CRITICAL MULTICULTURALISM AND PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

CRITICAL MULTICULTURAISM AND PRESERVICE

TEACHER EDUCATION

Cynthia Hale Erickson

This qualitative research study examines the lived experience of preservice teachers in a class on teaching diverse populations. The goal for a critical multicultural class is to provide teachers with the tools to facilitate receptivity on their part, and strategies that will enable them to empower themselves within the existing hierarchy. This study will illuminate preservice teachers' experience in a critical multicultural classroom and their responses to a critically reflective pedagogy. The goals of the study are to understand the students' lived experiences and their learning outcomes in the following ways.

(1) Students' awareness of their own cultural backgrounds and its impact on their teaching methods.

(2) Students' views of multiculturalism in its various forms

(3) Students' awareness of the political aspect of education and how it may impact their teaching.

(4) Students' views of what it means to be a critically reflective teacher.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation journey has taken me down many paths, some productive, others brief waypoints in a quest to improve my skills as an educator. For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a teacher. As a child, instead of playing with Barbie dolls, I played "teacher." I had a fully stocked library where the neighborhood kids could check out books. I had a chalkboard and school math primers that my great-uncle published. I conducted many classes on the various patios and screen porches of my childhood.

Growing up in south Florida, I was exposed to multiple cultures and a multitude of colorful people. My love of learning extended to the many cultures I encountered. Upon moving to a small town in south Alabama, I found my colorful world narrowed; it seemed everyone there wanted to be the same. If not for the teachers at school, my world would have become colorless and uniform. My teachers encouraged me to continue my exploration of other cultures. I was selected to be an exchange student to Brazil during my junior year in high school. This experience helped me further appreciate multiple customs, traditions and mores. I saw the world not just from one perspective, but from many and realized the advantages of various viewpoints. I may not have agreed with them all, but I understood that they all made contributions to illuminating given situations.

A college education was never even discussed in our family; it was understood that I would attend college. I struggled with what I wanted to "be" as most college students do. Although I dreamed of becoming a marine biologist, a forest ranger, and a psychologist, my childhood teacher role-playing came back to me repeatedly. It seems my legacy in education subconsciously guided my path. My sister was a special education teacher, and I admired her most in the entire world. My great-uncle had written and published math primers. Each of my aunts on my paternal and fraternal sides were teachers as well. My great-grandfather Roy V. Ellise taught at Sewanee Military Academy and became the youngest superintendent ever hired in Sikeston, Missouri.

While researching my great-grandfather's legacy as an educator, much to my surprise I found he was responsible for building the first African American school in Sikeston along with an elementary school and gymnasium. To my greater surprise, I discovered that he had attended the University of Cincinnati where he studied with John Dewey. I suppose some of this may explain my inherent love of teaching.

Thinking back to my interactions with my great-grandfather, or Dad as we called him, I see myself sitting at his knee, as he peeled apples for me with the peel unbroken. He would read to me from old, tattered mythology and fairytale books, where I learned about Circe's allure, the scary Cyclops and much-feared ogres and trolls. One of my most treasured memorabilia is a picture where he is reading *How Come Christmas* to the cadets at Sewanee Military Academy. By the time I was truly cognizant of Dad's career he had long since retired and had moved with us to Florida.

Entering the College of Education at the University of Alabama set me on a new path. I followed in my sister's steps and enrolled in the special education program with a

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specialization in emotionally disturbed children. I did my student teaching at Bryce Mental Hospital where I learned little about teaching in a public school, but a great deal about disturbed children. This experience helped me understand that people do not often act abnormally as much as react to abnormal situations. Most of the children I have met were products of their situations. Physical and sexual abuse, broken families, drug abuse, and abject poverty often contribute to children's defiant behavior. Patience, consistency, and concern then become even more important teaching tools; I loved everything about teaching and learning. Upon graduating, I returned home to realize my dream of teaching.

In order to defer payment on my loans and grants and because of my experience working with disturbed children, I chose to teach at an inner city school in Mobile. My first teaching assignment was a school that was located in the projects and had a 99% African American population. I was to teach a self-contained special education class for emotionally disturbed students.

Prior to my initial hiring, I was sent to several "troubled" schools for interviews. When I was finally hired, the principal stated that there were two applicants for the job, one White and one Black; he was required by law to hire the former for purposes of racial balance. At this time, Mobile was still under federal injunctions from the Birdie May Davis case. Although I knew I was qualified for the job, I was hurt and insulted that my skin color played a pivotal role in my hiring. Once again, my naiveté showed. For the first time in my life, my "Whiteness" had become an issue for me.

Teaching at Dunbar Middle was a challenge. On the first day of school the assistant principal drew me aside and explained that if I did not leave with the rest of the teachers at 3:05, I was to have someone escort me to my car. In addition to this

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disconcerting news, my first day with the students demonstrated how little I knew. No matter what four years of college had taught me, I was inexperienced and untested.

As I was straightening desks on that first day, admiring my bulletin board with my complex reward system displayed, my first student, Mary, walked in and proceeded to instruct me on the virtues of a token economy rather than the elaborate system I had devised. To say I was a little unsettled is an understatement. As the rest of my small class filed in, I was overwhelmed with feelings similar to Peter McLaren's when he describes his first few weeks of school in a similar situation: "I was green; suffered from naiveté and cultural myopia" (McLaren, 2003 p. 68).

The students included a young cherub faced Tarrent whose favorite activity was kicking other students down the school's stairwells. Other students included Mary who was wise well beyond her 12 years, Robert who hid his extension cord scars under long sleeves and pants despite the August heat, and Willy who had the charm of any self-respecting con man. There were of course others, whose names and faces have faded with time. However, these four faces have lingered because of their intelligence and their apparent resignation to their fates.

Mary taught me hope, by maintaining her effervescent personality even in light of her circumstances. Tarrent taught me about the anger that comes with living without parents, in projects full of things gone wrong. Disregard for others is the lesson Willy taught me. Time and again, he gave me the sense of a charming bear waiting to strike.

One day in anger, Robert threw a bottle at me. I called his foster mother to report the incident. Unknown to me at the time, this action led to a severe beating with an extension cord, apparently one of many. The social worker said I should have noticed

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the signs of abuse, including Robert's penchant for wearing clothing out of season. Quiet rage was the lesson Robert taught me. I had failed him as so many others had before me. While teaching at this school, I learned much about poverty, abuse, and pervasive feelings of hopelessness.

These lessons stayed with me even after I moved to other schools. Yet at each successive school, I found more children trapped by race, socioeconomic status or awful circumstances who had similar lessons to teach me. I learned with each new group of students, no matter where or at what ages who in adverse situations need to become champions for themselves as well as for others. Teaching this sense of empowerment, however, is no easy task.

After several years of teaching, I returned to school for my master's degree. I took a course in multicultural education that I hated and enjoyed at the same time. I was and am a middle class White person from the Deep South who never experienced racial inequalities. Integration problems seemed to happen elsewhere. People of color were part of my everyday existence and always had been, but still I was insulated in my own White world. It seems I was as naive as early multicultural programs were.

Years later, I returned to graduate school and once again had to take a multicultural course. I began reflecting back upon my experiences in multicultural classes, and I began to pick up clues to my growing interest. Initially in my undergraduate work in the seventies, multiculturalism was a way to imbue content with celebratory ethnic and cultural stories. I liked the idea of learning about other cultures so this seemed a straightforward and fun way to expose my students to many other cultures.

It seemed to me as well as others that if we could all "just get along," all of this race business would go away.

In my master's program, however, the tone of my multicultural class changed. The subject matter was linked to social justice and seemed to focus on a Black-White dichotomy. My professor exposed the class to the injustices of the dominant society [White people]. I played the devil's advocate and asked every racially charged question I could. My Whiteness was showing. "I've never owned slaves, why should I apologize?" "I have black friends. I'm not prejudiced." "Why can't they [Blacks] adjust the way Asian Americans have?" "All they [people of color] need to do is pull themselves up by their bootstraps and work. After all I've worked for everything I've ever had." Oh how my professor must have cringed. I knew the ignorance of these questions. I had heard them posed many times, in many different situations. I wanted answers. However, the answers appeared to address only Black-White issues. Other ethnicities and cultures also needed attention. Never even broached in class was my guilt about being white. So went my "multicultural education." None of these classes seemed to provide the necessary tools for enlightening my students, be they Black, White, male, female, gay, straight, or from any other racial/ethnic group.

Not until I began my doctoral work did many of these unanswered questions get heard and answered. Through several classes, these touchy subjects were addressed in an academic, thoughtful, caring manner. Here, the professors took a much more social-scientific stance. The issues covered a broader range of topics. I remember my first foray into multiculturalism at this level. The class assignment required a reply to readings on feminism. My response was an uninformed, unfounded diatribe about the problems with

feminism. My professor's response was a gentle reminder of the importance of responding to questions with ideas based on facts and research. Later I learned that this professor was a major contributor to feminist theory. She is a superb example of how teachers should teach multiculturalism. Students come to the classroom with a variety of experiences and opinions. This professor did not berate me or make me feel as though my opinion was unworthy. Instead, she encouraged me to explore the content more thoroughly and arrive at a more informed place.

Topics in multicultural education are often emotionally charged. How teachers manage classroom discussions of these topics is critical to the success of the class. The challenge is to provide a safe environment where students feel that they can share their experiences without fear of ridicule. Building trust within the classroom is the teacher's first challenge. hooks (1994) discusses this challenge in *Teaching to Transgress*: "I enter the classroom with the assumption that we must build a 'community' in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor" (p. 40). Especially now with online classes becoming more popular establishing a sense of community in the classroom is even more challenging. Yet a strong sense of community has been modeled in the doctoral multicultural classes I have taken. It is important and feasible to take this sense of community as well as a broader range of topics to the undergraduate level.

With my family background in education and my specialization in special education, my progress toward critical multiculturalism is ultimately not surprising. Effectively addressing the challenge of preparing preservice teachers for the real world of teaching diverse students is my goal. Initially I was confused as to how I would go about

this using the quantitative methods I was familiar with from undergraduate and graduate school.

My first foray into qualitative study was frustrating and not very helpful along those lines to say the least. I did not "get it." I kept asking classmates how I could possibly conduct a study using my own classroom. That would be subjective, biased, and invalid, all those quantitative epitaphs. I continued to study and read, guided by dedicated professors who continued to reassure me that a qualitative approach might be the most appropriate method for my study. I remained skeptical, though, until one day while I was reading Blumer's book on symbolic interactionism, a light did not just come on, it glared. I now understood.

Symbolic Interactionism, Postmodernism, and the Multicultural Paradigm

For decades, social scientists have debated the most appropriate way to study people's lived experiences. Einstein is correct in stating that not everything that counts can be counted; thus, the need for an alternative to quantitative research. The gamut of human experiences cannot be calculated and measured using statistical and other numerical approaches. Any of our lived experiences involve feelings and sensations that are difficult to assess by statistical means.

Two preeminent sociologists of the twentieth century, George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer the architects of symbolic interactionism, argue for such alternatives. Blumer developed the concept of symbolic interactionism drawing not only from Mead's foundational ideas but also from those of John Dewey and William James as well as others. Symbolic interactionism according to Schwandt (2001) is rooted in American

pragmatism. He provides a succinct description for a complex idea: "humans are purposive agents who confront a world that must be interpreted rather than a world composed of a set of stimuli to which the individual must react" (p. 245). Blumer (1969) suggested that "human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that things have for them" (p. 2). In addition, these meanings derive from people's social interactions. This approach differs from the psychological stance that assumes human behaviors are fundamentally reactions to environmental stimuli. For symbolic interactionists, the meanings of things emerge from interaction with others, rather than from inherent content or narrow cognitions. As the products of human interactions, meanings also involve people's interpretations. Interpretive acts entail the formation of meaning.

From the symbolic interactionist perspective then, studying the meaningful experiences of human beings necessitates an approach that reaches beyond statistical data. Blumer (1969) argues against the exclusive use of quantitative inquiry when conducting social science research

> Many of these preoccupations, such as those stressing the need for statistical and quantitative techniques, are grossly inadequate on the simple ground that they deal only with a limited aspect of the full act of scientific inquiry, ignoring such matters as premises, problems, concepts, and so on. More serious is their almost universal failure to face the task of outlining the principles of how schemes, problems, data, connections, concepts, and interpretations are to be constructed in the light of the nature of the empirical world under study. (p. 27)

Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2006) says one of the main misunderstandings about social research is the assumption that "general theoretical knowledge (context-independent) is more valuable than concrete practical (context dependent) knowledge" (p. 221). He goes on to argue not only that context dependent knowledge is necessary for people to develop expertise in a given subject area but also that in the study of human affairs there is only context dependent knowledge. Flyvbjerg's stance parallels both Blumer's and Dewey's emphasis on how all learning takes place in social situations. All these theorists imply the profound analytic power of interactionist approaches to understanding social life. In education, two areas in need of this analytical power are multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism. Both need more interpretation and explanation.

Although multicultural education has by now been part of teacher education programs for decades, its effectiveness is in question. Multicultural education's success has been inconsistent. Rhoads (1995) suggests possible reasons for this inconsistency: "The principal reason postsecondary institutions have dragged their feet is because responding to cultural diversity, as in the implementation of a multicultural curriculum, threatens the canonical knowledge upon which the dominant forces in higher education are positioned" (p. 7). Whether multicultural courses are effective or not, they are where prospective teachers learn their responsibilities to the marginalized students of today's classroom. In successful cases these classes have become instruments of social justice. In many instances, multiculturalism is "accepted as the framework within which social justice is to be negotiated in a pluralistic society" (Lee, 2003, p. 4). Multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism are two fundamental as well as controversial facets of the evolving field of education.

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Evolving Multiculturalism

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, (NCATE, 2008)

outlines the new Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Teacher Preparation

Institutions. Standard four addresses diversity: "Extensive and substantive clinical

practices for both conventional and distance learning programs are designed to encourage

candidates to interact with exceptional students and students from a broad range of

diverse groups" (NCATE, 2008, p. 36). Historically, these courses aimed toward

integrating diverse racial/ethnic content into traditionally Eurocentric curricula. The

celebratory nature of multiculturalism, as manifested during the 1970's and 1980's, has

come under fire as being naive and lacking in theoretical support. To move

multiculturalism into the twenty-first century, Torres (1998) suggests

> To achieve the goals of diversity and multiculturalism, Universities should be able
>
> to attract the best and brightest, the most qualified scholars, undergraduates, and
>
> graduates who can explore in their teaching, research, and outreach the frontiers
>
> of knowledge without prejudice, approaching their work with creativity, with joy,
>
> with enthusiasm and dedication, with a sense of utopian hope. (p. 440)

Instilling this sense of hope along with solid research efforts should be the goal of future

multiculturalism courses. A sense of hope is important for future teachers; however, as

May (2000) points out, there must be pragmatic aspects to these courses. Teachers need

practical tools to use in the classrooms.

There has been considerable debate as to the effectiveness of multicultural

programs. Describing multicultural programs, Meyer and Rhodes (2006) suggest that

So often these studies emphasize a skewed view of ethnicity, gender, and minority

cultures. Rather than produce multicultural relationships, they emphasize the

differences, which may teach some level of tolerance, but not understanding . . .

and curriculum design that fails to address the idea of transformation fails to

realize the important rationale for multicultural education. (p. 84)

In addition to the issue of whether these programs succeed, May (1999) points to other

problems

However, these debates about multicultural education, and the industry it has

spawned, have also been characterized by a depressing disjuncture between their

vaulting, high minded ambitions and the ongoing reality of school life for

minority (majority) students. In short, multicultural education has had a largely

negligible impact to date on the life chances of minority students, the racialized

attitudes of majority students, the inherent monoculturalism of school practice,

and the wider processes of power relations and inequality which underpins all

these. (p. 1)

In other words, multiculturalism has not effectively addressed some key issues facing

educators today.

Multicultural education was born out of the work of leading Negro scholars such

as W.E.B. Dubois, Carter G. Woodson, and George Washington Williams. They sought

correctives to the stereotypes of African Americans, especially in the area of education.

These scholars wrote prolifically about the lives of African Americans, founded the

Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, established Black History

Month, and provided accurate depictions of African American communities.

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Over the years, multiculturalism has evolved into three intertwined, overlapping schools of thought. Beginning in the 1960's during the Civil Rights Movement, scholar and educator James Banks wrote extensively on the subject and provided educators with alternative strategies for educating African American children. Others such as Paulo Freire and Myles Horton, though not even technically multiculturalists, viewed education as a transformative process for liberating marginalized students. More recently educational theorists such as Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, and Stephen May have conceptualized versions of multiculturalism based on critical theory. These educational theorists believe that critical multiculturalism and critically reflective teaching are the new faces of multiculturalism.

All advocates of critical theory, McLaren, Giroux and May suggest that knowledge construction be in the hands of students and teachers. Critical theory rests broadly on three tenets. Schwant (2001) suggests these three strategies; the first "Is to integrate theory and practice in such a way that individuals and groups become aware of the contradictions and distortions in their belief systems and social practices and are then inspired to change those beliefs and practices." The second tenet is to be "Practical and normative and not merely descriptive and explanatory." The third tenet is "A critique of instrumental, technical reason" (p. 45). Critical theorists challenge the academic canons of traditional education while insisting that teachers must be aware in practical daily ways that education is unavoidably political.

Critical multiculturalism in these senses almost becomes postmodernist. Postmodernism is often misunderstood and frequently engenders confusion, disgust, and frustration on the part of those unfamiliar with it. Yet postmodernism is useful here for its

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"distrust of and incredulity toward all 'totalizing' discourses or metanarratives – those large-scale or abstract theoretical frameworks that purportedly explain culture, society, and human agency" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 201).

Postmodernism could be helpful in illuminating each of the three main visions of multiculturalism. Even Banks states, "Multicultural education is...postmodern in its assumptions about knowledge and knowledge construction, it challenges positivist assumptions about the relationship between human values, knowledge and action" (as cited in Powers, 2002, p. 209). Although one might assume that this acknowledgment of postmodernism is uncharacteristic of Banks, it is not. He goes on to say that

> Postmodern theorists have pointed out, knowledge is socially
> constructed....Transformative academic scholars assume that knowledge is not
> neutral but is influenced by human interests, that all knowledge reflects the power
> and social relationships within society and that an important purpose of
> knowledge construction is to help people improve society. (p. 5, 9)

For Banks postmodernism is one more tool in the quest for a democratic educational system. Specifically, postmodernism may provide a way to illuminate the injustices of our current system. After all, postmodernists eschew the metanarratives that have distorted American history texts for decades. Furthermore, postmodernists lend support to the multicultural, transformative, and critical multicultural pedagogies of all three groups. Broadly, postmodernism supports all three paradigms: "Rejecting a specifically modern form of rationality associated with empiricism and modern science, postmodernist thought emphasizes the importance of taking differences in perspective

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into account" (Powers, 2002 p. 212). Put differently, postmodernists reject a monocultural view of the world and support various versions of the notion that "localized" knowledge or content-dependent knowledge has value. These two ideas are central for each group of educators, whether multiculturalists, transformists, or critical multiculturalists.

Multiculturalism to Critical Multiculturalism

There are many definitions of multicultural education. Heard (1999) provides one

Multicultural education is in part an approach to public education that embraces the complex and very difficult task of helping to create a unified democratic society in which people can maintain their cultural and personal identities and minorities and women have real bona fide equal access to wealth and political power. (p. 461)

This definition combines the traditional idea of multiculturalism as a means to celebrate diversity with the progressive idea of social justice.

Critical multiculturalism, on the other hand, goes even further by insisting that students must be involved in their education. Giving voice to students as well as their teacher is a central component of critical multiculturalism. May makes three pertinent points along these lines. First, he suggests that the public sphere in a nation-state reflects the ideologies of the dominant group, thus reducing the "linguistic capital" of minority groups. This situation in turn negates minority voices. This practice is illustrated daily throughout classrooms across the country. The western Eurocentric ideas of what is acceptable for classroom conversations often differ dramatically from those of minorities. The difficult goal for the educator is to provide opportunities for minority voices. Our

transformative group supports these thoughts in this way: "What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves. And in so doing that, he or she lives the experience of relating democratically as authority with the freedom of the students" (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990, p. 181).

These points made by Horton and Freire in *We Make the Road by Walking*, (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990) concern the overriding obligation teachers have to their students. Teachers must offer students well structured opportunities for engaging in dialectic discussions that encourage students to give voice to their knowledge. By welcoming real life problems to the classroom, teachers position themselves to join students in constructing new knowledge and ways of knowing – very postmodern indeed.

May's second notion is to give power and respect to the cultural knowledge students bring to the classroom. The notion of cultural relevance has a long history in education. Dewey's philosophy of education broadly centered on its significance: "I believe that the social life of the child is the basis of concentration, or correlation, in all his training or growth" (as cited in Boydston & Bowers 1972 p. 89). Freire and Horton agree. In discussing educational practices Freire specifically underscores the importance of what students bring to the classroom: "They bring with them their knowledge at the level of common sense, and they have the right to go beyond this level of knowledge" (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990, p. 157). Freire elaborates saying that students: "have a right to know better what they already know." (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990, p. 157). The challenge for educators is to help students clarify the facts and reasons behind their knowledge and take them beyond their current knowledge.

The third idea of critical multiculturalism is the fluidity of culture. Understanding that cultures are ever-changing entities is important. All culture is situated by time, place and history; however, it is not bound by these. Cultures are in flux as are the groups that reproduce and transform them, thus, the need for adaptive culturally dynamic pedagogies in the classroom. One example of such an approach is Giroux's (1997) border pedagogy: "Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps. The terrain of learning becomes inextricably linked to the shifting parameters of place, identity, history, and power" (p. 147). Border pedagogy presupposes both that cultural identities are in flux and that students may find it impossible to identify with a single unitary culture. The beauty of such critical pedagogy and critical multiculturalism is their respect for multiple paradigms in addressing questions of today's complex human experiences.

Critical multiculturalism is an evolving branch of multiculturalism, and with it come controversy and questions. Such questions may only be addressed effectively through strong qualitative inquiry that encompasses multiple approaches and considerable exploration. How to make the best use of multiculturalism, as well as including it in critical versions, remains substantially unclear. With the prudent use of symbolic interactionism, coupled with postmodernism, researchers may illuminate and highlight this area of education in the early twenty-first century.

<center>Symbolic Interactionism's Illuminating Capacity</center>

Symbolic interactionism is often neglected or overlooked in social research. According to Forte (2004), for example "Social Workers have forgotten their interactionist ancestors" (p. 391). Yet, he says symbolic interactionism can help the social worker understand marginalized members of society.

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Educators too may have overlooked this approach. Symbolic interactionism can help us understand labeling processes and even emergent languages among students, such as the ones used in text messaging. Educators must come to terms with how today's adolescents interact and communicate within and beyond their cultural groups. Text messaging, music videos, cell phones, and Internet communities have globalized and reified culture. As Giroux, Lankenshear, McLaren, and Peters (1996) explain

> The fact of the matter is that mass media plays a decisive role in the lives of young people, and the issue is not whether such media perpetuates dominant power relations but, rather, how youth and others experience the culture of the media differently, or the ways media is 'experienced differently by different individuals.' (p. 63)

Symbolic interactionism may help researchers illuminate how adolescents and members of other cultural groups construct meanings from their lived experiences. Blumer (1969) refers to symbolic interactionism methods as exploratory study:

> Exploration is by definition a flexible procedure in which the scholar shifts from one to another line of inquiry, adopts new points of observation as his study progresses, moves in new directions previously unthought of, and changes his recognition of what relevant data as he acquires more information and better understanding. (p. 40)

This is not to say that the researcher runs willy-nilly through the research process, but that as new data emerge she adjusts her thought processes and how she is generating or analyzing the data at hand. The rigorous outline of her research design remains firmly in place, but the design itself has an emergent character in "natural" settings.

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Likewise, postmodernism can aid the researcher in her quest to navigate the constantly changing landscape of adolescents' and other cultural worlds: "No longer belonging to any one place or location, youth increasingly inhabit shifting cultural and social spheres marked by a plurality of languages and cultures" (Giroux 1997, p. 68). Postmodernism validates multiple stories and views. It offers a pragmatic approach to the changing multicultural world of today's youth: "Postmodernism is concerned with rethinking culture and the power relations embodied not only in cultural representations but also material practices" (Grant & Sachs, 1995, p. 90). This flexible view is important for today's critical multiculturalists, first, because it provides a new lens that McLaren (2003) and Giroux (1997) call "critical literacy." Secondly, postmodernism emphasizes teachers positions and feelings on culture and power relations, which are important to consider when designing coursework.

It appears that the dual use of symbolic interactionism and postmodernism provides researchers with tools needed to enrich our knowledge about students' lives in today's school settings. Postmodernism encourages a wide-open view of multiple narratives, while symbolic interactionism helps us disclose meanings that might not be revealed with a quantitative approach. Concepts are difficult to measure using a quantitative approach.

Why does it matter? Why do we need alternatives to quantitative study? Throughout my search for legitimate approaches to research, I understood two things. First, research is serious business and not to be undertaken lightly. Second, researching human experiences is vastly more complex then statistical data alone can illuminate. Researchers must recognize that humans exercise agency and thus, often behave in

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immeasurable ways. Finally, researchers must not forget that humans interact and react in social situations and are often defined by those situations. Symbolic interactionism and postmodernism provide a framework that considers these circumstances.

Statement of Purpose

The primary focus of my research is critical multiculturalism; its secondary focus is the development of a critically reflexive pedagogy. Teachers need the basic principles and theory that lie within a critical pedagogy, yet they must have the freedom to create lessons pertinent to their classrooms and students. The goal of the critically reflective teacher is to incorporate learners' experiences into her lessons.

As a teacher, I know the importance of what the students bring to the classroom. Critical multiculturalism may be threaded with debate and controversy, but, as one who lives each day in a classroom and a community fraught with challenges of an increasingly diverse population, I know what meaningful pedagogy looks like. Critical multiculturalism provides me a theoretical framework and a critical pedagogy that enables me to meet the challenges of my daily interactions with students. In turn, I want to help teach future teachers the importance of multiculturalism as a critical pedagogical movement.

After teaching for 24 years, I am well aware that teachers' ability to change the political hierarchy in their districts or their schools is severely limited. Thus, my goal for a critical multicultural class is to provide teachers with the tools to facilitate open-mindedness on their part and the strategies that will enable them to empower themselves within the existing hierarchy. Specifically, this study will illuminate preservice teachers'

experience in a critical multicultural classroom and their responses to a critically reflective pedagogy.

In this study I will teach an undergraduate class on critical multiculturalism. My goals are to understand the students' lived experiences and their learning outcomes in terms of

(1) students' awareness of their own cultural backgrounds and its impact on their teaching methods

(2) students' views of multiculturalism in its various forms

(3) students' awareness of the political aspect of education and how it may impact their teaching

(4) students' views of what it means to be a critically reflective teacher.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature on multiculturalism abounds with information about the differences between institutionalized multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism and the challenges both face. Multicultural education is undergoing a transformation with an increased emphasis on social justice. As I stated in my introduction, for the uninitiated, today's multiculturalism classrooare much more political in nature. The focus is on power, social justice, and transformational learning rather than emphasizing race and inclusiveness. Today's multicultural courses tackle tough issues such as sexuality, Whiteness, and positions of power within communities. Getting today's neophyte teachers to understand these complex issues and integrate them into the classroom is a challenge for university instructors. The need for inquiry into how preservice teachers view critical multicultural material and how college multicultural classes teach students democratic strategies is fierce: "The need for this kind of inquiry stems from the scarcity of research about how teachers learn new attitudes and behaviors" (as cited in Heard, 1999). Multicultural classes at the university level must address preservice teachers' ingrained attitudes and effectively advocate democratic strategies that empower teachers and students.

Instructors face several hurdles when implementing critical multicultural curricula. Three of the most obstinate include continuing systems of nondemocratic

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practices within school systems, teacher-training programs dominated by non- democratic training programs, and challenges to personal cultural attitudes, especially those centering on middle class, heterosexual privilege (Heard, 1999). In addition to these challenges, critical pedagogies and critically reflective teaching entail challenges that need to be confronted in order to educate preservice teachers for effective twenty-first century teaching.

<div align="center">Challenging Traditional Non-Democratic Systems</div>

The first hurdle instructors and teachers face are non-democratic systems, due in large part to standardization. School systems around the United States are under constant pressure to produce "successful citizens." Part of the problem with this policy is that "successful citizen" is a contested concept. With a diverse population come diverse definitions of success.

Early leaders in educational theory such as Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Montessori, and Bronfenbrenner understood the need for individualization in educational practices. Innovative educational programs emphasize the child's needs to be independent and learn at different speeds. As a student and later as a teacher, I experienced and implemented first hand the variety of individual products, educational strategies and programs popular in the 1960's, 1970's and even in the early 1980's. Science Research Associates (SRA) reading programs let children advance at their own pace, teachers' implemented strategies according to learning abilities, and approaches such as Montessori's became widespread. Additionally, special education programs emphasized individual education programs that met the least restrictive environment test.

However, the educational community in the United States is notorious for jumping on the latest bandwagon of educational reform. Currently that bandwagon is the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Yet, with this new enforcement of teacher and school accountability, we have certainly missed the point of education. Children continue to fail at alarming rates. The national reformist NCLB has illustrated how: "From the beginning, a fundamental fault of ignoring individual differences in all dimensions of education and child development spelled failure for this program" (Frost, 2007, p. 225).

Yet NCLB standardization has become the yardstick for measuring school success, and consequently children's success. Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) reports haunt school administrators and constant testing preoccupy teachers' time. All the while, none of these actions demonstrably and reliably benefit children. Frustrated teachers refer to NCLB as No Child Gets Ahead. Administrators are bogged down in lengthy reports and tied up in statistical numbers game that no one seems to be winning. The rules constantly change, "Although the standards movement is cast as aiming to improve schools, it can be understood as part of a political struggle over who has the right to define how the next generations will see the world and their places within it" (Sleeter, 2004, p. 122). School systems are thus held hostage by federal laws that ignore local needs and provide little or no financial support to implement required programs, providing instead only punishment to those schools that do not or cannot comply.

Nichols, Class, and Berliner's study in 2005 completed by the Education Policy Studies Laboratory of Arizona State University (as cited in Frost, 2007) found "high stakes testing" had little impact on student performance. Worse, "This study, conducted in 25 states, found a negative effect on minority students and illuminated the performance

gap between White and minority students and between students from middle-and upper-income families and those from low-income homes" (Frost, 2007, p. 226). The negative impact of testing comes as no surprise for those on the frontline: teachers. Pressures to ensure improving test scores for all children, no matter their ability, and the expectation that special education students can perform on grade level, defeat the idea of individualization and of special programs that level the playing field for those special students.

As the early leaders in educational theory understood, standardization robs administrators and teachers of the ability to make decisions that are best for their children and their schools and classrooms: "For too long our schools have offered young people curriculums based on outmoded content and delivered through ineffective teaching methods, particularly at high-poverty schools" (Landsman & Gorski, 2007, p. 42). Landsman and Gorksi identify five myths associated with standardization. First, arts, recess, physical education and second languages are frills. Second, a standardized curriculum is essential for the success of every student. Third, teaching critical thinking and social consciousness is political. Fourth, a student's failure to learn reveals a deficiency in aptitude in the students or a lack of attentiveness on the part of students' parents. Finally, students learn most effectively when they are tracked into classes with peers assumed to have similar ability. As research has shown, all these notions have proven inconclusive or simply incorrect. Landsman and Gorski suggest that teachers and administrators must counteract them with democratic practices in daily instruction. In addition, teachers must have faith in their expertise and knowledge and be confident in their understanding of what is best for their students. Although the NCLB Act gives

school systems and teachers less choice than ever in making "democratic decisions," there are methods available that can empower systems, teachers, and students to create their own democratic educational communities.

Several examples appear in the literature illustrate empowering practices. The National Education Association, along with several states, is suing the federal administration for the lack of financial support required for implementing NCLB (Frost, 2007). Teachers and administrators themselves can counter standardization pressures by implementing innovative teaching strategies and programs, such as service learning projects aimed at the local communities. They can identify inequities in the learning environment and stop blaming students and parents for failures. They can also begin to think critically about teaching practices and adopt reflective teaching strategies (Landsman & Groski, 2007).

<div align="center">The Challenges Facing Teacher Education Programs</div>

Another challenge facing multicultural educators is teacher education programs themselves. Teacher education programs tend to dismiss the importance of multiculturalism. School systems face increasingly diverse populations. The middle-class Eurocentric classroom population is atypical in many school districts. However, teacher-training programs have changed little, continuing to attract middle-class White females who are ill equipped to face the diverse populations staring back at them on Monday mornings: "Helping [education] students articulate, critically examine, and develop their own beliefs and action agendas for emancipation of oppressed people is very difficult; it is not discussed sufficiently by multicultural education practitioners or theorists" (as cited

in Varus, and Ozcan, 1996, p. 2). Critical reflexive practices are essential in teacher

education programs that effectively equip their students.

Giroux, et. al. (1996) identifies why courses in critical multiculturalism or

multiculturalism have little support

> By virtue of its refusal to decouple the dynamics of politics and power from
> schooling, cultural studies is often charged with being 'too ideological' or else is
> simply ignored on account of its criticisms regarding how education generates a
> privileged narrative space for some students and a space that fosters inequality
> and subordination for others. (p. 43)

Within the programs that do exist, students of all colors are often not heard. Parker and

Hood (as cited in Sleeter 2004) found that sometimes students of color are not

encouraged to use their experience to help themselves or others in the classroom. As

Parker and Hood (as cited in Sleeter 2004) point out,

> They brought life experiences they could draw on to construct multicultural
> pedagogy, but their programs were not designed to extend what they already
> knew or to prepare their White peers to teach in schools such as those which the
> students of color were familiar. (p. 212)

This practice of course goes against the teaching philosophy of most critical multicultural

proponents. Students' knowledge should be acknowledged and expanded upon by

instructors. Validating this knowledge leads students to take possession of their knowing.

As Freire (1970/2005a) asserts, students have a right to know what they already know

and expand upon that knowledge.

An additional concern for some university professors is the fear of alienating White students. White students often feel threatened by critical multicultural curricula. Often students, especially White middle-class students, take a defensive attitude when discussing multiculturalism, much as I did as stated in my introduction. Carpenter (2000) reports various forms of student resistance:

> a) avoiding discussion of any aspect of multiculturalism; b) dismissing the content as based on biased/unbalanced information; c) dismissing the content as too baffling to discuss further; d) dismissing the content as irrelevant; e) exhibiting discomfort; f) being silent; g) absence from class; or h) hostile verbal challenges.
>
> (p. 5)

In addition, she notes that many students deny the experience of contemporary forms of discrimination and thus deny the foundation of multiculturalism itself.

As a White middle-class female, I can speak about many of the acts listed above, which often indicate a naiveté or ignorance of the power and privilege Whiteness engenders. Until I encountered courses that forced me to think reflectively about issues of power, privilege, and prejudice, I too have been guilty of each form of resistance at various times in my life. Multicultural topics are often painful, and for Whites, embarrassing to discuss. How does one approach such difficult subjects? The literature indicates that many preservice teachers are ill prepared to cope with diverse class populations. They have "naive, idealistic beliefs and have not explored their identities as members of a privileged White race, which leads them to adopt a colorblind perspective, ignoring or denying the fact that ethnic or racial differences can have pedagogical implications" (cited in Meyer & Rhodes, 2006).

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Whiteness studies tend to demonize White culture as the dominant power that overshadows all other cultural narratives. For critical multicultural instructors, the White students are the "others" whose culture has subverted all other cultures. How to deal with the students who often resist multicultural and especially critical multiculturalism pedagogies is a challenge. In her discussion on this dilemma faced by instructors, Trainor (2002) suggests that by ignoring or exhibiting closed minds toward these students' instructors exacerbate the problem: "To put it another way, our efforts are compromised by (in part because they are predicated on) the moral necessity of excluding the very students who, arguably, we need to reach" (p. 636). University courses that do not recognize students' knowledge, from whatever viewpoint, can discourage students of all colors, thus making multicultural courses seem even less important than students already view them.

<center>Further Problems Plague Multicultural Education</center>

Opponents see critical multiculturalism with its postmodern lens as divisive. Essentialist paradigms promote the continuation of traditional canons of knowledge about what is worthy of study and what is not. This institutionalized canon appears to have hindered critical multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is seen as curriculum that "threatens the canonical knowledge upon which the dominant forces in higher education are positioned" (Rhoads, 1995, p. 7). Moreover, the canon entails eschewing so-called border knowledge, knowledge outside the cultural mainstream, as less important than knowledge commonly taken for granted in the halls and classrooms of higher learning institutions.

Critical multiculturalists argue that border knowledge is as relevant as traditional knowledge. Students bring their own varieties of knowledge to the classroom, and it is the educator's responsibility to recognize and affirm that knowledge, thus empowering students to be their own advocates. One such approach to empowering students is the critical literacy that Giroux (1997) and McLaren (2003) advocate. Critical literacy uses the "language of critique" and a "language of possibility." As McLaren explains, the language of critique offers a way for students to develop the theoretical vocabulary and analytical skills characteristic of multiculturalism. In addition, the "language of possibility" offers a vision of a better future by putting theory into practice. McLaren (2003) suggests that "critical literacy deepens the roots of democracy by encouraging students actively to participate in public discourses and debates over social, economic, and political issues that affect everyday life in their own and neighboring communities" (p. 47). This vision of critical multiculturalism promotes an engaged citizenry that can only brighten the future of the United States and that by any standard is part of a successful democratic society.

In order to engage students in democratic debate universities must accept that canonical knowledge lives beyond what Torres (1998) refers to as foundational canons. Traditional canonical knowledge is not up for debate and cannot be negotiated much at all: "Foundational canons, however, are ongoing processes of cultural negotiations, taking as their precedents key foundations for dialogue and open ended interpretations of history and community experiences" (Torres, 1998, p. 141). These canons can become an essential part of the curriculum and make room for dialogue among instructors, as well as between students and instructors. Freire, hooks, Giroux, McLaren, and others advocate

this open dialogue as a central notion of transformative education, critical

multiculturalism and democratic education. Talking about foundational canons Torres

(1998) makes this general point

> They also enjoy what Freire would like to term an "epistemology of curiosity": an
>
> endless need to define what cultural principles make the life of people more
>
> harmonious, the cultural exchanges more self-reflective, and the ethical
>
> underpinnings of the culture closer to the cultural imperatives of social justice,
>
> individual responsibility, and caring. (p. 441)

Educational canons like this enable the educational community to evolve with the

gloablization of local communities. In turn, teachers of diverse populations can expand

and even revolutionize traditional canons to provide students with the emancipatory tools

they need in an ever-changing world.

Discussions involving words such as racism, oppression, dominance, or privilege

often evoke defensive reactions based on guilt, embarrassment, and resentment.

Preservice teachers and other educators must distance themselves from essentialist

ideology that perpetuates narrow conceptualizations of these terms. Educators must

separate these concepts from their personal feelings and understand that the realities of

privilege, dominance, racism or oppression are larger than personal experience. Without

distance, the majority-group educator, in particular, will find it difficult to discuss such

topics. Johnson (2006), a White sociologist, discusses this need for detachment

> The words are not about me because they name something much larger than me,
>
> something I didn't invent or create but that was passed on to me as legacy when I
>
> was born into to this society. If I'm going to be part of the solution to that difficult

legacy, I must step back from my defensive sensitivity to such language and look

at the reality it points to. (p. 11)

Educators must have a language to discuss and critically evaluate socially relevant issues

of the day, which do include racism, sexism, homophobia and classism. We must teach

our preservice teachers the language of critical multiculturalism. Critically reflecting

upon themselves and their pedagogical practices may help them avoid developing

defensive closed-minded attitudes.

One misconception that educators of preservice teachers must instill in their

students is the idea that White people are the "bad guys." Howard points out, "It is

important to remember as we embark on this complex and sometimes uncomfortable

journey into greater understanding that the 'enemy' is dominance itself, not White

people" (cited in Jay & Jones, 2005, p.109). This stance can combat resistance from

students. Yet, because being White is a cultural category that is often ignored as such,

novice teachers must understand its relevancy and whatever impact it may have upon

their classroom environments. Students need to understand where they fit in all of this

multicultural theory and practice: "Confusion around *this* question is often the major

source of resistance to multicultural teaching and learning, especially among white

students" (Jay & Jones, 2005, p. 103).

With proper preparation and understanding of our students' cultural backgrounds,

educators can circumvent resistance with a pedagogy of care that includes hope and joy.

Hope is something shared between teachers and students: "The hope that we can learn

together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and

resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of our joy" (Freire, 1998/2001, p.

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69). The important notion here is that we must understand our students and then be role models, changing our own perceptions of culture and diversity. Resistance to change is difficult to overcome; however, cognitive psychology may provide insight into overcoming resistance to changing attitudes.

The Persistence of Prejudicial Behavior

Researchers of human cognitive behavior identify two types of prejudice. One is traditional, blatant stereotyping, and the other is contemporary bias, which is subtle and exhibited even by those with egalitarian values. Traditional prejudice is by definition obvious and easily identified, but its contemporary versions are restrained and less obvious. Dovidio and Gaertner (2004) point out

> According to symbolic racism theory, a related perspective that has emphasized the role of politically conservative rather than liberal ideology (Sears, 1988) negative feelings toward blacks that whites acquire early in life persist into adulthood but are expressed indirectly and symbolically, in terms of opposition to busing or resistance to preferential treatment, rather than directly or overtly, as in support for segregation. (p. 154)

Studies show that multicultural programs can change such prejudicial behavior. Several conditions that foster reduced prejudice include equal status across groups, cooperative intergroup interactions, opportunities for personal acquaintance, and supportive egalitarian norms (cited in Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004).

Another important strategy for reducing prejudice is the "The Common In-Group Identity Model" (Appendix A). This model emphasizes inclusiveness by encouraging the

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group members to view themselves as one cohesive group. However, this model does not abandon individual identities; group members "may possess dual identities, conceiving of themselves as belonging to both groups" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004, p. 128). Implementing an in-group model within a classroom fosters an environment where everyone feels a sense of solidarity, yet individual identities and cultures are still salient. This feeling of camaraderie is crucial for the multicultural classroom.

Reducing prejudice is a daunting challenge. It seems the human brain may be wired to identify out-group members for defensive purposes, the classical flight or fight response. Fiske (2004) discusses one aspect of intergroup conflict

Brain imaging shows activation of the amygdala in response to out-group faces; because the amygdala is the center of fear and anxiety in the brain, its activation in response to out-groups is consistent with primitive emotional prejudices. Furthermore, automatic activation of out-group categories leads to behavior stereotypically associated with that group. (p.124)

In other words, categories of differences such as race, gender and age trigger base emotional responses in the primitive brain. Yet, education can still override the "automaticity" of stereotypical reactions. Although people do tend to categorize, they can minimize stereotypical attitudes by developing contacts with members outside of their group under the conditions mentioned above.

Motivation plays an important role in categorization: "Category activation is not *unconditionally* automatic. Although people can instantly identify another person's category membership (especially gender, race, and age), they may not always activate associated stereotypes" (Fiske, 2004, p. 125). Courses in multicultural education can

alleviate prejudicial stereotypes by encouraging sensitivity and openness to other points of views, identifying mutual goals, establishing equal status across students, and fostering friendships among different groups: "Genuine intergroup friendships demonstrably do reduce stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination of whatever sort" (Fiske, 2004, p 130). Rudman, Ashmore and Gary (2001) found that intergroup bias can be altered through diversity education. Again, some of the compelling factors were the development of friendships with out-group members and self-awareness of one's own prejudice

> . . . for volunteers, educational forums designed to promote appreciation for diversity, friendships with out-group members, and insight into one's own prejudice and stereotypes can enable the unleaning of both implicit and explicit intergroup bias-a possibility that should inspire cautious optimism for researchers and educators alike. (p. 866)

Although prejudicial behaviors may not be as blatant as they once were, "prejudice continues to dog Americans' footsteps, even as we make progress toward an egalitarian ideal" (as cited in Rudman, Ashmore & Gary, 2001, p. 856). Self-reported prejudice continues to indicate lower levels of prejudice racism, but reality seems much more complex. Open up the daily paper, and you see examples of racism with some regularity. Incidents such as the Michael Richards diatribe, Mel Gibson's anti-Semitic tirade, and more recently Don Imus's "faux pas" highlight the somewhat very public expression of contemporary prejudice.

These prejudicial behaviors may have gone significantly "underground" for several reasons. First prejudice conflicts with the egalitarian views many Whites claim. Second, in many instances, people face a great deal of social pressure not to express

prejudicial attitudes, and the backlash for such behaviors can be tremendous. Finally, self-reporting provides the respondent time to reflect carefully about the respectability of their responses, making them possibly rehearsed rather than spontaneous.

Prejudice, bias, and bigotry continue to plague our society and our schools. Educational programs like multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism, although controversial, prove at least in certain conditions to have a positive impact on those who voluntarily participate in them. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1964) so eloquently stated in his 1964 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, we must refuse to believe that we are all "bound to a starless midnight of racism" rather than a "bright brotherhood of peace," where hatred flourishes and kindness toward one another flounders. Our aspirations as educators in a democratic society should be to promote a multicultural paradigm that embraces and empowers our students to become "successful" in the art of becoming humane.

Critical Pedagogy and Critically Reflective Teaching

Developing a critical pedagogy is an important step in delivering a curriculum based on social justice. Critical pedagogical practices originated as a way to bridge theory and practice in emancipatory educational programs. John Dewey is considered the father of the progressive education movement. In his attempt to link individual and social knowledge with democracy and freedom, he, according to McLaren, provided critical pedagogy with the "language of possibility" a vital point of the critical pedagogical movement (as cited in Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003).

In the 1970's Freire became an inspiration for critical pedagogy proponents and remains so. Freire wrote about the need to liberate oppressed students, initially in Brazil and then around the world. Freire's goal was to foster relationships among students and between students and teachers in an effort to discourage a "banking" method based on teacher authority. Instead, he advocated a dialogical teaching whereby teachers do not simply transfer knowledge to the students but provide them opportunities to construct knowledge using what they already know and integrating it with new learning. Such a relationship between student and teacher as well as newly constructed knowledge itself eventuates in a transformative education that has inspired countless educators. One of the most important notions Freire (2005b) espoused was teaching with an ethic of love. In *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare to Teach* he challenges teachers not only to teach with and for critical consciousness, but also, to teach with love and for the love of teaching

> We must dare so as never to dichotomize cognition and emotion. We must dare so that we can continue to teach for a long time under conditions that we know well: low salaries, lack of respect, and the ever-present risk of becoming prey to cynicism. We must dare to learn how to dare in order to say no to the bureaucratization of the mind to which we are exposed every day. We must dare so that we can continue to do so even when it is so much more materially advantageous to stop daring. (p. 5)

In my judgment, Freire's thinking offers a foundation for a critical multicultural pedagogy. Today's teachers face not only all of the challenges above but they also face

the challenge of students desperate for guidance, support, and respect. Darder, Baltodano, & Torres (2003) state

> Implementing a critical pedagogy offer teachers strategies for helping students find their own way in the world. A critical pedagogy is fundamentally committed to the development and evolvement of a culture of schooling that supports the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised students. (p. 11)

Henry Giroux was apparently the first to actually link critical pedagogy, emancipatory schooling, and democratic principles for the purpose of serving oppressed groups. Inspired by Dewey, Freire, Horton, and others, Giroux asks whose story is being told in schools. For what purposes and for whose purpose do schools exist? On the website *Rage & Hope* students from University of Texas outline the purposes of critical pedagogy. Williams (1999) outlines the following pedagogical approach suggested by Giroux:

> a) Create new forms of knowledge through its emphasis on breaking down disciplines and creating interdisciplinary knowledge. b) Raise questions about the relationships between the margins and centers of power in schools and is concerned about how to provide a way of reading history as part of a larger project of reclaiming power and identity, particularly as these are shaped around the categories of race, gender, class, and ethnicity. c) Reject the distinction between high and popular culture so as to make curriculum knowledge responsive to the everyday knowledge that constitutes peoples' lived histories differently. d)

Illuminate the primacy of the ethical in defining the language that teachers and others use to produce particular cultural practices.

A critical pedagogy challenges the status quo, thus engendering criticisms of firmly entrenched educational canons. Criticisms of critical pedagogy abound. Barry Kanpol (1998, Introduction, para. 2) summarizes these criticisms. The first one is that proponents of critical pedagogy are often predominatly-White universities and professors. Kanpol argues that regardless of background everyone has the right to argue for a democratic educational system. The second criticism often posed is that the language of critical pedagogy is obtuse. Kanpol suggests that emerging social movements often have challenging vocabularies that intentionally defy old ways of thinking. The third charged leveled at critical pedagogy is that it lacks the tools needed for effective implementation in the classroom. The struggle to eschew standardization and formulaic answers is precisely what critical multiculturalism entails, hence, the need for a critical pedagogy.

In a recent column in the *Mobile Press Register*, Thomas (2007) a conservative syndicated columnist for Tribune Media Services states that most certainly Britain and possibly the United States are corrupting school curricula. He worries that using popular culture as a teaching tool, a stance advocated by McLaren and Giroux, and no longer teaching the classics are trends that fail students by politicizing classroom content. Those unfamiliar with teaching strategies and contemporary education may fear these trends. However, educators are well aware that popular cultural content often enhances classroom content. Furthermore, the classics are most assuredly being taught. As for politicizing curriculum content, being thinking human beings and by choosing what to teach each day, teachers unavoidably politicize the curriculum content.

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Teachers need the basic principles and theory of critical pedagogy. They need the freedom to create lessons pertinent to their classrooms and useful with their populations. To criticize a pedagogy based upon the needs of the learner is anathema to critically reflective educators whose goal is to incorporate the learner's lived experiences in her lessons. Such strategies have been promoted since at least 1897 when John Dewey's *Pedagogic Creed* was first published in *The School Journal.*

One important component of a critical pedagogy is the concept of becoming a critically reflective teacher. This is an important first step in implementing a critical pedagogy. Providing preservice teachers, in particular, need to learn how to think not only critically but also reflectively. Vavrus & Ozcan (1996) state, "The promising practice of professional reflection ideally would yield teacher candidates who could move beyond the technical requirements of instruction to deeper considerations and actions on complex, multidimensional topics such as global and multicultural education" (p. 3).

Reflective teaching is a skill every teacher should employ. The difficult process of reflecting on one's own abilities and performance becomes less frightening the more it is practiced. Thus, as Brookfield (1995) suggests, "Teachers have to learn that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice" (p. 1). No matter how much we aim to be fair and inclusive and to treat others with respect, we will not see ourselves as others see us unless we reflect on our practices and their outcomes.

It is important to involve others in this process since we often see ourselves differently from how others see us. For example, I pride myself on being prepared, encouraging students to ask questions, and being attuned to learning styles. However, upon visiting a website where students rate their teachers, one student claimed to like me

but observed that I expect them "to already know everything." I might view myself as being aware of learning levels, but some behavior of mine made this student feel insecure in her knowledge. Thus, I paused to reflect upon my actions over the past year. I teach gifted education students, and sometimes I forget that much of what I know is simply because I am older than my students. A high IQ does not replace experience. The "gifted" classification does not imbue the students with historical or common sense knowledge. I appreciate anew, then, that "The first responsibility of critical teachers is to research what students know, speak, experience, and feel, as starting points from which an empowering curriculum is developed" (Shor, 1992, p. 22).

Over the past few years, I have gotten so involved with the technical aspects of teaching and lesson planning that I was overlooking some of my students' needs. Often we may become swept away in the onslaught of paperwork, curriculum deadlines, and standardized testing preparation, that we forget why we are in the classroom in the first place: for the students. We may be bound to implement hegemonic curriculum, but that does not keep us from practicing democratic methods of delivery and including democratic ideals within the prescribed curriculum.

Anyone with the desire to learn and teach may practice critical reflection. Learning about one's self as a teacher is crucial. Discussing reflective practices Freire (1998/2001) argues that, there can be no teaching without such learning. The critically reflective teacher thus understands they maintain the status of eternal students. Freire (1998/2001) says

> The more critically one exercises one's capacity of learning, the greater is one's
>
> capacity for constructing and developing what I call "epistemological curiosity,"

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without which it is not possible to obtain a complete grasp of the object of our knowledge. (p. 32)

Critically reflective teaching is a transformative process. Our goal as teachers is transformative education, and this transformation is scarcely just for our students. We continue to be students our entire lives. As our student populations change and become more diverse, we can reconstruct ourselves using our ability to take new knowledge and transform ourselves into the teachers our students need us to be.

Critical multiculturalism provides a theoretical framework and a critical pedagogy that enables me to meet the challenges of my daily interactions with students. In turn, I have gotten interested in how to teach future teachers the importance of multiculturalism as a critical pedagogical movement. Developing effective, courses in critical multiculturalism continues to be an important, though elusive, goal. By developing, implementing and evaluating a class in critical multiculturalism I hope to further our knowledge of what the new faces of multiculturalism may look like in our globalized, diverse world.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Albert Einstein is attributed with saying, "Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted" (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 12). For decades, social scientists have debated the most appropriate way to conduct their research. Einstein is correct in stating that not everything that counts can be counted, thus, the need for an alternative to quantitative research. Human experiences cannot consequently be calculated and measured using statistical data. Much of our lived experiences involve personal feelings and sentiments that are difficult to assess by statistically measurable means. My own research is aimed at illuminating the lived experiences of students in a critical multiculturalism course with a secondary emphasis of a critically reflective pedagogy for preservice teachers. In my judgment, this project virtually necessitates a qualitative approach.

I have designed, implemented and evaluated a critical multiculturalism course. I have chosen a case study design to illuminate students' lived experiences in this class. The case study, according to Schwandt (2001), is an approach to inquiry where the case is at the center of the study rather than variables. He cites Yin who defines case study as the preferred strategy when the researcher is addressing why questions in a real life setting where the inquirer has little control and multiple sources of evidence are desirable. In case study research, the researcher's focus is on exploring or describing individuals or

small groups, rather than generalizing or establishing cause and effect relationships. Case studies involve a holistic view.

Shwandt (2001) outlines Yin's approach to case study. Yin delineates five steps in conducting a case study. Identify a study question; identify a study proposition if any; define a unit of analysis; identify the logic linking the data to the proposition or research questions; finally, set the criteria for analyzing the data. In addition to these steps, Yin emphasizes the importance of presenting the theoretical perspectives underpinning the study, identifying goals, participant selection, and selection of the appropriate methods for generating the data.

The strength of the case study lies in thick, rich descriptions. These descriptions illuminate the situation under study and provide an in-depth look at situation or event. In addition to this benefit, the case study can highlight human experiences such as creativity and innovations as well as lay the grounds for concept development. The case study can highlight practical everyday knowledge that is the basis for theory making. According to Miles and Huberman (1994)

> A good case history, by definition, must trace the flow of events over time. Careful description of the settings, people, and events is one of the main contributions of qualitative research. But such descriptions also have an analytic, interpretive purpose: to illuminate the constant, influential, determining factors shaping the course of events. After all, our main findings entail themes and constructs derived from the interactions between settings and people. (p. 301)

Miles and Huberman adopt Blumer's interactionist approach; they emphasize that meanings are made from the interactions between situations and people. Eysenck (1976)

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offers the following when discussing case study research: "sometimes we simply have to keep our eyes open and look carefully at individual cases – not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something" (p. 9). A case is rich in knowledge nested in everyday occurrences. Flyvbjerg (2006) believes context dependent knowledge is necessary for people to develop expertise in a given subject area. Moreover, in the study of human affairs there is only context dependent knowledge. These ideas support Blumer's and Dewey's beliefs that all learning or meaning making take place in social situations.

In addition to a symbolic intereactionism approach, I use a postmodernist lens to look at the naturalistic setting of the classroom. Questions raised from a postmodernist stance include discussions of metanarratives and heterogeneity. Postmodernist discussions can evaluate "the range of texts we read, and. . . the ways in which we read them" (as cited in Giroux et. al., 1996, p. 63). Understanding cultures from various perspectives and being able to discuss culture, prejudice and power is encouraged using a postmodern lens. Analyzing students' work and experiences with a postmodern lens allowed me to look at data from a variety of viewpoints, but it also demands rigor. When discussing the freedom postmodernism provides researchers, Richardson (2000) cautions

> Although postmodernism frees ethnographers to re-present their findings in different ways, it constrains them asking them to be more self-conscious about claims to authorship, authority, truth, validity, and reliability. Self-reflexivity brings to consciousness some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing. (p. 254)

The important information yielded by my case study perspective will aid further development of classes for preservice teachers in the area of multiculturalism.

One of the most common criticisms of case study research is subjectivity. Many researchers realize that in the study of human life total objectivity is not possible. In-depth case studies actually make it difficult for the researcher to maintain bias or predetermined ideas in the face of reality. Flyvbjerg (2006) suggests that

> According to Campbell, Ragin, Geertz, Wieviorka, Flyvbjerg and others, researchers who have conducted intensive, in-depth case studies typically report that their preconceived views, assumptions, concepts and hypotheses were wrong and that the case material has compelled them to revise their hypotheses on essential points. (428)

These researchers have found that an alternative means of research is indeed necessary. As Blumer (1969) argued nearly 40 years ago, traditional analysis may hinder an understanding of the empirical world: "Even though using the more realistic data yielded by exploration, the conventional protocol of scientific analysis still forces such data into an artificial framework that seriously limits and impairs genuine empirical analysis" (p. 43). Subjectivity in case study is addressed through trustworthiness and rigor and through multiple methods of data collection and analysis.

<center>Generating and Analyzing Data</center>

Schwandt (2001) defines methods as "a procedure, tool, or technique used by the inquirer to generate and analyze data" (p. 158). He goes on to enumerate various ways an inquirer may obtain data, such as interviewing, observation, participant observation, and document analysis. This study used a combination of these methods.

Student activities and their responses to the activities are part of the data. Data also includes semi-structured interviews in three phases and initial questions for a focus group for clarifying follow up questions. Then the second and third phases use interviews for highlighting student reflections on how students construct knowledge and then use in-depth interviews that clarify important points.

Initial questions derive from the research questions. These questions should set the interviewee at ease. They also help reduce the occurrence of yes/no answers. Some examples of initial questions for this inquiry include, Can you describe how some of the subjects discussed in class made you feel? How have your thoughts on ethnicity changed? Can you describe what affect your own ethnicity has on your teaching style? The important idea during initial questioning is to establish rapport between the researcher and the interviewee. In addition, the researcher wants to elicit detailed rich information.

In order to begin my study I felt it necessary to use the interview process immediately. My first step was to interview three professors who currently teach in the area of multiculturalism and diversity studies. Dr. Nichols teaches graduate courses on multiculturalism. Dr. Rogers is head of Diversity Studies and Dr. Desposito teaches multiculturalism in the teacher education program. I felt all three of these professors would provide incite and information as I began to design and implement my study.

I used focus groups with the students in the study. The use of focus groups helps the researcher draw out ideas, thoughts and feelings that might go undetected in individual interviews. The focus group interview developed in an effort to glean responses from audiences about radio programs in 1941 by Robert Morton (Lewis, 2000,

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para. 1). Qualitative inquiry use focus groups to describe what people really think, feel and say: "The hallmark of focus groups is the explicit use of the group interaction to generate data and insights that would be unlikely to emerge without the interaction found in a group" (Mahoney, 1997, para. 2). When using focus groups feelings and thoughts about a topic may change because of the interaction between focus group members, thus, yielding a more detailed picture of the situation: "It taps into human tendencies where attitudes and perceptions are developed through interaction with other people" (Lewis, 2000, para. 1).

I interviewed several students individually. In this third phase of the interview process, the in-depth interview, my goal was to delve into the individual's thoughts about the research making connections between research questions and reality, in this case, the classroom: "The goal of the interview is to deeply explore the respondent's point of view, feelings and perspectives. In this sense, in-depth interviews yield information" (Guion, 2006, p.1). Some of the characteristics that distinguish the in-depth interview include; open-ended questions, semi-structured format, seeking understanding and interpretation, the conversational tone of the interview, and the recording of information gathered. The in-depth interview is an important way to generate and corroborate data. Anfara et. al. (2002) states that "In-depth interviewing as a method of gathering information is a way to correlate etic issues (cited in Anfara, 2002) with emic issues" (as cited in Anfara, 2002, p. 32). Making sure the questions developed in the initial interview relate to the information sought in the in-depth interview is imperative to the success of the interview process.

Silverman (as cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994) suggests that researchers begin with "how" questions. These are the guiding focus about what the participants have

experienced rather than what I think they experienced: "By beginning with 'how" we can then fruitfully move on to "'why" questions about institutional and cultural constraints" (p. 297). The guiding questions for my reflexivity consist of teachable moments with questions like the following. How do I design a class that illuminates critical multiculturalism and critically reflective pedagogy? My interview questions included examples like the following: Did some issues or topics make you uncomfortable? What were these? Can you tell me about why these made you uneasy? Why do you think you were more comfortable discussing some issues or topics rather than others? What topics would you worry about teaching in your own class? Why do you think these topics are difficult for many students to discuss?

The data used in this study derive from my journal, student interviews, a student focus group, students' class work and student evaluations of the course and instructor. Six class activities help to generate data.

1. Weekly reflective journals: students read selected article and respond to the reading with a one to two paragraph reflection and one paragraph stating their opinions about the content in the reading.

2. A racial autobiography was written reflecting upon information covered in class. Students wrote a two to four page paper that defines their personal and ethnic identity. They might ask, How has this identity affected their development as a person? How might this identity benefit or hinder their ability to teach children from diverse backgrounds? What bias or prejudices have they wrestled with along the way? They made connections to the readings and provided at least four citations from the readings using the fifth edition APA format.

3. A critical literacy activity used concepts from the critical literacy notion of McLaren. Students chose an article or book from the class list and answered the following questions: What experiential omissions are there in a piece of literature that, to you, seems important? To what extent does this piece of literature acknowledge and address ethical issues in teaching? Whose voices are heard in this piece? To what extent does the piece use a form of specialized language that is unjustifiably distanced from the colloquial language of the learner and teachers? Whose interests are served by the piece? How does this piece contribute to my knowledge of how to implement a democratic pedagogy and survive a hegemonic system?

4. Common Sense Assumption Activity – Using the common sense assumptions found on pages 4-7 in Brookfield's *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, students read the "common sense" assumptions; and before reading the alternative interpretations that followed, they wrote their own alternative interpretations to these assumptions.

5. Weekly classroom participation in discussions is a critical component of the class. Class discussions covered assigned readings and the students' reflective journals. In addition, a brief writing assignment was given prior to the end of each class that reflected the students' thoughts on the class discussion for that day.

6. Students developed a critical multicultural lesson plan using what they learned in the course. It focused on their chosen subject area; they designed a lesson plan that incorporated ideas from a critical multicultural perspective. For example, they could develop a lesson in critical literacy using a prominent figure relative to their subject area.

Using student responses to class activities, interviews and my reactions to each class provide rich, thick descriptions of how the class is progressing.

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Organization of data manifests itself in two ways. Folders were kept for each week's student activities and interviews and my journal are transcribed to my computer after each interview or writing session. Folders on the computer were kept and detail needed materials, developing questions, revision of interview questions, and changes in class activities, if any.

Rigor and trustworthiness are necessary for the qualitative inquirer. Data triangulation increases the likelihood of trustworthiness and rigor. Therefore, in addition to student interviews I also used classroom documents (student assignments), and member checks. Creswell and Miller (2000) refer to this as the lens used by the researcher that includes the participants: "The qualitative paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be. This lens suggests the importance of checking how accurately participants' realities have been represented in the final account" (p. 125). Using a variety of data collection methods lessens the possibility of misinterpreting data.

Data analysis does not begin after the data collection phase. It must begin from the conception of focus and purpose and continue throughout the data collection phase. Well thought out purpose and methodology, carefully crafted interview questions, careful notes and detailed, thick, rich descriptions at all stages of inquiry are critical to the data collection phase and later in the analysis phase of the case study. These procedures help triangulate and corroborate data as well as increase the trustworthiness of the data analysis phase of the case study.

The analysis of qualitative data is similar to putting a jigsaw puzzle together. You have all the pieces, but you must fit them together to achieve the big picture. The

challenge with qualitative data is that it is more complex than counting numbers in a survey. Data sets in case studies may take shape in the form of a person's feelings, a group's dynamics, or a person's coping skills. LeCompte (2000) asserts

> The task of analysis, which makes interpretation possible, requires researchers first to determine how to organize their data and use it to construct an intact portrait of the original phenomenon under study and second, to tell the readers what that portrait means.
>
> (p. 147)

Organizing data, finding items of importance, creating stable sets of items, creating patterns, assembling structure and making sure data is credible are all important steps in qualitative analysis.

The abundance of data that arose from this study made it critical for me to take command of the data collection procedures: "The first step in analyzing data is to impose order on the collection process from the beginning of the research process" (LeCompte, 2000, p. 147). Folders, both computer and paper copies, were maintained throughout the research project. I filed all interviews, field notes, narratives, questionnaires, participant artifacts according to the date of occurrence. I conducted a periodic review of collected data to ascertain if there may be information gaps. If missing information is unavailable, justification for its absence is provided.

The next step was to sift through the data and identify items relevant to the research questions. This search consisted of reading the data material once through to determine the general feeling of the information. The development of broad categories of codes is used to identify and categorize feelings, emotions and thoughts of participants.

These include feelings of excitement, confusion, resentment, embarrassment, guilt and other feelings as they emerge. Interesting and instructive markers are identified. These markers include any ideas, notions or feelings the researcher feels pertinent to the study questions. Information considered interesting is coded as INT if information is instructive it is coded INS. If information is typical or indicative it is coded IND. Subscripts indicate why information is either pertinent or instructive as they develop relevance during the research and as they apply to the research questions. Information appearing frequently has a code of (fq).

In the next step, I created sets of items from the initial coded material. During this phase the identification of behaviors, events, thoughts, and feelings that have similarities and differences occurs. These items are coded with *(s)* or *(d)* as a subcategory subscript. From these coded items, emerged themes from which patterns were determined. One way this is accomplished is by asking the students in the class to organize items into themes or have them create themes they think are important within the material produced in class: "Conducting data collection strategies such a these, using them to create the 'rules' for identifying items and creating taxonomies, helps to assure that the researchers' categories are meaningful to the people being studied" (LeCompte, 2000, p. 149).

Once themes emerge, patterns are identified. Patterns are identified with similar criteria used to identify items. Other identifying criteria could possibly include similarity or co-occurrence of behaviors or events, sequencing of events, and corroboration of items by other pieces of data. Piecing the patterns together much as a tailor pieces a pattern to create a dress allows assembly of the structures that pieces together the findings.

Creating piles of information allows for cross-referencing patterns and confirm or disconfirm patterns. Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to this as disconfirming evidence. Creswell and Miller (2000) offer, "In this process, researchers rely on their own lens, and this represents a constructivist approach in that it is less systematic than other procedures and relies on examining all of the multiple perspectives on a theme or category" (p. 127).

In order to maintain rigor and trustworthiness I conducted member checks with participants. Lincoln and Cuba describe member checks as "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 134). Member checks assure the researcher reports what participants actually perceive. Thus "Triangulation puts the researcher in a frame of mind to regard his or her own material critically, to test it, to identify its weaknesses, to identify where to test further doing something different" (as cited in Anfara, et. al. 2002, p. 33). Data analysis in qualitative inquiry is not separate from the report. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest "reporting is not separate from thinking, from analysis. Rather, it is analysis. We can adapt the old saying into a new form: "How do I know what I think until I see what I've written?"" (p. 299) The process of qualitative inquiry is as important as the findings. The qualitative case study process is a circular process that folds back upon itself repeatedly which makes the process lengthy, but produces a truly illuminated picture of how human's experience daily activities.

The participants in my study are from undergraduate students enrolled in the teacher education program at the University of West Florida who need to fulfill a three hour multicultural class requirement. The students' age ranges are between 21 to 58 years of age. For some this is their first experience within a multicultural classroom. The demographic of the student population at the University of West Florida (2008) indicates

an average of 40% males, 60% females, and a minority population of 22%. Florida residents make up 89% of the population. The middle 50th percentile ACT scores range from 21-25 and the middle 50th percentile high school GPA is 3.1-4.0. The class make up reflected these numbers. Historically, females compose a higher percentage of education majors, so the female population of the class reflected this trend. The class was limited to twelve students who were willing to participate in this case study. The following are the demographics of the class. There were two males, both in their twenties, one (White) and one Bahamian (Black). "Jack" and "Dee-Nyce" both young men want to teach at the high school level. Jack wants to coach high school football and eventually coach at the college level. Dee Nyce is a philosophy/religion major with an education minor who wants to return to his native Bahamas, teach high school, and possibly become a minister and family counselor. There are ten females in the class ranging from 23-58 years of age. Vannee is a native of Peru and an enlisted navel corpsman, Denise is a Philippine-American of Irish/Scottish decent and is a married mother of one. Louisa is an African American mother of two grown children. The others are White. Patsy is a mother of three who is seeking her education degree along with her adult daughter Heidi, also in the class. Heidi also a mother of three spent her first years in school in Hawaii and was considered a "Haole" which is a derogatory term for Whites. Patsy's husband, Heidi's father, is retired military. Annie is finishing her degree; she is a single mother of three daughters and a self-described former "military brat." Raonna grew up in Alaska. She is seeking a B. A. in Elementary Education; she also wants to pursue a master's degree in Theology. She currently works at a women's resource center. Kris comes from a naval family and is the CEO of her own consulting firm. She wants to change careers to do

something "more giving" and public related; therefore, she is seeking her degree in education. Finally, Misty and Jessie both are seeking education degrees and would like to teach at the elementary level first grade and kindergarten respectively. Both girls are single and in their twenties. The class was conducted during the B term of 2008. It was a combination of face-to-face classes and online e-learning forums. A combination course that included computer mediated communication (CMC) that hopefully provided for a more fertile and open discussion of some of the complicated topics. According to Akintunde (2006) "multicultural topics such as White privilege often initiate emotionally charged debates" (p. 35). He goes on to say online courses offer a venue that alleviates some of this conflict:

> Because the online courses provide students with a discussion area to have on open and ongoing conversation, much of the negative confrontation and fear of being ridiculed for one's perceived deficit of knowledge in the area of race and multiculturalism are eliminated. (p. 36)

Ethics and Reflexivity

"Any qualitative researcher who is not asleep ponders moral and ethical questions: Is my project really worth doing? Do people really understand what they are getting into...?" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 288). Ethical considerations are an imperative part of any scientific study. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) application includes my research objectives, participant recruitment procedures, and an explanation of how confidentiality of data is maintained (Appendix B). It also includes methods, procedures implemented, and informed consent forms.

Students who registered for the course were informed by their advisor, Misty Lacour, that the class was part of a research project. They were given the opportunity to drop the class if they did not wish to participate in the study. An Informed Consent Form (Appendix C) was signed by each student and included the title of the research project, statement of the procedures, potential risks and benefits of the study and finally the statement of consent. The basic ethical principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice outlined in the Belmont Report were followed, as were all other IRB guidelines.

Regarding beneficence, students' personal information will remain confidential and pseudonyms are used in the report rather than students' real names unless they requested their real name be used. The students took on the role of co-researchers; thus, they were fully informed of the research process. The concept of justice primarily pertains to student grades in this case. Therefore, no student was penalized for his or her responses to course work. Grading of course work was guided using two standards: completion of the course work within the parameters set forth in the syllabus and completion of the work in a timely manner. Once the study was outlined for the students, they were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study. The final class consists of a debriefing session where the students had the opportunity to discuss some of the research findings. I also included a member check on the last evening. Students were provided with a character summary of how I believed they viewed multiculturalism; I also gave them a pseudonym for their approval. Students had the opportunity at the end of class to evaluate the course and the instructor. This information is added to the final report. The Evaluation can be found in Appendix D. In addition to these procedures, I asked students if I could contact them in the future for following up on collected data.

The evaluations were inadvertently misplaced, thus, requiring me to contact students after the class had ended.

Researcher reflexivity is an additional ethical safeguard in qualitative inquiry. Miles and Huberman discuss reflexivity in terms of the researcher's self-awareness

Our own experience showed us vividly how useful it is to maintain a part of your attention on the processes involved in analysis – from the selection of research questions through coding, the creation of displays, data entry, conclusion drawing, and verification. Only through such sustained awareness can regular self-correction occur. . . (p. 310)

Reflexivity is important to the case study because the researcher is part of the research study. Because of the close proximity to the case, the researcher must act with a rigorous sense of self-awareness. In an effort to minimize bias within the study I kept a journal for recording my observations, what I value as important, and accounts of what I perceived to occur during the study. Establishing rapport with the participants is central for trustworthiness as is being transparent about the research process. In addition to trustworthiness, reflexive questions remained in the forefront of the data collection. These reflexive questions include the participants' views, the study's intended audience and my own views. Questions regarding participants include

How do they know what they know?

How do they perceive the world?

How do students perceive and respond to the specific subject matter of the class?

How do students respond to the class activities?

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How can we create a classroom environment that fosters diverse opinions?

How do the students react to the overall curriculum I have implemented?

How can students create critical multicultural lessons for their classrooms?

How do they perceive me as the researcher, themselves as participants?

Questions about the readers of the study include

Will they understand what I have given them?

What do they think of the findings?

How do visiting colleagues view the material presented?

How will they use the information provided by the study?

Questions for me as the inquirer include

What do I know and believe?

What strengths and weaknesses do I bring to the study?

How do I ensure that students feel free to express themselves to me

knowing I am the researcher?

How do I use what I learn?

What impact do I make on the study?

Have I exhibited self-awareness throughout the study?

Have I been transparent in my analysis?

The case study provides the researcher with an in-depth view of a situation. My goal was to illuminate students' experiences and reactions to a curriculum that is undergoing change. The most effective way of accomplishing this goal is to teach the class and report on students' experience as well as my own. Flyvbjerg (2006) supports this approach:

If one assumes that research, like other learning processes, can be described by

the phenomenology for human learning, it then becomes clear that the most

advanced form of understanding is achieved when researchers place themselves

within the context being studied. Only in this way can researchers understand the

viewpoints and the behavior, which characterizes social actors. (p. 236)

The task of establishing trustworthiness and credibility is the sole responsibility of the

researcher. Reflexivity assists the researcher in maintaining cogent and transparent data

collection, analysis and reporting.

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING FROM THE PROS

Freire (2005b) says, "Facing a fear is the first step in turning it into courage" (p. 88). Facing the fears of teaching a college course for the first time was a central feature of getting ready to teach critical multiculturalism. I wanted to prepare as well as possible for the class, and I felt I could learn from those experienced in teaching such classes. Therefore, I set up interviews with experienced professors to promote that learning.

I interviewed Drs. Mary Rogers, Joyce Nichols, both professors in the Department of Professional and Community Leadership, and Dr. Fe Desposito, Division of Teacher Education. Dr. Rogers is a professor; Dr. Nichols, an associate professor; and Dr. Desposito, an instructor. All three educators have distinct, valuable views about how to approach such a class. The life experiences of each of these educators, along with their professional experiences, interested me as I laid the foundations for my class.

Multicultural or Intercultural Educator?

Dr. Desposito was educated in the Philippines where she got her bachelor's degree in 1981 from Columban College. In 1989, she received her Ph.D. at the University of Santo Tomas there. After moving to the United States, she earned her Ed. D. at the University of West Florida in 2000. Dr. Desposito is a member of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, which centers specifically on design and

faculty online learning labs. She is interested in diversity training because of her cultural background.

As a self-described "perfectionist," Dr. Desposito maintains high expectations for her students. She enjoys teaching her diversity class online because she thinks that students are more apt to be open about their feelings and more careful about the quality of their writing. She commented that many times her students say they are sharing certain feelings for the first time: "A lot of them say that I have this emotion from when I was younger, because I grew up in a family of racists or prejudice. Some of them state that their parents are racist, that they had friends who were colored, and they had to like hide it." A similar pattern shows up in Akintunde's (2006) account of teaching online diversity courses: "Students often write personal and emotional e-mails that reflect tremendous internal turmoil as they grapple with issues of inequality" (p. 43).

I asked Dr. Desposito whether she has met with resistance in her class. She responded by addressing the students' ability to tackle rigorous course work. When I probed further, asking about the content of the class and racial attitudes, her reply was negative: "No, because at the start of the course I tell them that for the first part of the course they are receiving useful and significant learning when it comes to when they teach and all that." Resistance to the course material did not seem to be a problem because of how Dr. Desposito presents it. She emphasizes the material as an opportunity to learn what students will need in the future. Throughout the interview, she continually referred to the rigorous content of the class. Her high expectations of students also got recurrent expression throughout the interview. I also asked Dr. Desposito about her strategies for getting students "to reach beyond" their own knowledge. She assigns two

major projects, a case analysis with a multicultural problem and paper highlighting a diversity issue.

I questioned Dr. Desposito about her teaching philosophy. Many teachers think an educator should remain neutral and apolitical. Yet critical pedagogy treats teachers as change agents whose opinions and beliefs are part of the dialectical process of education: "For the critical educator, there are many sides to a problem, and often these sides are linked to certain class, race, and gender interests" (McLaren, 2003, p. 194). I asked Dr. Desposito about the cultural or ethical beliefs she might bring to the classroom. She believes it is important to present all views and not try to persuade students in any way. She insists on the importance of remaining neutral, not "interjecting" particular ideologies in the classroom. This stance then denies the decided value and norms undergirding even traditional multicultural approaches to education.

My closing question elicits advice she might have for me. Dr. Despoisto emphasized the "need to care, to care for the students and always tell them that you need them to succeed, because to me that is very important." She feels that although a rigorous curriculum is important, instilling a sense of caring for the students helps them succeed in the end. Woven throughout these professors' comments is their emphasis on caring which affirms my own teaching approach.

Living History

Dr. Nichols, a native of the Florida Panhandle, got her undergraduate degree at Florida State University in 1982, her master's of education at the University of West Florida, and her doctorate in education in 1995 at Florida State University. She always wanted to teach. While in college, though, she became an admissions officer and worked

at UWF in that capacity for nine years. Her desire to teach still lingered, however. Eventually, after getting her doctorate, Dr. Nichols returned to the classroom at UWF. She currently serves as the associate chair of her department.

Dr. Nichols brings a wealth of experience and care to her current work. She was the founder and director of the Tampa-based Haynes Services School from 1996 to 1998. The school provides residential and therapeutic care for males ages 6-17 who cannot live at home because of abandonment or neglect. Dr. Nichols has published in peer reviewed journals, is a frequent presenter at regional and state conferences and belongs to numerous professional organizations. She is also the author of *Teaching Diversity* (2005). Dr. Nichols received the University of West Florida's Outstanding Black Alumni Award in 1994.

Given the challenges of teaching diversity courses, I felt it important to get each professor's thoughts on this matter. Dr. Nichols believes the most difficult challenge she faces is being a minority person teaching about diversity. She finds, "that many of the students that are in the classes have no idea, no concept about being in segregated schools. They have no idea about it; even the minority students don't understand that." In addition, Dr. Nichols talked about the resistance she sometimes encounters and relates it to the "pain" some students may feel as a result of equity programs. She notes that

It's very hard to talk about Affirmative Action in any of my classes, too. So they're having difficulties getting jobs. They're thinking, I'm not getting a job because they're giving it to a minority. So it's hard to address those kinds of specific issues, when the students are feeling pain because they feel like a minority is getting something they are not.

As we will see, this theme also emerged in my own diversity class.

I asked about strategies in the classroom, Dr. Nichols emphasizes reflective journaling and the use of history. She uses prompts such as

Think about the first time you met someone that was from a different race or a different religion or culture. How was it being in that environment with the person? Were you friends with that person? How did you relate to the person?"

She goes on to say

I try to take them back to the history, because they don't know the history. They have to understand where we are coming from to understand where we are now. You know that old statement, "if you forget the past, you're doomed to repeat it."

When I asked about the ability to remain neutral or apolitical in the classroom, Dr. Nichols stated she tries to remain neutral. However, she also said

I can't stand there and say that I've never been discriminated against or that I've never experienced racism. I haven't to the degree that some people have, but I have experienced some of that, and so I have to share that. But I do try to be neutral.

The important point Dr. Nichols emphasized is that although she was part of history and could tell many stories of discrimination, she did not want the class to turn into a story of "all about me and my experiences as a black woman."

Her ability to sense students' patience or impatience, as the case may be, and their receptiveness or resistance to stories from the past is intuitive yet central to Dr. Nichols' success as a diversity teacher. Her goal is to help students understand not only

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multiculturalism but also its history. When I asked how she accomplishes this, she

answers,

> The best that I can do is to talk to them about what has happened in the past and
>
> try to explain to them that you are privileged because you don't have to think
>
> about certain things. For example, I'll say, you can walk into a room being a
>
> white person, say a white male, and everything is okay. . .But when I walk into a
>
> room into let's use a restaurant, or into a store, well that person in that store may
>
> look at me differently because I'm a minority. I'm an African American female,
>
> and [someone] may think that I might be trying to steal something you know, or
>
> something like that, whereas they may not consider that with you. And that's
>
> always going to be the case.

In helping me understand the distinction of how race may be different from some

other situations Dr. Nichols provides this poignant example:

> I've talked to them about being a gay person. Well, that person might not know
>
> that you're gay, but as soon as I walk into that room, you know that I'm African
>
> American. That's always with me. That's always with us, even though I have
>
> three degrees; I have a doctorate. None of that matters, when I walk into a store.
>
> People don't know that, so I try to take them (the students) back to the history,
>
> because they don't know the history.

Promoting this sense of history is, to Dr. Nichols, an important goal in diversity classes.

She feels that history is central to understanding multicultural issues.

My final question, again, was about how to advise someone starting out in the

field:

You have to give the students in your class an opportunity to talk about their

experiences and what they've been through, and that way it kind of opens it up to

other ideas and other beliefs. And you have to kind of steer them in the right

direction to learn about other minorities and not just focusing on one minority. So

I would just get them actively involved and actively engaged. No just doing

lecture. So I would encourage constructivist learning, active learning versus

lecturing.

Exposing students to other points of view appears to be a common thread among

these professors. hooks (1994) addresses this issue: "Accepting the decentering of the

West globally, embracing multiculturalism, compels educators to focus attention on the

issue of voice. Who speaks? Who listens? And why?" She goes on to say, "I enter the

classroom with the assumption that we must build 'community' in order to create a

climate of openness and intellectual rigor" (p. 40). Having been a student of both Dr.

Nichols and Dr. Rogers, I can attest to their commitment in building learning

communities where each voice gets heard. Illustrated in Dr. Rogers's interview is the

importance of listening to others viewpoints. Listening and caring about others is her

life's work.

<center>Gentle Warrior</center>

My interview with Dr. Rogers reaffirmed much of what the other professors said

as well as added other useful strategies for teaching diversity courses. Dr. Rogers brings

to the classroom 40 years of experience plus passion for the subject. A product of the

1960's, Dr. Rogers describes herself as a working class, black-identified radical. Her

beliefs, not her tactics, put her in the radical category. She has long been a champion of

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the underdogs of the world and rejects many institutionalized practices, such as inheritance, expensive weddings, and merit-based scholarships. In her words, "Working to gain respect and rights for underdogs is what my work is ultimately all about. . ."

Beginning her career in 1966 as a working-class student on scholarship at Marycrest College, a Roman Catholic women's college, laid the foundation for her "awareness" of her own "working-class roots" and her budding pride in those roots. She became involved in picketing and other forms of activism "on behalf of poor persons." Later in graduate school at the University of Massachusetts, much of her Catholic upbringing was challenged by her exposure to a multitude of other religions and attitudes.

Over these many years, she has continued her commitment to marginalized people through her work as a professor, active community member, and mentor to doctoral students. Her writings on the subject of diversity, women's studies and qualitative research are evident in books, such as *Barbie Culture, Who's Afraid of Women's Studies?* and *Sociology, Ethnomethodology and Experience.* In addition, she is the author of numerous peer-reviewed articles, presents at conferences on a regular basis, and is on the editorial review boards of peer reviewed journals, such as *Human Studies* and *Schutzian Research.* Dr. Rogers' caring hand touches all those who come in contact with her. Having been her student, I was curious about her answers to my questions about multiculturalism.

I followed my original plan by asking, "What has been the most significant challenge you've faced when teaching diversity courses?" Dr. Rogers answer echoed Dr. Nichols. Dr. Rogers felt that often if you are teaching about an oppressed group that you

belong to, some students feel you have an "ax to grind." When teaching about feminist issues some men, though not the majority, "will sit up, and they are just waiting for you to say something that they can come back at with you." Another issue she finds interesting is students' curiosity about why you would be teaching about a given topic. Some students look for hidden agendas. For example, if you are teaching about lesbianism, they might be curious whether you "are really a lesbian who just happens to be married." Alternatively when a person is teaching about disabilities, students may wonder whether "you have a disability you haven't told us about. . .it's slippery; it's hard to deal with." When asked why she felt students did that, as I admitted I had as a student, Dr. Rogers replied, "Yes, and probably every student has done it at one time. They want to account for some circumstance that would make an otherwise reasonable person concerned with all these unreasonable issues!"

Asked about her strategies for encouraging students to reach beyond their knowledge base, Dr. Rogers stresses reflective activities. Like Dr. Nichols, she often uses writing exercises, such as writing from another person's point of view. For example, one exercise includes reading a novella such as Gibbons' *Ellen Foster* that explores the relationship between two young girls. One is White, Ellen; the other is Black, Starletta. The students then reverse the fiction's point of view by telling its story from Starletta's point of view. This strategy illuminates gender and race as well as storytelling.

I again posed the question about neutrality and apolitical stances in the classroom. Her reply was interesting, and in my mind, realistic. Dr. Rogers says she never tries to hide her personal feelings and beliefs: "I try to be open about where I stand and how I feel, just as I try to listen well to students trying to tell me where they stand and how they

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feel." This genuineness and honesty are apparent to my students who had only one encounter with her on her visit to our class, as we will later see.

This question of neutrality for me as a researcher and as a teacher of multiculturalism is paramount. I want to dialogue with students in a critically conscious way while not projecting my beliefs onto them. Thus, I followed Dr. Rogers' lead and tried to be honest with them. In addition, I exposed them to critical literacy strategies: "Students can then make the hidden curriculum explicit and develop a critical political consciousness" (McLaren, 2003, p. 195).

All three professors emphasize the most important characteristics diversity instructors must have is enthusiasm for the subject and a caring attitude. I had the distinct impression that each professor believes the importance of what they teach is far-reaching and relevant within the community. One of the most significant aspects I found in all three interviews was the professors' concern for students' welfare. All three interviews were woven with phrases such as "be humble" or "you need to care for the students" and "give the students opportunities to share their experiences." Although some resistance occurs within these classes, these professors emphasize connecting with the students.

These professors understand and practice what Noddings (2003) calls the "special gift of the teacher." This gift "is to receive the student, to look at the subject matter with him. Her commitment is to him, the cared–for and he is– trough that commitment–set free to pursue his legitimate projects" (p.177). Three main themes emerged from these interviews. The first is to care for the students. The second is to engage students in learning. Finally, one must "enter the classroom confidently as well as humbly." With

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these three lessons, I was ready to begin exploring students' lived experiences in my own classroom.

<center>Designing the Class</center>

"I like and hate diversity classes all at the same time!" This appeared in an online posting for the diversity class I designed for preservice teachers and this inquiry. This attitude echoes the current research regarding how many preservice teachers feel about taking multicultural education classes. My intention for this study was to understand the lived experience of students like the one above.

Blumer (1969) reminds us, ". . .that the empirical social world consists of ongoing group life and one has to get close to this life to know what is going on in it" (p.38). In order to understand sentiments like the one above, I designed a multicultural class for preservice teachers that went beyond the flags, festivals, and folklore of other cultures. Hernadez (as cited in Assaf & Dooley, 2006) argues that "Teacher educators who teach multicultural education courses too often focus on curricular or content aspects of multicultural education and rarely deal with the process of changing teachers' belief systems related to multicultural education" (p. 48). These aspects of cultures are important, yet my goal was twofold: I wanted preservice teachers to understand the social responsibility involved in multiculturalism as well as the importance of implementing curriculum that addresses social justice issues. Social justice, according to Rogers (1998) entails

> Seeing that each person's dignity gets honored, each person's needs get recognized and addressed, and any person's or group's claims to extras are anchored in merits or needs widely agreed upon and open to debate among members. (p. 4)

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In addition, I wanted the students in the preservice program to understand themselves and their history as well as the history of multiculturalism so that they can meet the challenges of today's changing classrooms. Understanding these students' experiences required me to "get close to this life."

Armed with advice from professionals in the field and a considerable amount of research and planning, I outlined my approach. I planned reflective writing opportunities, online threaded discussions, and in-class lectures and discussions. After reviewing other syllabi from other institutions' syllabi and exchanging emails with several professors, I finalized a syllabus of my own (Appendix E). This syllabus reflects a critical multicultural approach with an emphasis on social justice and critically reflective pedagogic practices.

The required texts include Friere's *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach,* Johnson's *Privilege, Power and Difference,* and Sleeter's DVD *Culture, Difference and Power*.

I chose Freire's book for its straightforward, honest approach to teaching and teachers. In the letters, Freire wrote to teachers he offers guidance on connecting to students, teaching democratically, and even handling first day jitters. Johnson's book delineates White privilege and other systemic, institutionalized systems of privilege. Johnson does all this without attributing blame. Having been on the receiving end of many multicultural courses, I wanted the students to understand, as I had, that assigning blame often shuts down learning. I like Johnson's (2006) book because he aims "to identify tools for understanding what's going on and what it's got to do with us without being swallowed up in a sea of guilt and blame or rushing into denial and angry self-

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defense" (p. 9). The book then offers approaches for meeting the challenges many of us face in our day-to-day lives. Last, I chose Sleeter's DVD for its social justice approach to teaching and its technologically savy presentation as well as its relatively low cost. This DVD offers a multitude of interactive activities, plus video clips with scholars such as Geneva Gay. It also includes clips of actual teachers in their classrooms who model critical multicultural approaches.

Next, I developed a theme for each week using weekly readings, journal articles, DVD lessons and Power Point resources I created. The first week I opened with a general Power Point on multiculturalism and critical multiculturalism. I understood from Dr. Nichols' interview how important a sense of history is for the students. I coordinated that with McIntosh's *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* and Johnson's chapters *We're in Trouble* and *Privilege, Oppression and Difference*. My goal was to get students thinking beyond the traditional multicultural literature based on a modernist model. Traditional multicultural literature has a "feel good individual approach toward multicultural education rather than approaching oppression as a systematic manifestation"(Akintunde, 1999, p. 5).

Each week began with an online reading and threaded discussion that touched on sensitive issues central to multicultural curricula such as White privilege. Readings addressed preservice teachers' awareness of multiculturalism, the origins of one's own racist attitudes, the destructive nature of the term race, minority parenting, and White privilege. Each article offered informative substance as well as a controversial edge. The syllabus outlines in detail weekly assignments and major assignments such as the midterm and final. The midterm is a reflective ethnic autobiography about the student's

life reflecting on prejudices they may have experienced during childhood. The final examination consists of a multicultural lesson plan with an emphasis on social justice.

Enrollment in the class was open to any preservice teacher in the teacher education program at the University of West Florida. This open invitation resulted in a diverse group of 12 students from varying walks of life. Each developed their own voice either through their in-class writings, online postings or through the class discussions. The lived experience of what these voices shared is the focus of the following chapters.

CHAPTER V

ONLINE VOICES

The online section of this class provided an environment for students to give

voice to their thoughts and feelings. The concept of voice is a vital factor in establishing a

critical pedagogy. Encouraging students to find their "voice" involves more than simply

allowing them to tell their stories. It involves what Giroux (1997) terms the "politics of

voice":

> This politics entails taking up the relationship between the personal and the
>
> political in a way that does not collapse the political into the personal but
>
> strengthens the relationship between the two so as to engage in rather than
>
> withdraw from addressing those institutional forms and structures that contribute
>
> to forms of racism, sexism, and class exploitation. (p.224)

The politics of voice underscores the importance of teachers understanding themselves

and their identities as they are socially constructed and relate to culture and historical

practices in education. Second, Giroux (1997) emphasizes hooks' perspective that voice

becomes more than the "telling of tales" to one of critical analysis connected to the

feminist ideals of "solidarity, struggle, and politics" (p. 225). With this notion of voice,

we can connect critical pedagogy to students' lived experiences and create meaning from

their stories as they relate to the classroom. Reflecting back upon my first experience in

trying to find my own voice, I remember my professor, Dr. Pilcher, encouraging us to

find our own voice. She explained that in order for our writing to come alive we had to discover that voice. At the time, that was a confusing concept. However, as the term progressed and her readings encouraged self-reflection and exploration of social issues I found my voice. It was small and insignificant at the time, but I believe it has grown. I wanted this discovery for the students in my class. I believe, through the online component of this class, some of them found their voice.

In viewing the online voices, I found three themes emerged. The students find a sense of freedom in speaking and posting online. They exchange ideas about sensitive topics and they finally begin to collaborate with one another in an effort to find answers to the difficult topics presented in their readings. Freedom, exchanging ideas and collaboration in the students' postings exemplify the emerging and transformative possibilities of online learning opportunities.

The Freedom of Voice Online

As Dr. Desposito had emphasized, I found that students expressed themselves more openly in the online discussions than they did in class. The online discussions were lively, and students' comments were sometimes much more revealing than during the class discussions. Although research in online multicultural classes is sparse, anecdotal data suggest it does provide a sense of freedom. One student reports, "I'm amazed at what people will say online. The online element of this class elicited a refreshing candor about difficult topics. Annie, who said very little in class, expresses herself online:

Until I entered college and began to discuss racism and multiculturalism, the

topic usually evoked feelings of tension, anxiety, irritation, even pity, denial or

worse - dismissal. Through ongoing research in this class and the sharing of

information, I am convinced that more learning opportunities will arise and events

like the symposium will become more widespread. As this topic is one that most

future educators have a genuine interest in for their success and the success of

their students.

Although Annie was very introspective in the classroom setting, in the online setting she

was verbal and insightful. Misty was another participant who never uttered a word in

class unless asked directly. The online component gave Misty the freedom to voice her

thoughts:

 I think that all human beings have a common ancestry. In this sense, all people

are related to one another and are created equal. As long as we keep classifying

people by race, we will continue to distance ourselves from others. Race should

not be confused with culture, language, nationality or religion.

 The online discussions gave students a forum for open discussions about sensitive issues

they might not have broached in a face-to-face setting. Misty never shared her ideas in

class, but felt free to express the above thoughts online. When discussing online classes

Akintude (2006) points out, "Students tend to feel more free to express their inner

thoughts and feelings regarding race privilege, and multicultural pedagogy, which is a

vital and necessary component to intellectual movement and a paradigmatic shift" (p. 36).

Two students, Annie and Patsy, illustrate Akintude's point in an online threaded

discussion. Annie writes

I continue to be amazed at my own ignorance that this topic has been so hotly

pursued throughout history and that so much damage has been forthcoming to

minorities. I still have trouble forming opinions in that I'm dealing with my own

ignorance in this area.

Pasty replies

Annie, how brave to say that you still have [sic] ignorance in this area, I have

been weak also, even though my Dad would have beat me to no end if he even

thought I didn't know better. My issue is that I am taken in sometimes by the

ignorance of others. I have to constantly keep myself in check on this issue.

The more I learn however the better I am at it. This class has taught me so much

already and I know I will be the better person for taking it (Even if it is required).

The students seemed bolder in their assertions when "speaking" online. Since the students

were able to post their thoughts and feelings about various sensitive topics their sense of

awareness regarding other classmates' feelings and ideas were indeed heightened. As

Chabon, Cain and Lee-Wilkerson (2001) found in their discussion about online threaded

discussion, "Through the threaded discussions, students were able to draw conclusions

about the impact of cultural differences on society, the need for cultural sensitivity and

the characteristics of culturally competent clinical practices" (p. 140).

Students began making comments concerning the freedom they felt when

discussing topics. Heidi critically assesses the difficulty of some of the readings:

Banks also says something that I would like to put on a reference card to remind

myself from time to time as I become a teacher and that is, "Teachers should be

aware of and sensitive to the stages of cultural development that all of their

students – including mainstream students, students of color, and other

marginalized groups of students – may be experiencing and facilitate their identity

development." (Banks, 2004). My big word babble definition of this is: [sic]

Teachers, be careful, your students are diverse and their cultural awareness levels

will all be different – educate them multiculturally [sic] and they will form an

identity of their own.

Heidi feels comfortable enough to reveal her struggle with what she views as the

educational jargon of an article and shares with the class her attempt to make it her own

by rewording the definition. Jack is also beginning to understand the value in what Heidi

refers to as "big word babble" and takes it one-step further with his own assertions of

Freire's work:

I agree with your statements about big word babble. I thought that it was funny

and defiantly [sic] true. On the other hand, i [sic] think that Freire's words are

written in a way that requires you to go back and think. That is why this book

works, our class works, and our discussions are so valuable to Mrs. Erickson.

Even more revealing were the others feelings that they could question the text as

indicated in Raonna's post:

The author says, "Globalization and nationalism are contradictory but coexisting

trends and forces in the world today." It seems difficult to see how this author's

ideals could really pan out in the way he thinks. What is so wrong with

nationalism and being self-dependant [sic] as a nation?

These discussions provide a virtual round-table for exchanging student ideas and

experiences. These exchanges provide a tangible example of reflective practices; in

addition, it reveals how students think, process and respond to others points of view.

These interactions generate new ways of knowing and understanding our world. Students

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feel free to discuss issues and admit vulnerabilities they might be otherwise too

embarrassed to share in class. Viewing the students' online conversations allowed me to

see their lived experiences in a different light.

Throughout these exchanges, my challenge was to remain thoughtful and

supportive, yet instructive when responding to students. During the semester, I remained

open and honest when responding to contentious comments made by students. Dr.

Rogers's comments about students who are "curious" as to why you would be interested

in such "unreasonable issues" repeatedly showed up in online discussions. This is where

students felt free enough to express how they really felt. Initially, I was concerned that

my response to students would trigger further frustration or even anger. However, Dr.

Rogers's as well as Dr. Nichols's emphasis on understanding where the student is coming

from kept occurring in my mind. Because of the caring these professors model, I was able

to approach the controversial discussions and topics with appropriate responses as

expressed in this exchange between Jack and me

> Jack: There should not be a Black history month without a White history month,
>
> American Indian history month, Mexican history month, Asian history
>
> month. . .There should not be only Black colleges, everyone should be able to be
>
> admitted (I think that is a form of racism), why is there a ton of only minority
>
> scholarships, and there is no only White scholarships??? [sic]

I replied

> James, I understand your frustration and your desire to believe everything should
>
> be equal. Unfortunately, for the last 200 years it has not been equal. Your
>
> comment regarding black history month, white history month is something I hear

quite often. My response to that is, and I am a history teacher, we have white

history month nine months of the school year. Regarding scholarships, I also feel

your pain, it is difficult to understand how "special groups" receive benefits just

because of skin color, however, historically these groups whether Black, Native

American, or whatever, are underrepresented in the university population due to

the injustices suffered in the past due to our unequal system. As Johnson (2006)

says, and I paraphrase, we did not create the problem, but we have inherited it, and we

are obliged to do something about it.

The straightforward, liberating and sometimes argumentative tones of these conversations

lead me to infer the students were finally comfortable giving voice to their true thoughts

and feelings. These and other volatile ideas were beginning to increase in frequency in

the online posts.

Exchanging Volatile Ideas

The students began to exchange ideas, sometimes without regard to political

correctness. Jack, the one White male student in the class, makes this rather controversial

post:

Racism now is no longer a White vs. Black issue or near the problem; it was

during that time frame (what about the Indians?). In the section called "Childhood

Experiences: The Roots of Racism" D'Andrea mentions that the childhood images

were primarily related to African Americans because they were the minority

group, well today African Americans are no-longer the minority group.

The students were reflecting on and responding to D'Andrea's *The Evolution and*

Transformation of a White Racist: A Personal Narrative. Reponses to Jack's post ranged

from understanding why he felt sometimes that tolerance goes overboard to recognizing the need for teaching social and cross-cultural skills that connect to the students' lived experiences. Raonna responds to Jack's comments:

> Some of the things you said in your response bothered me considerably. The key is connecting with our students. What good does it do if we throw a lesson plan at our kids without understanding where they are? I believe educating someone is meeting them where they are and then bringing them to know something new.

These statements reflect the discussion Freire and Horton have in *We Make the Road by Walking* concerning the recognition that students come to the classroom filled with knowledge:

> When students come, of course, they bring with them, inside them, in their bodies, in their lives; they bring their hopes, despair, expectations, knowledge, which they got by living, by fighting, by becoming frustrated. Undoubtedly, they don't come here empty. (Bell, Gaventa, and Peters, 1990, p. 156)

Students at all levels of maturity arrive in class with knowledge about their world and how they should navigate that world. A teacher's job is to help students integrate what students know with new experiences and new information about the world.

The students also use the online opportunity to question and support one another on hot button issues. In an exchange with Heidi about the controversial use of the term race, Kris writes

> The scientists of the past were not objective and used science to validate personal social prejudices. Race was paired with intelligence and descriptions such as

slow, foolish and negligent. Racial identity is not scientific or biologically useful. It is used to measure inferiority, not social class.

Heidi replies

Kris, I liked what you said: *"Racial identity is not scientific or biologically useful. It is used to measure inferiority, not social class"*. Right on. I think of the word "race" as being something that there is only one winner at, definitely not a word used to describe equality. . . . therefore it does not fit into the picture of ethnicity!

Ziegahn's (2001) study of online transformational learning is relevant here. She notes, "Because of the asynchronous online environment, both students and instructors had access to written accounts of the intellectual and emotional connections students made as they pondered new ideas, responses from classmates, and memories of their own experiences" (p. 149).

The issues of racism and our naiveté about it became apparent as we continued to reflect on our experiences. The online posts aided our reflective abilities. These online reflective communications mirror what Ziegahn's (2001) study of computer mediated communications (CMC) multiculturalism course found, "In this reflective stage, students reinterpreted either prior experience or present realities through the new theoretical lenses resulting from class readings and discussion" (p.147). Jessie and Kris provide an example of this reflective exchange

Jessie: Before I met my best friend Ravon, I thought that segregation was something that ended with the Civil Rights Movement because I was never exposed to it. She told me a recent story about her father, a full blooded Philippine, being denied service at a gas station in Jay because of his skin color.

I'm still bothered that I live in a town so close to that kind of discrimination and as long as we live in a racist society there is a need for multicultural education, personal change, and social action.

Kris: I am shocked to hear about your friend's father. I must be naive about some things. It is hard for me to wrap my brain around such ignorance. I have a real problem thinking that everyone thinks like me.

The students' naiveté was somewhat surprising. I believe the online discussions opened many of our eyes to discriminatory practices that because of our White privilege we were heretofore unaware. Comments like Jessie's, "I thought segregation was a thing of the past" and Jack's comment, "African-Americans are no longer the minority" exhibit the somewhat sheltered experiences of some students in the class. The class readings and online discussions challenged these sheltered upbringings, which helped in reflective activities. These reflective activities helped the students identify underlying feelings and attitudes about issues concerning multiculturalism.

Emerging themes developed as the class discussed issues of race, diversity and White privilege. Inferred benefits and unfair advantages because of race became a topic of discussion in the reflections on D'Andrea's article *The Evolution of a White Racist. Some s*tudents believe that with race come unfair advantages through minority scholarships. This online discussion between Jack and Patsy exemplifies their stance:

Jack: Why are there a ton of only minority scholarships, and there is no only white scholarships???

Kris replies with this

I certainly understand where you are coming from. I had to pay for my first round

of college with no aid or scholarship and I was a waitress. I remember seeing on

my tuition receipt that I had to contribute some of my hard earned money to

financial aid for others, when I could not get any help myself, I was furious! But

I cannot help but think that must be how the underprivileged and minorities have

felt for many years, screwed over.

Patsy replies, "I agree with James that minority's are given a better shot at education. Not

only do they qualify because of their race they also qualify because of their income."

Affirmative Action programs and minority scholarships evoke resistance among many

White students, as Dr. Nichols had reiterated in my interview with her.

Getting students to reflect on their upbringing and how it will affect their teaching

was an important goal for our online threaded discussions. The online forum provides

students with a space for sharing lived experiences: "Computer Mediated Communication

(CMC) can provide the space for students to share stories around personal and group

cultural identities in an environment which may be perceived as more open and relaxed

than the face-to-face classroom context" (as cited in Ziegahn, 2001, p. 145).

We were making progress in understanding that education is indeed political and

as educators, we are agents of change. Kris comes to this conclusion at the end of the

threaded discussion above

Teachers and counselors have roles as social activists. They will influence moral

development. They can disrupt negative racial views using education and be

active in promoting positive change in schools. We must have teaching

programs that deal with issues of racism, equality, and justice.

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Studies about racial discrimination support Kris's comment about disrupting negative racial views. The online discussions of this class reflect much of what I found in the literature. "Previous studies have proved that technology can provide meaningful ways for educators and students to process information and collaborate in order to promote critical thinking and social justice through multicultural education" (as cited in Sleeter & Tettegah, 2002, p, 3).

By providing discussion forums, online students have multiple opportunities to dialogue with me and among themselves. Rarely did I have to interject because classmates were quick to respond to each other's comments. Teaching and learning from each other became an evident phase of the online section as we see in the following exchanges.

Emergent Collaborative Learning Opportunities

The interaction between the students in the online discussions is vital in furthering our understanding of the complex issues we discussed in class. In addition, these discussions helped us bond as a group. When discussing the virtual environment as it relates to creating positive online learning experiences, Rasmussen, Nichols, and Ferguson (2006) suggest that interaction is an important strategy when discussing and reflecting upon the sensitive topics discussed in multiculturalism classes: "Interaction facilitates instruction strategies of reflection and collaboration" (p. 269).

Appreciating this notion of "common sense" knowledge is central for students in understanding themselves and their future students. The online feature gives students a place to share their common sense knowledge and life experiences. Louisa shares her lived experiences in her online post

Can you imagine not being able to touch the same textbook that a white child had touched? I have lived through this. Now that the signs are gone and we all go to the same hospital, we sit in same waiting room, and we drink from the same water fountains, yet racism still lives. It is still woven into the fabric of our society.

Patsy responds to Louisa's post confirming the racism that existed in her hometown.

Louisa, as a teenager I worked in a friend's mother's restaurant waiting tables. There was a sign on the wall that said coloreds are served at the back of the restaurant. The back of the restaurant was the kitchen! The restrooms were labeled whites and coloreds.

Jessie's response to Louisa's post illustrates the interaction and collaboration emerging in class

Louisa, I really enjoy hearing your point of view in class and listening to your opinions. How can you stand to listen to some people say that racism is not around today and that we are all given equal rights? I know that we are all coming from completely different places when stating our beliefs, I have been experiencing privileges all my life and you have experienced racism first hand but I think that it makes the discussions more meaningful.

We were beginning to open up and share life experiences with one another and in effect educate each other. The students were getting acquainted through the virtual environment and building a learning community. Even so, these revelations and reflections were often difficult and sometimes raised more questions than they answered as Heidi posts,

It was hard for me to read what I know to be the truth. Many of us were raised with little mingling of culture. I must say that I truly like this class

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because of the diverse students in it. It intrigues me and I am looking

forward to the discussions, thoughts and feelings of all of us. Are we all like

D'Andrea to a certain extent? I mean, many were raised to stick with their

own "kind", is this mentality/socially present today?

These discussions further our understanding of how important self-reflection and sharing

experiences can be in learning about these issues. Raonna shares this revelation

It is pretty amazing all the different areas of life that this issue seems to

permeate. There is no place free from it within our society. It starts at home at an

early age, it grows in school, it is present in the church and then we find it in our

professions. The worst thing is the silence toward the issue. . .the author states it

this way. . ."the violence of our silence." In every facet of our life, this is present

and in every way, we are avoiding the issue.

In observing the students and reading their writings, I could actually see these

inner conflicts manifesting in their online discussions. While discussing the term race

Kris posts this:

I always remember something I heard Chris Rock say in one of his comedy

shows, 'There ain't a white person in here who would trade places with me, and

I'm RICH!' Think about it, if you could trade places with a black man who is

more successful and very rich, no way would you do it, it would not matter, you

would hold on to your white skin. I know I would. That shows me there is still a

superiority that comes with white skin.

    How the students were raised as children caused a continual struggle between how

they feel now and is evident throughout their posts. Students express their struggles in the

online postings. As Ziegahn (2001) notes, "The written nature of online classroom dialogue rendered thinking and feeling transparent, to other students as well as the teacher" (p. 146). This transparency promoted forthright dialogue between the students as illustrated in this exchange between Jack and Kris:

> Jack: I want all minorities to succeed and overcome any obstacles they may face, but how much help do they need? The help (or multicultural differences) is overshadowing the need for better and more subject matter for our children. In my opinion I should not be worried whether a child can speak English or not, that child's parents should have taught or learned English when receiving citizenship into our country, I am pretty sure that is a requirement.

Kris recognizes Jack's frustration and attempts to address it in a collaborative and thoughtful manner

> I agree in one aspect that culture needs to be left at home. In the case where a school had to serve different jello because it interfered with a different culture, ridiculous. Sometimes tolerance goes overboard. But, students cannot be taught like robots (learn your lessons and that's it). These kids are different now. They are not linear thinkers anymore, they are hypercommunicators. Students are going to have to be successful in a global economy. In that aspect, I would have to teach social and cross-cultural skills.

Kris instinctively recognizes and shares that children today are using technology and communicating in many ways, from cell phones to the Internet. This ability to communicate so readily offers educators multiple opportunities to reach students. Much like Giroux (1997) suggests when discussing border pedagogy

What is at stake here is developing a border pedagogy that can fruitfully work to

break down those ideologies, cultural codes, and social practices that prevent

students from recognizing how society forms at particular historical conjunctures

operate to repress alternative reading of their own experiences, society, and the

world. (p.150)

The students are beginning to tackle the complexities of the multicultural classrooms they

will face. I gather from their comments these students are people who care about

children, but are unsure how to traverse the changing landscape of a twenty-first century

classroom. As Annie responds to the comments above

That part of me that is the Type A, white single mother personality,

struggling to complete her education while working full time would LOVE

to agree with you, but I know from assisting in my daughter's classrooms

throughout elementary school years that we have a challenging road before us.

America is changing dramatically and the classroom population is changing even

in our more rural towns. The fact is that we will have to [sic] adapt in order to

succeed, not the other way around. I appreciate your honesty though and look

forward to hearing your conclusions throughout our class.

These postings reveal the inner turmoil the students are feeling. These posts and the

responses allow the students to vent their frustrations and fears. I found as Ziegahn

(2001) found: "These students were embroiled in the emotions that accompanied a hard

look at their assumptions" (p. 147). Through these reflective online posts they are

beginning to look at and question their own as well as others' original paradigms; with

this questioning comes further understanding of how our views may shape our teaching attitudes and styles.

CHAPTER VI

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

The classroom assignments involved reflective practices like those all three

professors use. At the end of each class, students spent 15-20 minutes writing a reflection

upon the week's readings, class lectures, discussions and activities. This proved

invaluable in assessing how the students were experiencing the class content and

interactions. Other reflective experiences had the students participating in a "common

sense assumption activity" where Brookfield (1995) demystifies commonly held

assumptions about teaching methods. Students examined assumptions such as "It's

common sense to cut lecturing down to a minimum, since lecturing induces passivity and

kills critical thinking." The students had to say whether they accept the assumption and

why. Several other reflective activities highlight students' struggles with issues of

diversity. The next exercise helps illustrate these struggles.

Becoming Other

A revealing reflective activity had the students use Johnson's (2006) Diversity

Wheel, based on Hill Collins's matrix of domination. According to Hill Collins (1990)

Replacing additive models of oppression with interlocking ones creates

possibilities for new paradigms. The significance of seeing race, class, and

gender as interlocking systems of oppression is that such an approach fosters a

paradigmatic shift of thinking inclusively about other oppressions, such as age,

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sexual orientation, religion, and ethnicity. Race, class, and gender represent the

three systems of oppression that most heavily affect African-American women.

But these systems and the economic, political, and ideological conditions that

support them may not be the most fundamental oppressions, and they certainly

affect many more groups than Black women. Other people of color, Jews, the

poor, white women, and gays and lesbians have all had similar ideological

justifications offered for their subordination. All categories of humans labeled

Others have been equated to one another, to animals, and to nature. (p. 223)

Hill Collins sees oppression as an overarching concept that addresses what many groups

of people suffer. The uniqueness of her paradigm is its focus on the interconnectedness or

matrix of all oppressive hierarchies. Moreover, the matrix of domination implies that

virtually everyone at one time or another suffers from oppression of some type or they

may become the oppressor. The challenge is to see how we subordinate Others. Johnson

gets us to see Others using an exercise with the Diversity Wheel. This paradigm shift is

central in getting students to see diverse points of view. Johnson describes Loden and

Rosener's (1991) diversity wheel. The inner ring consists of basic human characteristics,

age, race, sexual preferences, and such. The outer wheel consists of societal

characteristics including but not limited to, education, work background, marital status,

religious beliefs and parental status. In this exercise, using Johnson's diversity wheel

students first identify their "culture" and then write a "point of view" paper taking on the

persona of someone culturally or ethnically different. The following excerpts are from

this exercise. Jessie changes her culture from that of a heterosexual female to a white

heterosexual male of the same age:

A day in my life as a 22-year-old white male is pretty typical. I have certain

privileges because of my race and gender but also some disadvantages. It seems

like mostly everyone I work with and go to school with is pretty similar to me. I

went to high school with mostly all white people; I didn't mingle much with

anyone different than me. I have to make sure to maintain my dominance so I

remain in everyone's eyes, "a man". I am in fear of losing my job to a minority

that can possibly work for less. If I lost my job I wouldn't be able to provide for

my family and I wouldn't feel like a man. I need people to respect me. At work I

like joking with the female employees but have to be careful that they don't report

me for sexual harassment. I'm of course just joking, but some girls can be so

sensitive and take it the wrong way. There is one guy at work that is gay and I try

not to interact with him too much. I'm not homophobic but I think that a real man

is defined as someone who is always in control, and sexual identity is a major

way that we can prove that. "Real men" are heterosexual and masculine.

Raonna, a white female, also chooses to become a white male

If tomorrow I were a man things would be very different for me. In many ways I

think my life would have improved drastically. First off I would be head of my

house and would lead our home in the direction I think it should go. I would make

good financial decisions and work hard to accomplish things I have set out to do. I

wouldn't wait on anyone to tell me what I should do or how I should be. I would

be free to be me. I would be totally self-absorbed and self-centered. The world

would revolve around me and my needs. At work I would be highly praised

instead of second guessed. There is little doubt in my mind that I would make a

lot more money and have a higher position in the company. I would spend more

time with my friends and enjoy my life. I would do what I want when I want with

little regard to how it affects other people. I would be insensitive and probably a

little miserable because of my selfishness.

Interestingly, both of these intelligent young women feel that their lives would afford

them more freedom and respect. Jessie does recognize some of the social pressures of

being male in a society dominated by heterosexual males. She hints at the psychological

oppression some men may self-inflict regarding their sexual orientation and the pressure

to preserve the "real man" persona.   Raonna's resentment of male privilege and

domination is apparent in her passages. Raonna holds little back admitting only that (s)he

may be "a little" miserable because of his selfishness. She also believes that as a man the

world would revolve around his needs.

Kris changes from a 30 something, White female to an African American female:

I chose to change my race from White to Black. When I think about how my life

would change, I can only see a few things. First thought is my neighbor would be

so pissed. He is your typical ignorant redneck loser. He is drunk half the time I

see him and is trying to sponge off disability because he is too lazy to work. I've

heard him complain about how the Mexicans are taking all our jobs. And I've

said to him "They're not taking your job, you're too lazy to get one." Of course

he uses the "n" word. I've told him he can say whatever he wants in his yard but

don't ever bring his racist remarks to my space.

In this excerpt, Kris identifies the racial paradox that sometimes exists between White

working class males and Others. Kris recognizes her neighbor is unwilling to work, yet

blames his own unemployed status on those "Mexicans." Fine, Weis, Addelston, and

Maruza (1997) discover this attitude in their study of White working-class males in the

late twentieth century. When discussing hierarchies of race, gender and class in the

United States the authors note

> Among the varied demographic categories that spill out of this race/gender
>
> hierarchy, white men are the only ones who have a vested interest in maintaining
>
> both their position and their hierarchy-even, ironically, working-class boys and
>
> men who enjoy little of the privilege accrued to their gender/race status. (p. 55)

Kris goes on to identify other forms of racism she might encounter. She discusses how

her social life might change:

> I do have some friends in Gulf Shores from when I lived and worked there before
>
> coming to Pensacola. I don't make it over there much, but we are all big Nascar
>
> [sic] fans and go to Talladega every fall. Those friends would not want to include
>
> me if I were black. Definitely would not let me go to Talladega. It would be too
>
> embarrassing for them as there are no black people at the race or campground.
>
> The people that camp out at Talladega are true racist [sic]. I have heard some
>
> horrible remarks at that race. I would truly be scared for my life to go there if I
>
> were black.

Kris then discusses the perceived benefits of race:

> The biggest and best change would be with my company. The business I am in
>
> is set up to where all federal government big businesses (prime) must give 23% of
>
> service revenue to small businesses (sub). This is how they keep big business
>
> from monopolizing and promote small business growth. I qualify for small

business as I am woman owned. If I were black, I would qualify as a small

disadvantaged business and be eligible for the 8(a) programs, which are only

minority owned. All prime contractors are very interested in adding 8(a)'s to their

contracts to get the diversity credit for small business participation. It helps them

win contracts. If I were a black woman, my company would be a sub to many

more contracts and I would make a lot more money. Also, under the 8(a)

authority, contracting officers could award me contracts without any competition.

This would build my company and give me the experience to build up to

priming my own contracts. It's basically Affirmative Action for small

business. These are the ways I can see how being black would change my life. I

am single, Catholic, own my own home and car. My dog would love me no

matter what. I don't see much change.

Kris believes becoming Black would affect her career in a positive manner and

her social life in a negative way. In her first attempt at this assignment, she did not

mention any negative aspects when changing roles. After the following prompt from me,

"Kris, you make several valid points about the business end of things. However, how do

you think people outside your family and co-workers would treat you?"

Only then did Kris add the information about her friends in Gulf Shores.

Annie provides us with a look at how changing her nationality will change her life.

I am a Hispanic woman, 43 years old with three children. My husband left our

family 6 years ago. I am a single mother. Although my English is very good, it is

very difficult to get a good paying job in this area where Mexican people are

treated with suspicion. Because I was raised in a very traditional Catholic

upbringing, I did not pursue a college education, I anticipated being married for life and raising my children without having to work full-time.

Annie identifies the problem some immigrant women may commonly have because of their ethnic background. She tells how difficult it is to acquire assistance.

Although I am an American citizen, as are my children, we required to prove our citizenship when applying for government assistance, for schooling purposes, for housing and for employment. It is not enough to check the "American citizen box" on applications without having to provide our birth certificates, which I must have with me at all time.

Finally, Annie addresses the social isolation often felt by single working mothers, which may be compounded by distance from relatives living outside of the United States.

I feel isolated much of the time; my co-workers are mostly white women who are married. Their husbands help with the children, provide adequate income and also companionship. Other than work, we do not have much in common. I am aware that I will be passed over for any promotion because I am unable to work over-time or holidays due to the fact that I am my children's sole caretaker and must be available for them. My extended family all live out of state.

Annie herself is a single mother and may have similar features to the one described above, however, realizes how the difficulties might be compounded if she were of a different ethnic background.

Jack changes his race from White to Black. This change, according to Jack, would result in a loss of a few friends: "As far as friendships, I don't think that being Black would go over well." He does not attribute this loss due to racial attitudes, but to cultural

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differences. He describes his friends: "They are all White middle class and have very strong upbringings and are not use to African Americans." He feels the same result would occur if he were African American and changed to a White male. However, he believes that changing his race would improve his financial situation regarding school: "I personally think that on a financial side of life being Black during my twenties would help with my schooling."

In many of Jack's posts and writings, he refers to the disparity between scholarships for African Americans versus those available to Whites. Apparently, Jack struggles with the financial burden of getting a college education and lays some of the blame on what he sees as a lack of parity for White students in the secondary educational system. This type of resentment is found in the literature; Wilson (1996) describes this pattern:

> Although the view of affirmative action as reverse discrimination that
> destroys the careers of white students and professors is not supported by the
> evidence, anecdotes about the white males unable to get jobs because they are all
> designated for minorities continue to be told. (p. 88)

Jack's comments reflect what Fine et. al (1997) observe: "According to these men, white men are today being set up as the 'new minority,' which contradicts their notions of equal opportunity" (p. 61).

An addition to this view, blaming the victim has become commonplace in society. Ryan (1971) finds, "The generic process of blaming the victim is applied to almost every American problem" (p. 5). Blaming the victim ideology replaces the traditional conservative ideology that deficits in character or socioeconomic status are intrinsic

problems, in other words, people are just born that way. The traditional view simply, as Annie suggested in an earlier comment, dismisses the problem as unworthy of attention. Blaming the victim shifts responsibility for societal ills from society to the individual. This ideological shift is a dangerous one because it alleviates responsibility by the dominate majority. Helping others is currently in vogue as the preponderance of "community service programs" and charity events demonstrate. However, blaming the victim lets us off the hook. As Ryan (1971) suggests, "It is a brilliant ideology for justifying a perverse form of social action designed to change, not society, as one might expect, but rather society's victim" (p.7).

This relates to education in the form of special programs designed to "fix" the child rather than fixing systemic inequalities within a school system. Rather than undertake the responsibility for changing long held inequitable practices, victim blaming excuses us from taking action on social injustices. Whatever the cause, how students see a situation from another point of view tends to reveal their genuine feelings on issues such as race or in this class Affirmative Action.

Putting yourself in the place of another person is a difficult task. It is impossible to determine how life would really change, but this exercise provides everyone with a reflective opportunity to try to walk in someone else's shoes. I find it interesting that with the exception of Annie, the students feel their life would improve in some way if they were other than what they are today. Many of the comments regarding benefits dealt with improved financial situations.

Ethnic Autobiographies

The reflective assignment above serves as a precursor for their midterm examination, a reflective autobiography that concerned one's own upbringing in terms of racist or other discriminatory practices. Much like the D'Andrea article that illustrates how even seemingly innocent activities like playing "cowboys and Indians" reinforce detrimental stereotypes, the mid-term had students reflect upon childhood incidents that may have contributed to prejudicial practices. In the ethnic autobiographies, I wanted them to identify discriminatory practices they saw as children and think about how these practices might affect their current attitudes.

Of all the students, Patsy had the most difficult time reconciling the facts of racism, especially institutionalized racism, with her upbringing on the Florida panhandle during the 1950's. Her White father was actually raised by an African American couple named Henry and Dumps

> There was a Black family living behind Daddy's house where he could count
>
> on a meal. My Daddy loved old Henry and Dumps. Dumps was really the name
>
> she was born with. In all sense [sic] of the word, they were his parents. They fed
>
> him and took care of him.

Because of her father's relationship with Henry and Dumps, racist behavior was unacceptable in Patsy's childhood home. This attitude was scarcely the norm of that era. In her paper, Patsy describes the day her school was desegregated:

> I can still remember the first day the buses pulled up in front of the school.
>
> If daggers could have flown from eyes, we would have all be [sic] dead! I was
>
> scared more than curious. I would walk on one side of the school sidewalk if a

Black were coming my way. Heck. . . I wasn't going to get in their way because they might kill me. This is so far from the way my parents raised me. I was taking on the rationalization of the other students. Those are the students whose parents had taught them to be a racist. The segregation of the Indians to our school wasn't such a big deal. The people of our town didn't really think they posed any problems, because they lived 20 miles away. The Blacks however lived in the "Nigger Quarters" on the other side of the railroad tracks. I know this is a hard word to read, just as much as it was for me to write it. It is how the whites and blacks referred to where the blacks lived. They would never have been allowed to live in town with the white folks. In the 50's and well into the 70's they chose to live across the railroad tracks. They have now however, settled harmoniously in town. It is quite common to see mixed couples, which are a sign that segregation in my opinion has worked. It is sad that it has taken so long to accomplish this.

A telling comment of our continued naiveté or maybe denial is Patsy's use of the phrase, "they chose to live across the railroad tracks." I think most of us who were raised in the South understand that, at that time, there was very little choice involved.

An interesting contrast is Patsy's daughter Heidi. Her reflections about growing up in Hawaii account for the tolerant attitudes that are Patsy's core beliefs. Although being "color blind" is an approach we need to abandon, Heidi uses it here to explain to us that her parents did not raise her to be prejudiced.

The fact that my mother and father seemed to be colorblind is confusing. They come from the Deep South where prejudices run high. They grew up in the 60's, a

time of Black neighborhoods being completely separate from White

neighborhoods. It was a time where the Indians from the reservation which was

next to their hometown were still considered as untouchable as the Blacks were.

How did they grow to the point of being very young parents and color blind? I

cannot remember hearing a derogatory remark against color until my adolescent

years in Hawaii.

Because of Heidi's childhood experience as a minority, she values her mother's

acceptance of others. Throughout the term, Heidi's high degree of respect for her mother

is evident. Heidi understands prejudice not only from her mother's teachings but also

from her own experience as a member of an outsider group

I can remember going to class one day, just like every other day, and I passed an

alcove where several young men were hanging out. As I looked over at them, I

dropped something and as I picked the item up, one of the guys begin by saying,

and note that I quote, "You ugly ass hoale, you are so White, you need to go

back to the mainland, no one wants you here, don't you ever look at me again!"

Then he spit at me but thankfully not on me. That moment had a profound impact

on me, on how I become quiet in a room full of differences. I would have to say

that what happened that day had a small portion to do with who I have

become.

Identifying discriminatory practices from our childhood help us develop further

insights into our daily practices. They also shed light on aspects of each student's lived

experiences. Louisa, for instance, continues her struggle daily as a preschool teacher

When I think about white privilege and my desire to become a teacher, I

don't look at the color [sic] children's skin. However, White parents as well

as some Black parents walk in and find out that I am an African American

and I can see the disappointment in their face. Years of experience has

taught me that I must teach the child and enlighten the parent.

The accommodating attitude Louisa displays helped us further understand the complexities

of race relations. Louisa helped us toward new ways of understanding discriminatory

practices and how to cope with them.

Vannee, a native of Peru, provides us with a different view regarding how her

culture views race:

The population of Peru is a complex mix between ethnic and racial groups.

Since the colonization, the Spanish White people mixed with the Amerindian

making a race called *Mestizo*. Before emancipation, Afro-Americans and

Asian people came to live in the territory like slaves. Peru recognizes

mixed races like part of the history of the country. That is the difference

between Hispanic culture and American culture.

She refers to Freire's impact on education in her country and how even in Peru White

people are at the top of the social and financial hierarchy:

Freire changed the educational system not only in his country, also in South

America, were [sic] the poor class cannot have access to a good education. I had a

catholic [sic] humanistic education. I studied with the people who were white and

for the dominant class in Peru. They studied with the only purpose to take charge

of the families [sic] business in the future. White people in my country are rich.

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Vannee also describes what she views as a misconception about Hispanic and African American relationships:

> I worked with African American people, and I think the statement of
> Johnson & Guinn do not reflect the reality. Johnson said, "Blacks feared
> Hispanics were taking their jobs, while the Hispanics resented Black for trying to
> maintain control of the political system" (Johnson & Guinn, 1997). I did not have
> any problem with African American people but I perceived that we are funny
> people for them. In Chicago, I found some people that make fun of my accent
> when [sic] I came here; they did not understand me at all.

Addressing multiculturalism in the classroom, Vannee says,

> Evans mentions in the lecture, "teachers are urged to infuse several ethnic
> perspectives into the curriculum" (Evans, 2006). A teacher must to have [sic]
> the ability to understand others cultures and to keep the prejudices away. It is not
> erasing [sic] what we are thinking; it's motivating us to open our mind to the
> different necessities of ours future students. There are pre-recorder [sic]
> stereotypes in all minds, but we can change what we are thinking for something
> that we can use in a classroom, [sic].

The autobiographies promoted students' awareness of their upbringing. The autobiographies, in turn, may show how their backgrounds might influence their teaching methods and experiences. The students' stories are poignant and imply how students can develop sensitivity about cultural awareness.

Establishing Environment

In creating this class, I sought to facilitate a learning environment where students felt secure yet challenged enough to discuss and tackle perplexing and even painful issues. I used a postmodernist approach to information, a variety of activities, and a Freireian approach to teaching.

Dr. Nichols advocates a combination of approaches that encourage active, engaged learning. The ethnic autobiography as well as the Power Points, the interactive DVD, and the hands on activities each week stimulated such learning. Whether the assignment was a discussion, a class critical literacy activity, visiting the computer lab to view lesson plans or video clips, the students got actively involved in "constructing" their own knowledge. As Mezirow states, ". . .knowledge is not 'out there' to be discovered but is created from interpretations and reinterpretations in light of new experiences" (as cited in Merriam, 2001, p. 16).

My desire to establish a warm, open environment where the students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts on sensitive topics was also paramount. Establishing this environment is, according to the three professors as well as the literature, vital in creating a successful multicultural class. Yet developing such an environment proves quite difficult. Getting the students to understand the notion of a dialogic forum where student and teacher and student and student were talking "with" one another rather than "to" one another is new to many in the class.

I aim not only for what Freire (2005b) calls the problem solving method of teaching but also for dialogical teaching. "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student

with students-teachers" (p. 80). Dialogue falters, however. For example, the first evening while we were discussing White privilege, Dee-nyce began speaking and then stopped. When I encouraged him to go on, he shook his head and said he did not want a bad grade. I had to encourage him to go on and express his views, even if they did not agree with mine. I wanted students to accept the absence of clear-cut answers to the questions we were exploring.

Taking a postmodernist approach did, though, help me move toward the rapport and openness I sought. The students were discovering their voices and histories through the activities, discussions and online postings. Throughout the term, I often had to remind them that what they had to say would not affect their grade. As the term progressed, students did become more comfortable voicing their thoughts, as their threaded discussions illustrate.

After several weeks, the consensus about class discussions indicated a sense of freedom. hooks (1994) describes what we accomplished together: "To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin" (p.13). By the end of the term, the students confirm that the class atmosphere reflected this caring with comments like these: "I really like we are able to express ourselves without fear of judgment" and "I feel like I learn in this class, I feel like someone listens to my opinions." Then there was this exchange in a threaded discussion; Heidi had this to say: "I am glad that I was able to attend a small classroom setting with presentations similar to that of the symposium sessions. I think I was able to better express as well as soak up the opinions of others."

Annie responds,

> When confronted with some of the information though, I am becoming aware that
> this issue has some deeply ingrained mindsets on all sides from all viewpoints.
> Even reading stories in the Bible, racism and class distinctions have been around
> since societies began to form. I suppose we can start with ourselves and those
> around us and do our part to initiate the change we hope to see.

Patsy sums it all up with this honest, earthy comment:

> I don't usually admit to anything buttttt. . .I[sic] have learned more in this small
> setting class then I have learned in two semesters at UWF. Don't get me wrong
> now. . .I don't want to take another Culture Class of any sort. I'm done!! Kaput!
> I'm cultured out.

> Yet, a postmodernist approach elicits frustration. In several in-class writings and
online postings, students express frustration about not being "fed" the answers. A
conversation among Kris, Raonna and me is illustrative.

> Kris: I too wanted to be told what to do in a multicultural classroom and realize
> it's not that simple. My attitude toward diversity is what is most important. The
> reaction that stood out to me is, "If you think this [social inequality] is something
> that doesn't happen, it is because you are not looking for it.
> Raonna: I feel the same way about wanting to be told what to do. I think this is
> because I am at a loss when it comes to how to react to all this information. I
> want to act---I am not sure how to apply this to my own life and even less how to
> apply it to a classroom. I just want someone to spell it out for me but it seems

much more complicated than that. I have awareness now but I feel confused and more so inadequate to handle it in a classroom.

Cindy: Kris and Raonna, there are no formulaic answers to the questions we are asking. Each classroom is different as is each child and teacher. You are both correct in that there are no easy answers, but many questions. Combining critical reflection as a personal practice with critical literacy and sound teaching will aid you in your quest for a multicultural classroom. Make students understand you care and much of what you are seeking will come naturally. Give students a voice.

Such thoughts, frustrations, concerns, and awareness characterize the bulk of the data here. Analyzing and faithfully reporting students' lived experiences is my challenge. While students' online discussions allow me to "get close to this life," the face-to-face classroom experiences allow me to make connections with those whose online voices were often bold. The next chapter moves us, then, from virtual space to classroom space.

CHAPTER VII

CONNECTING FACE TO FACE

Our class combined face-to-face meetings with online learning. Although online

learning provides great opportunity for reflecting and exchanging ideas, I wanted the

face-to-face connection with and among the students. Thus, we met weekly for three

hours. I began each evening with a brief lecture on some aspect of multiculturalism. Our

main topics covered White privilege, critically reflective teaching, demographic shifts,

culturally relevant pedagogies, multicultural curricula, lesson planning and critical

literacy. As the quote above suggests as we progressed we often discovered new

questions.

The first night McIntosh's article on White privilege was our focus. This article

explores taken for granted privileges people enjoy because of their White skin. Although

White people have done nothing to earn or even seek this privilege, it causes problems

for all of us and pain for some of us. As Johnson (2006) explains, "Privilege is always at

someone else's expense and always exacts a cost" (p. 8). As one student said, McIntosh's

article was rather a bold opener. Dee-nyce, who hails from the Bahamas, had never had a

White teacher before moving to the U. S. His comments about White privilege were

revealing: "The first night I was like, whoa, I couldn't imagine a class that actually talked

about White privilege." As the students discussed this concept, many admitted to being

unfamiliar with the phrase. Some students felt conflicted. Several revealed in their writings that although they felt "everyone should have the same opportunities and equal rights," they "would not want any of their current privileges taken away."

Another theme in several writings and discussions involved a shift in attitude. Their awareness of racial privileges now makes some of the White students, as McIntosh puts it; feel "newly accountable." One student made a particularly telling observation:

I was mostly humbled by how many White condition [sic] she listed that I can see pertain to my own life as a White individual. I didn't realize how privileged I actually was and how many more advantages I have over someone of color or of a different ethnic background.

Contradicting with these thoughts, Jack had this to say about McIntosh's article, "I personally think that we should be reading an article named *Minority Privilege and How It Causes the Problem of Lingering Racism."* Multiculturalism as a divisive topic was a recurrent theme in the class discussions, online posts and in-class writings. Although the students agree that racism or oppression of any group is unacceptable, about half of the class repeatedly voiced concern that if we do not let the past go, we will have difficulty moving forward. Throughout the class, the students struggled with understanding the need to learn how to teach diverse populations while moving away from feeling guilt and embarrassment over past injustices.

One evening as we discussed these issues in a small, informal focus group, tensions became apparent. Patsy finally asked, "How do I not feel guilty about teaching about slavery?" Louisa replied, "What you've got to do is teach that every White person was not bad." She goes on to share lesson plans she uses in her class that focuses on the

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Quakers and the Underground Railroad. She emphasizes how that system involved Whites and Blacks working together. Louisa emphasizes that you have to pay attention to the positive as well as the negative. This stance from an African American student toward a White student seems freeing for us all. The tension of discussing this topic lessens palpably after this exchange.

This discussion showed several interesting things. First, the students are finally beginning to feel comfortable enough with each other's "otherness" to ask tough questions. Second, some White people, who do not view themselves as prejudiced and have no reason to, continue to feel guilt and a sense of blame. In my judgment, this circumstance often prevents constructive dialogue in multicultural classrooms. Third, this turning point for the class led Louisa to explain how she, as an African American teacher, sees the politization of education. She tells us that among Santa Rosa County's 112 new teachers this year, not one is African American. Out of 2000 teachers in that district, only 39 are African American. Louisa goes on to say that, she could get angry and irate. Instead, though, she again emphasizes something positive alongside the negative:

> I've got to be conscious of what I instill into my children. So yes, slavery was a bad thing. It was a black eye for America wanting to be a dominate leader, but what do I teach the children of the future? Well, let's take a look at it. Everybody was not bad.

Dee-nyce highlights another interesting point when he discusses why he thinks predominately White schools outperform predominately-Black schools: "I do not feel that White students should bring down their level of achievement and drive, but use their 'White privilege' to empower those who might be less powerful." This statement reflects

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the transformative learning Freire (2005a) advocates: "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 79). Dee-nyce's comments also highlight his depth of understanding about the Black/White dichotomy and socioeconomic disparities in society.

Another class discussion focused on how cultural backgrounds should drive teaching strategies in a diverse classroom. I emphasized that a teacher cannot divorce children from their culture. Interestingly, Dee-nyce argues that you must do so when a child's culture impedes learning. He talks about some subcultures in his native Bahamas that denigrate education and promote drug use as well as thug culture. He believes the teacher is responsible for separating children from such damaging cultures and helping them see how education can improve their lives.

Louisa and I both suggest that teachers could not do that if they are unaware of a child's cultural background in the first place. You could almost see the light bulb coming on in Dee-nyce's head. These exchanges underscore the importance of dialogue between students and teacher. As Freire (2005a) puts it, "The teacher cannot think for her students nor can she impose her thought on them. . . .thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication" (p. 77).

When we discussed the demographics of today's classrooms and the world, tales of discriminatory experiences surfaced. One student remembers the first time she was called "cracker," and another shares her fears about shopping at night, walking or jogging alone in the evenings. Others make statements like, "Hispanics are growing at an alarming rate," or "Men should be the head of the family." Another student admits, "I didn't think I needed this class, but when Johnson discusses the matrix of domination, I

thought, okay, maybe I do need this class." She was discussing her feelings about females in positions of power. She as well as one other student shared their negative attitudes toward women "bosses." This began a lively discussion of women's rights and male domination. Sadly, the only two males were absent. The women's writings and discussion reflect, though, that some students might have hesitated to have an open conversation on these topics had the men been present: "I felt the discussion we had today on gender inequalities was interesting and I don't think we would've been able to do so as freely if the males were present in the class today."

Gradually, the students realize racism and discriminatory practices are far from rare. One student claims, "It is eye-opening to hear how racism is still affecting people of color." Another observes, "Racism is still present, but silent." Scholars refer to this "silent" racism as "covert racism." Coats (2008) says this less observable "racism remains submerged, entangled in the centuries-old tentacles borne of exploitation, extortion, and hyperoppression" (p. 208). Covert racism may manifest itself as "color blindness" or, more obviously, in the gerrymandering of voting districts. Jessie sums up the final consesus of class in this reflection: "We can all learn from reflecting on our own thoughts and understanding where our prejudices come from."

The majority of the students understand the need to take diverse populations into account and to incorportate critical multicultral lessons in their teaching. Yet those who had been in the teacher education program longer were in their own words: "Up to here with diversity." Yet, all students continue to keep an open mind. Even Jack, the one vocal holdout, made this instructive statement,

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So far, I have to force myself to keep an open mind due to my upbringing. I am learning some, but resistant to a lot. The whole thing I have with multiculturalism is that it complicates and causes more problems. . . my opinion is subject to change. This class has great expectations and a great reasoning, so it is forcing me to think out of the box. I just don't want racism to be used as a crutch.

Most of these 12 students were not so much resistant to a critical multicultural curriculum as they were unfamiliar with its concepts and principles. I did not sense an unwillingness to learn, but caution in approaching sensitive topics within a diverse group. In one class writing Heidi stated, "I have so much to say, yet I couldn't speak tonight. I felt the proverbial elephant present, sitting directly in front of me." When I later asked her what she meant, she said she was afraid of sharing her thoughts because she did not want to offend others in the class. All of the students expressed this hesitancy at one time or another during the term. Louisa, whom I came to see as the matriarch of the class, even remained cautiously silent until the class progressed.

Several students voice the notion that continually talking about multicultural issues perpetuates divisive thinking. It was as if they thought, if we ignored "it," the problem would go away. One student stated these feelings this way, "I'm not really racist, but I wonder if we didn't focus so much on who has been hurt that maybe we could move forward." Instructors in multicultural classes often face this kind of thinking. However, as Johnson (2006) articulates,

The bottom line is that a trouble we can't talk about is a trouble we can't do

anything about. Words like sexism and privilege point to something difficult and

painful in our history that continues in everyday life in our society. (p. 10)

His point is, one I reiterate to the students, if we cannot talk about these issues, they will

continue to plague society.

Midway through the term I invited my mentor, Dr. Rogers to class to address any

questions the students might have. She embodies what it means to be a critically

reflective instructor. Although I was aware of this aspect of Dr. Rogers' teaching ability,

it was instructive to watch as a participant-observer the effect she had on the students.

As Dr. Rogers entered the room, she made physical contact with each student by

shaking their hand and making direct eye contact. This simple human contact set the

tenor for the class. As the floor opened for questions, there was some tentativeness on the

part of the students. After one question, the forum took off. The students asked questions

ranging from, "What do you think are the most important characteristics of a good

teacher?" to the continued practice of tracking k-12 students. The students responded to

Dr. Rogers's "warmth and genuineness." They all commented that after she made that

first physical contact with them, they immediately felt at ease. Passion for education and

people are characteristics Dr. Rogers's feels are important characteristics for teachers to

have. This statement rang true with the students. As preservice teachers, each of them

exhibits excitement and passion about becoming a teacher. Later in the reflective writing

assignments students commented on Dr. Rogers' ability to establish a comfort zone with

initial human contact.

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Another significant impression the students gathered from the discussion was the need for teachers to identify at least one positive attribute for each student. The class felt this was a useful strategy when working with diverse populations. Dr. Rogers also talked about the political aspect of education. The notion that we blame disenfranchised groups for social problems rather than holding those in public office accountable for addressing social needs captivated the students. Politicizing education appeared to be a new notion for the students.

Jack offered an uncharacteristic reaction: "The knowledge Dr. Rogers has is unbiased. This is needed in order for the school system to approach multiculturalism correctly." This comment perhaps responds to the postmodernist approach that Dr. Rogers has mastered. Her ability to make students like Jack feel relaxed and her ability to present sensitive topics in ways that do not jeopardize dialogue, is by the students' own admission, the embodiment of a superior educator. Moreover, at least according to Jack, teacher education programs need this stance in order to "approach" multiculturalism in an unbiased manner. This interaction with Dr. Rogers may have led to a turning point for Jack. Forthwith, Jack's comments, although still somewhat based on Eurocentric ideologies, began a slow change:

Most multicultural opinions are coming only from one point of view when Freire's thoughts are maintained with no bias what so-ever! [sic] After reading this chapter I see more clearly into the realm of teaching and authoritarian type teaching. Students today require much more than an adult telling them what to do, they require a leader or even a friend. I see the need for a relationship rather than a placement type of setting where I am the teacher and you are the student.

This student had earlier insisted you did not need to understand the student; simply teach your subject. Could this be another light bulb flickering on?

A Study in Contrasts: Two Students' Views

For a small class of 12 students it was still a rather diverse population. The ages ranged from 21 to 58 years in age. The students' backgrounds varied quite a bit. Jessie and Misty are young middle class females from traditionally White middle class backgrounds. Both girls want to teach kindergarten. Vannee is a single South American female from Peru. Her goals include continuing to study the most she can and become an elementary school teacher. Becoming a pastor and teaching high school back home are two goals Dyee-nyce is pursuing. He is a Black single male from the Bahamas. Roanna is a young middle class White female from Alaska who, because of abuse, has been on her own since she was 15 years old. Her goals include becoming a missionary in Africa; she currently works as an administrative assistant at the Safe Harbor Women's Resource Center. Patsy and her daughter Heidi are White middle class females from a military family and had lived in many locations over the years. They are both seeking education degrees. Kris, too, is a White middle class female from a military background. She is the owner and manager of her own military procurement business. Denise is a Philippine-American middle class married mother of one in her late twenties. Denise said much of her life is "on hold" until she finishes her degree. She wants to be a kindergarten teacher. Annie is a White middle class single mother of three girls. She wants to finish her degree in elementary education and become a teacher. Louisa is a 55-year-old African American mother of two grown children one of whom is serving in Iraq. Louisa is fulfilling her dream of becoming a teacher. She currently teaches pre-school in Santa Rosa County.

Finally, Jack is the lone White middle-class 25-year-old male. Jack currently works in retail, is an avid angler and wants to teach biology and coach high school football someday. All of these students arrived with their individual viewpoints and ideas of what diversity means to them.

I focus here on the two most contrasting students Jack and Louisa. Separated by age, race and life experiences their conversations and postings showed the socio-racial dichotomy that continues to exist despite the civil rights movement, equity programs and multicultural education programs.

Jack viewed the content of this class, as a distraction taking away from the content subject matter he felt should be the focus of teaching. As he stated in one online post, "Multiculturalism is a distraction in my opinion. Teachers are not in the classroom to concern themselves with the differences of culture." Louisa on the other hand has this to say in her class writings, "I feel this class will be very beneficial to all students entering the teaching profession." These opposing viewpoints continue throughout the term. Louisa's attitude throughout the term is supportive and encouraging while Jack's is resistant and skeptical. Yet, as we progress, we begin to see a slight shift in Jack's attitude. I believe this shift is due, in part, to his interaction with Louisa. As Blumer (1969) suggests, "Symbolic interaction sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact" (p. 5). Various topics and how they relate to our lives were discussed each night. Louisa is hesitant to share her thoughts at first, but as time went on, she began to share with us some of her experiences as a Black growing up in the racially charged atmosphere of southern Alabama. When discussing Freire's (2005b) statement, "My presence in the

world, with the world and with other people implies my complete knowledge of myself"

(p. 95). Louisa recognizes her own connection with the statement:

> However, being in the world and being part of history has made me understand
> that I am history. With this knowledge, I am forever changed from the little black
> girl from a small town in Alabama. As a teacher, my knowledge, growth, and
> development have given me the burning desire to share this discovery with others.

Louisa echoes Dr. Nichols statements about being part of history. In contrast to Louisa's

acknowledgement of the importance of a child's cultural background, hers in particular,

Jack continues to deny the role culture plays in working and interacting with children.

Jack clings to what I consider outdated methods of student/teacher interactions. This

comment is an example of Jack's general attitude: "I would much rather learn what, how,

and why a child acted a certain way then blame the problem on multicultural issues. I say

this because behavioral management is the primary need, at least I think so." Jack's

solution to student differences is addressing them as behavior problems rather than

cultural differences that may entail a change in his teaching style or methods. As the class

explores issues of race, domination and stereotypes, Jack's attitude shifts somewhat.

One evening in class we were discussing stereotypes we find in our own

neighborhoods. Louisa shared a story about a White family who had moved into her

neighborhood and were leery of the presence of Louisa's family. They had a stereotypical

view of Blacks. They asked the neighbors about how the "Blacks worked out" in the

predominately White neighborhood. Louisa's frank discussion about this issue prompted

Jack to share a story about a conversation he and his father recently had about a new

family moving into their neighborhood. Jack's father implied he hoped the new neighbors

were not of a certain persuasion. Jack suggests using ideas learned from this class that his

father should not hold stereotypical beliefs about any one group. As luck would have it

the family was of the same persuasion as Jack's father; however, Jack said they were very

unsavory and his father was very unhappy with the situation. Jack reminded his father

that he should not make stereotypical judgments about people based upon skin color.

This slight acknowledgment of how stereotypical attitudes affect out lives

indicated a slight shift in Jacks outlook. I believe the interactions with other class

members played an important role in helping Jack see diversity in a new light.

Tools for the Classroom: Giving Them What They Want

In the preceding weeks, our class had spent hours discussing the theories and

history of multiculturalism. The time finally came for putting theory into practice. This, it

seems, is what the students really want: "I want solutions to the problem instead of

circling the problem." This statement encapsulates the feelings most of the students

expressed. All the talk of theory and privilege was okay, but what they want is practical

lessons for implementing critically relevant lessons. Thus, I spent two nights on lessons

focusing on developing critical literacy lesson plans. The students express relief and

excitement about receiving practical tools useful in real life.

The students' reactions to the lessons on critical literacy highlight their need for

practical lessons that tie together theory and practice. One student comments, "The

critical literacy activity is a good tool to keep in my portfolio." Actually developing

lesson plans seems to move some students forward, as expressed in this statement: "I am

motivated to do something about it. I do not want to sit silent anymore. I feel a social

responsibility as a teacher to be an agent of social change."

The lessons on critical literacy brought forth students' realization that they, as well as their future students, could and should question the status quo. "I never thought to question the text." Kris made this statement: "I had no idea how to go about teaching social change. The critical literacy lesson gave me a tool to accomplish this." Raonna expresses it this way: "I will be thrilled if my students gain a passion for questioning what they see and hear." This lesson is yet another turning point. All previous lessons had been leading to the idea of getting students to implement transformative educational experiences in their own classrooms.

The second lesson-planning event involves a visit to the computer lab. There we explore various teaching websites such as *Teaching Tolerance,* a website that Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, developed. It offers a wealth of information for teachers to use. At this site, we also view video clips of teachers sharing how they involve parents from immigrant families in the school experience. This experience set the stage for the students' final exam, a multicultural lesson plan addressing social issues.

The culminating activity for this class is the development of this lesson plan. The criteria include goals and objectives, a warm up or anticipatory set, direct instructions, guided practice, closure, independent practice, materials and evaluation criteria. Even though we discuss incorporating social- justice topics numerous times, the students still want to incorporate festivals and "cultural" activities. I continue to stress the importance of including social issues, and on the last evening, they surprise me. Although several students include festivals and folklore in their lesson plans, they each touch on socially relevant issues.

The students' plans range from the elementary level to the high school level. Topics range from Denise's Native American History to Jack's appeal for sustainable environmental conservation. Denise's lesson plan focuses on Native Americans in the area. She presents a detailed unit that includes inviting the Pensacola Historical Society Trunk Presentation to the class for historical background, story time, art activities and discussions. Jack focuses on fishing regulations and how these regulations influence local fisheries and sport fishing. His plan includes a lab, using the Internet for research and writing a paper on the validity of the information gathering techniques of the National Marine Fisheries Society.

As the students present their lesson plans, Dee-nyce presents one on religious studies. This sends the class into intense debate. Several students claim that you cannot teach anything having to do with religion in Florida's public school system. The class launches into a debate about this issue, and divisiveness again surfaces. However, with their newfound ability to discuss these issues the students hold a passionate, yet civil debate. Some students believe that in an effort to include other religions, cultures and ideologies, the U. S. is conceding too much ground.

After listening to them deliberate, I ask, "Would it be a fair statement to say that although you all want to respect other cultures and make cultural connections, you feel the U.S. is giving up too much of its own Judeo-Christian heritage?" The class is divided evenly. One student clarifies her point: "It's all fine and dandy to say culture of various forms are welcomed until you feel something is being taken away. Truly, does anyone think that as ingrained as their beliefs are that we can take their beliefs away?"

This student brings up two relative points. First, people do have strongly held ideas about their culture including their religious beliefs. Second, if they are intensely held, how can we hope to change those beliefs, or do we even want to change them? Another student has the answer:

> For so long I think we have forced ourselves or have been forced by society to remain quiet about our prejudices. After this class, I personally feel that without expressing our prejudices we will not be able to find out if these prejudices are right or wrong. When we clean up our ignorance and replace it with knowledge about each other, we become better people and ultimately become better teachers.

This comment reflects the emerging voices of the students. They are developing new paradigms through interaction with one another.

Although deeply ingrained attitudes continue to surface until the end, the last in-class reflection provides insight into how multicultural courses can change attitudes. This statement comes from the most strident holdout:

> Even though I disagree with a lot of the material and ways of thinking, I would say that because of this course I will be much more prepared to not convey any ignorance upon some other student who has a different cultural upbringing than I did. I personally think that knowledge or level of awareness alone is reason enough to take this course.

This student's comment reflects the literature: "Creating ideological environments that challenge teachers' deeply held assumptions and views that constitute their internally persuasive discourses and provide multiple viewpoints and voices is a process that takes

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time and commitment" (Assaf & Dooley, 2006, p. 49). These experiences and interactions highlight what I set out to discover:

(1) Are the students aware of their own cultural backgrounds and its impact on their teaching methods?

(2) What were students' views of multiculturalism in its various forms?

(3) Were students aware of the political aspect of education and its impact on their teaching?

(4) Did students grasp what it means to be a critically reflective teacher?

The Evaluations

Further helping answer these questions, I developed a confidential evaluation (Appendix D). The students filled these out and returned them on the last night. Through a series of mishaps, the original evaluations got lost. I requested them again through email and received several in return. Although this circumstance was unfortunate, the copious amounts of data previously gathered such as, in class reflections, personal observations, online discussions, and parting thoughts left me with a solid sense of how the students viewed the class and their learning.

Several questions in the evaluation particularly pertain to the study. The first asked whether the class assignments helped students identify awareness of their own cultural background and its impact on their teaching methods. One student's response supported other students' writings and in class comments:

Writing the paper [ethnic autobiography] got me in touch with my background and the class made me aware we all come from a different place. It will help when I become a teacher to know that every student who walks into my classroom

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comes from a different place, a different background, a different experience due
to their cultural background.

Another student reiterated this point, "It also presented the opportunity to review my own
past and my cultural background." Awareness emerged as a recurrent theme that the
students deemed beneficial.

Concerning the class content, the students enjoyed the video clips of teachers
sharing their ideas and the interactive DVD by Sleeter. Although they voiced initial
concern about the difficulty of reading Freire, in the final comments his democratic
teaching philosophy is what most of them commented on. For instance, one student
wrote,

The class gave me the book by Freire and I think I will continue to read and learn
from it. It will help form me into the teacher I want and need to be. His ideas of
what works and how we need to relate to multicultural students will help me.

Another wrote, "I really appreciated the letters by Freire, which were thought
provoking."

A question about classroom climate, elicited a positive response from each
student. Every student, whether in the evaluations, class papers, or class comments liked
and commented on the physical arrangement of the room. We sat at a conference table
where we could all face one another; this seemed to engender a sense of camaraderie.
Dovidio and Gaertner's (2004) In Group Identity Model support this sense of
camaraderie. Much like the model the class atmosphere engendered a sense of solidarity
while allowing us to maintain our individual personalities. A comment from the
evaluations reflects this sense of camaraderie:

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Our class seemed to be made up of a diverse population; I think the seating

arrangement encouraged discussion and the atmosphere was very comfortable and

non-threatening. Also, Mrs. Erickson has a warm personality that is encouraging

and she presents interesting topics.

The online component of the class was also successful according to the evaluations. Students felt the online work was "very valuable," as one evaluation stated, "The postings were a great way to interact freely and being able to read the articles at home and do the writing reflections with no pressure from a time limit was great for me." The online discussion section of this study exhibits the benefits achievable from this evolving venue for multicultural education. There students feel free to discuss sensitive topics, provide controversial comments, and share experiences. Although the face-to-face component of the class was successful in helping us bond as a group, the online section helped further our understanding of the topics and, just as importantly, each other as individuals.

One question posed in the evaluation was, "Did the class bring into focus the political aspect of education and how it impacts teaching?" I am unsure if I made the connection between political action and teaching clear enough for the students. One answer to this question suggested I was unsuccessful here: "I believe this was touched upon, but not covered in-depth." Alternatively, perhaps I formulated the questions poorly. However, another evaluation response indicated

Yes, it brought into focus a political aspect, because of racism; we can see why

there is such a gap between Whites and Blacks within the United States. Even

now, the government is still trying to find ways to bridge the achievement gap

that has developed.

The politics of education was a component of each lesson. The students may have a different conception of politics. In order to clarify this point I emailed the students and asked them to clarify this point. One student's response indicated she felt the class did bring into focus the political aspect of education and its influence on teaching. Each of the other evaluations with the exception of the one student felt education and its political ramifications were clearly defined.

I was successful in establishing an environment where the students felt the freedom to express themselves. Dee-nyce stated,

I do feel a freedom to express myself in this class that I do not feel in other classes. It's more relaxed and you don't feel that you are going to be judged that any answer you give is a stupid answer it is taken in stride and if its off topic, you guide us back to where we need to be.

Louisa made the comment that she was encouraged by this class because it was "a vessel of enlightenment." She said the topic of White privilege was important that some people hedge around the topic they want to "white wash it." Jack felt that no matter what, he would have voiced his opinion, but he felt this class promoted a feeling of collaboration.

I asked the students to evaluate the subject matter of the class. All evaluations stated they felt the subject matter was important; however, one in particular was particularly succinct and heartfelt:

For an education class, I feel the subject manner was on point and timely. I think that we constantly ignore the fact that culture and diversity have a lot to do with success in the classroom. As teachers, we have biases, and stereotypes about students, and it does affect the way we teach them. If I have an inner hatred for a

specific ethnic group, I would not be compelled as a teacher to give it my best

shot. The subject matter of the class forced us to face our own selves.

In order to obtain collaborative data that would support the evaluations, on the last

evening, I asked the students directly if they understood that my intent was to make them

go beyond the festivals and folklore curricula; understanding critical multiculturalism is

much more complex. They all nodded yes when I asked them. "Tell me how you know

that?" Patsy replied, "Because you told us it was." After a few laughs, Denise stated,

"Because it's not about the culture, it's about the kid." Raonna stated, "The mid-term

helped, because it brought home the whole reflection of understanding where I came

from and how we grow up and the different situations we all come from." These

comments did reinforce the students' successful connection between pedagogy and

politics.

Also during the last class, I asked the students to provide some closing thoughts

concerning the class, specifically with regard to how their opinion about multiculturalism

may or may not have changed. The majority reaction was overwhelmingly positive. Each

student commented that they enjoyed the class even when they did not always agree with

its content. Their opinions about multicultural classes were mixed. They fell into three

clusters: those who felt their opinions had changed, those who felt their opinions had not

changed because they already had positive attitudes toward or experiences with

multiculturalism, and those whose modernist attitudes were firmly entrenched but who

were now open to new ideas. Reviewing the students writings indicated those students'

whose opinions had changed about multicultural classes were students who had fewer

experiences in education classes. As one student commented,

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My opinions about diversity remain the same because I have always been very

interested in cultural differences. However, my view on myself and my own

"White privilege" was brought to my attention for the first time through the mid-

term and online posts. I realize that there are things I must change within myself.

Comments like this reflect new understanding of how multiculturalism curricula,

including their own cultural backgrounds are critical in today's classroom.

The students, who felt their opinions about multiculturalism had not changed, fell

in two clusters, they already held strong beliefs about the importance of teaching

multiculturalism or their strongly held personal beliefs remained. However, those

clinging to personal beliefs did acknowledge the importance of their newfound

awareness:

Although, I feel that the knowledge is helpful to me personally and will benefit

future relationships, I still find myself clinging to original beliefs. I don't think

this issue will ever fully be resolved this side of heaven. We may learn

(hopefully) to be more sensitive and to stand up for justice, but I believe the

underlying tension will remain.

The comment of this student reinforces the continued need for teacher education

classes in multicultural education. Even though some students feel they are flooded with

multiculturalism as one student put it, "I am all diversified out!" I strongly support the

continued inclusion of multicultural courses in teacher education programs, especially

critical versions. Changing culturally ingrained attitudes takes time and commitment.

Louisa summed up the answer succinctly:

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The material presented, opened my eyes to the fact that we need to continue to

dialogue about multiculturalism. We are a nation of different races and we bring

many things to the country. There should never be one set group who has the

ability to control our society.

Understanding the preservice teacher's experience will further enhance our ability

to design multicultural curriculum for future teachers. Teaching pedagogy and practice

must reflect the ever-changing populations of our classrooms. Designing and

implementing critical multicultural curricula can meet the needs of the burgeoning

diversity within our schools. Part of this exciting challenge begins with university

teaching programs.

CHAPTER VIII

DISCUSSION

Bakhtin suggests (as cited in Assaf & McMunn Dooley, 2006) "Our ideology development is. . . an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological view points, approaches, directions, and values" (p. 42). A forum, such as class meetings and online threaded discussions for students' exchange of ideas, is critical in getting preservice teachers to understand how their ideologies, beliefs and values will shape their learning and thus their teaching. Establishing an environment where students feel free to exchange ideas on controversial topics is also central in avoiding the pitfall of alienating the very people you are trying to reach.

Throughout my educational career, I have taken many multicultural classes. Until my postsecondary courses, I was among the eye rollers when anyone mentioned multiculturalism. I can identify with Patsy's statement, "I'm not really racist, but I wonder if we didn't focus so much on who has been hurt then maybe we could move forward." Yet, as a teacher, I see daily the injustices that exist in our schools and our society. Johnson (2006) explains why we must name and talk about terms such as racism, oppression and dominance: "I can understand what it names and what it has to do with me and most important, what I can do about it" (p. 11). Through these thoughts and ideas, my dissertation study evolved. I wanted to understand how, however unintentionally, we perpetuate social injustices in our classrooms.

I understand from the research and my own experience that preparing teachers for today's diverse classrooms is a daunting challenge for teacher education programs. I brought to the study a genuine desire to share my enthusiasm for teaching and specifically teaching diverse populations. My teaching history includes teaching special needs populations including emotionally disturbed, learning disabled, and gifted students. I have a clear understanding of what it means to be different in a classroom.

All children regardless of ability, race, economic or religious background deserve the opportunity to learn. I am a firm believer that education is one of the best equalizers our society has available. Yet I have come to understand through research, reading and experience that a fair and equitable education is not always the rule. In large part, teachers play an extremely important role in making sure students, regardless of the educational system or the student's situation, can level the playing field. However, in order to accomplish this level playing field the teacher must be knowledgeable about the challenges each student faces whether these challenges are due to discriminatory systemic practices, personal challenges or individual prejudices. As teachers, we must understand ourselves, including our personal prejudices, before we can help and understand our students overcome their own challenges. I believe this class was successful in this endeavor; one student summarized the class this way:

> This class provided me with the opportunity to look deep within myself and become more culturally aware of myself, and how much culture has shaped my way of thinking. It will definitely help me with my teaching methods because it showed me where my biases are within my culture, and it made me appreciate the

differences in everyone. So, I will treat each student with equal respect, and hold

their diverse cultures with as much esteem as my own in the classroom.

This is the attitude I hope the class instilled in the students. The reflective awareness of

our cultural backgrounds, attitudes and biases can only improve our teaching abilities.

One way to get an overall sense of this reflective awareness is through poetic

transcription. Glesne (1997) explains how poetic transcription relates to qualitative

inquiry. She defines poetic transcription "as the creation of poem like compositions from

the words of interviewees" (p. 204). Poetic transcriptions combine the science of research

with the emotion of the lived experience. The voices in this study create a vision of the

transformative power of multicultural education.

Guilt. . . Humbled. . .Unaware of privilege . . .
Ashamed do not want to give up privileges. . . Makes us accountable
Thankful to be made aware. . . Racism has become subversive
Progress takes time. . . Change takes time
Knowing in my soul it was so wrong

It really pays to be a minority. . . I like and hate diversity all at the same time
Nothing in life is handed to you, you have to go and take it, but that is only
the case when you are a middle class, white male
When I think of multiculturalism I begin to squirm. . .Multiculturalism complicates and
causes more problems
The proverbial white elephant sitting right
in front of me

Force myself to have an open mind. . . Need to expand my thinking. . . sheltered. . .I grew
up oblivious to racial issues. . .
desire to learn new things. . . forcing me to think outside the box

Never had a white teacher. . .
Men are supposed to run the family. . . don't want a female running this country right
now
Is the white race becoming a minority?
People categorize me in categories I don't belong. . . I was called cracker for the first
time. . .
I really don't want integration of anybody regardless of their race

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I'm not really racist, but. . .

More aware now. . . Racism is still present-but silent
However, I am history. With this knowledge I am forever changed from the little black
girl from a small town in Alabama. . .

Fearful. . .Unknown. . . scared to death when starting out but they will conquer their
fears and find ways to cultivate those lines of communication
The only way to get over my fear is to face it head on. . . dive in head first
Be aware of your power as a teacher. . . have to constantly evolve. . . Realize the
importance of diversity
Caring is the important first step. . . Culture and ethnicity are central to learning
This is more than cultural diversity-this is a cultural system in place that needs to be
altered

I really have God to thank for the teachers that intervened in my life

Warmth...genuineness... to understand and meet the individual... caring about each and
every student
I am challenged to get involved. . . love and enjoy teaching. . . How can any teacher
promote discrimination, oppression
Look inside the student... We are a nation of immigrants
What is acceptable to hold on to and what has to be let go? What does the United States
then become?

Still many things that need to change... opportunity to express my true feelings
Excitement. . . amazing. . . how people really feel. . . someone listened to my opinion
Challenging students to think for themselves. . . passion for questioning what they see
and hear

I am motivated to do something about it, I do not want to sit silent anymore
Forced me to think and reflect on what I believe
Vessel of enlightenment!

Although powerful, the above transcription highlights traditional multicultural

issues having mainly to do with race and gender. Throughout the study, it was difficult to

get students to discuss the many other issues included in this area. Grier (1959) notes, "I

notice that freshmen are grossly ignorant of any knowledge of Western culture, past or

present" (p. 69). His comments reflect Dr. Nichols interview comment: "I try to take

them back to the history, because they don't know the history." Much of the literature on

teaching history indicates as Grier suggests that students are deficient in historical knowledge. Textbooks provide a sweeping outline of facts, but provide little in the way of substantive knowledge on issues such as the Women's Movement, ageism, classism or queer theory, all issues facing today's students. When students lack this basic content knowledge foundation, it is difficult to move beyond traditional multicultural issues. It seems we circle back repeatedly to the issue most familiar to us, but may leave out discussions of other important issues and concepts facing today's students. We must move toward understanding that we all come from a multicultural background and this background as Hill Collins (1991) suggests is interconnected and continually in flux depending upon time and situation. Regardless of a student's area of specialization, science, math, elementary or secondary, we must all become students of history in order to move forward.

I do not believe I could have gathered this information using traditional quantitative methods. The findings from this study confirm my belief that students continue to be unaware of the necessity of a multicultural curricula and some may still be resistant to these curricula, particularly critical multiculturalism.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

My study, like most, has several limitations. The class size was limited to 12 students for the purpose of gathering rich and descriptive data. Teaching a class with a larger number of students may have provided the study with additional data. A larger class might have included more than one White and one Black male student who could have provided a variety of opinions, in turn, providing even more contrast.

Another limitation was the length of the class; it was only eight weeks long. This seemed too brief a time. With more time, we might have established relationships that encourage commentary that is even more forthright. In addition, the short time restricted the amount of information I could cover. There were numerous topics where I felt we only skimmed the surface or had to leave out entirely, such as physical limitations and queerness.

Teachers often do not think of teaching and its political ramifications. Helping students become cognizant of the political ramifications of educational systems should be a goal for all teacher education courses. According to McLaren (2003), this connection is important in teaching: "The tradition of critical pedagogy. . . represents an approach to schooling that is committed to the imperatives of empowering students and transforming the larger social order in the interests of justice and equality" (p. xxxi). I was diligent in trying to bring this connection into focus while emphasizing the need for self-awareness as a way to change teachers' beliefs and feelings about social justice issues in the classroom. Because of the time limit I may not have covered these aspects as well as I could have.

I believe the students felt free to express themselves in online posts and in class. However, I feel I might have been too successful in making personal connections with the students. I sometimes got the feeling that they might be hesitant to express their feelings because they did not want to disappoint me. I was surprised at how receptive and complementary students were. I am used to teaching high school age students where it is not cool to like the teacher and never under any circumstances do teenagers provide positive feedback. I did not find this to be the case at the university level. The students

often made positive comments about the class. This was, of course, reinforcing and encouraging. Nevertheless, the problem existed that no matter how casual and comfortable I made the students feel, I was the one giving the grade and the one they wanted to impress. I could not deny my position of authority. I established a Freirian dialogic classroom; however, I was still the one in authority.

I was very transparent about the purpose of the class. The students understood from the beginning they were participating in a dissertation study. This knowledge might have colored their answers to a degree. Jack even made a comment about how important their conversations were to me because of this circumstance. Did the students phrase their answers to please me? Possibly, yet overall, I believe the veracity of the students' statements and writings are genuine and an accurate depiction of how many students view multicultural classes.

I was pleased with the overall results of the study. I am a little surprised at how closely this study reflects what I found in the literature. However, I would do some things differently. I would extend the length of the study, changing it from an eight-week term to the full 18-week term. I felt the class was just beginning to coalesce just as the term was ending. The students also made comments saying they wished we had more time because we were just getting to know one another.

Secondly, I would incorporate guidelines that are more stringent on due dates and online posts. Several students did not post, one student never posted, and several students turned assignments in late. This behavior caught me off guard. I had the misguided notion that because this was a college level class everyone would do the work on time and to the

best of their ability. However, not unlike my high school students, students turned in late assignments and did not post until the last minute or even later.

Another factor I was not expecting was the drama of students' lives. I had several students that had rather extreme personal issues. One student was homeless for a short period and another had severe financial problems that caused a great deal of make up work and the need for a grade change later in the term. Yet, overall, the students were enthusiastic and very cooperative. They were willing to give me personal information in case I had questions after the class ended.

As Annie suggested the issues of race relations, prejudice, oppression and dominance may never be "decided this side of heaven." All the same, as educators, we must continue our pursuit in understanding our craft and developing best practices that further enhance our profession thus improving the lives of those students we touch. Freire (2005b) exemplifies this pursuit:

> As educators we are politicians; we engage in politics when we educate. And if we dream about democracy, let us fight, day and night, for a school in which we talk to and with the learners so that, hearing them, we can be heard by the as well. (p. 121)

More than anything, this connection between and among teachers and students and the awareness of education as a political vehicle for liberating students is the crux of transformative education. Developing a democratic classroom that reflects this attitude should be the goal of teacher education programs. The triangulation of information gathered though observations, interviews, in-class writings, online posts and a focus

group further confirms the importance of threading multicultural curricula throughout all teacher education classes.

Further Research

The implications for further research are numerous. Further research might possibly look at long-term effects of multicultural teacher education classes. Do the lessons the students learn manifest in better teaching methods? Do the teachers truly incorporate and implement social justice curricula once they reach the classroom? Do teachers acquire and model truly democratic methodologies or do they fall back into using traditional methods and practices?

It is my experience that most teachers do have the best intentions and truly care about the students in their classrooms. Yet I also see and hear stereotypical behaviors regarding students of color or students of low socio-economic or different ethnic backgrounds. I know these teachers have participated in multicultural classes, so why do we fall back into old belief patterns?

An informative study might involve the identification of variables that might cause teachers to forget their multicultural training. If we could identify behavior of students, parents or systems that inadvertently, reinforce teacher's conventional beliefs we could then develop programs that aid in ameliorating these discriminatory stereotypes.

Teaching is a complex and challenging profession, helping preservice teachers prepare for the changing demographics in the United States is an important aim for universities across the country. This study provides a snapshot of preservice teachers and their attitudes about multiculturalism. The students' behaviors and attitudes in this instance reflect the current research. Consequently, supporting the need for further

research in how teacher education programs can encourage a critical multicultural

pedagogical approach for teaching in the twenty-first century.

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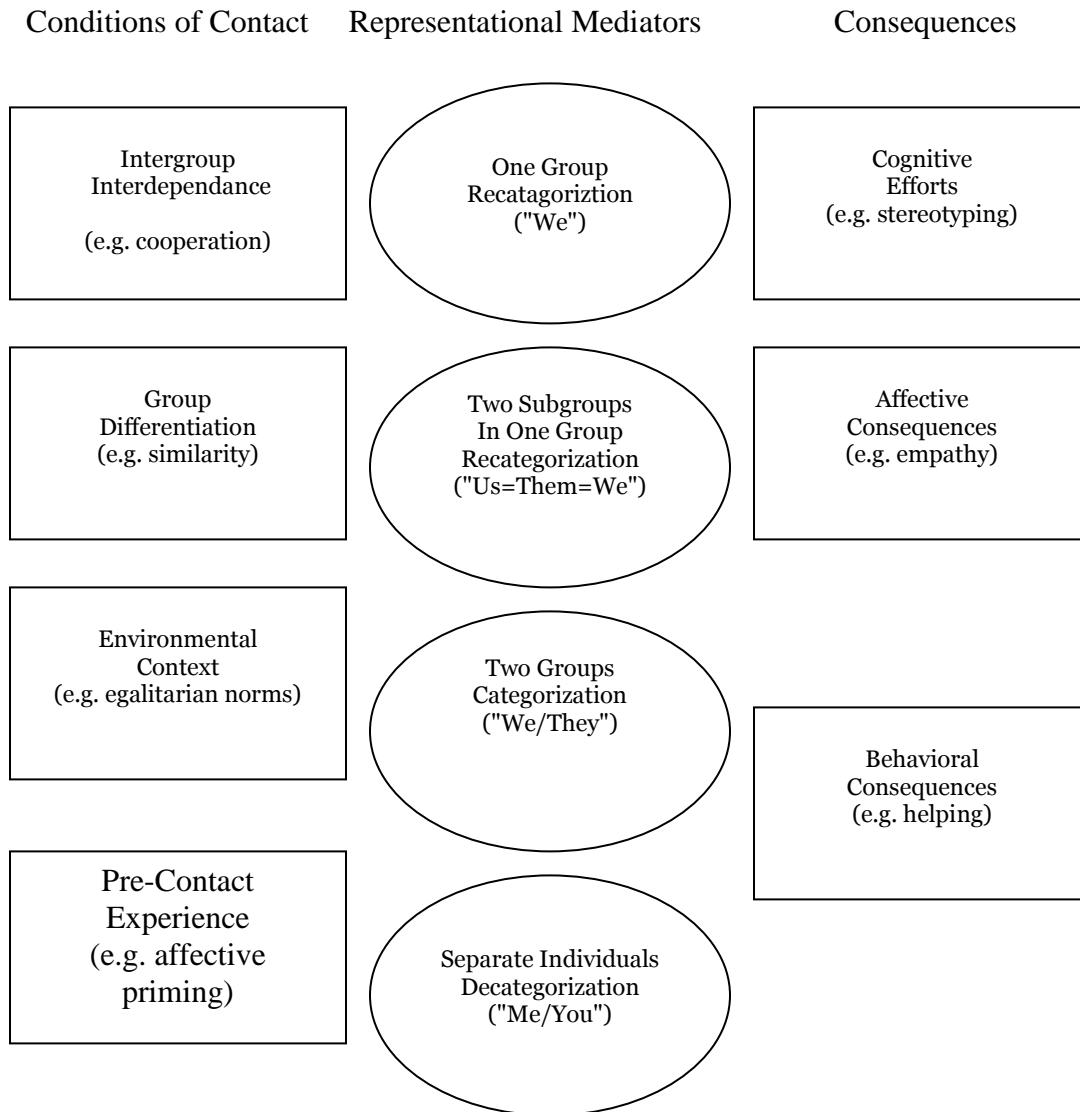　　next? *The Mobile Press Register*, p. 12A.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

The Common In-Group Identity Model

The Common In-Group Identity Model

Conditions of Contact   Representational Mediators   Consequences

| Intergroup Interdependance (e.g. cooperation) | One Group Recatagoriztion ("We") | Cognitive Efforts (e.g. stereotyping) |

Group Differentiation (e.g. similarity)

Two Subgroups In One Group Recategorization ("Us=Them=We")

Affective Consequences (e.g. empathy)

Environmental Context (e.g. egalitarian norms)

Two Groups Categorization ("We/They")

Behavioral Consequences (e.g. helping)

Pre-Contact Experience (e.g. affective priming)

Separate Individuals Decategorization ("Me/You")

Appendix B

Copy of IRB Letter

University of

West Florida

Ms. Cindy Erickson   November 8, 2007

16417 Honey Road

Summerdale, AL 36580

Dear Ms. Erickson:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Research Participant Protection has completed its review of your proposal titled "Critical Multiculturalism and Preservice Teacher Education" as it relates to the protection of human participants used in research, and has granted approval for you to proceed with your study. As a research investigator, please be aware of the following:

- You acknowledge and accept your responsibility for protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants and for complying with all parts of 45 CFR Part 46, the UWF IRB Policy and Procedures, and the decisions of the IRB. You may view these documents on the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs web page at http://www.research.uwf.edu. You acknowledge completion of the IRB ethical training requirements for researchers as attested in the IRB application.

- You will ensure that legally effective informed consent is obtained and documented. If written consent is required, the consent form must be signed by the participant or the participant's legally authorized representative. A copy is to be given to the person signing the form and a copy kept for your file.

- You will promptly report any proposed changes in previously approved human participant research activities to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The proposed changes will not be initiated without IRB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participants.

- **You are responsible for reporting progress of approved research to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at the end of the project period. Approval for this project is valid for one year. If the data phase of your project continues beyond one year, you must request a renewal by the IRB before approval of the first year lapses. Project Directors of research requiring full committee review should notify the IRB when data collection is completed.**

- You will immediately report to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to human participants.

Good luck in your research endeavors. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 857-6378.

Sincerely,

Dr. Terry Prewitt, Chair   Dr. Richard S. Podemski

IRB for Human Research   Associate Vice President for Research and

Participant Protection   Dean of Graduate Studies

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title of Research: Intellectual Segregation in Perservice Teacher Education: Multiculturalism: Critical Multiculturalism and Undergraduates Lived Experiences.

I.   Federal and university regulations require me to obtain signed consent for participation in research involving human participants. After reading the introductory letter and sections II through V below, please indicate your consent by signing and dating this form.

II.   **Statement of Procedure**: Thank you for your interest in this research project being conducted by Cindy Erickson, a doctoral candidate in the College of Professional Studies at the University of West Florida. As explained in the introductory letter this research project involves preservice teachers and diversity studies. This research project involves your participation in classroom activities, and/ or interviews. The risks and benefits of participating in the project are outlined below. Your information will be kept in strict confidence and all Institutional Review Board procedures will be followed. All persons and personal information will be kept confidential.

I understand that as a participant in this project:

(1) I will not be penalized for my responses to course work. Grading of course work will be guided using two standards, completion of the course work within the parameters set forth in the syllabus and completion of the work in a timely manner.
(2) Participation in interviews is voluntary and my identity (unless a professor) will remain anonymous. All information will be coded and kept secure.
(3) My grades in the class will be confidential.
(4) The researcher will share results of the study with me.
(5) I will have an opportunity to evaluate the course and the instructor.
(6) I may discontinue participation in the project at any time (while remaining in class) and not suffer any penalty for withdrawing from the study.

II.   Potential Risks of the Study:

(1) There are no foreseeable risks involved with the study.

III.   Potential Benefits of the Study:

(1) Data obtained from this study may provide educational professionals with information that would assist in the development of improved learning opportunities for future teachers.
(2) Data obtained from this study may provide participants with insight into their teaching strategies.
(3) Data obtained from this study may help identify strengths and weaknesses in educational practices regarding diversity training in preservice education programs.

IV.   **Statement of Consent**: I certify that I have read and fully understand the procedural statements, the risks, and the benefits of this research project. I understand that by voluntarily signing below I am agreeing to participate in this research project. I also understand I can withdraw from the project at any time with no penalty. A copy of this form and introductory letter will be provided to me.

I also am will to have the research investigator contact me at a later time for the purpose of following up on data acquired or information that may emerge during the analysis phase of the project. ____yes, no____.

Any questions or concerns about hsi may be directed to Cindy Erickson, the researcher, at cle10@gulftel.com or 251-988-1062

Participant's name (please print) _____ Date_____

Participant's signature _____Date_____

Appendix D

EDG 2701 Evaluation

EDG 2701 Evaluation

Please remember not to put your name on this document. It will be placed in a sealed envelope and given to Dr. Rogers. She will then have the questions and answers typed up and provide me with the results. Strict confidentiality will be maintained, please be honest and forthcoming in your answers.

1. Did this class provide you with ways to identify your own awareness of your cultural background and its possible impact on your teaching methods? If so please explain, if not please elaborate.

2. What information was provided by the instructor to inform you of the various views of multiculturalism? i.e. Schools of thought.

3. Did the class bring into focus the political aspect of education and how it impacts teaching? Please provide an explanation for your answer.

4. Did the class provide you with an explanation of what it means to be a critically reflective teacher? Please elaborate.

5. Evaluate the subject matter of the class.

6. Were our class activities helpful in preparing you for future teaching endeavors? How so or how not?

7. Did the class environment encourage diverse opinions? If so, how was that achieved? If not, what could have been done differently?

8. With your understanding that I was the researcher did you feel free to express your opinion, why or why not?

9. What was the most important concept you learned from the class?

10. How do you think this class will impact your teaching philosophy?

11. If you could change our class's content, how would you make it richer or more diverse?

12. What did you find most challenging about our class?

13. What did you find least challenging about our class?

14. Say why you found or online work valuable or not.

Appendix E

Critical Multiculturalism Syllabus

Critical Multiculturalism

1.0 **Instructor**: Cindy Erickson

2.0 **Text and materials**:
> 2.1 Jackson, Allen,G. (2006). Privilege, power, and difference. McGraw Hill, New York
> 2.2 **Freire, Paulo** (2005). Teachers as cultural workers; Letters to those who dare teach. pp. 71-162. Westview Press, Cambridge, MA
> 2.3 **Brookfield, Stephen**, (1995). Becoming a critically reflective teacher, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
> 2.3 Teaching Tolerance www.teachingtolerance.org/magazine
> 2.5 Various Articles found on ERIC

3.0 **Purpose and Overview**: The purpose of this course is to engage preservice teachers in a critical examination of multicultural education and critical pedagogy. The students in this class will be challenged to examine themselves and their theoretical foundations as both pertain to teaching increasingly diverse student populations.

4.0 **Objectives**:
> 4.1 Identify and define multiculturalism, critical multiculturalism, critical pedagogy, and critically reflective teaching.
> 4.2 Identify the political and power relationships involved in education.
> 4.3 Recognize your own racial identity and cultural values and how they may shape your students and classroom.
> 4.4 Develop your own critical theoretical framework for your own teaching methods or pedagogy.
> 4.5 Identify what it means to become a critically reflective teacher.
> 4.6 Develop a critical multicultural lesson plan unit.

5.0 **Guidelines**: Critical multiculturalism is a captivating aspect of education. With the growing diversity of our country teachers can no longer expect to teach in an "average" classroom. Therefore, our institutions of higher learning must provide preservice teachers with the tools to teach a far wider range of talents, abilities and ethnicities. The hope of this class is to do just that. However, the topic of multiculturalism is one fraught with many obstacles and challenges. It will force all of us to reexamine our beliefs, and at

times our discussions may be emotionally charged and divisive in nature. It is my intentions to provide an atmosphere of open dialogue where we can discuss the challenging issues provided by our readings. It is important that everyone feel that everyone can share their opinions without fear of ridicule. We must on the outset understand that we may agree to disagree with various topics throughout the course.

With this being said, we must *always* respect others opinions, and frame our comments in reflective, professional language. Creating an open inclusive classroom is a challenge every teacher faces. Hopefully this class will model how you may create a democratic atmosphere in your own classroom.

6.0 **Class Activities and assignments:**

6.1 **Weekly reading reflective journals**- (10 pts) each week you will read a selected article and respond to the reading with a 1-2 paragraph reflection and 1 paragraph stating your opinion. Your reaction could answer the following questions:

- What key definitions are included?
- What are the major contributions to teaching?
- What practical implications did you find useful?
- What criticisms are warranted, if any, provide academic support not emotion for your answer. Your emotions/personal thoughts or feelings should be included in the 3rd paragraph.

6.2 **Racial Autobiography**- Understanding Ourselves - (Mid-term 50 pts) Reflecting upon the information we have covered to date, write a 2-4 page paper that defines your personal and ethnic identity. How has this identity affected your development as a person? How might this identity benefit or hinder your ability to teach children from diverse backgrounds? What bias or prejudices have you wrestled with along the way? Please make connections to the readings and provide at least four citations from the readings using the fifth edition APA format.

6.3 **Critical literacy activity**: (20 pts) (Brookfield, 1995, McLaren, 2003) using the concepts from critical literacy, choose any article or book from the class list and answer the following questions:

- What experiential omissions are there in a piece of literature that, to you, seems important?
- To what extent does this piece of literature acknowledge and address ethical issues in teaching?
- Whose voices are heard in this piece?
- To what extent does the piece use a form of specialized language that is unjustifiably distanced from the colloquial language of the learner and teachers?
- Whose interests are served by the piece?

- How does this piece contribute to my knowledge of how to implement a democratic pedagogy and survive a hegemonic system?

6.4 **Common Sense Assumption Activity:** (10 pts) Using the common sense assumptions found on pages 4-7 in Brookfield read the "common sense" assumptions and before reading the alternative interpretations that follow, write your own alternative interpretations to these assumptions.

6.5 Weekly **classroom participation:** (10 pts.) Participation in weekly classroom discussions are a critical component for a successful class. Please come prepared each week to discuss the class assigned readings and turn in your reflective journals. In addition, a brief writing assignment will be given prior to the end of each class that will reflect your thoughts on the class discussion for that day. Your thoughts and feedback are important to the development of this course.

6. 6 **Develop a critical multicultural lesson plan:** (Final exam, 100 pts.) Using what you have leaned in this course and within your own subject area content. Design a lesson plan that incorporates ideas from a critical multicultural perspective. For example, you could develop a lesson in critical literacy using a prominent figure relative to your subject area. Please include the following:
- List objectives; be sure to include action verbs. i.e. The students will (identify, develop, display, recognize, etc.) the _____.
- Provide a description of lesson and activities.
- Include at least one student centered activity.
- List the materials and evaluative tools used.

Following is a guideline for this activity.

Lesson name: _____

Objective(s): _____

_____

_____

Activities:_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

Materials needed:_____

Evaluation method:_____