

CHAPTER THREE: CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Chapter one discussed the notion of brain growth, and that it is the individual's brain growth that leads to their understanding. When considering literature, what a person reads will influence how they think. Exposure to traditionally canonized literature will produce a single literary culture, the monoculture, and exposure to multiethnic literature will give many, non-canonized, literary voices a say, i.e the multicultural. It examined the use of multicultural education, the opponents of it, and how multiethnic literature is a part of multicultural education. Chapter two explained the development of education in the United States, and how the Civil Rights era gave birth to the multicultural education movement. It examined at the development of reading instruction in the United States, the history reading materials used in schools, and how different instructional approaches were politically influenced. It reviewed ground breaking studies into multiethnic literature, and how these studies influenced to the formation of multicultural education. Chapter three reviews the research about multiethnic literature. The research used in this chapter is organized into five sections: content analysis, teacher analysis, preoperations, concrete operations, and formal operations. Each of these studies are summarized and analyzed, based on the conclusions provided. The research is reviewed to examine how the use of multiethnic literature effected the engagement of students.

Content Analysis

The initial six studies of this section analyzed the ethnic content of trade books and basal readers. Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, and Anderson (1982) starts the

analysis because their study demonstrated how cultural schemata affected the comprehension of written text. In this analysis, Reynolds' et al. (1982) study is followed by Larrick's (1965) study of books written for children in the 1960's, the same study was replicated by Chall, Radwin, French, and Hall (1979) 10-years after Larrick's (1965) study. This was done to determine if publishers had given non-Caucasian books additional attention. Similarly, 25-years after Larrick's (1965) study, Reimer (1992) investigated the status of multiethnic literature. Greenlaw (1971) investigated the influence, if any, minority groups had on publishers of basal readers, as well as influence on school systems implementation of basal readers. Bean, Readence, and Mallette (1996) used James Banks' multicultural typology to select young adult novels, with multicultural themes.

In an empirical study, to determine if there was a relationship between cultural schemata and reading comprehension, Reynolds, Taylor, Steffensen, Shirey, and Anderson (1982) investigated 105 eighth-grade students. Approximately half these students were boys, and half were girls. Nine of the students were dropped from the analysis because their recall probe data suggested that they did not seriously attend to the task. The subjects of this study attended one of three schools: Memphis, Tennessee a school that drew its' students from a African American working class area (n = 54); and either, Ogden or Mahomet, Illinois who drew its' students from a Caucasian agricultural area (n = 51). All subjects of this study read a letter about a school incident that could have been interpreted as a fight or as an instance of sounding, sounding is a form of ritual insult predominantly found in the African American community. Although sounding is often done for amusement, Reynolds et al.(1982) noted that skill in this verbal art is one

typology formed a basis for character discussion. The six-stage typology revealed the variability in main characters' self-identity across the six novels. The book selection criteria offered teachers a means of identifying young adult novels that realistically confront societal problems. In conclusion Bean et al.(1996) suggested the need for future research involving in/pre service teachers, as well as adolescent students.

The method of believing and doubting, as outlined by Blau, gave this study credibility. Had Bean only interpreted the stories, then the conclusions would have been limited. However, the fact that three different researchers offered three responses to support or doubt the other rater's findings produced findings that are convincing. This study gives teachers a means to analyze the content of the reading materials that are used in their classroom.

The analysis of the research in content analysis suggests that multiethnic literature has not been produced in the same quantity of monoculture literature, nor was multiethnic literature used in schools in the same quantity as monoculture literature. As Reynold's et al. (1982) investigation suggested, the ethnicity of the reader directly impacts her comprehension of it. When only monoculture literature is provided to the students, they are not provided with the dendritic growth necessary for living in the ethnically diverse world that they will encounter after school. The Larrick (1965), Greenlaw (1971), Chall et al. (1979), and Reimer (1992) studies indicated that a lack of multiethnic literature was provided for preoperational students. Bean's et al.(1996) study demonstrated that multiethnic literature could be selected for school aged children. More analysis is necessary to determine how multiethnic literature is used to teach preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational school aged children.

p59-
60

Teacher Analysis

Students dendritic growth is built upon the reading of literature, as well as the teaching of it. The prior section of this chapter, analyzed the content that school aged children were reading. This section of the chapter analyzes the teachers who instruct the students. In the first study, Carroll, Gregg, and Watts (1995) investigated teachers attitude toward multicultural literature. In the second study, Gill (1998) investigated university professors' use of multicultural literature, followed by four studies of preservice teachers' attitudes toward multicultural literature. This section ends with a study by Smith and Strickland (2001) that investigated how teachers use multicultural literature. To understand how multiethnic literature has effected students, different aspects of teachers attitudes need to be investigated. Whether it is the attitude of inservice teachers, preservice teachers, or professors of teachers, the notions held will affect the school aged child because the teachers' schemata will affect how she creates her literature lesson.

Carroll, Gregg, and Watts (1995) with other members of the Florida Council of Teachers of English Multicultural Commission, developed a survey, "Multicultural Education in Florida's English/language arts Classes: Attitudes and Practices." This survey asked teachers of English/language arts in the state of Florida what they knew about, where confused about, and needed to learn more about regarding teaching culturally diverse students. Their survey focused on the teaching of literature because they believed that the most obvious and direct means of bringing multicultural awareness into classrooms was through the study of literature by writers from under-represented groups, groups who write for both adults and adolescents. Members of the Florida

approaches to teaching literature, and used the novels as a spring board to discuss their lives. Based on the above, Smith and Strickland (2001) concluded, "if the goal for using multicultural literature is to foster an ethical respect for literary characters, the study suggests that it is necessary to look hard at both the norms that characterize response-centered discussion and at the instructional strategies that have become commonplace in response-centered classrooms to determine whether they complement or conflict with that goal"(p. 163)

The fact that two different sets of graduate students analyzed the data gave this study triangulation. One of the goals Smith and Strickland (2001) set to achieve was fostering an ethical respect for others, using multicultural literature. Their study did not do this. The study suggested that the use of reader based instruction was engaging, but it did not test if it produced more significant understanding than the traditional teacher based instruction. The engagement in the text was engagement of teachers. This study does not imply that the same results would have occurred for the students of these teachers.

Throughout the teacher analysis, the researchers found different attitudes toward multiethnic literature. Carroll et al. (1995) found that there was conflicting notions of culture, but not of ethnicity, Carrol et al. also found that many teachers were loyal to the literary canon, the literary canon that is predominantly Caucasian. Bean et al. (1999) and Chaveilier and Houser (1997) found that preservice teachers could be engaged in multiethnic literature. Smith and Strickland (2001) found that the use of ethnically diverse text was engaging for the teachers, when the instruction was reader based. These studies did not, however, discuss effects of multiethnic literature on students that are in

the stage of preoperations.

Preoperations

As noted by Piaget(1952), a child is in preoperations between the years two and seven. In this stage, the child attains language, but is not yet ready to think in logical terms. The preoperational child can represent the world symbolically with mental images, but all symbols and images depend upon the child's own perception and own intuition, the child in this stage is completely egocentric (Piaget, 1952). The introduction of multiethnic literature, could provide the stimulus for dendritic growth, that will build multiethnic understanding. This section of the chapter focuses on the effect of multiethnic literature on preoperational children. This section contains six studies, that investigate the use of multiethnic literature, and its effects on preoperational children. In the first study, Yawkey and Blackwell (1974) investigated the effects of multiethnic reading materials on four-year-old children. This section will conclude with Wham, Barnhart, and Cook's (1996) investigation of the enhancement of multiethnic awareness through the story book reading experience.

In a quasi-experimental quantitative study, Yawkey and Blackwell (1974) investigated the influences of selected multi-ethnic social studies reading materials on African American childrens' attitudes toward themselves and Caucasians. The subjects of this investigation were 44, four-year old children in a low socio-economic area of urban Baltimore. The children were in three different classrooms of 18. All children were pre-tested using an attitude inventory at the beginning of the experiment, and posttested 30 consecutive school days later at the conclusion of the experiment. A 20-item test, Attitudes of Young Black Children Towards Themselves and Whites was

students.

Summary

Chapter three was a review of the research about multiethnic literature. The findings of the studies were summarized and analyzed, based on the conclusions and provided. The research was reviewed to examine how the use of multiethnic literature affected the engagement of students. The research in the Content Analysis section indicated that the amount of multiethnic literature has been limited, and that students may not have been exposed to the use of multiethnic literature during their development through pre-, concrete, and formal operations. The research of the Teacher Analysis section indicated that the use of multiethnic literature can be used to engage preservice teachers, and that this engagement in multiethnic literature may help prepare the preservice teacher for working with ethnically diverse students. The research of the Preoperations and Concrete Operations sections indicated that both non-Caucasian as well as Caucasian students benefitted from the use of multiethnic literature. The research of the Formal Operations section found that students can be engaged by multiethnic literature, but that this engagement may be challenged by the students. Chapter four outlines the summary of the findings from this chapter with respect to Content Analysis, Teacher Analysis, Preoperations, Concrete Operations, and Formal Operations. Then chapter four will consider classroom implications and suggestions for future research.