, or seek to push back against factors that might obstruct students’ abilities to meet her expectations; largely, hers was an understanding of student success that tied itself entirely to academic success. Thus while Sam and Geneva’s commitment to student success included focus on supporting their students of

color, a heightened commitment due to their recognition of the disproportionate inequities these students faced, this same focus was absent for Allison, leaving her at the emerging level of the characteristic.

Commitment to Creating a Classroom Community (Characteristic 8). Sam, Geneva, and Allison collectively demonstrated a strong commitment to creating a warm classroom environment that embraced students. I coded this characteristic the most frequently, with 135 instances noted across all three cases. Perhaps this finding is unsurprising: there are few controversial side effects of promoting a warm classroom environment. This finding is corroborated in the literature: Siwatu's (2007) study found that that fostering a sense of classroom community was overwhelmingly the characteristic teachers felt most efficacious performing. All of the teachers in my study expressed the important role relationships played in their classrooms. Of fostering relationships with students, Geneva offered "It's the best part of the job." Among other things, these relationships wielded power: they helped support positive classroom management and helped create an inclusive space in which students felt safe and supported.

Rather than exert an authoritarian approach to classroom discipline, the teachers often relied on their relationships to correct students' undesirable behavior. In response to a student caught cheating on his sonnet recitation during the prior day's lesson, Sam jabbed playfully at his student throughout the lesson; with every quip, the other students laughed wildly, and the offending student sheepishly grinned. When I asked Sam why he elected to laugh the incident off, Sam responded with "It's not the worst thing ever. Let's just move on." This commitment to classroom community also impacted the student's academic success, as evidenced by Sam's acknowledgment that "I can't teach him if he's not here." Geneva frequently turned to her

informational text selection to create a warm classroom environment; consistently, she selected texts based on her students' interests. These intentional choices not only promoted classroom conversation, but also helped engaged her students in the reading of informational texts, a literacy-building activity Geneva saw as an important aspect of readying for students for their post-graduation realities.

Allison incorporated what she termed “serendipitous” modern tie-ins into her instruction. These texts gave her students an opportunity to see their own modern realities reflected in the classroom, and helped to foster classroom conversation that connected the modern texts to the canonical selections at the heart of the day's lesson and connect the students to each other. Allison frequently used students' colloquialisms, such as “boo” and “bae,” asides that almost always made her students laugh.

While all three teachers performed community-building behaviors in their classrooms, it is worth noting that these behaviors almost entirely fell along the *emerging* (student-led efforts) and *progressing* (teacher-led efforts) descriptors. An *advancing* orientation would have required teachers to seek students' input with regards to classroom management, curriculum, and engagement, feedback the teachers did not solicit. Accordingly, I concluded that while teachers performed this characteristic easily, they did not necessarily incorporate their students' perspectives and insights to improve the climate of the classroom.

Shared Struggles

Difficulty of Affirming Students' Cultural Assets (Characteristic 2). Across cases, teachers demonstrated difficulty in affirming their students' cultural assets. While Sam did admire his students' sense of resiliency—that many of his students had overcome dire circumstances awed him—he did not explicitly acknowledge their knowledge, skills, and talents,

or articulate that these presented alternatives to the dominant cultural capital. Geneva, on the other hand, mentioned wanting to affirm her students' cultural backgrounds, but fretted that doing so would earn her the label of "the Black teacher always talking about Black issues." This trepidation perhaps explicates why I did not code any instances of her performing or embodying this characteristic. Though Sam and Geneva believed their students to have cultural capital, they both struggled to find ways to bring out those conversations explicitly affirming students' cultural assets.

While I coded five instances in which Sam affirmed his students' cultural assets, Allison only spoke to the characteristic once—and then, in a *nascent* manner. Allison did not share this same desire to affirm her students' cultural assets. Her desire to perform a color-blinded pedagogy hindered her from understanding the myriad forms and ways in which her students brought cultural knowledge into her classroom. A student, Allison believed, should be seen on an academic level rather than on a cultural level. Again, Allison's belief in neutrality worked against the aims of culturally responsive teaching.

Difficulty of Seeing the Relationship between the Sociopolitical Contexts of Schools (Characteristic 5) and Understanding Impact of Context and Culture on Students

(Characteristic 6). Another interesting cross case finding was the degree to which participants' seemed to understand the relationship between the sociopolitical contexts of schools and the impact of context and culture on students. In separating the two characteristics, Cain (2015) noted that

Whereas...characteristic [five] focuses more broadly on the society, ...characteristic [six] looks more specifically at the impact of cultural and context on students' with a focus on understanding the historical and contemporary role of cultural and cultural difference and their impact on students' school-related experiences and outcomes. (102)

I pause here to once again revisit the forest/tree analogy I offered in previous chapters: given that characteristic five presents the historical, politically-charged realities of schools on a broader, more encompassing scale, it functions as the forest that houses the “trees” of trait six—the localized, and more immediately experienced, realities students face as a result of context and culture.

Across the cases, the participants seemed to experience difficulty understanding how these two entities informed each other. For example, while Sam and Geneva expressed on numerous occasions (n=21 and 8, respectively) the ways in which context and culture marginalized their students of color, I only Geneva acknowledged the ways in which historical factors shaped their students’ realities, something she did three times. Had Sam connected the marginalization his students’ of color faced to the time-honored tradition of segregating students based on socioeconomic status—or, if Geneva had likened her African American students’ experiences at Mountain View to attendant effects of integration, given that the mandate frequently removed African American students from their neighborhood schools and moved them to predominantly white school settings, a displacement that tended to hinder, rather than support, their academic success (see, e.g., Siddle Walker, 1993)— they would have both demonstrated a more developed understanding of the ways in schools’ historical sociopolitical contexts directly impacted their students. Interestingly, Allison acknowledged on occasion (n=2) ways in which schools’ historically implemented policies impacted students, referencing, among other topics, how higher tracked classrooms tended to be filled with white students. In contrast to Sam and Geneva, Allison refuted the notion that context and culture impacted her students at all, further evidence of her devotion to performing a color-blind pedagogy, an insistence she made 10 times, all *nascent* in their orientation. Thus, cross case analysis showed that the teachers

experienced difficulty teasing apart these two characteristics—or tended perhaps to see the forest *or* the trees, a conception that seemed to hinge on their contextual realities and sociocultural identities.

Difficulty of Critical Reflection (Characteristic 9). While the teachers shared an ease demonstrating a commitment to their students’ academic success and creating a warm classroom environment, they likewise experienced difficulties performing certain culturally responsive teaching characteristics. One of these characteristics was characteristic nine, engaging in critical reflection to guide practice. This practice encourages teachers “to ask questions that pertain to one’s construction of individuals from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds” (Howard, 2003, p. 198). Critical reflection deviates from traditional approaches to pedagogical reflection in that it requires teachers to critically analyze their own positionalities and challenge their teaching beliefs and practices. It requires teachers to consider the factors that shape their teaching, and in what ways—and to examine if their actions are oppressive or dehumanizing (Korthagen, 1993; Sockman & Sharma, 2008). Undertaken with fidelity, critical reflection uses teachers’ heightened awareness of self to effect educational changes and, in doing so, creates more equitable learning conditions for students (Carr & Kemmis, 1983; Manouchehri, 2002; Burnett & Lingam, 2007).

Across cases, I coded sparsely for this characteristic. Of the 11 instances I coded, 10 belonged to Sam; the other statement, which was *nascent* in its orientation, belonged to Allison. Of his own volition, Sam utilized critical collegueship (Lord, 1994) as a vehicle to disrupt his deficit ideologies and more fully engage culturally responsive literacy practices. Frequently during the study, Sam solicited my feedback around issues with which he and his students were facing. This invitation for insight emerged most prominently when Sam asked my opinion about

his actions with regards to the “food stamps” incident. After this incident, Sam demonstrated a deeper capacity for critical reflection: the quantity of his critical reflection-related comments increased as well as the levels on which they placed. During the focus group, he noted that “when we started the process and I was like oh yeah, I’m doing these things, and now that we’re going through it and now that I’m reflecting I’m like oh man, there’s so many ways to change and grow.” His thoughtful consideration of my answers and increasingly critically framed comments related to critical reflection showed that critical colleagueship provided a powerful means by which to support his growth as a culturally responsive teacher.

For Geneva, her own sociocultural awareness and contextual realities interacted in such a way that impacted her critical reflection. Frequently, Geneva discussed the extent to which her pedagogical methods were subjected to heightened scrutiny due to her sociocultural identity. While she certainly reflected on her teaching practices in critical ways, Geneva’s intent was not to change her curriculum and pedagogy to ensure more equitable experiences for her students. Even when she told her two African American students they “couldn’t fail,” the attendant effect wasn’t Geneva modifying her pedagogy/curriculum; the focus was instead on providing the students with extra support to ensure their success (characteristic three). The descriptors for characteristic nine did not align with Geneva’s case, a finding I attribute to the fact that many of her students belonged to highly valued socioeconomic status groups while Geneva belonged to a historically marginalized group. I conceptualize this gap in the data analysis as a limitation of the MTCS which, for characteristic nine, seems designed to prompt the critical reflection of teachers belonging to dominant groups, particularly with regards to their teaching students from non-dominant groups.

While Allison reflected on her curricular and pedagogical actions, she did not critically reflect on the intersections between her own positionality and her students' educative experiences. Allison's loyalty to her curriculum, and to preparing her students for their IB exam, took priority in her classroom; consequently, the reflecting she performed pertained more to promoting academic success than disrupting any hegemonic forces at play in her classroom. During our focus group, Allison admitted that she had difficulty engaging in critical reflection. She shared with the group that

When you and I talked about this, I thought more in terms of being a reflective practitioner. In that regard, I still think I fall where I marked myself when we first met—emerging, or progressing. I have an arrow between the two. Looking at this, I'm aware of the choices I'm making when I decide what I'm going to teach and my approach. I don't seek to offend anyone, but I'm also not like, "Bill really likes FIFA; I'm going to use this FIFA article." It's more like, "I'm teaching Wife of Bath. This parallels this Miley Cyrus thing; let's bring that in."

Interestingly, even though Allison admits her critical reflection shortcomings, the example she provided aligned more with characteristic eight, creating a warm classroom community. Thus, it is possible that Allison did not truly understand the processes undergirding critical reflection. Young (2010) offered this foreboding assessment of the consequences of absence of critical reflection: "Unless European Americans seriously analyze and change their cultural biases and ethnic prejudices (toward self and others), they are not likely to be very diligent in helping students to do likewise" (p. 257). The fact that Allison struggled throughout the study to demonstrate critical reflection presents a troubling reality that can perhaps be generalized to understand the difficulties white teachers nation-wide experience performing this characteristic.

Difficulty Fostering Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness (Characteristic 10). Also common across the teachers' cases was an expressed difficulty moving their students toward taking action to challenge sociopolitical issues that impacted students and their communities.

Research corroborates this barrier: Ladson-Billings (2006) warned that fostering students' sociopolitical consciousness often proved to be the element of culturally relevant pedagogy teachers found most difficult to execute. Similarly, Young (2010) found that teachers were only willing to promote their students' academic learning and cultivate their cultural competence, leaving their sociopolitical consciousness undeveloped. Payne and Laughter (2013) hypothesized a twofold explanation of the reasons behind teachers failing to move their students toward action-oriented projects: firstly, teachers may not themselves embody sociopolitical consciousness; secondly, incorporating issues sociopolitical in nature into classroom instruction may seem overwhelming even to teachers who do embody this awareness. While the first segment of this theory describes Allison to a certain extent, it only thinly presents the realities Sam and Geneva encountered, a conversation I pause to take up here.

Both Sam and Geneva demonstrated a developed sense of personal sociopolitical consciousness, as evidenced by the 30 and 18 instances respectively that emerged in the data. In various ways and degrees, they used their classrooms as spaces in which to query sociopolitical issues salient to the students and their communities. Both teachers promoted these discussions through intentionally prompting in-class conversations and consciously selecting informational texts rife with pertinent, relevant issues of equity. Sam was even able to, from time to time, use his canonical literature to promote these conversations, though he admittedly found these discussions difficult to extract from the literature. But moving his students toward action-oriented projects proved a frightening endeavor. He worried aloud what repercussions he would face if he and his students took a public stand against some of the inequitable conditions occurring at Dupont High School. Geneva too expressed a fear of repercussion if her commitment to fostering her students' sociopolitical consciousness became too provocative.

Interestingly, whereas Sam freely engaged class discussions around sociopolitical issues, Geneva's concern started with the depth of the in-class conversations. She fretted that she might be accused of "race baiting" or "talking about Black stuff" if she discussed issues of inequity too frequently. Because they feared generating discord, both teachers fell short of prompting their students to take action against inequities that impacted them, their community, or society. Their lack of attention to developing students' agency meant that their students' sociopolitical consciousness went as far as in-class conversations would allow. Without these action-oriented projects, Geneva and Sam remained situated on the *progressing* descriptor for characteristic 10.

Conversations across the MTCS Domains: *Dispositions, Knowledge, and Skills*

Recall that the MTCS's 11 characteristics are bifurcated into 3 domains: characteristics one through four are classified as dispositions; characteristics five through six are classified as knowledge; and characteristics nine through 11 are classified as skills. The MTCS describes these strands as follows:

Dispositions are the values, attitudes and beliefs that shape how teachers interpret knowledge and apply skills. The next layer is knowledge, which is the information that is used to inform the skills. Skills describe teaching practices and what teachers do inside and outside of the classroom (p. 1).

The findings of this study show that these characteristics often influence each other. For example, in Sam's class, his willingness to open up sociopolitical conversations (characteristic 10—a skill) led to his students' "calling him out" about his privilege, in turn impacting his sociocultural awareness (characteristic one). As such, examining the MTCS in practice seems to reveal a cyclical relationship between these three domains, illustrated in Figure 5.

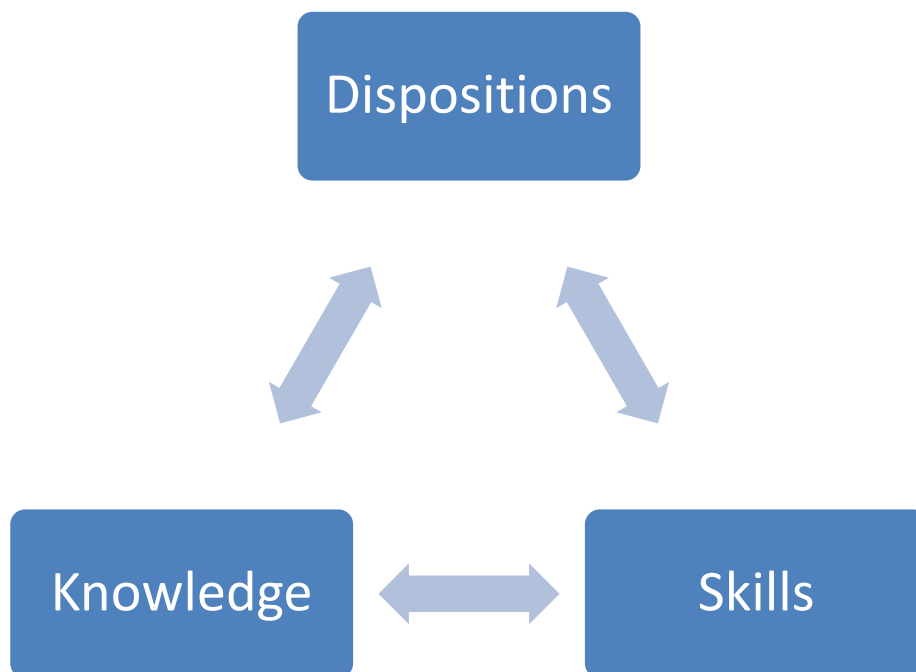


Figure 5. Cyclical nature of the MTCS domains as evidenced from applying the MTCS in practice.

Though all of the MTCS characteristics play a uniquely important role in actualizing the aims of culturally responsive teaching, in examining the data, it seems that the disposition of sociocultural awareness—characteristic one—likely informed many of the other knowledge and skills characteristics. Allison infrequently saw herself as a sociocultural being. Without this depth of understanding, she struggled to understand the impact of context and culture on her students and engage in critical reflection. When she did discuss her commitment to students’ success or demonstrate her ability to create a classroom that embraced students, she did so in ways that were thought to be beneficial for all students, a sign of her preference for a color-blind approach to teaching. Thusly, without this fundamental characteristic—understanding one’s self as a sociocultural being—many of the other characteristics were unlikely to emerge, particularly in *advancing* and *transformational* ways.

Combined, Geneva and Sam totaled over 44 comments that pertained to their sociocultural awareness. This understanding of themselves as sociocultural beings seemed to shape almost every facet of their practice, from the *advancing/transformational* ways they demonstrated a commitment to their students' success, to the commitment they felt to developing their students' sociopolitical consciousness, to their attempts to modify their curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of inequity. Geneva's sociocultural awareness prompted her to find subversive ways to teach in culturally responsive ways—she believed overtly sociopolitical conversations would not be taken well due to its perceived incongruence with the British literature curriculum, and that this critique would lead to her being accused of “race-baiting.” Additionally, her sociocultural awareness prompted her to provide extra support to her African American students. For Sam, his sense of self, coupled with his desire for authentic critical collegueship, stimulated his critical reflection processes, a characteristic classified as a skill. Both teachers' sociocultural awareness seemed to shape their understanding of the ways in which context and culture impacted their students (characteristic six). Findings from this study thusly reveal that culturally responsive teaching characteristics are difficult, if not impossible, to untangle from one another and indeed inform one another.

Teaching Canonical British Literature in Culturally Responsive Ways: Inhibiting Factors

Here, I shift to examining the factors that inhibited the teachers' ability and willingness to teach their canonical British literature in culturally responsive ways. These hindrances include classroom context and teachers' identities, conversations I take up in the following sections.

Classroom Context

Shulman (1987) wrote that the “wisdom of practice” emanates not only from observable classroom behaviors, but also in understanding the intent underlying these pedagogical choices and the context in which teaching occurs. This study, like others (see, e.g., Siwatu, 2011),

revealed context to be a formidable factor that shaped the degree to which teachers felt both able and willing to enact culturally responsive approaches to teaching canonical British literature.

Tangentially related, Smitherman (1986) asserted that “ultimately, *both* Black and white students must be prepared for life in a multilinguistic, transnational world” (p. 219). Yet, across the cases, and with varying degrees of impact, the presence of white students affected teachers’ ability and willingness to broach certain conversations. Sam and Geneva both expressed concern over the punitive fallout that might occur if they facilitated conversations of privilege and inequities with their students; these fears have proved warranted, as documented in the literature (see, e.g., Hayes & Juarez, 2012). While talking about white privilege, Sam worried his one white student would “erupt,” a concern that impacted the depth to which Sam was willing to take the conversation. While Sam experienced this tension only sometimes, for Geneva, mindfulness of her white students’ reactions to any sociopolitical conversations she might have fostered permeated her teaching choices. When discussing sociopolitical issues with her students, Geneva lamented having to “drag it out of them.” Like other teachers (see, e.g., Thomas, 2015), both Sam and Geneva worried about upsetting their white students by discussing race in their literature classrooms.

Like Sam and Geneva, Allison also voiced the role students’ heterogeneity played in her classroom instruction. She felt a need to “be careful because [our school’s demographics] are so split.” But the motivations behind her caution split from Sam and Geneva’s: Allison avoided a deep exploration of critical issues because she did not want to make her white students feel uncomfortable. During the focus group, Allison shared

I’m working with a teacher who’s new to Arena [High School]. He taught at the “Dupont” of Cunningham [city 1.5 hours away from Sykes County]. He came in and wants to say that he’s a white male and it’s his responsibility to be aware of this. I told him because we have more of a split, you have to be careful. Not careful, like don’t talk about it, but for a

15- to 17-year-old, if you're saying, "you're really privileged" and they hear that in every class, they go home and question their self-worth. Being a good teacher, we never seek to do that no matter the cultural identity of the student. So I'm not afraid of any of those conversations, but I have to do it in a very purposeful way.

Here, Allison expressed disapproval for her colleague inviting conversation around critiquing systems of power, seeing these actions as ones that might adversely impact white students' sense of self. Gillborn (2005) warned that "the most dangerous form of 'white supremacy' is not the obvious and extreme fascistic posturing of small neo-nazi groups, but rather the taken-for-granted routine privileging of white interests that goes unremarked in the political mainstream" (p. 485). In this statement specifically, and across her case broadly, Allison's preference for maintaining the sociocultural status quo aligned with unquestioned, deeply ingrained pedagogical practices that viewed "good" teaching as a neutralizing agent that rendered sociocultural nuancing unnecessary.

During the focus group, Allison discussed how the heterogeneity of her classroom impacted the ways in which conversations were broached. She shared that "because it's so blended, we wouldn't have a separate conversation [related to sociocultural identity]; it would be whole-class, and person X bringing this in, person Y bringing this in. It's the same thing, but there isn't this minority-majority shift happening across the board." This comment provided another moment in the study during which Allison seemed to articulate a belief that having a culturally-specific, "separate" conversation was less than ideal. A superior approach, Allison seemed to believe, was creating an affirming climate in which students felt like they could share their own experiences, which is a vastly differently conversational intent than moving students toward sociopolitical consciousness.

Though all three teachers expressed a reticence to broach certain conversations because of the presence of white students, multicultural conversations have proven benefits for white

students as for other students of color (Galda, 1998; Meyer, Pentito, & Hynds, Savage, Hindle, & Sleeter, 2010). These critical conversations serve as powerful vehicles through which to engage and include white students of the systems of power that privilege and oppress people (Glazier & Seo, 2003). In shying away from these exchanges, teachers miss out on invaluable opportunities to center multicultural conversations in their classrooms, and to promote social justice.

Teachers' Identities

Sam and Allison both experienced difficulty culturally responsive pedagogies due to their whiteness. On occasion, Sam expressed a belief that race was removed from a discussion, such as when he cautioned the African American student late to class that she would end up on welfare and food stamps if she did not alter her behavior. Yet, Sam also demonstrated willingness—and a genuine desire—to improve his culturally responsive teaching by learning how to critically reflect. His growth along the MTCS's levels for trait nine revealed his dedication to improving his practice in order to promote more equitable conditions for his students. Allison's whiteness informed her desire to perform a color-blind pedagogy, which inhibited her from acknowledging her own sociocultural identity and the ways in which her privileged positionality impacted her students. Time and again, she voiced a preference for seeing students as academic and not sociocultural beings, believing that quality pedagogy rendered sociocultural recognition unnecessary. Thus, her whiteness precluded her critical reflection, as essential component of performing culturally responsive pedagogy.

While an assortment of factors complicated teachers' ability and willingness to teach in culturally responsive ways in their British literature classrooms, only one teacher expressed compounded strains due to her sociocultural identity: Geneva. The need to "catch" herself when she sensed conversations were becoming too provocative permeated her case. From her

ethnographic interview to her focus group contributions, Geneva's need to self-censor laced her study. She was careful not to present herself in ways that might be perceived as "ghetto" lest she be deemed unprofessional. This looming stereotype weighed heavily on her; to combat it, she felt she needed to be the "model Black teacher." Additionally, she worried that if her goals of equity were communicated too explicitly, her colleagues might disapprove. Wanting to retain their friendship, Geneva admitted she perhaps did not broach conversations with them the way she would if they identified as persons of color. For Geneva, her ability and willingness to engage culturally responsive pedagogies were impacted dramatically by the institutional in which she worked.

Teaching Canonical British Literature in Culturally Responsive Ways: Promoting Factors

While a variety of factors that impacted the extent to which Sam and Geneva felt able and willing to teach their canonical British literature in culturally responsive ways, still other entities buttressed their efforts. These elements included teachers' classroom contextual realities and their teaching identities. Important to note is that Allison is absent from the conversation below as, by and large, she did not deliver her curriculum in culturally responsive ways.

Classroom Context

While students complicated the teachers' ability and willingness to engage certain conversations, they also enabled these practices. In contrast to Geneva, who felt the racial homogeneity of her classroom prevented her from engaging the types of critical conversations she preferred, context actually supported Sam's efforts to relate his content in culturally responsive ways. In his narrative sketch, Sam wrote that

I must admit that I'm lucky enough to teach in a school where many conversations are not off-limits. I think a large part of this freedom is the demographics that I work with. I work with predominately low-income African American students. I can't quite put into words why it's easier to have certain discussions, but it is.

Interestingly, teaching students who almost all identified as persons of color made his culturally responsive teaching practices easier to perform. Sam admitted to feeling a sense of “freedom” to broach controversial topics, and that he felt fortunate to teach in such a context conducive to fostering these conversations. Also worth noting is that though he identified as gay, as a white male, Sam enjoyed a position of power (at least on the surface)— this likely allowed him to engage certain topics in ways Geneva and Allison were not permitted. Though he admitted an inability to explain why teaching at Dupont made these conversations easier to facilitate, his mention of his students’ low socioeconomic statuses, as well as data gleaned throughout his case study, suggest that he very much understood that his students had been both historically and presently marginalized and that his classroom provided an important space for his students to “fight back” against these forces.

Teachers’ Identities

Teachers’ biographies are rife with formative experiences that often, and perhaps without their knowing it, shape teachers’ pedagogies (Britzman, 1986). Biography plays a key role in the actualization of responsive teaching practices (Herrera, 2010). Cross case analysis revealed one that, with regards to Sam and Geneva, biographical experiences played an integral role in preparing teachers to deliver their content in culturally responsive ways. Though their lived realities were, in many ways, contrastive with each other, both of the teachers shared experiences that had dramatically impacted their positionality, and better enabled them to realize culturally responsive teaching practices.

For Sam, growing up a white, middle class male shaped his educative experiences and the ways in which he viewed the world around him. Unknowingly, his parents shaped the high standards Sam extended to his students. It Sam discussed that his parents’ no-nonsense

expectation of college attendance and completion impacted the degree to which he demanded his students' academic excellence. Sam also related that his student teaching internship, during which he learned from a masterful African American teacher, likewise shaped his teaching practices.

While Sam embodied a developing sense of himself as a culturally responsive teacher, it took him leaving his first teaching job at a rural, mostly white school and coming to Dupont for him to truly understand the degree to which he enjoyed privileges due to his sociocultural identity. Transitioning to Dupont, a school at which he became the “minority” in the room first time in his life, proved a transformative biographical experience for Sam. At Dupont, his willingness to engage certain issues, such as white privilege, resulted in his students “calling [him] on it.” Thusly, teaching at Dupont help Sam develop his skills of critical reflection.

Sam also noted that identifying as gay also informed the degree to which he both noticed and attended to instances of marginalization. He believed that this shared experience of othering, though different than his students', allowed him to better “see [their] struggle.” Sam boldly used his sexual orientation to coax his students into examining their own stereotypes, prejudices, and biases. During one observation, he noted that

For some of these kids, I'm probably the only openly gay adult they've been around. To see that I'm cool, I'm funny, I'll help them when I need help—I'm a normal person. You have to work with me, respect me, and we have to all get along here. So for me, maybe it's helping them to realize and break down some barriers that they've learned at home.

Thus, Sam was able to utilize his own marginalization—and humanity— as a means to invite students to deconstruct some of their own beliefs. Here, we see that Sam's relationships with his students were a powerful conduit through which to prompt their own critical reflection.

Geneva's history of intersecting marginalization marked her case. Having spent most of her life as one of the few, if not the only, person of color in her educational contexts, Geneva felt

primed for her work at Mountain Valley High School. Her ability to “speak the language” signified her ability to both successfully and seamlessly move from one Discourse community to another (Gee, 2015). This history led to her admitting to sometimes feeling “more comfortable” in a room of white people. Her sense of being a “double negative” as a Black woman infused her approach to pedagogy: having experienced this prolonged marginalization, she wanted to work in ways that shielded her students from those same experiences.

Also important to Geneva’s case was her sense of motherhood. Her heightened dedication to the success of her African American students exemplified Collins’ (2002) notion of the “other-mother,” a phenomenon in which African American teachers feel compelled to offer a type of communal care which revealed Geneva’s sense of accountability to support all of the children of the Black community. In telling her failing African American students “you could be my son,” Geneva showed motherly concern for her students particular to her African American students. That Geneva was herself a mother to five children likewise shaped her own approaches to culturally responsive teaching.

Describing the links between biographical experiences and social justice-oriented teaching, Kirkland (2008) wrote that “Pain defines social injustice, as passion may define a reaction against it. Without a clear understanding of what is unjust, however, one cannot truly define what is just” (p. 61). During the study, both Geneva and Sam discussed experienced pain due to their sociocultural identities, but both channeled this angst into their pedagogy to help support their students—particularly those who, like them, identified with historically marginalized groups.

Particularizing the Difficulties of Teaching British Literature in Culturally Responsive Ways

Thus far, the realities I have presented apply to any teacher regardless of her content area. But I would be remiss to leave unproblematic the tensions between culturally responsive teaching and canonical British literature given that this study corroborates the scholarship that reveals the ways in which British literature presents nuanced challenges to both its students and the teachers working to deliver the material (Carter, 2006, 2006; Cook & Amatuucci, 2006; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). All of the study's teachers expressed feeling that the curriculum—an assemblage of texts that overwhelmingly forwards only the majoritarian story of whiteness, and in doing so, reifies a tenet of critical race theory—bounded their efforts and abilities to teach in culturally responsive ways. But what accounts for these nuanced hardships? Below, I tease apart the ways in which the British literature curriculum's racial exclusivity, archaic language and themes, and teacher-specific constraints further exacerbated the teachers' ability and willingness to deliver their content in culturally responsive ways.

Racial Restrictions

“Let's face it: dead white guy literature is not appealing to many students. It's not relatable, it's not interesting, and it's just not relevant.” Sam read this line to us at the focus group and, in doing so, revealed a theme that marked his case: a frustration with a curriculum that required him to read entirely white canonical authors to his almost entirely non-white students. This frustration led to his unabashedly stating, “This canon, to me, sucks.” Toward the end of the study, Sam, vexed by the incongruences between the curriculum and his students, began to question the trajectory for British literature in secondary classrooms. He offered

We can recognize that this is this all white canon, it's really hard to teach and to keep it really relevant to our students, we need to make some changes, when you think about doing that will we be heard? Will that change happen?

Sam believed that the curriculum required a transformation in order to be relevant to secondary students, particularly for those who do not identify as European Americans. However, this question was left unanswered; this charge, unfilled.

Geneva also believed that the curriculum's racial exclusivity made culturally responsive teaching difficult. When, after telling me that British literature was the most difficult content she had taught in her 14 year career, I asked Geneva to share with me what she thought accounted for this particular canonical hardship, she quickly responded with "Because they're all white. Were there Black people in Britain writing literature? I'm sure there were, but it's all about the dead white ones." Though contrastive to Sam in sociocultural identity and classroom contextual realities, Geneva echoed restrictions similar to the ones Sam faced: the curriculum simply did not reflect her students' realities. After detailing a teacher-facilitated conversation on the shooting of Trayvon Martin in her African American literature class, I asked Geneva if she felt she could incorporate the same conversation into her British literature course. "Shakespeare is Shakespeare," Geneva told me, shaking her head. "I don't know how you can flip British lit in any other way." Here, Geneva suggested that a certain racial rigidity marked the British literature classroom, one that privileged, even if implicitly, the stories and experiences of whites. Consequently, she did not feel like the curriculum made provisions for non-white perspectives, either by modifying the canonical content or by supplementing materials she believed she could incorporate into the discussion. These racial limitations were unique to the British literature curriculum: for example, in American literature (taught in the junior year in North Carolina) the Sykes County's required reading list included Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Wright's *Black Boy*, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and the poetry of Langston Hughes.

Archaic Language, Inaccessible Themes

But its racial exclusivity was not the only reason the teachers voiced British literature to be a particularly challenging content to teach. Despite their nuanced differences and similarities across biographies, classroom contextual realities, and the culturally responsive teaching practices in general, all three teachers affirmed that British literature was the most difficult content they had delivered. Sam believed that the British literature curriculum was “100% the hardest curriculum I’ve ever taught” due in part because of it being “difficult to understand and break down.” Speaking to the curriculum’s age, Geneva lamented that “It’s almost like British lit stops like 50-60 years ago.” Even Allison, who expressed a devout love of the canon, admitted that “it’s a struggle” to help her students connect with such an old body of literature. She stated that “[Teaching British literature] is tricky because we’re talking about one area, and a lot of times we’re talking about a large chunk of time, but not necessarily a modern chunk of time.” These complaints are warranted: the British canon is itself almost a thousand years older than the American canon, a genesis marked by colonial writings of the 1600s (Baym, 2007). Allison and Sam both complained that students consistently struggled to understand *The Canterbury Tales*, written in the fourteenth century, and that no amount of pedagogical fine-tuning seemed sufficient to engage their students with the content. As they finished up *Beowulf*, students were Sam’s students were relieved to read Shakespeare. But Geneva did not share the sentiment that Shakespeare signaled a welcomed change for students. She shared with me that “Shakespeare gets the [students] upset...’this is crazy, I don’t understand this,’” she echoed. The archaic language frustrated students, and the inaccessible themes often bored them as well. An examination of the Syke’s County required readings (Appendix B) confirmed that these complaints were warranted: the most current title the teachers were required to teach was George

Orwell's (1936) "Shooting an Elephant," published almost eighty years prior to the study. These titles contrasted with those of the American literature curriculum, which required teachers to include modern American poets and teach August Wilson's (1986) play *Fences*.

Sam acknowledged too that teaching British literature well required him to teach history also. He shared that "there's so many symbols in [British literature], and allusions and references to things, you have to preface with them. You're talking about Anglo Saxon culture—they don't get that in American history." Here, Sam referenced the fact that secondary students take history courses on world and American history, two installments that align with the authorship/content of the materials taught in freshmen, sophomore, and junior English courses in North Carolina. Students received little to no instruction on Anglo-Saxon culture and other cultures covered in the British literature curriculum, thereby leaving the British literature teachers responsible for teaching this contextual information, which was essential to fostering students' understanding of the canonical literature.

The curriculum's cultural inaccessibility came out again toward the end of the study when Sam's students read *The Importance of Being Ernest*. Even though Sam saw it as something as a "reward" for the students given the humor laced throughout, Sam admitted that

[The Importance of Being] Ernest is hard to teach to this group of kids because we're talking about a completely different lifestyle. You're talking about rich, white, upper-class people in the Victorian era who live totally opposite lives than the kids we have. Every time I come up to the Victorian era, it's always hard because you're talking about a totally different way of life. Everything is different and the kids don't respond to it as well. The big hats, the tight dresses, the refined society, the proper way of saying things; you have tea at this time, and you run on this schedule—we do activities with that, but it's always hard to get them to remotely understand how life could function that way.

Again, Sam shared the difficulty he faced in trying to help his students access a canonical work so removed from their own lives. The text, aside from its racial exclusivity, is set in Victorian-

era England, a period of time about which many of the students knew little. The characters are also rich, and the students did not understand their leisurely lifestyle. Even after Sam gave them background information on the time period, the students still found the lifestyle odd, and experienced difficulty engaging the material. Thus, the play marginalized students on many fronts, including their race/ethnicity, class, and age.

Teacher-Specific Constraints

All three teachers experienced particular constraints that stymied their ability to teach canonical British literature in culturally responsive ways. Sam, who loathed British literature, admitted to struggling with some of the readings himself. He experienced difficulty trying to modernize a curriculum that “is just so white.” While he wanted to incorporate timely articles of current events that could help engage his students with the canonical material, he admitted that “my struggle is incorporating these informational articles trying to locate them and connect them with text.” Because of the curriculum’s sociocultural inaccessibility, it did not readily lend itself to modern supplementary materials, as evidenced by Sam’s statement that “One of the biggest challenges with Brit lit[erature], if you’re going to find articles that are relevant, that takes some time.” Thus, while Sam wished to modernize his British curriculum, he was not entirely sure how to meaningfully update his content, an uncertainty further exacerbated by the limitations he experienced due to time.

Because of its racial exclusivity, Geneva felt unable to engender sociopolitical/equity-driven conversations in her British literature classroom. Throughout the study, only Geneva discussed the ways in which the curriculum’s racial homogeneity stood at odds with her sociocultural identity; these dichotomies stifled the pedagogical and curricular moves Geneva felt able and willing to make. Geneva admitted to feeling “more protected” to broach certain

conversations with the students in her African American literature course than in her British literature course because the curricular topics seemed to organically extend to timely, sociopolitically-oriented issues. While the content of her African American course naturally generated sociopolitical conversations, her British literature curriculum did not; thusly did Geneva feel that she could not as easily engage certain critical conversations with her students without the fear of punitive pushback. While reflecting on the source behind her increased ability and willingness to perform culturally responsive pedagogies in her African American literature class than in her British literature class, “it really is the curriculum,” Geneva mused during our last post-observation interview.

Allison shared that her ultimate goal was helping her students “understand and appreciat[e] the content.” Allison, like other white teachers (see, e.g., Macaluso, 2013; Martin, 2014), believed her content to be a supremely powerful entity, and that her students would benefit from their exposure to it; she believed too that her students would take up her appreciation of the material if only her pedagogy proved sufficiently intriguing. She became, in essence, a reified extension of the British literature canon. Her aim was to cultivate this canonical love and appreciation within her students; fostering conversations around inequities would turn her classroom into a space that promoted what she perceived to be classroom politicizing. In this way, Allison’s own allegiance to her canonical British literature curriculum inhibited her ability and willingness to actualize culturally responsive teaching practices.

Projecting Multicultural Voices in Canonical Spaces: Three Approaches

Recall that my study relies on critical race theory to understand both the long-standing and unyielding stasis of the British literature curriculum in secondary U.S. schools—which I conceptualize as the majoritarian story of the secondary English classroom. My study, then, functions as a counterstory that reveals the ways in which this exclusionary curriculum can be

taught in culturally affirming, rather than relegating, ways. To that end, I detail below the three different approaches these teachers took to “make multicultural” their British literature curriculum.

Apply Laissez-Faire Multiculturalism: Allison’s Approach

Throughout her study, Allison affirmed the importance of canonical literature in her classroom. Despite her canonical devotion—or maybe *because* of it—she brought in supplementary materials to help support her students’ understanding of and engagement with the material. This additive approach amounted to her inputting multicultural material without restructuring the content (Banks, 1998). She allowed students to engage in conversations of equity and sociopolitical consciousness if they chose to foster these conversations themselves, but did not intentionally prompt these conversations—a sort of laissez-faire, hands-off approach to multicultural teaching.

Allison’s insistence on color-blind approaches to teaching canonical British literature may, without her even realizing it, marginalize her students who belong to non-dominant groups. Her story presents a common reality that sees white teachers failing to acknowledge the oppressive qualities of their curriculum and pedagogy. For example, Carter (2007) wrote of a teacher who, in unpacking concepts of beauty in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 130, “My Mistress’ Eyes,” attempted to problematize whiteness. However, she ultimately fell short, discussing only its hue in relation to other colors rather than its oppressive qualities. Consequently, the two Black girls at the study’s heart were marginalized by both the images in the poem (which excluded depictions of Blackness), as well as the ensuing discussion of defining “whiteness,” a conversation in which the girls felt they could not participate. Because they did not subscribe and adhere to traditional academic literacies, the teacher of two African American female students in

a British literature class perceived them as disengaged, passive, and powerless (Carter, 2006). One student lamented that the teacher seemed to “be basing the class on White people” (p. 50), meaning that both the curriculum and classroom conversations ignored her identity as a Black female. In some ways, Allison’s is a cautionary tale: if teachers do not understand the cultural properties of rhetoric—or how written and oral language both reflects and perpetuates whiteness, its privileges (Feagin, 2013; Leonardo & Grubb, 2013) or the “epistemological racism” (Kubota & Lin, 2009) imbued therein—they are unlikely to understand how best to meet their students’ diverse needs (Kaplan, 1984).

Incorporate Informational and Supplementary Texts: Geneva’s Approach

While Geneva wanted all of her students to learn about cultures different from their own, create more equitable learning conditions for her students, and foster conversations around equity and sociopolitical consciousness, she went about these activities cautiously: she knew from her experience growing up and learning in mostly white schools and institutions that her actions could be perceived as agenda-driven. This understanding led Geneva to seek quieter, more subversive means by which to engage the culturally responsive ends. Incorporating informational texts, such as the multicultural examples of heroes when reading *Beowulf*, provided a safe way for Geneva to broach these conversations. She likewise called on supplementary texts, such as the daily quotes, to create space for multicultural voices. Though she worked to transform her curriculum, her modifications were subtly performed and largely ones that she undertook without her students’ input or assistance as requesting their insight would have required an explicit conversation around the inequities in the curriculum, a concern Geneva did not believe she could voice.

Engage in Critical Analysis With the Students: Sam's Approach

Though Sam admittedly struggled to incorporate informational texts that could modernize and make relevant canonical literature, he successfully provided his students with opportunities to perform counter-narratives removed from the traditional texts. He invited his students to reflect on their own biographical experiences in relation to canonical texts, such as how their own notions of forgiveness shaped their reading of “The Wife of Bath’s Tale.” He provided a safe environment for students to share their own tales of sociocultural othering, such as when the student who identified as bi-racial lamented having to select one box for “race/ethnicity” on the PSAT. Lastly, he opened his classroom up to critical conversations around equity and sociopolitical consciousness, such as when he answered his student’s question about why she had so many substitute teachers since coming to Dupont. That Sam identified as gay seemed to shape his approach to pedagogy. Sam mentioned feeling othered during his own high school career, wondering why the content never reflected the stories and voices of people who shared his own sexual orientation. He noted, though never elaborated about the incidents in great detail, that he and his partner had faced ridicule when out in public. Having intimately experienced marginalization himself, Sam demonstrated an increased awareness of the ways in which students might be oppressed due to their sociocultural identity. These experiences equipped Sam with an awareness to deliver his instruction in culturally responsive ways. Though Sam strove to implement a transformative curriculum (Banks, 1998) that required students to query the curriculum they engaged, he, like Geneva, stopped short of moving his students toward agency, which precluded both teachers' ability to implement a social justice-driven curriculum (Banks, 1998).

I pause here to note that while Sam was an exemplary culturally responsive teacher, in some ways, he rather abandoned his British literature curriculum. As such, one potential way to read this study is that a teacher can either elect to teach in culturally responsive ways or teach canonical British literature—not both. While in some ways this movement away from the given curriculum supports his culturally responsive teaching by providing him opportunities to bring in modern, diverse, and sociopolitically charged texts and conversations, it is important to note that mastery of the content is still essential to teaching in culturally responsive ways. By mastering the content, students experienced authentic student learning that positions them to achieve mainstream success (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Secondly, this mastery grants students access to the culture of power (Delpit, 2006) that the British literature curriculum represents. To increase his capacity for culturally responsive teaching, Sam—and teachers like him—should work to foster critical, sociopolitical conversations *through* rigorous canonical instruction. One should not be abandoned or sacrificed for the other.

Supporting Teachers' Efforts to Become More Culturally Responsive: My Role

While teachers and I often shared materials back and forth—I even created a culturally responsive Google share folder so we could all access materials easily—perhaps the most intriguing aspect of my role as researcher emerged when I taught each teacher's class. During the early stages of phase two of the study, I offered to teach each teacher's class. I initially proposed these lessons as I wanted to honor the participant-observation role I had adopted, and teaching a lesson provided me with an authentic way to immerse myself in the setting. However, as the study continued, all three teachers began to voice struggles they faced in delivering their lessons in culturally responsive ways. Thus, as I drafted the lessons, I sought to show teachers ways they might mediate the challenges they articulated, which included using canonical texts to as a “way in” to discussing particular topics, and engaging students in critical conversations. These lessons

were undertaken to understand the degree to which the participants, students and I could, together, push the canonical limits.

In addition to modeling ways they might address their articulated challenges to culturally responsive teaching, I wanted to ensure that the participants felt comfortable with my activities. Accordingly, I designed lessons based on what I observed to be the driving forces behind the teacher's pedagogy. For example, one of the goals in my lesson for Allison's class was to engage students in a conversation around how language was manipulated to shape meaning, a question that guided almost all of her in-class discussions. This contrasted somewhat with the lesson I designed for Sam's students, which I crafted to affirm his penchant for class-wide dialogism. I also wanted to model activities that I didn't quite see in data collection and, in doing so, help teachers see the pedagogical and curricular possibilities their curriculum afforded. Lastly, I asked teachers if there was a particular text they wanted me to incorporate. Geneva asked if I would design an activity that centralized *Othello*, since she wanted the students to engage the text (it was not a Sykes County required reading); Sam asked for me to show him ways to bring in culturally responsive informational texts, an inclusion he struggled to perform. Wanting to increase her students' exposure to Shakespeare, Allison asked that I incorporate excerpts from several of his plays; I settled on *Othello*, *Richard III*, and *Macbeth*, as each play housed a character who experienced othering due to race, disability, and gender identity, respectively.

In the following sections, I detail one sample lesson, the MTCS characteristics I intentionally touched on, ways I used canonical texts to foster a conversation around equity, and my efforts to engage students in critical conversations. I pause to note that the approaches I applied would suffice the needs of all teachers—that is, ones who privilege the canon, like

Allison, but also those who wish to position their students to talk back to the canonical curriculum, like Geneva and Sam.

A Sample Lesson: *Frankenstein* and Othering

Though my three lessons varied somewhat, common to all was the notion of othering, and an incorporation of both informational texts and counterstories. For the sake of space and redundancy, I will focus on the lesson I taught for Sam's students. I opened the lesson with an article (Bloom, 2005) that detailed Jane Elliott's experiment in the 1960s during which she separated her students based on blue/brown eyes and afforded each group certain privileges and powers over the non-dominant group. Prior to reading, I encouraged students to survey the texts and write a one sentence prediction of the article, a pre-reading strategy proven to help develop their reading comprehension (Fisher & Frey, 2004). We used this strategy as a way to open up a conversation about othering—the forces behind it, the historical entrenchment of it, and the attendant effects of it. We shifted to discussing one form of the phenomenon—racial othering—which I situated in the literature by discussing with students the history of the word and notion of “race” and how the socially constructed idea was used to justify injustices from slavery to segregation (see, e.g. Smedley, 1998). Wanting the students to see that othering could, and often does, taken on more covert forms, I projected a map of their voting district, and read excerpts from a national report that found that the district in which Dupont was located in to be one of the most gerrymandered in the country. Feeling confident that the students knew how to discuss othering, we moved into a conversation around *Frankenstein* (Shelley, 1996). At this juncture, I gave students various excerpts from the texts to that reflected the various ways in which the creature was othered. We queried, for example, the creature's “monstrous” appearance and his rudimentary, but developing, language skills. Following our conversation of the text, we

examined the core reading list for Sykes County—the one the students were currently following, though many did not realize such a list existed, much less that they were complying with it. I challenged them to examine the list and make explicit the ways in which othering could manifest in something as seemingly apolitical like a reading list. They quickly ascertained that the authors were all white, and almost entirely male. Lastly, students worked in teams to create Venn diagrams that compared/contrasted the types of othering made apparent throughout all the materials we engaged that day. I invited students to tweet me if they wanted to extend the conversation, offer a related experience/article, or just give me feedback on the lesson. Several students took me up on the offer, and we talked about the lesson for a few days after.

These numerous approaches to unpacking the notion of othering were intentionally implemented on my part to demonstrate for teachers the ways in which they could develop their students' sociopolitical consciousness, particularly as they teach canonical British literature, thereby allowing teachers to modify their curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity. Foundational to my lesson was an intent to function as an agent of change—I hoped that, by modeling an equity-driven lesson that raised students' and teachers' awareness of issues of the inequities the British literature curriculum endorsed, I would better position them to participate in the critiquing of the lists they were required to read.

Focus on Analysis of a Canonical Text to Engage Particular Topics

In teaching all three teachers' classes, I attempted to model ways teachers could select and teach modern, salient materials that allow students to more fully engage the canonical curriculum. I selected one topic—othering—but used several different text types and pulled from various time periods, from Elliot's experiment to marginalizing educational, and voting policies, to deepen the conversation. With all three lessons, I intentionally married seemingly unrelated

conversations on othering with British canonical literature because I wanted to show that possibilities exist for opening up equity/sociopolitical consciousness dialogue even when teaching such exclusionary curriculum—that in fact, the exclusionary properties of the curriculum opened up equity-driven conversations. In collecting these texts, I strove to show the teachers that they could modernize the canonical literature, but do so in a critically-minded way that fostered students' sociopolitical consciousness. My moves were consciously undertaken to modify a curriculum I saw as inequitable and oppressive, an intent I shared with each teacher during our post-observation interview.

Helping Teachers Help Students Engage in Critical Conversations

While teaching my lessons on othering, I experienced firsthand the contextual constraints the teachers experienced. Unquestionably, my experience engaging Sam's students was the easiest. As I observed with Sam, the students were ready, willing, and *excited* to participate in conversations of equity and sociopolitical consciousness. However, in both Geneva and Allison's classes, both populated with far more white students, I had a more difficult time garnering answers to my questions. In both classes, handful of students readily engaged the conversations; however, some of the students clearly were uninterested. While teaching Allison's class, one student, who had just completed an activity I created that asked students to examine Donald Trump's othering rhetoric when he called Mexican immigrants "rapists and murderers," high-fived a friend and issued an affirming "TRUMP!" In Geneva's class, I experienced what she described as the need "to drag it out of them." Few students seemed wholly engaged in the activities, all of which centered on the various forms of othering in *Othello*. Upon reading a line from the play that suggested Othello wasn't truly Black, given his many accomplishments, one African American student asked, "what does that even mean, 'you're not being Black'"? The

question, like several of my own, went unanswered. Thus, while I wanted to provide support to the teachers by helping their students learn to engage difficult conversations about inequity and sociopolitical consciousness, I fell short of this goal. While the conversation went smoothly in Sam's class, it stalled somewhat in Geneva and Allison's classrooms. This experience affirmed a cross case finding I surmised while analyzing the three cases: that contextual realities, such as the heterogeneity/homogeneity of students' sociocultural backgrounds, offered certain affordances and constraints with regards to the types of complex issues broached.

Cross Case Discussion

Cross case analysis illuminated several points of convergence as well as important matters of divergence. To begin, the collective inquiry revealed that Allison was, in many ways, a very different teacher than Sam and Geneva. Yet, despite her split from Sam and Geneva's culturally responsive approaches, Allison story remains critical to this cross case analysis. Hers is perhaps the story of *many* white teachers, and reveals the realities many British literature teachers and students encounter and negotiate across the country. In telling her story, the incongruences between good teaching and good culturally responsive teaching emerged; sharing her story, then, allows for an interrogation into the ways in which even good teachers do not teach in equity-driven ways.

In examining teachers' data with regards to the MTCS, certain characteristics emerged as more readily, and perhaps more easily, performed and embodied. Sam, Geneva, and Allison revealed a shared commitment to fostering their students' academic success. However, in recognizing the hegemonic conditions which they faced, only Sam and Geneva expressed a heightened desire to see their students of color generally, and their African American students particularly, succeed. For Allison, success held more traditional notions of performing well in the

course as well as on the impending IB exam. All of the teachers demonstrated an overwhelming ability to create a warm classroom environment, which they promoted through relationships with the students, humor, and selecting curricular materials the students would enjoy reading. However, they did not seek or use student feedback to improve classroom management, engagement, or the curriculum.

The teachers experienced difficulty performing certain acts of culturally responsive teaching. Affirming their students' cultural assets was, for all teachers, something infrequently done. While Sam affirmed these assets, he sometimes framed these comments by opening with the hardships students faced rather than focusing on their strengths. Geneva wished to affirm her students' cultural assets, but feared doing so would cause people to critique her for always bring up "Black issues." Allison preferred not to view her students as cultural beings at all, making affirming their cultural assets all but impossible.

The teachers infrequently mentioned the ways in which the sociopolitical contexts of schools shaped their realities. Only Sam and Geneva discussed the ways in which context and culture marginalized their students; for her part, Allison consistently dismissed these hegemonic forces, believing that her sound pedagogy sufficiently equalized students' educative experiences and outcomes. Thusly, analysis revealed that the teachers did not uniformly make connections between how the historical roles and broadly implemented policies of schools directly impacted their own students.

Critical reflection proved to be another characteristic with which the teachers struggled to perform. For Sam, who demonstrated growth along the MTCS during the study, critical reflection was a difficult process that he initially resisted. Though she showed a great deal of sociocultural awareness, Geneva did not share any evidence of critical reflection, though this

may be attributed to the MTCS's description of the characteristic as one geared more toward white teachers of culturally diverse students. Perhaps because she viewed her classroom and her practice as neutral entities, Allison did not critically reflect on her practice. Uniformly, teachers found it difficult to foster their students' sociopolitical consciousness. While Sam and Geneva generated conversations around sociopolitical issues, they stopped short of having their students take action to improve the conditions about which they read, fearing punitive backlash if they did. Allison, on the other hand, did not intentionally seek to foster these conversations at all, but expressed an openness to the discussion if the discussion arose.

Certain factors positively impacted the Sam and Geneva's ability and willingness to teach in culturally responsive ways. Across their cases, the teachers expressed that their classroom contextual realities and their teaching identities inhibited their culturally responsive approaches to teaching. For example, the presence of dissenting white students caused Sam and Geneva to shy away from certain conversations. Both teachers fretted that their actions could result in punitive fallout, a cognizance that prevented their broaching controversial matters.

Interestingly, these same factors—their classroom contextual realities and their teaching identities—likewise promoted Geneva and Sam's culturally responsive approaches to teaching. That the majority of Sam's students belonged to historically marginalized groups allowed them to engage topics he would have, if in another school, left untouched. Aware of the tensions between her predominantly white school and her position as an African American female, Geneva turned to informational texts to bring up issues of equity and sociopolitical consciousness. Geneva used her own sociocultural identity to help support the success of her African American students. For both Sam and Geneva, identifying with historically marginalized

groups proved a powerful sociocultural membership that compelled them to more empathically, and readily, engage their historically marginalized students in the canonical conversation.

Lastly, cross case analysis revealed that the notion of “canonical hardships” is nuanced in ways the literature to date does not fully acknowledge. The study revealed that the British literature curriculum presents unique curricular boundaries, including racial rigidity, archaic language and inaccessible themes, and teacher-specific constraints. Lastly, I detailed the ways I used my role as participant-observer to help the teachers’ work as culturally responsive teachers of British literature by creating activities that synergized canonical literature with a variety of equity/sociopolitically-driven texts.

Who’s the “Best”?

As the cross case analysis chapter closes, the reader may wonder: who’s the “best” and most culturally responsive teacher in this study? The data tells us, by the prolifically coded instances of his MTCS characteristics, that the answer is Sam. But I offer this answer with the caveat that contextual realities play a vital role in his ability and willingness to teach in culturally responsive ways—Sam even admitted that he was “lucky” to teach in an environment in which equity and sociopolitically-driven discussions are celebrated. Sam intentionally, and unabashedly, brought critical conversations around social and educational inequity to the forefront of his classroom. Yet, he sometimes sacrificed his instructional rigor, devoting entire class periods to allowing the students to share their stories of oppression and marginalization.

Geneva expressed a heightened desire to support her African American students. She wished to have conversations similar to the ones Sam facilitated with his students but, bound by her sociocultural identity and setting, could not. Thusly, Geneva’s case allows for an insight into

the ways contextual realities—an entity for which the MTCS does not account—profoundly impact the pedagogical and curricular moves teachers feel able to perform.

While Sam and Geneva emerged as the study’s most culturally responsive teachers, Allison, on the other hand, favored a “good teaching is good for everyone” approach that deeply shaped how her instruction—even when seemingly culturally responsive in nature—was interpreted. Allison’s students engaged in rigorous conversations and activities centered around the British literature curriculum. In this way, her commitment to student learning, a tenet of culturally responsive teaching, was undeniable. Yet, the way she talked about her approach revealed her allegiance to color-blind pedagogy and the seeming apolitical nature she believed it (rightfully) underscored.

Like all teachers, Sam, Geneva, and Allison demonstrated an array of strengths and weaknesses with regards to their culturally responsive instruction. A “best” teacher scenario would perhaps meld together the strengths of *all* of these teachers: rigorous British literature instruction (Allison) intentionally undertaken to support the achievement of marginalized students (Geneva) and to open up critical, sociopolitically-oriented conversations (Sam). This teacher might find, and incorporate, canonical counterstories—both those written by British authors and the students themselves—to honor the experiential knowledge of those persons the canon largely dismisses. In these ways, a teacher who is both equity-minded and instructionally rigorous would best actualize the goals of culturally responsive teaching.

Implications and Further Considerations

The previous sections detailed the most prominent commonalities and differences between Geneva, Sam, and Allison’s commitments and approaches to culturally responsive teaching in their canonical British literature classrooms. Salient themes included a shared ease

demonstrating a commitment to students' success and creating a classroom community that embraced students; additionally, it revealed the difficulty of affirming students' cultural assets; understanding the relationship between the sociopolitical context of schools and the impact of context and culture on students; engaging in critical reflection to guide practice; and moving students toward action-oriented sociopolitical work. Affordances and constraints, such as classroom contextual realities and teaching identities, emerged as critical factors that impacted teachers' ability and willingness to teach in culturally affirming ways. In this section, I relay the implications for these findings, tending specifically to secondary English teachers and teacher education. I then offer ideas for future research that holds the potential to further elucidate the tensions between homogenous curriculum and culturally responsive pedagogies.

Implications for Secondary Teachers

The findings of this study, and others before it, elucidate the difficulties teachers face in performing culturally responsive pedagogies in their canonical British literature classrooms. Yet, its racially exclusionary curriculum means that it embodies a particularized form of curriculum potential (Deng, 2011) for teachers willing to engage their students in a query of curriculum's marginalizing properties; thus, the conflicting missions of culturally responsive teaching and British literature perhaps make the English IV classroom the *best* and most incendiary space in which to combat educational inequity and sharpen students' critical consciousness. But, if left unexplored, this curriculum potential withers and literary hegemony is left intact.

Recall that the literature review revealed common methods used to teach British literature to secondary students; these included text-centered, cinematic, interdisciplinary, performance-based, and culturally responsive approaches. However, with regards to culturally responsive approaches, the majority of the articles spoke to creating a classroom community; discussed

infrequently were approaches that developed students' sociopolitical consciousness and/or modified curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity. Below, I offer alternative approaches to delivering canonical British literature in culturally responsive ways: some illuminated through the study participants' practices and some that emerged after reflecting together on these practices. These approaches have been intentionally designed to capitalize on the curricular potential the subject affords.

A Transformative Approach

Canonical Counterstorytelling. One way to deliver a culturally responsive British literature curriculum is to find—and teach—canonical counterstories. This might involve reading Equiano's slave narrative, or reading Behn's (1648) *Oroonoko*, the story of an African prince sold into slavery, believed by some to be first novel ever written (Carey-Webb, 2001). Updike's (2001) *Claudius and Gertrude*, a prequel to *Hamlet* told from Gertrude's vantage point, provides another means by which to incorporate often silenced canonical voices. Woolf's (1957) *A Room of One's Own* provides another supplementary material that would allow a British literature teacher to incorporate a female perspective; her story of Shakespeare's hypothetical sister Judith contextualizes the plight and challenges a brilliant, ambitious woman would have faced in Renaissance England. Teachers may also use electronic resources available from the Britain's International Slavery Museum (2015) to better contextualize the stories—and oppressions—the curriculum leaves out. These curricular approaches help to open up important conversations that might otherwise remain silenced and likewise provide teachers with a way to modify their curriculum to confront issues of equity.

Cultural Criticism. Kumashiro (2004) wrote that the “the ‘classics’ are not inherently oppressive: They can be useful in an anti-oppressive lesson if teachers ask questions about the

ways they reinforce the privilege of only certain experiences and perspectives” (p. 75). Though the texts housed within the British canon comprise the subject’s formal curriculum and prove challenging to teachers and students alike, perhaps the subject’s symbolic curriculum (Gay, 1995) presents the greatest challenge of teaching these canonical pieces. Teachers, perhaps unwittingly, endorse a “hidden curriculum” (Giroux, 2001) that espouses and affirms the voices, experiences, and values of Europeans when they teach these works (Asante, 1999; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Yet, they may not even realize the hegemonic qualities of these curricular choices and pedagogies (see, e.g., Carter, 2006, 2007). However, when its texts are taught intentionally, the canonical British literature classroom morphs into a prime space in which to engage secondary English students in a discussion of the ways in which policies and practices may marginalize and privilege certain students. By presenting the required curriculum as an on-going dialogue (Applebee, 1996), students who are otherwise positioned on the canon’s peripheral are brought into the canonical conversation. To bring this inquiry, students could examine the CCSS, and then read more about its Appendix B, a set of recommended texts criticized for its privileging of white, male, heterosexual voices (Schieble, 2014). In this way, students become critical consumers of required reading curricula by (re)conceptualizing these lists as elements of their content that merit scrutiny and critique. Of this cultural criticism approach to teaching secondary literature, O’Neill (1993) wrote that,

Culturally critical reading practices have the potential to construct critical readers as opposed to responsive readers. In one sense, it can be argued that responsive readers are prisoners of the text, while critical readers have the option to resist the text and to take up alternative, even oppositional, reading positions. (p. 24)

Thus, British literature teachers should position their students to critically engage these required lists as politically charged, ideologically imbued documents so that honor the experiences and voices of some groups at the expense of others.

I pause to note that classroom conversations should not limit themselves to acknowledging oppression and finding ways to modify the curriculum to promote inclusion. To be truly transformative, conversations in the secondary British literature classroom should also involve engaging students in discussions of whiteness, and the ways in which literature curriculum embodies and perpetuates hegemony under the guise of greatness (Morrison, 1992). In this way, white students are provided with a way in to the conversation (Glazier & Seo, 2005).

Deconstruction and Reconstruction. Building on their understanding as literature curricula as cultural, political, and ideological documents, students should be invited to work alongside teachers to deconstruct and reconstruct the curriculum in such a way that makes provisions for multicultural and diverse voices and experiences (Banks, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2006). This transformative approach to multicultural education moves students away from additive and celebratory notions of multiculturalism and instead positions them to engage with both the curriculum and society in more critical, emancipatory ways (Banks, 1998). By inviting students to join in an ongoing dialogue around the ways in which the required British literature curriculum both marginalizes and privileges the voices and experiences of dominant groups, students learn discipline-specific ways to disrupt literary (and societal) hegemony, and work to create new realities. To actualize the transformative multicultural approach to British literature, students could research current issues of corruption in relation to those documented in the British literature course, such as child labor during the Romantic era, an assignment Sam's students completed during the study; or, like Geneva's students, they could examine multimodal informational texts to better understand sociopolitical issues impacting their community and society, such as the graph reflecting the incarceration rate disparities between Blacks and other racial groups. They might investigate instances of othering observed in the media, their

classrooms, and canonical literature, a conversation I fostered when I taught Sam, Geneva, and Allison's students. These activities all provide a means for British literature students to investigate, and revitalize, their exclusionary required reading list.

The Social Action Approach

In the British literature classroom, students from an assortment of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds would undoubtedly benefit from learning about the canon's history and present status, a conversation I introduce above and explore in more detail below. But, in order to actualize a social action approach to their British literature curriculum (Banks, 1998), they should then apply this newfound knowledge to galvanize changes in both their classroom as well as the world around them. While I noted above ways in which Sam, Geneva, and I worked to transform the curriculum, we all fell short of positioning students to *take action against* these inequities in order to move into social action approach to their curriculum. Some of this hesitation stemmed from a sense of uncertainty around how to support students' sociopolitically-driven actions. Such extensions might include, for example, encouraging students to write to administration in their school districts, offering a critique of their homogeneous reading list and the othering it represents and perpetuates. In this class letter, students could offer their own reading list—one that they have researched and compiled as a collective during their transformative phase of their modification of the curriculum. Scrutinizing their curriculum, generating a revitalized, transformed curriculum, and reaching out to promote social change sees students performing a social action-driven British literature curriculum. Under this model, students are empowered to work as agents of change, foster their sociopolitical consciousness, and modify their curriculum and pedagogy for equity.

Engage Critical Reflection Processes

This study revealed that critical reflection was an action infrequently undertaken, and that a myriad of factors, including lack of sociocultural awareness (Allison) and contextual realities (Geneva), stymied this process. But critical reflection is a crucial element to performing culturally responsive pedagogies (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2003). Thus, the question emerges: how can in-service teachers find opportunities to engage in this important, if difficult, aspect of their teaching? One possible way is through professional development. The teachers' engagement with the MTCS helped coax their thinking around their culturally responsive teaching practices; through my weekly observations and interviews, they continued to revisit these characteristics throughout the study. At the study's culminating focus group, all teachers reported that their participation in the study helped them to think more critically about their practice. It stands to reason, then, that providing teachers with sustained opportunities to engage with a self-assessment tool such as the MTCS will help promote their critical reflection processes.

Implications for Teacher Education

In the previous section, I discussed ways in which secondary teachers, students, and policy makers can work to support culturally responsive instruction in the British literature classroom. In this section, I shift my discussion to exploring the ways in which teacher educators can prepare teachers and teacher candidates for this very important work.

Disbanding the Curriculum

Given the research conducted by my canonical forebears (see, e.g., Carter, 2006, 2007; Cook & Amatuucci, 2006) and the findings this study offers, I believe that we—here, I include researchers, secondary teachers, policy makers, and students—would do well to disband the canonical British literature curriculum. While I understand and appreciate the literary value of

many of these treasured titles, perhaps it is time to move away from a model that has changed very little in over a hundred years, despite the radically different and diverse backgrounds U.S. secondary students now reflect. To that end, I offer a charge to leaders in the field to use their platforms to stimulate conversations around disbanding this hegemonic and unyielding curriculum. I intend to lead this charge. Yet, as a pedagogical realist, I understand that change is slow, and not necessarily guaranteed. Accordingly, while we offer our dissent and seek to promote curricular change, we should equip our teachers and teacher candidates with the tools necessary to relate the canonical curriculum in culturally responsive ways.

Developing Dispositions

Dispositions, or deeply ingrained values and beliefs, have been shown to guide pre-service teachers' (PSTs') behavior in certain contexts (Villegas, 2007) and often make themselves clear through actions (or inactions) toward students (Diez, 2007). Dispositions are very difficult to change (Davila, 2011; Santoro & Allard, 2006; Zeichner, 1999) and, when left unexamined, can have dire effects on K-12 students (Grant, 1991; Lee, 2007; Sleeter, 2012). Hall (2005) elaborated that, "Despite the types and amounts of knowledge that teachers may hold, it is their beliefs that are more likely to dictate their actions in the classroom" (p. 405). In order to reshape their feeling toward multiculturalism, PSTs must first understand the relationship of these feelings with their dispositions toward learning to teach (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1995). Here, I offer ideas for querying these dispositions and, in doing so, positioning teachers and teacher candidates to teach in more intentionally culturally responsive ways, beliefs and behaviors they will (hopefully) extend to their own students.

Supporting Critical Reflection

Self-Assessment. To encourage PSTs to query their dispositions, teacher educators must introduce these conversations into their classrooms, a critical first step given that many PSTs may not even know they subscribe to marginalizing beliefs and behaviors (Davila, 2011; McIntyre, 2002). In order to foster discussion around students' propensity and readiness for culturally responsive teaching, teacher educators may ask their students to self-assess by completing Cain's (2015) MTCS, or other tools such as the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy and Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy Belief scales (Siwatu, 2006). Siwatu (2007) suggested that teacher educators encourage PSTs to focus on those elements of culturally responsive teaching with which they felt least efficacious in order to help support their growth as culturally responsive educators. These interventions should be sustained throughout the class—and throughout the teacher education program—to sufficiently nourish students' growth. To extend their understanding and demonstrate their growth, teacher and teacher candidates would do well to then develop lessons and reflections that promote and demonstrate their growth along the continuum of the selected characteristics.

Through Modeling. This study, like others before it (see, e.g., Davila, 2011; Glazier, Boyd, Hughes, Able, & Mallous, 2012; Howard, 2003), shows that critical reflection is an arduous process. Perhaps some of this difficulty stems from the fact that teachers need (more) opportunities to practice this reflection in their teacher education coursework. Thus, teacher educators must consider ways in which to support their pre-service teachers as they work to develop the ability to critically examine their positionality. Modeling has proven itself a powerful entity capable of cajoling pre-service teachers into considering, and re-orienting, their dispositions (Conklin, 2008). One of the most transformative ways a teacher might model this

critical reflection is through the act of witnessing their whiteness (Tochluk, 2010). This work requires teacher educators to explicitly address their recognition of the privileges they enjoy as a result of their sociocultural identity. Additionally, they should discuss ways in which they question their own deeply ingrained beliefs and values to ensure they are not unintentionally marginalizing students. Demonstrating public vulnerability is no easy feat, to be sure, but is likely an essential element of helping pre-service teachers cultivate the ability to critically reflect on their own pedagogical actions.

Through Critical Colleagueship. Critical colleagueship (Lord, 1994), a relationship that allows for teachers to engage in critical conversations of their culturally responsive teaching practices, including a critique of self as well as others, rather than having conversations only related to surface-level teaching issues (Glazier, Boyd, Hughes, Able, & Mallous, 2012), also holds transformative promise. In teacher education courses, PSTs might engage these conversations in class, through journaling and responding to each other, or a myriad of other formats. As critical colleagues, PSTs should challenge and support each other's work to progress their social justice orientations.

A Layered Approach to Developing Students' Sociopolitical Consciousness

The traditional approach to preparing students for teacher candidacy involves learning the art of writing a lesson plan (Britzman, 2003). But, without undergoing meaningful training during their teacher education coursework, teachers will likely not develop the skills—or the self-efficacy—to foster their own students' sociopolitical consciousness, particularly with regards to encouraging them to design and complete action-oriented projects. To combat this ineffectuality, teacher educators might consider a layered approach to lesson planning that involves pushing teacher and teacher candidates to develop their own sociopolitical

consciousness. This multi-layered approach to developing students' sociopolitical consciousness might entail designing a "traditional" lesson tied to a canonical text; incorporating an informational and/or multicultural supplementary text to transform the curriculum to account for diverse voices and to satisfy the CCSS; and a third layer in which students synthesize and *do* something with this newfound information. Teachers and teacher candidates could create these multi-layered lessons while engaging in coursework, a community-oriented approach to instruction that will likely position them to better understand the communities they are currently, or will be, serving (Barnes, 2016). Teacher educators should facilitate class-wide discussion around these layers of sociopolitical consciousness, and suggest ways to link sociopolitical consciousness to canonical literature, so all involved can benefit from the exposure to multiple, sustained approaches to developing sociopolitical consciousness. Activities such as those described above may be classified as efficacy building interventions (Siwatu, 2007) that ultimately help teachers and teacher candidates feel more confident in their ability to perform culturally responsive teaching practices.

Additional Considerations for Teaching Canonical British Literature in Culturally Responsive Ways

My study is one that seeks to understand and relate the myriad realities, constraints, and successes teachers experience in trying to deliver their content in culturally responsive ways. Here, I have presented ideas for addressing the challenges that emerged in the cross case analysis of Sam, Geneva, and Allison's stories. But is it worth noting that these stories—indeed, *all* teachers' stories—are shaped heavily by their context, biography, and students. Thusly, what I have offered here are generalized possibilities for pushing back against the articulated cross case challenges. But, even with its successfully performed theoretical replication (Yin, 2013), I would be remiss to imagine that my study presents a uniformly experienced understanding of the

tensions between canonicity and culturally responsive teaching. What it does attempt to do, however, is present the stories of three unique, complex, passionate teachers, and the fascinating ways in which canonicity and their positionalities complicated and complimented each other. So, while Sam, Geneva, and Allison's cases are not meant to stand for *the* stories of the canonical British literature classroom, they act as three important and insightful inquiries into the phenomena under investigation.

Directions for Future Research

Like Stake (2006) predicted, my collective case study both answered and raised questions related to the teaching of culturally responsive teaching in exclusionary canonical spaces. To that end, I conclude my inquiry by offering suggestions for future scholarship around these seemingly dichotomous entities.

Research on the MTCS

My use of the MTCS provided rich data, and allowed for a nuanced exploration into the ways and extent to which teachers worked in culturally responsive ways when exclusionary curriculum factored into their realities. Though I used it primarily for observation and analysis purposes, the tool wields great potential for prompting growth among both secondary teachers and teacher education students. Future research might examine the role of the tool in these settings. For example, research might study how a professional learning community, English department, or even entire school uses the tool at the beginning of the year, and then works intentionally to move toward more advanced levels. Though the tool recommends that its users focus on one to three characteristics in order to develop more culturally responsive practices, my findings reveal the cyclical nature of these characteristics, and the difficulty produced by trying to isolate them. As such, teacher educators would do well to examine the tool with their students,

and explicitly attend to the relationship between the three domains, as students begin to consider the ways in which they might develop their characteristics. Teacher educators should encourage students to think carefully about how they might best attend to developing their dispositions, a division that seems to dramatically shape the culturally responsive characteristics teachers embody and perform. By its very nature, these iterative experiences throughout the course—and, ideally, throughout teacher education training—would prompt teachers and teacher candidates to critically reflect on their practices.

Research on Students' Experiences

Because mine is an intentional focus on telling the stories of British literature teachers and the realities, challenges, and successes of their performing culturally responsive pedagogies in exclusionary curricular spaces, noticeably absent from this study are the voices of British literature students. However, future research should attend to how these dichotomies impact students' experiences in the British literature classroom. This research could examine, for example, the nuanced ways in which the curriculum impacts students belonging to non-dominant groups, but should likewise probe how white students engage with and are impacted by the content.

Research on Canonical Pedagogy

As discussed in the implications sections, stakeholders in English education—from teacher educators, teacher candidates, to secondary English teachers—all stand to gain considerable insights when the curriculum's history and current state are treated as rich topics to be studied and critiqued (O'Neill, 1993). This means examining current required reading selections, the many studies of secondary literature curriculum throughout the subject's history, and the scholarship around both homogenous and multicultural reading lists, among other salient

entities. But this critical investigation should not end there—secondary students should be positioned to query the same entities. This foundational understanding of the British literature curriculum allows a means for teachers and students to collaboratively revitalize the curriculum so that it becomes more meaningful to the students' lives (Beach & Myers, 2001) and projects a more inclusive chorus of voices and experiences, a transformative approach to multicultural teaching (Banks, 1998) and a critical element of culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1992). Scholars would do well to document these generative practices— What forms do they take? What benefits do they afford? What resistances do they create?—and note their effects on students' ability to discuss and navigate oppressive, institutional systems of power.

Research on Cultivating Intent

Arguably one of the most important discussions this study brings to the forefront of the research on culturally responsive teaching is the role of intentionality when performing equity pedagogies. Thusly, future research should examine best practices around cultivating teachers' consciously undertaking culturally responsive teaching approaches. This work might encourage teacher and teacher candidates to select characteristics of the MTCS (or another multicultural self-assessment tool) on which to focus, then follow the ways in which teacher educators support their students' growth as they strive to progress on the continuum. Creating spaces for teachers and teacher candidates to intentionally develop a more advanced placement on the MTCS continuum provides a way for teacher educators to differentiate their instruction so that teacher candidates maximize and personalize their growth as multicultural teachers. Again, scholarship should document the practices that most effectively help move teachers and teacher candidates toward intentionally modifying their practice to teaching in more culturally responsive, socially just ways.

In 1974, Applebee asked stakeholders in the field how students belonging to marginalized communities would find a place within the unapologetically narrow secondary curriculum. This study offers an answer to his query by exploring the potential for broadening the rigid British literature canon in order to bring students on its peripheral into the canonical conversation. It rejects culturally responsive canonical teaching as an oxymoronic coupling by showing that teachers need not favor one approach or the other. By exploring the realities, challenges, and successes of culturally responsive canonical teaching, this work makes the case for intentionally undertaken teacher preparation that positions teachers and teacher candidates to deliver their own canonical content in equity-minded ways—and in doing so, help their secondary students find a place, and a voice, in the canonical classroom.

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION TIMELINE

Procedures
Phase 1 (August 2015)
<p>Solicited community nominations from contacts in the field (See Appendix C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacted community nominated teachers via email (See Appendix D) • Interviewed community nominated, self-identifying culturally responsive teachers of British literature (See Appendix F) • Began Researcher's Log
Phase 2 (August 2015- December 2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observed participants' classrooms on weekly, rotating basis (See Appendix A) • Used Culturally Responsive Instructional Observation Protocol (CRIOP—see Appendix G) • Collected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Documents: teaching materials and assignments b. Artifacts: classroom walls, desk spacing, etc. • Conducted Weekly Post-Observation Interviews (n=36, 12 for each participant; see Appendix H) • Continued writing in Researcher's Log
Phase 3 (December 2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collected Participants' Narrative Sketches (See Appendix I) • Conducted Focus Group (see Appendix J)

APPENDIX B: BRITISH LITERATURE CURRICULUM (ENGLISH IV)—SYKES COUNTY

Text Type	Literature			Informational Text
Common Core	Stories	Drama	Poetry	Literary Nonfiction
Descriptor (pg 57 CCSS)	“Includes the subgenres of adventure stories, historical fiction, mysteries, myths, science fiction, realistic fiction, allegories, parodies, satire, and graphic novels”	“Includes one-act and multi-act plays, both in written form and on film”	“Includes the subgenres of narrative poems, lyrical poems, free verse poems, sonnets, odes, ballads, and epics”	“Includes the subgenres of exposition, argument, and functional text in the form of personal essays, speeches, opinion pieces, essays about art or literature, biographies, memoirs, journalism, and historical, scientific, technical, or economic accounts (including digital sources) written for a broad audience”
Core Titles	<p>Arthurian Legends</p> <p><i>1984</i> (1090) George Orwell</p> <p>Or</p> <p><i>Brave New World</i> (870) Aldous Huxley</p> <p>Dickens</p> <p>One additional novel of choice that represents the text complexity of 11-CCR</p>	<p><i>Macbeth</i> or <i>Hamlet</i> William Shakespeare</p> <p>Include a play (in part or whole) from Shaw or Wilde</p>	<p>Selections from <i>Beowulf</i> <i>Canterbury Tales</i></p> <p>Selections from the following periods: Renaissance Romantic Victorian Modern</p>	<p>Choose at least three</p> <p><i>A Vindication from the Rights of Women</i> <i>The Journal of Dorothy Wordsworth</i> <i>Shakespeare’s Sister</i> “Be Ye Men of Valor” “Shooting an Elephant” “Meditation 17”</p> <p>Work with your social studies department to determine seminal U.S. documents that would support the standards in both English and social studies courses.</p>

APPENDIX C: SOLICITATION OF NOMINATIONS

I am a former Sykes County Public Schools teacher; currently, I am conducting a research study at UNC-Chapel Hill wherein I examine the best practices of culturally relevant teachers of British literature. To that end, I am seeking community nominations from principals, teachers, literacy coaches and other stakeholders in the field for those teachers of English IV (British literature) who are exemplars of this teaching style. Selected teachers should

- 1) *cultivate and privilege caring relationships with students,*
- 2) *reflect high expectations for students so that they authentically learn and engage with material,*
- 3) *utilize students' cultures as a vehicle through which to improve their academic achievement and validate their lived experiences, and*
- 4) *challenge students to identify issues and sources of inequity and work to combat them.*

If you know of a teacher who demonstrates these qualities, I ask that you respond to this email with the participant's name, email address, and a few sentences explaining why this teacher is an exemplary culturally relevant teacher of British literature. I will then reach out to nominated teachers in an effort to recruit them to the study.

Thank you for your help.

Best,

Jeanne Bissonnette

APPENDIX D: INITIAL CONTACT OF NOMINEES

I am a former Sykes County English teacher and am currently conducting a research study at UNC-Chapel Hill wherein I examine the best practices of culturally relevant teachers of British literature. You have been nominated as being an exemplary teacher of your curriculum. This means that you

- 1) *cultivate and privilege caring relationships between teachers and students,*
- 2) *reflect high expectations for students so that they authentically learn and engage with material*
- 3) *utilize students' cultures as a vehicle through which to improve their academic achievement and validate their lived experiences, and*
- 4) *challenge students to identify issues and sources of inequity and work to combat them.*

Because you have been identified as being one such teacher, I invite you to participate in my study. This study has two phases; you do **not** have to participate in both stages. All collected data will be de-identified.

Stage 1: Participating in a biographical interview wherein you share your own background as well as your perceptions of culturally relevant teaching. This interview will likely last an hour. By participating, you are self-identifying as a culturally relevant teacher of British literature. In preparation for our interview, I ask that you **bring 3 biographical objects** that reflect your beliefs about culturally relevant teaching. These items may, for example, conjure a particular story related to your teaching that you feel demonstrates your commitment to teaching in culturally responsive ways. An item may highlight your own personal definition of the phrase, or perhaps highlight a pivotal moment in your teaching career that prompted you to reevaluate and modify your practices to improve your cultural responsiveness. These objects may take the form of a picture, a card, a trinket, a trophy, an email, or any number of other possibilities. Objects may also reflect aspects salient to your own biography, particularly if you believe these items help explain your work as a culturally relevant teacher. It may be helpful for you to think of these items as “metaphors of the self” (Olney, 1972). As you select your biographical objects, consider the stories, values, and beliefs these artifacts represent, and how they help contextualize your work as a culturally relevant teacher of British literature.

During our interview, I will ask you to engage with the **Multicultural Teacher Capacity Scale (MTCS)**. This tool is a self-assessment designed to help you understand your positioning on the continuum of culturally responsive teaching. The tool invites you to position yourself on 5 progressive levels: *nascent*, *emerging*, *progressing*, *advancing*, and *transformational*. As you work through the assessment, I will ask you to write down examples that help substantiate your answers.

Stage 2: If selected for stage 2 of the study, I will ask to visit your classroom on a rotating basis (i.e., every Monday) from August-November in order to collect data that helps me understand the ways in which you engage culturally relevant teaching in your British literature classroom. You may select the days/times of our observations. Pending each observation, we will meet briefly to debrief the lesson, during which time I will ask questions to gain insight into your teaching practices.

In early December, after classroom observations are complete, all participants will engage in a focus group session. During this time, we will work together to understand what shifts, forms, and challenges we have collectively experienced in teaching British literature in culturally relevant ways. Prior to this session, I will invite you to craft your own narrative of culturally relevant teaching, which we will share and discuss at that time.

I see my role in this study as one of participant-observer, which means that as a former teacher of British literature in Sykes County—and one who identifies as culturally responsive—I will engage with you as we work together to unpack the nuances of this phenomenon. To that end, I will share any resources, answer any questions, co-teach, model lessons, and share my own experiences as are applicable and requested. To secure your confidence, I will ask you to check my data to ensure I have accurately portrayed your intended meaning; I will also share my finalized study with you.

If you are interested in either of the stages of this study, I ask that you respond to this email with a time and a place you are willing to meet. Stage 1 of the study, the initial interview, will likely take 1.5 hours.

I believe this matter is an important one and that together, we can consider ways by which to improve the educational experiences for all students. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Jeanne Bissonnette

APPENDIX E: CLARIFYING MULTICULTURAL: THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE MULTICULTURAL TEACHER CAPACITY SCALE (IRB 14-2404)

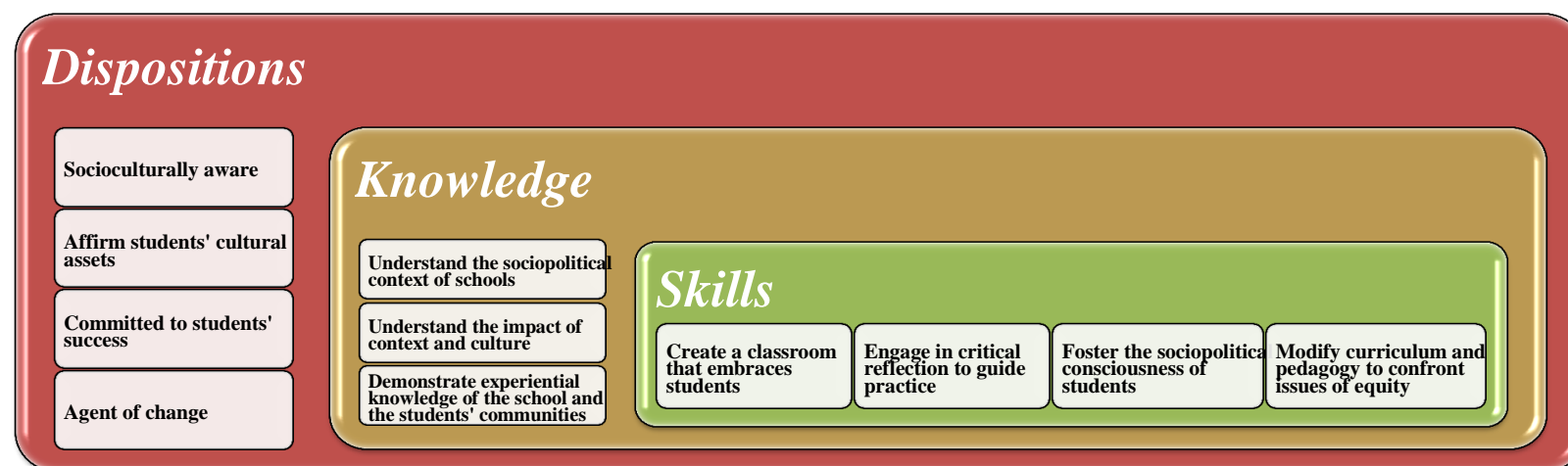
Jessie Montana Cain, PhD | University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill | jcain@live.unc.edu

****REVIEW ONLY****

Background: Although multicultural is a common term used in education, it is often used in inconsistent and superficial ways. In this study, multicultural education refers to a school-based reform movement and a multicultural teacher is one who has the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to promote educational equity in their classrooms, schools, and ultimately society. Acknowledging that teachers are not simply multicultural or not, multicultural teacher capacity describes the *extent* to which teachers are multicultural.

Description: The *Multicultural Teacher Capacity Scale* (MTCS) is a self-assessment tool designed to capture the extent to which teachers are multicultural as outlined by the included characteristics. Teachers reflect on the 11 multicultural characteristics as they are described along a continuum of levels. The MTCS is designed for **formative** use to better understand where teachers fall on the continuum and to then seek ways to promote growth. As depicted in the model below, multicultural teacher capacity is organized into **three domains: dispositions, knowledge, and skills**. Dispositions are the values, attitudes, and beliefs that shape how teachers interpret knowledge and apply skills. The next layer is knowledge, which is the information that is used to inform the skills. Skills describe teaching practices and what teachers do inside and outside of the classroom. Domains are the organizing categories and within each is a set of characteristics. Each characteristic is described along a continuum of **five levels: nascent, emerging, progressing, advancing, and transformational**. The goal is for everyone to find a place on the continuum. At the nascent level, teachers have not yet acquired the disposition, knowledge, or skill. At the emerging level, the teachers are developing an awareness, which then becomes acknowledgement at the progressing level. Social action begins at the advancing level and is intentional and sustained at the transformational level. The ultimate goal is for teachers to be intentionally engaged in social action that leads to long-lasting changes in their classrooms and beyond. By reflecting on their multicultural characteristics, teachers develop an awareness of their current level and the subsequent level present areas to work toward. This tool has implications for teacher education programs, teacher educators, teachers, and administrators who are committed to educational equity.

Instructions: To identify their respective levels, teachers **review each characteristic** and reflect on the descriptors **beginning with nascent** and continuing to the subsequent level until they reach a point where they do not meet the criteria listed. Levels are cumulative. As such, each descriptor under the levels must be met in order to progress to the subsequent level. It can be overwhelming to focus on 11 characteristics, therefore after reflecting on each characteristic **emphasis should be placed on 1-3 at a time**.



Characteristics	Nascent	Emerging	Progressing	Advancing	Transformational
1. Are Socioculturally Aware <i>Multicultural teachers understand the sociopolitical* context that shapes their identity and experiences.</i> <i>(*Sociopolitical refers to the laws, regulations, policies, practices, traditions, ideologies, and beliefs)</i>	<p>I have not yet examined factors such as my race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, language, geographic location, etc.</p> <p>I do not yet understand how my culture (or values, thoughts, actions, experiences and beliefs) are deeply influenced by factors such as my race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, language, etc.</p>	<p>I examine how factors such as my race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, language, geographic location, etc. influence how I experience world.</p> <p>I understand how my culture (or values, traditions, thoughts, actions, experiences and beliefs) are deeply influenced by factors such as my race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexual orientation, language, etc.</p>	<p>I recognize that the United States is a stratified society and that some experiences and identities are valued more and therefore privileged over others.</p> <p>I recognize that my values, thoughts, beliefs, and actions are not neutral but instead are influenced by the social and political context.</p>	<p>I am aware of my identity and experiences in relation to others and can articulate ways in which I have been privileged or marginalized based on my identification with those factors.</p> <p>I examine how my identity and experiences shape my perspective and recognize that my perspective (i.e., how I understand situations, how I define good, etc.) is neither universal or “right,” but cultural and contextual.</p> <p>I have a community where I can discuss and challenge issues of identity, experiences, and perspectives.</p>	<p>I critically examine my thoughts, beliefs, and actions to identify biases and limitations.</p> <p>I constantly challenge myself to be aware of and to understand situations from multiple perspectives and points of view (e.g., definitions of parent involvement).</p> <p>I constantly engage in critical conversations with a community where we discuss and challenge issues of identity, experiences, and perspectives.</p>
2. Affirm students' cultural assets <i>Multicultural teachers recognize students' cultural capital and the need to access dominant cultural capital to navigate inequitable systems.</i>	<p>I do not yet understand that all students have cultural capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, and talents) that is valuable in the classroom.</p> <p>I do not yet seek ways to identify the cultural capital that all of my students bring.</p>	<p>I understand that all students have cultural capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, and talents) that is valuable in the classroom.</p> <p>I intentionally seek ways to identify the cultural capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, and talents) that all of my students bring.</p>	<p>I understand that there is a dominant cultural capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, and talents) that my students are expected to acquire in order to navigate society that may differ from their own.</p> <p>I create opportunities for all students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and talents in the classroom, school, or community.</p>	<p>While I understand that my students have cultural capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, and talents), I also understand that all cultural capital is not valued equally in society.</p> <p>I am able to identify the capital (i.e., knowledge, skills, and talents) needed to navigate society (e.g., curriculum standards, Standard American English, computer literacy, etc.).</p>	<p>I explicitly discuss dominant and marginalized capital so that my students understand how to navigate inequitable systems and maintain their own cultural capital.</p> <p>I intentionally provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their cultural capital through content-aligned assignments and assessments.</p>
3. Committed to students' success <i>Multicultural teachers have high expectations of students because they see them as capable learners.</i>	<p>I care about my students, but do not yet believe that I have the tools to help them all be successful.</p> <p>I do not yet understand student failure beyond their circumstances (i.e., SES, language ability, exceptionality, etc.).</p> <p>I do not yet define success more broadly than performance on standardized tests.</p>	<p>I care about my students and believe that I have the tools to help them all be successful.</p> <p>I see my students as capable of success and do believe that their circumstances (i.e., SES, language ability, exceptionality, etc.) determine their failure.</p> <p>I define success more broadly than performance on standardized test.</p>	<p>I believe that it is my responsibility to ensure that all of my students are successful in my classroom.</p> <p>I recognize that some students are dependent on the school in order to meet traditional societal demands (i.e., high school completion) so I strive to help them to help them navigate inequitable systems.</p> <p>I communicate to my students the various (and may be competing) definitions of success.</p>	<p>I see my role as equipping and empowering my students for long-term success beyond my classroom.</p> <p>I examine the factors (<i>individual, institutional, and structural</i>) that are in place that create failure for some students (e.g., standardized testing, school funding, school policies, tracking, etc.).</p> <p>I provide opportunities for my students to demonstrate success in a variety of ways, while also helping them meet mainstream markers of success.</p>	<p>I communicate through words and actions that students can be successful in spite of their circumstances.</p> <p>I actively challenge factors that are in place that create failure for some students.</p> <p>I demonstrate my high expectations for students by employing strategies to ensure that all have access to a rigorous curriculum.</p> <p>I ensure that my students believe that they are capable of success.</p>

<p>4. Agents of change</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers understand and take action to confront issues of inequity and injustice in their classrooms and beyond</i></p>	<p>I do not yet understand the terms related to multicultural at the basic level (e.g., culture, equity, equality, oppression, prejudice, privilege, ideology, socialization social justice, power, etc.).</p>	<p>I understand terms related to multicultural education at the basic level and am able to apply them in context (e.g., culture, equity, equality, oppression, prejudice, privilege, ideology, socialization social justice, power, etc.).</p>	<p>I apply and recognize these terms within the school and societal context.</p> <p>I am conscious of the ways in which interpersonal discrimination can play out in my classroom (e.g., subtle and blatant derogatory comments).</p>	<p>I respond to instances of bias, discrimination, and inequity of within my classroom and school (a short-term level).</p> <p>I am conscious of the ways in which institutional discrimination can play out in my school (e.g., discipline targeting certain students, English only policies).</p>	<p>I take action and advocate on behalf of (or with) my students to challenge bias, discrimination and inequities (e.g., not comply with school policies that lead to inequitable outcomes and/or experiences for students)</p> <p>I recognize that students can be agents of change and seek to raise their awareness of issues of inequity.</p>
<p>5. Understand the sociopolitical context of schools</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers know how social, political, and economic factors in the society and community impact their students and schools.</i></p>	<p>I do not yet watch the news on a regular basis and nor do I feel that I am up-to-date with local and national events.</p> <p>I am not yet familiar with current educational policies that impact my profession and the students in my classroom (e.g., professional contract, legal rights of students, IEP process, etc.).</p>	<p>I watch the news on a regular basis and feel that I am up-to-date with local and national events.</p> <p>I am familiar with current educational policies that impact my profession and the students in my classroom (e.g., professional contract, legal rights of students, IEP process, etc.).</p>	<p>I consider whose voices are dominant and whose voices are marginalized in mainstream media.</p> <p>I intentionally seek varied media outlets to gain a wider perspective on local and national events.</p> <p>I understand how policies are made (i.e., decision makers, power brokers, stake holders, underlying factors, etc.).</p>	<p>I recognize that teaching is a political act.</p> <p>I am conscious of the impact of local and national events on schools and students.</p> <p>I am conscious of and communicate the impact of policies on schools and students.</p> <p>I am aware of the ways in which I can take action to impact my classroom and/or school.</p>	<p>I actively participate in decision-making at a school, community, and/or national level (i.e., school board, hiring committee, department chair, etc.) to advocate on behalf of my students and/or their communities.</p> <p>I involve my students, colleagues, and/or administrators in taking action.</p>
<p>6. Understand the impact of context and culture on students</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers understand the historical and contemporary role of culture and cultural difference and their impact on school-related experiences and outcomes.</i></p>	<p>I am not yet aware of the histories, struggles, and, accomplishments of various groups (e.g., related to race, ethnicity, gender, SES, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) beyond dates and facts.</p>	<p>I am aware of the histories, struggles, and, accomplishments of various groups beyond dates and facts (e.g., related to race, ethnicity, gender, SES, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) to understand the underlying factors (e.g., motivation, impact, consequences, etc.).</p>	<p>I make connections between the historical and contemporary context of various groups.</p> <p>I seek to understand the histories, struggles, and, accomplishments of various groups and their impact on my students' school-related experiences and outcomes (e.g., related to race, ethnicity, gender, SES, sexual orientation, religion, etc.).</p>	<p>I critically analyze issues related to race, ethnicity, gender, socio economic status, sexual orientation, and religion and recognize how they shape the learning experience and outcomes for my students.</p> <p>I can identify the ways in which some cultural factors and groups are privileged or marginalized in schools (and society) through curriculum, policies, and/or practices.</p>	<p>I challenge the negative impact these factors have on my students' outcomes and experiences.</p> <p>I help my students understand the ways that some cultural factors and groups are privileged or marginalized in schools and include them in opportunities to respond.</p>
<p>7. Demonstrate experiential knowledge of school and students' communities</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers understand their relationship with and resources within the community.</i></p>	<p>I do not yet believe that it is important to experience my school and/or students' communities.</p> <p>I do not yet see the students' and school's communities as a classroom resource.</p>	<p>I believe it is important to experience my school and/or students' communities.</p> <p>I see the students' and school's communities as a classroom resource.</p>	<p>I have authentic experiences in my students' and school's communities (e.g., attend events, shop, etc.).</p> <p>I intentionally seek opportunities to learn about resources within the community.</p>	<p>I critically reflect on my experiences and interactions within the communities to challenge assumptions.</p> <p>I seek ways to connect the community to my classroom and my classroom to the community.</p>	<p>I am actively involved in the community: I have sustained relationships with community members.</p> <p>I intentionally connect the community to my classroom, and my classroom to the community.</p>

<p>8. Create a classroom community that embraces students</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers share power with students to construct a student-centered environment where students are active members.</i></p>	<p>I do not yet utilize student input/voice to guide classroom management, engagement, and curriculum.</p> <p>I do not yet aim to create a classroom where students feel responsible for each other.</p>	<p>I value my students' input/voice regarding classroom management, engagement, and curriculum.</p> <p>I aim to create a classroom where students feel responsible for each other.</p>	<p>I seek student input/voice regarding classroom management, engagement, and/or curriculum.</p> <p>I am aware of and implement community-building strategies in my classroom.</p>	<p>I use input from students regarding classroom management, engagement, and curriculum.</p> <p>I reflect on how student voices are affirmed and respected within my classroom.</p>	<p>My classroom is studentcentered as demonstrated through their active role in developing classroom management, engagement, and curriculum.</p> <p>I seek student feedback to ensure that they feel a sense of community in the classroom.</p>
<p>9. Engage in critical reflection to guide practice</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers critically self-reflect and seek student feedback to become aware of and address biases that can lead to inequitable experiences and outcomes for students.</i></p>	<p>I do not yet understand how my values, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs are transmitted through what and how I teach.</p> <p>I am not yet aware that the choices in what and how I teach can lead to inequitable experiences and outcomes for my students.</p> <p>I do not yet understand and can distinguish deficit-based perspectives from asset-based perspectives.</p>	<p>I acknowledge that my teaching is not neutral; I understand that my values, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs are transmitted through what and how I teach.</p> <p>I am aware that the choices in what and how I teach can lead to inequitable experiences and outcomes for my students.</p> <p>I understand and can distinguish deficit-based perspectives from asset-based perspectives.</p>	<p>I seek to better understand the impact of what and how I teach on my students' school-related experiences and outcomes.</p> <p>I intentionally reflect on my pedagogical and curricular choices to uncover implicit or explicit bias.</p> <p>I can identify deficit- and assetbased thinking in my own pedagogical and curricular choices.</p>	<p>I can explain the rationale (<i>beyond professional requirements</i>) behind my pedagogical and curricular choices.</p> <p>I constantly reflect on my pedagogical and curricular choices to uncover implicit and explicit bias and deficit-based thinking.</p> <p>I seek ways to change my pedagogy and curriculum based on my critical reflections.</p>	<p>I can explain the rationale, (<i>beyond professional requirements</i>), objectives, and sociopolitical implications of my pedagogical and curricular choices.</p> <p>I constantly seek student feedback related to issues of equitable experiences and outcomes in my classroom.</p> <p>I change my pedagogy and curriculum based on my own critical reflections and/or students' input.</p>
<p>10. Foster the sociopolitical consciousness of students</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers facilitate the development of students who are aware of issues of equity and take action.</i></p>	<p>I do not yet provide opportunities for my student to discuss issues of equity that impact them, their community and/or society.</p>	<p>I provide teacher-directed opportunities for my students to discuss issues of inequity that impact them, their community, and/or society.</p>	<p>I facilitate my students' understanding of issues of equity and how it affects them and/or their community.</p>	<p>I facilitate action-oriented projects with my students related to issues of inequity that impact them, their community, or society.</p> <p>My students can communicate how issues of inequity impact them and their community.</p>	<p>My students develop and lead action-oriented projects related to an issue that they identify.</p> <p>My students demonstrate an understanding of issues of inequity related to them, their community and/or society.</p>
<p>11. Modify curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues of equity</p> <p><i>Multicultural teachers modify curriculum and pedagogy based on their awareness that traditional curriculum marginalizes some students while privileging others.</i></p>	<p>I do not yet consider my content area as a vehicle to examine issues of equity related to my students and their communities.</p>	<p>I see my content area as a vehicle to examine issues of equity related to my students, their communities, and/or society.</p>	<p>I seek opportunities in my curriculum to teach through an equity lens where students engage in content-aligned opportunities to examine issues of inequity (i.e., additive model of isolated activities or lessons).</p> <p>I consciously select curricular resources that challenge issues of inequity and/or include voices/perspectives that are marginalized in curriculum.</p>	<p>I analyze my curriculum to ensure that it meets content standards, includes varied perspectives, and opportunities for my students to become critical consumers of knowledge (i.e., embedded model leading towards transformation of curriculum).</p> <p>I model critical analysis of curriculum and text with students through a discussion of whom and what is privileged in curriculum.</p>	<p>Based on my analysis, I modify (or design) curriculum that meets content standards, includes varied perspectives, and provides opportunities for my students to become critical consumers of knowledge (i.e., implementing a transformed curriculum).</p> <p>My students play an active role in curricular decision-making to ensure that it is relevant and reflects their realities.</p>

APPENDIX F: ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Prior to our interview, I asked you to bring the biographical objects to our meeting to help me better understand how you view your work as a culturally relevant teacher of British literature. Can you share those now?
2. Can you tell me a bit about your
 - a) Community?
 - b) Family?
 - c) Education?
3. What led you to teaching? To teaching British literature?
4. There are numerous ways to define culturally relevant teaching. For my part and generally speaking, I define culturally relevant teaching as those teaching practices that 1) cultivate and privilege caring relationships between teachers and students, 2) reflect high expectations for students so that they authentically learn and engage with material 3) utilize students' cultures as a vehicle through which to improve their academic achievement and validate their lived experiences, and 4) challenge students to identify issues of inequity and work to combat them. How would you define "culturally responsive teaching"?
 - a) Did taking the MTCS help in this conceptualization? What did you glean from taking the self-assessment?
 - b) To what degree do you see yourself as an "agent of change" (characteristic 1)?
5. Tell me about your school. Specifically, what are its demographics? The demographics in your British literature class(es)?
6. How would you describe your philosophy of teaching? What do you believe "works"?
 - a) What role, if any, does understanding the sociopolitical context of your school/district (characteristic 4) play in your teaching philosophy?
 - b) To what degree does understanding your students' cultural and contextual backgrounds, particularly as they relate to academic achievement (characteristic 5), impact your teaching philosophy?
 - c) In what ways, if any, does your understanding of the resources available to students in their communities (characteristic 6) influence your teaching philosophy?
7. What factors have influenced your ability and willingness to teach British literature in culturally responsive ways?
8. What challenges, if any, have you encountered in trying to teach British literature in culturally responsive ways?
9. What kinds of things have you done in the classroom that have facilitated the academic success of students belonging to students belonging to historically marginalized populations?
 - a) How important is it to you to spend time reflecting on your instructional practices (characteristic 9)?
10. What kind of role do you believe parents play in the success of students? How would you describe the kinds of relationships you've had with parents of students belonging to historically marginalized populations?
11. How do you handle discipline? Are there special things that teachers of students belonging to historically marginalized populations should know about discipline?
How much of what you know about teaching children belonging to historically marginalized populations did you learn as a result of teacher training, either preservice or in-service?
12. Stage 2 of this study involves weekly observations on a rotating basis from Aug-Nov, weekly debriefings, and a focus group in early December. Are you willing to participate?

Ethnographic Interview Protocol--(Adapted from Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 183-184).

APPENDIX G: CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE INSTRUCTION OBSERVATION PROTOCOL READ TO ACHIEVE

Five of the MTCS's characteristics will be difficult to discern and validate during observations. To that end, the observation data will be coded for these five characteristics once additional data collection has been undertaken (ie, weekly debriefings) to show the degree to which these characteristics emerged during the observation. They are:

1. Sociocultural Awareness
4. Sees Self as an Agent of Change
5. Understanding of the Sociopolitical context of schools
6. Understanding of culture and context on students
9. Engagement in critical reflection to guide practice

School (use assigned number): _____

Teacher (assigned number): _____

Observer: _____

Date of Observation: _____

of Students in Classroom: _____

Core Reading Program(s): _____

RTA Intervention Program(s): _____

Start Time of Observation: _____

End Time of Observation: _____

Total Time of Obs: _____

Please review your field notes and estimate the time the TEACHER spent:

Reading aloud _____	On explicit writing _____	On explicit _____
minutes	instruction minutes	reading instruction minutes

Also estimate the time the STUDENTS spent:

Reading _____	Writing connected _____	In discussion with _____
connected text minutes	text minutes	other students minutes
Completing _____	Listening to _____	In literacy centers _____
worksheets minutes	directions minutes	minutes

- 4** = The classroom was **CONSISTENTLY CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
3 = The classroom was **OFTEN CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
2 = The classroom was **OCCASIONALLY CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
1 = The classroom was **RARELY CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features
0 = The classroom was **NEVER CHARACTERIZED** by culturally responsive features Transfer the holistic scores from pp. 2 through 9 to the table below.

CRI Pillar	Holistic Score
I. ASMT	
II. CARE	
III. CLIM	
IV. CURR	

CRI Pillar	Holistic Score
V. DISC	
VI. FAM	
VII. INSTR	
VIII. PERSP	

I. ASMT ASSESSMENT PRACTICES **Holistic score** **4** **3** **2** **1** **0**

MTCS Characteristic	CRI Indicator	For example, in a responsive classroom:	For example, in a non-responsive classroom:	Field notes: time of example	Field notes: time of non- example	Field notes: No example (□)
3 (student success)	1. The teacher gives clear direct feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher writes comments on student work that indicate his/her interest in the work (“Would he really do that?” “I’d like to know more about this …”) Rubrics for particular assignments are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher responds to student work with short evaluative comments such as “good job” or “□” 			
3 (student success)	2. The teacher includes multiple ways to represent knowledge and skills (all of the language arts, visual arts, music, drama, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can demonstrate knowledge in multiple ways (talking, writing, drama, art, etc.) Multiple assessments are used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher expects students to tell “the” answer Teacher tells students “the” answers 			
3 (student success) 8 (Classroom community)	3. The teacher encourages student self- assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students use rubrics to assess their own products Students are involved in developing the criteria for their finished products (e.g., scoring rubrics) Students are encouraged to evaluate their own products based upon a pre-determined set of criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students expect teacher to know all the answers Students turn all work into the teacher for a grade 			
3 (student success)	4. The teacher uses multifaceted (more than one type of measure), classroom-based assessments, tied to particular projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic assessments are used frequently (e.g., authentic group discussions/conversations, presentations, reading/writing for real audiences, etc.) Assessments typically involve reading and writing connected text (e.g., running records, journal responses, etc.) Formal and informal assessments are used to provide a holistic view of students’ strengths and needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students work only on worksheets Students have a narrow range of options for demonstrating competence (e.g., multiple choice tests, matching, etc.) Teacher uses standardized testing or constant quizzing; no assessment 			

3 (student success)	5. The teacher uses assessment data that captures individual student learning/ thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher uses assessment data to differentiate instruction • Teacher uses formative assessment to provide explicit instruction to students when they need it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher uses assessment data only to assign grades; data not used formatively to provide explicit instruction when needed • Teacher relies on summative assessments to inform instruction • Formative assessments are too general to capture 			
6 (Impact of culture and context on students)						

II. CARE CLASSROOM CARING AND TEACHER DISPOSITIONS **Holistic score** **4 3 2 1 0**

MTCS Characteristic	CRI Indicator	For example, in a responsive classroom:	For example, in a non- responsive classroom:	Field notes: time of example	Field notes: time of non- example	Field notes: No example (□)
3 (student success) 8 (classroom community)	1. The teacher demonstrates an ethic of care (e.g., equitable relationships, bonding)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher differentiates management techniques (e.g., using a more direct interactive style with students who require it) Teacher refers to students by name, uses personalized language with students Teacher consistently models respectful interaction with students in the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher makes sarcastic comments Teacher promotes negativity in the classroom; frequent criticisms, negative comments, etc. Teacher uses the same management techniques and interactive style with all students when it is clear that they do not work for some Teacher demonstrates 			
3 (student success)	2. The teacher communicates high expectations for all students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher differentiates instruction, recognizing students' varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests, etc. Teacher advocates for all students Teacher consistently demonstrates high expectations for all students academic achievement through insisting that they complete assignments, by providing challenging work, etc. (not letting them "get by" even when their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher criticizes the student (the person), not the work (the product) Teacher has low expectations (consistently gives work that is not challenging) Teacher doesn't balance student participation Teacher does not call on all students consistently Teacher ignores some students; e.g., never asks them to respond to questions, allows them to sleep, places them in the "corners" of the room and 			
3 (student success) 8 (classroom community)	3. The teacher creates a learning atmosphere in which students and teachers feel respect and connect to one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students do not hesitate to ask questions that further their learning Students know the class routines and are supported by them Students are encouraged to provide peer support and assistance Students are encouraged to respond to one another positively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher dominates the decision- making Teacher stays behind desk or across table from students; s/he does not get "on their level" Students are never encouraged to assist their peers Teacher does not address negative comments of one student towards another 			

8 (classroom community)	4. The teacher actively confronts instances of discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher confronts students' biases and acts of discrimination in the classroom actively • Teacher encourages a diversity of perspectives • Teacher uses a variety of multicultural literature to expose students to a variety of individual experiences and perspectives of people from diverse populations • Teacher engages students in critical examination of curriculum content and personal experiences that contribute to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher appears to have "favorite" students • Teacher allows students' open expression of prejudicial acts and statements toward others in the classroom community • Teacher squelches diversity of opinion • Teacher primarily presents content, curriculum, and ideas that are representative of a mainstream middle/upper class perspective(s) • Teacher consistently uses literature that only provides positive 			
10 (sociopolitical consciousness of students) * <i>talking as SPC?</i>						
11 (Modify curriculum and pedagogy to confront issues						

III. PERSP SOCIOPOLITICAL

Holistic score

4

3

2

1

0

CONSCIOUSNESS/MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

MTCS Characteristic	CRI Indicator	For example, in a responsive classroom:	For example, in a non-responsive classroom:	Field notes: time of example	Field notes: time of non- example	Field notes: No example (□)
4 (agents of change)* 11 (modify curriculum to confront issues of equity)	1. The teacher encourages students to think about and question the way things are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher encourages students to question the hegemonic social structure (the “way things are”) Teacher uses critical thinking techniques such as requesting evidence, accepting multiple points of view, respecting divergent ideas Teacher helps students think in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives (“Are there other ways to think about it?”) Teacher explains and/or models that there could be multiple answers to a problem/task and multiple ways to find the answers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher reduces complex content to lists, facts Teacher engages in mystification in which students are not given the “whole story” in order to avoid controversy Teacher never engages students in dialogue about the issues being raised in a text 			
2 (cultural assets) 10 (foster students’ sociopolitical consciousness)	2. The teacher encourages students to investigate and take action on real world problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher addresses real life problems and issues within the students’ communities and respects their “funds of knowledge” Teacher allows students to write about topics that really matter to them and helps students identify those topics Teacher encourages students to investigate real-world issues related to a topic being studied Teacher encourages students to become actively involved in solving problems at the local, state, national, and global levels Teacher uses literature, learning activities that encourage students to reflect on discrimination and bias Teacher engages students in identifying and developing solutions that address social injustice(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher does not encourage application to real-world issues; accepts or endorses the status quo by ignoring or dismissing real life problems related to the topic being studied 			

10 (foster students' sociopolitical consciousness)	3. The teacher actively deconstructs negative stereotypes in instructional materials and other texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher discusses biases in popular culture that students encounter in their daily lives (e.g., TV shows, advertising, popular songs, toys) Teacher helps students to think about biases in texts (e.g., "Who has the power in this book?" Whose perspectives are represented in the text? Discussion and consideration of who benefits from specific beliefs and practices represented in texts.) Teacher challenges students to deconstruct their own cultural assumptions and biases Teacher engages students in using literate skills and behaviors to bring about needed changes that benefit underserved and/or marginalized populations (e.g., engage in discourse, activities, and/or acts of social justice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher follows the script of the adopted program even when it conflicts with her own or the students' lived experiences Teacher accepts information in written texts as factual Teacher makes prejudicial statements to students (e.g., girls are emotional; immigrants don't belong here; etc.) 			
11 (modify curriculum to confront issues of equity)						
2 (cultural assets)	4. The teacher instructs students to use different discourse patterns to fit the social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher helps students focus on an audience in order to learn about "how language works" in various social contexts (How would I tell this to grandma? To the mayor?) Teacher uses diverse texts that model and represent a variety of discourse patterns, dialects, writing styles (e.g., topic centered narratives, episodic narratives, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher requires students to use the same discourse (standard English) in all social contexts (e.g., lunchroom, playground) 			

APPENDIX H: WEEKLY DEBRIEFING PROTOCOL

1. What did you do today that exhibited culturally relevant teaching?
2. What challenges, if any, did you encounter in trying to teach today's lesson in culturally relevant ways?
3. What factors influenced your ability and willingness to engage in culturally relevant teaching today?

APPENDIX I: NARRATIVE SKETCH REQUEST

In the near future, we will engage in a focus group wherein we will discuss culturally relevant teaching practices across our contexts. To that end, I ask that each of you write and bring in your own **personal narrative of culturally relevant teaching**. This document does not need to be long—one page will suffice—and should present your interpretation of culturally responsive teaching. To depict this, you may elect to present a pivotal moment in your teaching career, from your childhood, or your own schooling experience that has, in some way, impacted your vision and practice of culturally relevant pedagogy. I will write and share mine as well.

Please bring four copies of your narrative to the focus group.

APPENDIX J: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Please introduce yourselves. Tell us about what brought you to teaching, your current school, your students, your practice, and anything else you deem important to the session. Next, we will share our Culturally Relevant Teaching Narratives. I'll go first.
2. What similarities do you note between your own narratives and those shared by the other teachers? Differences?
3. Which differences are making a difference (teacher race, student race, experience, etc) as you attempt to teach in CR ways?
4. *Share WCPSS handout.* What are your thoughts on this document? How does this presentation of CRT align/contrast with your own understanding of these practices?
5. Findings show certain commonalities: all do stellar job demonstrating a commitment to students' success (3) and creating a warm classroom community (8). Findings also show little evidence of critical reflection and directing students toward action-oriented projects (characteristic 10). Does this corroborate with your own understanding of your practice? What factors account for these commonalities?
6. Factors that inhibit: What challenges do you encounter trying to teach your BL curriculum in culturally relevant ways? How are they different from the challenges in other content areas—say, in teaching American or World literature?
7. What factors promote your teaching in CR ways?
8. In what ways have your own biographical experiences shaped your approach to culturally responsive teaching?
9. How might you modify your teaching of British literature to more fully encapsulate and promote culturally responsive teaching?
10. What would you share with teacher education programs about being culturally responsive?

APPENDIX K: RESEARCH STUDY CROSSWALK

	Data Collection Strategies					
Case Study Issues:	Teacher Interviews	Observations	MTCS	Documents/ Archival Records	Physical Artifacts	Focus Group
1. In what ways, if any, are teachers engaging culturally relevant pedagogies in their British literature classrooms?	x	x	x	x	x	x
a. How do teachers define and practice culturally relevant teaching?	x	x	x	x	x	x
b. What factors inhibit culturally relevant teaching in the British literature classroom?	x					x
c. What factors promote culturally relevant teaching in the British literature classroom?	x	x	x	x	x	x

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