SELF STUDY OF TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION PRACTICES 7

Ann Katherine Schulte

# Seeking Integrity in Teacher Education

## Transforming Student Teachers, Transforming My Self

Springer

# SEEKING INTEGRITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

# Self Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices

Volume 7

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# SEEKING INTEGRITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

## Transforming Student Teachers, Transforming My Self

by

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Springer

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For all my students, but especially those in the Integrated
Teacher Core who were the inspiration for “Parallel Journeys.”
This book is a result of my desire to be a better teacher for them.

# Foreword

The founding of the special interest group “Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices” in the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in 1992 marked a significant point in the development of self-study research by teacher educators in research on teacher education. Although teacher educators had been conducting inquiries of their own practice for a long time with the goal of improving their own teaching and the quality of their teacher education programs, the birth of a group in the AERA dedicated to self-study research in teacher education stimulated an effort by teacher educators in a number of countries to have their work taken more seriously by researchers and policy makers as educational research. Self-study researchers began publishing their work in some of the most prestigious journals in education such as *Harvard Educational Review, Curriculum Inquiry,* and *Teachers College Record*, and there was a tremendous growth in the use of self-study research in the promotion and tenure process for teacher educators.

Since 1992, a number of edited book-length collections of self-studies of teacher educators from throughout the world have been published by major commercial publishers (e.g., Loughran & Russell, 2002; Russell & Korthagen, 1995; Samaras & Freese, 2006; Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2006), as well as a 1,500 page plus international handbook on self-study and teacher education (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004) and a peer-reviewed journal, *The Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices,* devoted to publishing self-studies in teacher education.

Despite this explosion in the publication of the self-studies of teacher educators, there has been very little evidence of attempts by self-study researchers to link their work to other similar work and to show how research studies build on one another and help accumulate knowledge about particular issues in teacher education (Zeichner, 2007). Many of the self-study books that have been published group studies together in a book because they are self-studies or fit within a broad theme (e.g., “exploring myths in teacher education”), not because the studies are part of a particular program of research.

One consequence of the failure of researchers to link individual self-studies to other self-studies, other non-self studies, and to broader programs of research is that self-study research in teacher education continues to have problems establishing itself as legitimate educational research outside the self-study community in a political context in which the “gold standard” for research is seen by many researchers and policy makers internationally to be experimental trials. Self-study research in teacher education has made important contributions to dignifying the work of teacher education and to improving the teaching and teacher education programs of the researchers, as well as providing much information of great practical value to other teacher educators. However, if we also want this work to be taken seriously as legitimate research by those outside the self-study community and to be included when syntheses of research are produced by panels and in research handbooks, we must begin to focus more on linking this work to the work of other researchers.

This book is a wonderful example of how self-study research can be linked to a broader program of research and help accumulate knowledge about an issue of great importance to educators throughout the world. There is also a lot of valuable practical advice contained in this book that will be useful to teacher educators who want to prepare their students to become successful teachers for all pupils. Ann Schulte presents her own self-study research that was conducted when she was a graduate student supervisor of student teachers in Wisconsin and in her current role as a university teacher educator in California. Her research is concerned with the issue of preparing teachers at the preservice level to be successful in schools that are increasingly diverse, where they will be teaching students who may have different racial/ethnic, social class, religious backgrounds, and sexual orientations than themselves.

Ann situates her work in relation to a body of self-study and non-self study research in multicultural teacher education and seeks to model in her own practice the kind of difficult self-examination that she is asking from her students. Although most of her students are white monolingual English-speaking women, Ann recognizes the diversities that exist within these supposed categories and the need to prepare all teachers, including teachers of color who are often ignored in teacher education programs in dominant white institutions (Villegas & Davis, 2008), for teaching all students. She also recognizes the need to understand and build upon the strengths that her students bring to their teacher education program in the same way that she is encouraging her students to teach their pupils in culturally responsive ways (Gay, 2000).

The stories and analyses in this book are firmly grounded in the complexities of the work of teacher education and many of the challenges involved in transforming oneself and one's students with regard to issues of race, class, gender, language, sexuality, and so on in socially unjust societies. Readers will get a good sense of the strategies that Ann has used in her work on herself and with her students and the various ways in which they succeeded and did not succeed with particular students. She draws upon her own journals, student work and feedback, as well as other sources to provide readers with cases that clearly illustrate her discussion about the processes and complexities of transformation.

In addition to this work being an example of high quality self-study research in teacher education, Ann's passion for her work, her respect for her students, and her commitment to the pursuit of greater social justice is evident throughout the book. This book is a good example of how one can simultaneously maintain the passion and commitment needed for contributing to a more humane and just world and the standards necessary for high quality educational research. Ann Schulte's work represents an important contribution to research on multicultural teacher education and confirms my view as to why it is crucial that self-study researchers in teacher education seek to demonstrate how their research adds new insights to research on issues of importance in teacher education.

Madison, Wisconsin Ken Zeichner
July 2008

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Members of the Self-study of Teacher Education Practice (S-STEP) group have been a consistently supportive network of colleagues who help to make this work meaningful for me and relevant to the larger teacher education field. The growth of the scholarship by the members of this organization demonstrates a tremendous response to the call for improving teacher education through better practice. I thank John Loughran, series editor, in particular for his encouragement and his wonderful assistance in completing this book.

Finally, one person who has been extremely helpful in completing this book is my current critical friend, Vera Stenhouse, who co-authored Chapter 8 with me. Her enthusiasm for the complexity of the issues and her tremendous ability to set deadlines have been instrumental not only in this book but in other areas of my research as well. I am indebted to her for the amount of time and energy she has spent helping me reframe and question my work so that I might articulate it in more meaningful ways.

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# Chapter 1
# Parallel Journeys: A Story About a White Woman Who Teaches White Women to Teach Diverse Populations

## Preface

The first chapter of this book offers a story. The story, although technically fictional, draws on a variety of actual experiences in my work as a teacher educator. Through this story, I attempt to provide examples and context for the issues that will be further elaborated upon in subsequent chapters. It is my hope that the reader will have opportunities within the story to recognize or relate to some of the dilemmas in this work. This book is by a White woman who teaches primarily White women but this does not mean that only White women should read it. My questions and struggles in education cross race and gender lines, but I do relate to my students in these ways particularly.

I was inspired to use this narrative format in Chapter 1 when reading *The Ethnographic I* by Carolyn Ellis (2004). Ellis's book is a methodological novel wherein she tells a story about teaching a fictional graduate course on autoethnography. While reading it, I felt like I became a member of the class learning about the other students while learning about how to employ this research method. Additionally, I realized that part of my approach to self-study research had a name, and it was autoethnography. Ellis's book helped me to think more carefully about data collection and analysis, as well as other ethical and moral issues. I related to the characters and the author/instructor as many of their experiences and perspectives were very similar to mine. The characters also challenged my thinking and provided a new way to experience learning.

Many of the situations I illustrate and the issues I attempt to foreground are common to the field of teacher education. In the chapters following the story, using a more traditional text format, I will unpack the dilemmas of a largely White, female middle-class teaching force being prepared by faculty who are often much like the preservice teachers[1] themselves. While addressing this widespread issue, I hope to discuss how we perpetuate privilege while bringing new insights for those who

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[1] Throughout this book, I will use the terms preservice teacher and student interchangeably depending on the relevant perspective they might hold in the situation. I will distinguish licensed teachers as practicing teachers or classroom teachers.

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have not considered many of the topics before. In the process, I will strive to resist essentializing White female teachers and teacher educators and recognize that these issues may cross a variety of identity categories and vary according to context. I will argue that many of the effective ways to teach White women about diversity are effective for all preservice teachers to gain a deeper understanding of diversity.

## Parallel Journeys

I smiled as though it was my first day of teaching sixth grade. I was about to begin another school year doing what I loved. I was beginning my seventh year as a teacher educator with a course I had found to be the most pedagogically challenging and rewarding. The course was what I called the Integrated Block. I designed it to combine the content of three prerequisite courses to the elementary education program. The topics covered classroom management and lesson planning through the lens of multicultural and democratic education. Content was addressed in an authentic order without respect to individual course boundaries. Students who took this block of courses met three times a week and were from a cohort program that had been taking courses together since they were freshmen. They already knew each other well and I, their instructor, was essentially the only outsider.

On the first day of class, in addition to the usual review of the syllabus, the students and I spent time learning each other's names and talking about the importance of one's name as part of one's identity. The students interviewed each other about the origin of their name and whether or not they liked it. I shared a few children's books[2] in which the main character is required to cope with having a name that is unusual to the teacher or peers.

> Luanne said in a slight whine, “But, like, some of those Chinese names are really weird.”
>
> “Weird?” I clarified, “or *new to you*?”
>
> “Both!” Luanne exclaimed, ignoring my attempt to correct her, “But how can I be expected to pronounce all of those names?”
>
> Mariana suggested it was okay for teachers to “Americanize” their students' names.
>
> She conceded, “It's really easier and less embarrassing for teachers to not try to roll the “r” in Mariana.”
>
> Abby declared, sounding apologetic, “But if you had introduced yourself as Mariana (rolling her r) then I would call you that, but you just say Mariana (not rolling the r).”

---

[2] For example, *Chrysanthemum* by Kevin Henkle and *My Name Is Maria Isabel* by Alma Flor Ada.

> "No, no, it's fine. See?" sighed Mariana. "It just makes a big deal about it if you pronounce it the Spanish way. My mom gets so mad when I don't say it in Spanish, but it's just easier."
>
> I observed extemporaneously, "Hmm, do you suppose most teachers pronounce Jesús, Gee-zuz?"
>
> Everyone laughs initially, and then the room is quiet.
>
> Karrie offers, "I hate it when people pronounce my name with a long 'a' like Carrie."
>
> "Right," I said, "And what if the pronunciation of your name was in some way linked to your cultural identity?"
>
> Exasperated, Mariana proclaims "But I'm *okay* with Mariana (not rolling the r). And I get to decide what I want to be called, right?"
>
> No one wanted to argue with that logic.

After the first class meeting, I walked by the doorway to the office of the cohort program coordinator. I shook my head as I said, "They're so typical! I mean, they're great, but they are SO typical!" One could almost hear the "tsk, tsk" of judgment in my voice. It is true, they were very homogenous at first glance. They were 24 women, juniors between the ages of 20 and 23. A full one third of them had first names that began with K, and most of the names sounded like Ashlee, Brittany, and Courtney. Mariana was apparently Latina, and the rest were mostly fair-skinned blondes and brunettes. Many of them wore the standard low-cut, spaghetti strap style of tank top, four of them sporting identical sorority letters. I was relieved that the exposed thong underwear fad had passed. I had seen my share of butt cracks.

The majority of the students at Central State University grew up within 200 miles of the university. Despite the fact that the teacher education program has an excellent statewide reputation, many students attend primarily because of the school's proximity to their hometown. The region is largely rural and agricultural. Although about 15% of all students in the elementary education program are men, traditionally there are only women enrolled in the special cohort program. The racial demographics of the students in the education program are even more White than the university population at large.

## Who Are We?

> Community building activities are standard curriculum during the first month or two of the Integrated Block. The goal is to learn more about one another, and one's self, and to promote interdependence. The first assignment is called The Bag Speech. Students are to bring a bag containing five items that would describe them. They then deliver a 2–3-min speech about the bag's contents.

> At the beginning of the second class, Kassie began her bag speech.
>
> "Okay, so I didn't really know what to bring so I asked my boyfriend."
>
> Kassie giggled.
>
> "Here is a picture of him and me snowboarding. I'm totally obsessed with snowboarding!"
>
> She continued to take items out of the bag and hold them up for everyone to see, "And this is a Starbucks coffee cup because I'm obsessed with coffee! Okay, this is my varsity letter from track when I was in high school. I was All State two years in a row. And here are a pair of shoes, because I'm obsessed with shoes! And this, this is my stuffed Booboo. I've had him since I was three. I used to line him up with my other stuffed animals and play school."
>
> Kassie peers into her empty bag and says, "And that's all!"
>
> She laughs a little self-consciously, gathers up her items, and bounces back to her seat. Everyone else in the class applauds her.
>
> Ellie smiled as she demonstrated her Prada designer bag, as Vanna White might, before she removed her items and put them on the desk.
>
> "I love Prada," she said.
>
> As Ellie spoke about each object, she put it back in her bag.
>
> "This is my tassle from my high school graduation because high school was a really great time for me, and I miss all my friends from there. This is a picture of my family with my dog, Buster. I'm really close to my family, and they are really supportive of me becoming a teacher. This is an apple that my high school English teacher gave me when I told her I wanted to become a teacher. Now I'm obsessed with collecting apples, so I have a whole collection. People keep giving them to me! This is my Bible. I have a strong faith in Jesus Christ, and my church is a big part of my life. Every summer I work at a church camp for 7–10-year olds. And finally, this is a Tim McGraw CD because I'm obsessed with Tim McGraw, AND his wife Faith Hill! I saw them both at the country music festival last summer!"
>
> A few students murmur agreement, and they all clap in appreciation of Ellie's speech.

During the speeches, the similarities among the students were apparent. Common were photographs that illustrated important people in their lives, usually their family or boyfriends. Many of the students brought objects that related to their love of children or their commitment to teaching or their wonderful experiences as a student. One painfully apparent similarity was the ubiquitous presence of the word "obsessed." I made a note to myself to demonstrate a mini-lesson on vocabulary enrichment – synonyms for obsessed.

Sometimes, Bag Speech objects demonstrated a potential awareness of social justice issues. One young woman shared a “Give Peace a Chance” bumper sticker. Luanne displayed a pin she had gotten while a member of her high school Gay/Straight Alliance. It said, “That’s so gay” with a red line through it.

In addition to the Bag Speech, another way students are asked to reflect on their backgrounds and get to know one another is by writing an “I am from… ” poem.[3] These poems are usually very illustrative of the students’ perceptions on their childhood because it focuses on family traditions, familiar people and sayings, and significant memories. Below is a poem by Kaylee.

Where I’m from
Family is cherished
Everything is a blessing
Nothing was missing
I couldn’t wait to go to school
Where we followed the golden rule
We earned what we got
And laughed a lot
I’m from Mom’s famous meatloaf
And prime rib on Christmas Eve
Big family dinners
Where everyone did the dishes
I’m from “Love you” and “Be safe”
Curfews and weekly chores
Grandpa Lou and Uncle Jeffrey
Who were never a bore
Old Glory flies everywhere
Flags don’t burn on our town square
When you pass on the street
Everyone stops to greet
I’m proud to be from
Where we never give up
Where we never give in
I’m proud to be who I am

I interpreted the symbols in Kaylee’s poem as conservative nationalism and rugged individualism. I knew she was from a small town up north where the loyalty oath is thought to be “God, country, horse.” I filtered the images of her poem through my own experiences, having grown up around cowboy culture and bootstrap mentality. To me they represented the extremes of heteronormativity and sexism. It was difficult to not layer my image of her with too much of my own experiences in small town America.

Although these poems usually reflect “blue skies and rainbows,” there are also times when this creative outlet allows students to share cloudier pasts that may have been previously hidden. Students volunteer to share their poems, and if they feel safe, some of them will reveal these personal details. Darla initially passes on the opportunity to read her poem aloud, but as I scanned the room for final volunteers, Darla indicated she would like to read it. As she read her poem, the other women in the room were visibly moved by the emotion conveyed around neglect, sadness, and need. The poem ended with a sense of great hope and optimism. Relief washed over Darla's face as she finished. The class sat quietly for a few minutes and I asked them to talk about the experience of writing these poems and sharing them.

---

[3] George Ella Lyon, original poet.

Kellie commented, "You think you know each other, but the things we shared in our poems showed another side to each of us. We don't usually talk about our childhoods."

Keely added, "I thought the poems were really reflective of each person's personality. It helped me to better understand why they are that way."

Despite the close relationships many of these young women had developed over the previous 2 years in the cohort, the activities in the block course were deepening their understanding of one another. As I was also contributing to some of the community building activities, I was beginning to feel less an outsider as we all developed our relationships and shared our stories. In fact, we became so comfortable with each other, I reflected on the fact that it was sometimes difficult to consistently call attention to their, and my own, cultural assumptions.

## Who Are Teachers?

After students in the course spend some time thinking about who they are and where they come from, I asked them to consider who teachers are. What do we know about this profession and those who call themselves teacher?

At the beginning of one class meeting, I instructed the students to fold their papers "hamburger style" and on the left side draw a picture of a typical teacher. "Imagine I was an alien coming to this planet and I wanted to know what a teacher looked like. How would you draw that person?"

As I walked around the room, I observed drawings of women (presumably White), some with their hair in a bun, most with skirts and a few with appliquéd sweater vests. Apples and alphabets were featured in many of the scenes. I smiled as I thought about how after leaving elementary school teaching, I sold every apple knickknack, all of my holiday pins, and every last "teacher sweater" I owned at a garage sale and felt liberated from the stereotype. But I could see that many of my students had long been enamored with that teacher identity and were excited to embody it themselves.

"Now, please set your artwork to the side and take out the images you brought for class today," I instructed. I had asked them to bring images of teachers they had collected in popular media or from computer clip art. They analyzed these images, and in small groups, the students discussed the portrayal of teachers in movies, on television, and in music. I showed video clips from Pink Floyd's music video "Another Brick in the Wall" and from popular movies such as *Ferris Bueller's Day Off,* where the economics teacher drones, "Class?... Anyone?... Anyone?"

"What do these images tell us about teachers, students, and schools?" I asked the class.

Katie offered, “That teachers have all the power and students hate school.”

“Teachers are portrayed as either old and frumpy or sexy. They’re never just normal looking,” said Brittany.

“Yeah,” added Jennifer, “I saw an ad the other day for ‘Bad Teacher, Naughty Student’ night at the Downtown Lounge. It’s like it’s a fetish thing.”

A couple of the other students gasped or exclaimed, “Ewww!”

Abby threw her arm up in the air in her usual non-sequitur way, as if she has just discovered something brilliant.

“Abby, what’s up?” I asked.

“Well, I was just thinking. I’m not sure, but I think I might be becoming a feminist because of this class!” Some of the other girls smiled and laughed at Abby’s enthusiastic revelation. She continued, “Well, last night we dressed up for Halloween and guys at the bar were coming up to me and thinking I was a nurse, and well, I won’t tell you some of the things they said, but I said to them ‘That is very sexist of you! Why do you think I’m a nurse? I’m a doctor!’”

Jennifer confirmed that Abby did indeed put these guys in their place.

The class continued their investigations by comparing the box covers of school-related films.[4] Depictions of movies like *The Substitute*, *Dangerous Minds*, and *Lean on Me* have dark colors and foreboding characters. In contrast, movies like *Billy Madison*, *Kindergarten Cop*, and *School of Rock* display pastel colors and happy people. It was obvious that the urban school films suggest that schools are hazardous places, and inner city students are uncontrollable and desperate. The students continued to explore how teachers are represented in the public, and I turned the discussion to the response to these images. “What do we do about that? Do we have a responsibility as a member of this profession to respond to these inaccurate portrayals?”

The young women stared, thinking intently about what this might mean for them personally.

After a long pause, Melissa said, “We can *not* be that image. We can be smart and engaging and teach in a way that is not like that.” Others chimed in ways they might model more positive representations of teaching.

I asked, “Great, is there anything you might do to respond directly to these images?” Blank stares. I impatiently suggested, “What about not patronizing that bar that fetishizes our profession?”

Abby’s eyes lit up. “We could write letters and complain about it.”

“Good.” I affirmed.

---

[4] This stems from the work of James Trier.

After a few more minutes of silence, I offered "You could not spend your money on the movie that describes teachers in an unrealistic or demeaning manner."

Some of the women nodded, not looking terribly convinced. I tried not to appear disappointed by the slow groundwork for activism.

I ended class by asking the students to take out their picture of a typical teacher. I instructed, "On the right side of the paper, draw a picture of yourself as teacher." I circled the room, watching students revel in their use of crayons and felt pens. Some drew themselves to look exactly like the picture on the left; others illustrated themselves wearing pants instead of a skirt, with dialogue bubbles saying encouraging things to the students. Apples, deeply held symbols of the profession, were still sprinkled throughout the scenes but less so. The class discussed how their pictures were similar or different, how their perception of teachers changed after the discussion, and how perceptions are slow to change in general.

In addition to analyzing public portrayals of teachers, I wanted the students to think carefully about the factual statistics about teachers. To demonstrate this, I began a lesson by asking them all to stand in a circle. I prefaced the activity saying, "I'm going to ask you to identify specific parts of your identity. If you feel uncomfortable acknowledging this part of your identity, please do not feel compelled to do so." Since the students in this cohort know each other fairly well, this self-disclosure is often very safe.

I began. "Would everyone who is male, please step out of the circle."

The women look at one another and giggle. The lack of men in the cohort was often a point of humor.

"Would everyone whose first language is not English, step out of the circle."

Mariana looked up and backed out of the circle.

"Would everyone who does not identify as White or Caucasian, please step out of the circle."

A few of the women looked at Mariana who has already left the circle, but no one else moved.

"If you grew up in an urban setting, a large city not a suburb, please step out of the circle."

Karrie stepped back.

"If you were raised in a religion other than Christianity, please step out."

Nikki stepped out.

"If you grew up in extreme wealth or poverty, please step out."

For a moment, no one moved, and then Darla looked down and stepped back.

I said, "Those of you who are left make up the typical population of teachers in the United States. I would also add that most teachers are heterosexual, but asking someone to acknowledge that part of their identity is not yet an entirely safe thing to do in our society so I have left that out."

As the students went back to their seats, I put a pie graph up on the overhead projector.

"Eighty percent of all teachers in the U.S. and even more elementary school teachers are women and a large majority of them are White, English speaking, middle class and Christian."

I put up another graph, one that showed very different information.

"These are the demographics of students in our schools."

The students sat quietly, absorbing the disparity between teachers and students. Some of them looked uncomfortable.

"What do you think about that?" I asked.

More silence.

Courtney offered, "It's too bad more men aren't teachers. I think when little boys don't see men as teachers; they don't think they can be a teacher."

Julie said, "I had a male teacher in sixth grade, and I really liked him."

"Other observations?" I inquired.

Luanne spoke up. "Well, just because I'm like most of the other teachers, doesn't mean I'm not going to be a good teacher."

I anticipated this defensiveness and was quick to respond. "Of course not! I'm not suggesting you are not going to be a good teacher. I am cut from the same cloth as you. I meet all of those characteristics as well. I'm just saying, it *is* what it *is*. These are the statistics about the people who are in our schools. I just want to know what you think about that."

Students offered suggestions for ways to recruit underrepresented people into teaching. Most of them agreed that a more diverse teacher population would be a good thing.

Kaylee argues that women are better nurturers and that it makes sense for women to teach, because many of them are second incomes for their family. She argued, "People don't go into teaching for the money or the status. The important thing is they want to be there. I would rather have all White women who want to teach than other people who aren't passionate about it." Other classmates agreed that teachers should care more about children than money.

Abby, her arm shooting out of its socket, was trying to get my attention to be called on. "Yes, Abby, tell us what you think."

"Just because you're not a White woman doesn't mean you can't be passionate about teaching!!! I think more students would become teachers if they had teachers who looked like them."

> I said, “Okay, Abby, what could you do to act on that belief? How do you think you could contribute to a more diverse teaching force?”
>
> Abby thought about it. “I don’t know. Encourage my students? Oh! What about bringing in lots of role models from different backgrounds? So my students can learn that they can be lots of different professions?” Other students responded in agreement, offering additional ways to do that.
>
> “These are great ways to change the face of teaching in the future. What should we do in the meantime? If anything?” I asked.
>
> Most students talked about being good teachers themselves. I observed that they seemed to have difficulty thinking about the big picture and how they might have any connection to the larger face of teaching.

Before the end of the lesson, I offered two more statistics. Less than half of all elementary school principals in the United States are women, and only 10% of all superintendents are women. I urged the young women in the room to consider pursuing these positions. “In these positions of leadership, you can have a greater impact on how schools operate, changing the aspects that you feel are inadequate or unjust.” I encouraged them, but I could see that the dream of being an elementary school teacher was so strong for many of them that they could not look that far ahead in their career right now. I wondered, were they resisting this activist leadership role or were they just not developmentally ready to accept this stance?

At the end of the lesson, Mariana approached me. She said, “You know, I grew up not thinking so much about being Mexican. My friends would always say to me, ‘Oh, you’re just another White girl.’ But I’m starting to think that my students might benefit from me sharing more of my culture.”

I smiled and said, “That’s interesting, Mariana (rolling the r). Thanks for sharing that with me.”

## Who Are Our Students?

My goals for the Integrated Block included students learning about their own identities but also learning something about other groups of people who they might perceive as different from them. The readings and discussion centered on, for example, the experiences of people from the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) community, those who are living in poverty or experiencing homelessness, and the belief systems of different religions represented in the area. The students shared stories about their friends or families who might have had similar experiences, with the intent of better understanding future students who come from these groups.

One conversation that was particularly enlightening was an impromptu discussion about what it means to be “American.” It began with questions about why some people referred to themselves as African American or Asian American.

> “Aren’t we all just Americans? I think those terms just point out the separation between groups,” offered Luanne.
>
> “Yeah,” said Julie, “ I don’t call myself Swedish American, even though my family still sort of celebrates some holidays like St. Lucia Day.”
>
> Courtney responded, “Well, maybe you *should* call yourself Swedish American.”
>
> “But I don’t want to call myself Swedish American. I’m just American.”
>
> I asked, “So, do you think it’s your choice to decide what you want to be called?”
>
> “Well,” Julie thinks and responds, “I guess so, but I think if you choose to hyphenate American, then you really don’t want to be American. You should stay in Sweden if you want to be Swedish.”
>
> Courtney pursued the argument, “But why can’t you be both Swedish and American? If you really like your ethnic heritage and want to keep some of those things, why not add it to your label instead of replace it with something else?”
>
> Luanne interrupted and responded for Julie, “Because this is America. America is a melting pot, and when you come, here we all become American.”
>
> “But what does that mean??” Abby asked, exasperated.
>
> The class continued to discuss the term, its origin, and the historical use of the term Americanization. I began listing characteristics on the whiteboard that students said came to mind when they thought about the word “American.”
>
> Ellie said, “U.S. citizen.”
>
> Carrie offered the word patriotic and Brittany countered with “critique.” Abby did not like the term critique because she thought it meant to complain and that did not fit with her image of a good American. This caused the conversation to erupt into how one defined what is a “good” American and a “bad” American. The class discussed the technical meaning of the word, discussing immigration and the process of becoming a U.S. citizen. Then they delved into the connotation of the term.
>
> I suggested, “If we can’t decide what it is, maybe we can learn from what it’s not,” and I wrote the word “Anti-American” and asked what that looked like.

A list of terms emerged, some of them synonymous with the words they had used to define American. Some students agreed that it’s like pornography; you know it when you see it. The class was coming to a close, so I asked the students to find three people over the weekend who had different backgrounds than themselves and ask them what it meant to be American. I wondered if some of them would have difficulty finding three people who were different from them. I hoped they would gather some additional perspectives on what it meant, or did not mean, to be American.

The following Monday, students wrote the quotes they had collected over the weekend up on the whiteboard. Some of them also described the interviewee: “African American male, age 23.” Words like patriot and law-abiding citizen were juxtaposed with Budweiser and NASCAR. The students debated back and forth what words best described what it meant to be American. But the more engaged conversation was about their experiences discussing this with other people. They were sometimes surprised and amused at the responses, learning a little about their friends or family. Ultimately, the class decided it was not something they could define because different people had different interpretations of it. I asked, “Then, how do you teach people to be American if you are not sure what it is?”

> Kassie asked, “Do we have to teach people to be American? Isn’t it just that they are or they aren’t?”
>
> Darla offered, “I don’t think we teach them to be American, I think we just teach them to be good people.”
>
> “Okay,” I said, “What, then, does it mean to be a *good person*?”
>
> What ensued was another debate about what the students thought to be good, debating whether or not obeying laws and following the rules makes one a good person or not. I challenged them to name heroes or role models that inhabit the qualities they wanted students to have. An argument commenced about Rosa Parks and other civil rights leaders who broke the law to fight against racial injustice.
>
> Darla asked, “How do we know when to help students know if breaking the rules is the right thing to do? I don’t really want them to think they can break my classroom rules, but I can see where historically it was necessary to break the rules. It seems like a slippery slope.”
>
> Ultimately, the students decided these terms are too difficult to define because there are so many contexts and perspectives to consider. I did very little to convince them otherwise, and as I walked back to my office after class, I wondered whether that uncertain space was a good thing or not. Would they view our inability to come up with “the answer” as a reason to continue to ask the questions or a reason to avoid having to think about it altogether?

## Cultural Studies

I desired to help students adopt a transformative approach to multicultural education, but I found that many of the students lacked very much knowledge about ethnic cultures different from their own, even those that are prevalent in the area. In an attempt to help students learn about other cultures, I assigned groups to research a particular culture using a variety of resources. In addition to learning something about a culture’s history and contemporary experiences, the students are asked to find resources that potentially might help teachers to better understand and serve students with this background. The group was asked to lead a presentation where they share what they found to be most helpful as future teachers.

The first group began their presentation about the Hmong culture by showing slides describing the history of how the Hmong were displaced from their homes and came to find refuge in the United States. Jennifer, who worked at a local museum, put on display many artifacts from the Hmong culture, sharing their meaning and describing how teachers might use these items in a lesson about the Hmong culture. Courtney described some behaviors that Hmong students may exhibit, such as averting eye contact, and highlighting some interesting aspects of their medical beliefs. Mariana provided a handout with Web sites of local Hmong cultural organizations and speakers. The class members asked questions and seemed very intrigued with the many interesting features of this culture.

The Native American group opened their presentation with the reading of a children's book. Luanne read with a respectful tone and inflection, as Brittany tapped quietly on her drum. The other students listened intently, taking in the details of the illustrations and responding to Luanne's prompts. When the story concluded, Darla asked the class whether they could identify similarities between this story and the Cinderella story with which they were all familiar. They took turns comparing and contrasting the characters, also sharing their knowledge of other cultural interpretations of the fairy tale and expressing appreciation for this seemingly convenient way to integrate cultural awareness. Karrie commented, "I hate it that in all the Cinderella stories, it always ends with Cinderella becoming beautiful and getting her Prince Charming. Why not have it end with Cinderella being normal looking or maybe not meeting her prince?"

Kassie exclaimed, "Because it's a *fairy tale*! That's what all girls dream about, being skinny and getting a prince."

To which many of the women emphatically disputed with groans and protests. Kassie rolled her eyes in response. To stir the pot a bit more, I suggested maybe there should be a book about Cinderella meeting her Prin*cess* Charming. This was met with an even louder uproar, a few of the students shouting that this was a great idea! Luanne complained that everyone was being so "PC."

The African American culture group, led by Abby, began their presentation by modeling an activity after the one I had done earlier in the semester. Abby instructed the class, "Imagine I was an alien coming to this planet and I wanted to know what an African American looked like. How would you draw that person?"

My blood rushed to my head and my pulse quickened; I was predicting this was a bad direction to take but unsure how to stop it without humiliating Abby. I wanted to trust my students, believing they could make it constructive. But as the class members made suggestions, and even though students were debating what an accurate portrayal of an African American was, it was clear that it was serving to perpetuate a variety of stereotypes.

I attempted to interrupt the activity by saying, "Let's be clear about what is a respectful representation of a culture. I think we need to think carefully about how we characterize any one person from the African American culture."

Abby, visibly trying to keep the activity from derailing, explained that this is the point of the activity – that we cannot assume that any person of a culture looks a particular way. Jessica, another member of her group, abruptly brought the activity to an end by quickly saying, “So, anyway, you can’t assume anything, and now we’re going to show you lots of well known African Americans in a variety of fields, maybe some that we don’t usually read about in our history books.”

After all the student presentations, I facilitated a discussion during which the students compared and contrasted common cultural characteristics or behaviors. They talked about the different cultures in which it was common to avoid direct eye contact. Some cultures discouraged children from speaking directly to adults. I shared my experiences from when I did a teacher exchange on an American Indian reservation.

“The greatest challenge for me,” I said, “was adapting to a different conception of time. I personally have always been a very time conscious person, and I learned that native people are conscious of time in a whole different way. Things happened, events started, whenever it started. No one was ever in a hurry because they valued the present in a way that is different from typical American culture. It was often described as ‘Indian time.’”

> Mariana offered, “Yeah, we always say my uncle lives on beaner time.”
>
> A few of the students chuckled.
>
> “So,” I continued, “are you telling us that the Mexican culture has a similar approach to time as the native people?”
>
> “Yes,” Mariana smiled, knowing I was offering her more appropriate language, “that is what I’m telling you.” She went on, “And sometimes our funerals last a long time. I know that is true for Native Americans, too.”
>
> I appreciated that Mariana was feeling comfortable to share her cultural background. I noticed that Mariana seemed to be contributing her cultural perspective more often in class, and the other students appeared to be genuinely interested in what she shared. I was pensive as I thought about how different these culture presentations might be if I had students from many of the culture groups they studied.

## Redefining What It Means to Be a Good Student

Despite the fact that the students struggled to define what it means to be a good person, it was clear to me that almost all my students considered themselves to be “good students” and in many cases identified as “perfectionists.” The young women in my class were generally very conscientious, clarifying expectations, completing assignments carefully, and wanting to get good grades; they knew how to “do school.” They often sought out praise and reassurance to verify they were on the right track. I generally appreciated these qualities, except when it came to the more untraditional assignments.

Early in the semester I described one of the assignments for the Integrated Block course, which was to create a final project of the students' choosing. Each student was allowed to complete a project that they felt would enhance their understanding of democracy and equity. It was emphasized that this is an opportunity to *do* something, rather than read or write something. They can *choose* to read, and they *will* have to respond to a few questions about their project in writing, but the goal is to experience something that will put the students in touch with some of the ideals of democratic education. I offered some examples, but essentially it was the students' responsibility to define the project. The world really was their oyster with this assignment, and yet some students experienced great anxiety, and sometimes resentment, about this assignment.

Julie was a good example of someone who was uncomfortable deciding what she ought to learn. For three days in a row after class, she would ask me whether she should do this project or that project. I would respond, "Well, that depends on what you want to learn." One time, Julie literally huffed in response.

Eventually, Julie came to office hours fretting about her project. Nearly in tears, she cried, "What do you want me to do? What kind of project will get an A? Geez! Just tell me what to do!"

I used a reflective questioning technique to help calm Julie down and determine what was important to her. I asked her what questions she had about education, about the world, about her place in this profession. Once Julie thought of an idea and established enough trust in her ability to really define what she wanted to learn (and trust that I really meant what I said), she embarked on a study of an underperforming school in town. She took pictures of physical conditions at the school, interviewed teachers and students, and analyzed demographics and test data for the school. She presented all this information in a passionate powerpoint presentation at the end of the semester. Julie waited for me after class to thank me for such a rewarding assignment. We joked about how we had almost come to fisticuffs that day in my office.

Another assignment demonstrated the results of having been well trained in a school system that values students who do what the teacher tells them to. The most significant paper the students write in the Integrated Block class is their Personal Practical Philosophy.[5] In this paper, it is the student's responsibility to describe what they believe the purpose of schooling is and then describe classroom procedures and instructional methods serving that purpose. The students are assigned readings about the historical purposes of schooling and various theorists' perspectives, but they are expected to articulate what they think their role is as a teacher. When they have established their purpose, they then use their texts and course activities, but most commonly their personal experiences as a student, to describe activities, procedures, and physical layouts that would support them in achieving their chosen purpose. The most important requirement of their paper is that all their ideas align with their stated purpose.

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[5] Richard R. Powell uses this term, drawing from the work of Clandinin and Connelly.

I observed that students struggled at all stages of this paper. First, some of them cannot believe they have never even thought about the purpose of schools before. The implication of this bothers some students more than others. Second, they want to include all the ideas they have been saving up about how to be a teacher (some of them literally had scrapbooks full of ideas), but they found those ideas that they thought seemed to be tried and true examples of what “works” did not always support their philosophy. As an exaggerated example of challenging the concept of what “works,” I said to the students, “Imagine I wanted you all to be quiet. If I screamed (screaming) ‘shut up, you brats!’ would you be quiet?” The students nodded in mild shock.

> “Yes,” I continued, “You probably would be quiet, but would I be accomplishing my larger purpose which includes helping students to feel safe to learn?” The students shook their heads, indicating a “no,” still surprised by my outburst.
>
> “Right, so you need to ask yourself if this activity that ‘works (I made quotation marks in the air with my fingers) is accomplishing your purpose, or is it simply getting students to obey? Is there a way to get students to comply that also achieves your larger purpose?”
>
> The philosophy papers were due in a week and at the end of class one day, Nikki handed me her draft and said, “Is this the right purpose?”
>
> I asked, without looking at the paper, “Does it support what you believe about schooling?”
>
> “I don’t know,” said Nikki.
>
> “You don’t know if it supports it or you don’t know what you believe?” I asked.
>
> Nikki screwed up her face and said, “I think I know what I believe, but I don’t really know if it’s right.”
>
> I looked squarely at Nikki and said, “How would you figure out if it’s right?”
>
> Nikki squirmed a bit, turned her head and looked out of the corner of her eye, and said, in the form of a question, “You could tell me it is?”
>
> Overhearing our conversation, Kaylee interrupted. “Yeah, I want to know that too. I think I know what I believe, but I’m not sure you’ll agree.”
>
> I offered, “Well, it’s not important that I agree. It’s important that you can align your belief with your action. That’s really the only criteria to being right.”
>
> Kaylee looked at me cautiously and said, “My dad says I should just write what you want to hear.”
>
> I replied, “Well, your dad is wrong. And when you get your paper back, you can show him that.”
>
> I felt pretty safe in making this somewhat smug statement. In the past, students had rarely written philosophies that were inappropriate. The only reason students

> were likely to lose points on the paper were when they suggested discipline systems where the impact on the child did not align with what the preservice teacher said was her purpose.
>
> I reflected on this exchange with Nikki and Kaylee and how it demonstrated again not just how little my students trusted their own ability to make decisions about their learning but also how little they trusted their teacher to grade them on their own thoughts and not the teacher's. These were very new ways of doing school.

## Transforming the Perspective of Good Student into Good Teacher

In preparation for writing their philosophy paper, I asked the women to consider their purpose in this profession. What did they believe their role was as teacher? What was the purpose of schooling? For most of the students, this was the first time they were asked to consider these questions, and some of them were quite shocked that in all the years they thought about their future work as a teacher, they had not thought about what they valued about schooling. It was always something they just took for granted. In order to prepare them to prioritize the purposes of schooling, my curriculum introduced a variety of societal impacts on schools, some of these variables also being new information for the students.

After discussing the disrepair and economic depravity of some of the country's schools, and hearing a local speaker about issues of homelessness, Brittany walked out of class with me and said, "This stuff is really informative, but it's really depressing. I'd prefer to talk about the warm and fuzzy stuff." She was expressing what I read on the faces of many of my students who walked out of class that day quiet and sullen.

I responded, "Yes, it is depressing, isn't it? But it's not all going to be depressing." As I walked away, I contemplated my potential responses to my students' emotions. Initially, I felt the urge to make them feel better. I wanted to make it okay, reassure them, help them feel better about what I was teaching them. I constructed an email to them in my head as I walked back to the office. It would say something like

> "Hi everyone,
>
> I know today was really challenging for you. Not everything we need to talk about will be pretty but, rest assured, we will be talking about ways to be hopeful about teaching and the conditions that exist in our schools. Trust that I will help you respond to the challenges that face you."

By the time I got to my office computer, I thought about this impulse to make them all feel better. I reflected on my feelings. Where was this coming from? Was this a good opportunity to model the discomfort or crisis that we had talked about when learning about anti-oppressive education? Was it not okay for them to feel badly for a day or two? And how do I know that all of them felt this way? Was I interpreting their silence as discomfort when maybe it was contemplation? Was there something here about our shared culture of being White women? About the "good students" needing to be affirmed? About the *instructor* (also a good student myself) needing to be affirmed?

> I ultimately decided to email just Brittany, if not to comfort my student, to make myself feel better about this negative reaction. The email looked like this:
>
> Brittany,
>
> Thanks for sharing your emotional response with me. I admit, it is depressing sometimes. I have, obviously, shown these videos and heard this information many times and I don't get so depressed anymore. I get angry. I'm mad this is the way it is. I want you to know that we will be working at ways to think more hopefully about these issues.
>
> Thanks again for sharing your feelings with me.

As I prepared for future lessons, I thought about how I wanted my students to adopt a critical stance on this "depressing" information. I wanted them to get mad like I was. I wanted to prepare them to go out into the profession and not just "be the change they wanted to see in the world"; I wanted them to take on more of an activist stance. But I was not really sure they wanted to.

## Heterogeneity Revealing Itself

The Integrated Block class was, in fact, extremely ethnically, socioeconomically, and religiously homogenous. Most of the differences among the students revealed themselves at other times during the semester, as I got to know them better. Based on Ellie's bag speech and some other comments, I had assumed she was a conservative Christian. During one class discussion when the topic was related to supporting gay and lesbian students, Ellie raised her hand and said, "I think this is going to be very difficult for me."

> Here it comes, I thought.
>
> Ellie continued, "I guess I have to realize that not everyone who walks into my classroom is going to think it's okay to be gay."
>
> What?!
>
> "My high school was a drama magnet school and, I mean, this is going to sound stereotypical, but it's my experience that a lot of the guys at my school in drama were gay. And our student body president was a lesbian, and she was one of the most popular people in the school. So, it's hard for me to remember that some of my students or their families may not know gay people, or may not think that it's okay to be gay."

> I was genuinely surprised that Ellie's religious beliefs did not seem to inhibit her acceptance of her gay and lesbian classmates.
>
> Kaylee, however, was not as willing to embrace acceptance. During the discussion, she cautiously but firmly stated that she thought homosexuality was wrong, that "they" are sinners, and that she would pray for her students who had gay family members but she would not talk about it in her classroom. Melissa very kindly responded that she felt sad for people (not naming Kaylee specifically) who might not see everything that a student has to offer. I watched the discussion, unsure about how to affirm Kaylee's identity in her deeply held religious beliefs, while protecting Kaylee's future gay and lesbian students. After some mildly tense moments, the class settled on polite agreement that we all have different opinions, and it is important to respect that everyone comes from different backgrounds.
>
> I had also made assumptions about Luanne's openness to diversity because of her membership in the Gay/Straight Alliance in high school, but over the course of the semester, Luanne made many comments that seemed in contrast to my assumption. For example, one day Luanne handed in a paper printed on lined loose leaf instead of standard White paper, saying, "Sorry this is so ghetto. I ran out of printer paper."
>
> I responded as she walked away, "Hey Luanne, did you know that 'ghetto' is the new 'gay'?"
>
> Luanne made a small huffing noise and walked out the door.

Although students' uniqueness showed more fully over time, the fact remained that most of the young White women in the class had not ever been asked to acknowledge the power, privilege, and marginalization associated with parts of their identities. But I was confident that I was providing many opportunities to help my students see the world from perspectives other than their own.

## Wrapping up the Semester

As part of a required linguistics course that the students attended concurrently with the Integrated Block, the students were assigned second language conversation partners. They regularly met with their partners for a symbiotic relationship; the second language learners were able to practice their English, and the preservice teachers were able to learn language conventions that would assist them in teaching English language learners. I often heard the students discuss what they were learning in these relationships during class breaks and sometimes during class as it related to course topics.

Toward the end of the semester, students were packing up their things at the end of class and lamenting to one another about their presentations for their linguistics class. I overheard Melissa complaining that her Hispanic conversation partner often came late to their meetings, so she did not feel like she had a lot to present on. I recognized this as an impromptu opportunity to connect to the cultural characteristics discussion they had earlier in the semester. I pointed out to Melissa, and anyone else within earshot, “So, that’s a great example of someone from another culture having a different conception of time. Remember that conversation?”

> “Yeah,” Melissa said, “She didn’t understand that Americans are on time.”
>
> I tried again, “Well, yes, most Americans do tend to operate with a different value of time. We believe it is socially acceptable to be late in some cases but not for other occasions. Do you think your partner’s different reaction to time might have been related to her culture?”
>
> Nodding her head, Melissa responded, “Yes, she just hasn’t learned the American concept of time yet.”
>
> Students were already walking out the door, I stood stunned, not sure what else I could say at this point to interrupt this deficit model so clearly entrenched in this student’s response. I watched the students walk out the door, feeling completely unsatisfied with the conversation, feeling pangs of fear that I had accomplished nothing with my students, letting this one conversation color my outlook on the whole semester. Tomorrow I would have more perspective on my success as a social justice advocate, but today I would feel awful.

The students would soon leave my classroom for a public school classroom. I clung to the hope that their experiences in my class would reverberate in their heads when they faced the challenges of teaching diverse groups of students. I realized it was one thing to challenge perspectives through course readings and discussions about educational theory; working on deeply held assumptions in real-life classrooms is yet another.

## Postscript

“How can I get my White middle-class women to understand diversity?”

For as long as I have been developing as a teacher educator, this has been one of the major questions. My doctoral courses, my work with education students as a graduate teaching assistant, and my ongoing development as a professor of education have all been focused in a major way on the “problem” of White middle-class female teachers. And here, in Chapter 1, I relate a storied experience that is an amalgamation of my experiences with classes largely populated with White middle-class women.

It is true, typically White middle-class women make up an overwhelmingly large number of teachers in the United States. But I am not so naïve as to think that the problems of education are confined to this statistic. Nor do I believe that all White people or women are defined by these characteristics alone. Most importantly, I do not wish to perpetuate the deficit model that has been created about these “typical” teachers.

It is no coincidence that the topic of White female teachers has been the center of my study for over 10 years. One is most likely to spend time studying that which most resonates with one’s self. Yes, I am a White English-speaking heterosexual female teacher, raised Christian in a small town. I understand that experience. I also understand the process that has transformed my understanding of teaching and learning and caused me to become acutely aware of how my upbringing had (un) prepared me for teaching. It is the combination of these experiences that have summoned me to write this book, to share my story and ongoing self-study, and propose how to utilize an asset model for White female teachers.

Within this book, I will outline the issues related to, but not specifically for, preparing White female teachers, share my experiences on how I came to understand the importance of purpose, and review the self-study literature that relates to the transformation of preservice teachers. I will reveal the challenges in my teaching and learning throughout a description of three different processes of self-study over the course of my professional development. Because self-study must always have a focus outward to the larger picture, the book will conclude with a dialogue between two teacher educators that seeks to highlight the issues related to not only who is being prepared to teach but who prepares them.

## Beyond a Deficit Model

A plethora of literature exists that examines and appropriately challenges the application of a cultural deficit model to students who are “Othered.” A deficit model contends that the problem with a child lies in the ways in which he or she is not like the “norm.” Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different (Grant and Sleeter, 2003) and Teaching for the Other (Kumashiro, 2000) are approaches to multicultural or anti-oppressive education that may perpetuate the deficit model by focusing on how to teach the students to unlearn their culturally different ways and to assimilate to the more socially acceptable ways of being in school.

In much of the teacher education research, the deficit model is a common explanation for why White middle-class teachers might be unsuccessful in meeting the needs of all of their students. Culturally responsive pedagogy utilizes a view of students that honors their cultural backgrounds and incorporates some of how they see the world into the practices of the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Essentially, teachers should begin to see students’ cultural differences as assets and opportunities for scaffolding skills and knowledge that are necessary to be successful in the world.

It is my contention that a similar asset model might be applied to the approach for White female teachers. It is well documented that those who come from a culturally privileged experience (e.g. White middle-class men) often have difficulty in understanding, let alone acting against, oppression. However, these difficulties do not make up the whole of that person. In addition to these limitations, certainly there are assets that those who are more privileged in society bring to the transformation process that can be drawn upon to scaffold an understanding of Others and oppression. Historically, schooling typically has been designed to be “culturally responsive” to White middle-class girls. I will argue that we should continue to be responsive to White women, to draw on the characteristics that these students bring from their life experiences as assets, but toward a new purpose and outcome that furthers their understanding of social justice and prepares them to act.

I am aware that in suggesting that teacher education should, in a sense, privilege White women by focusing on their strengths risks a critique of centering the work of multicultural education on Whiteness. Hernandez-Sheets (2000) and hooks (1994) have cautioned that White authors who write to a White audience often objectify people of color while ignoring the institutional contexts of racism. hooks (1994) reminds me that it is my responsibility to examine within my position of power the degree to which I rely on “conventional paradigms of domination to reinforce and maintain that power” (p. 105).

In essence, my goal throughout my work is to use my power to disrupt inequity. This must be done by accepting responsibility to interrupt my own perpetuation of privilege, to respectfully engage multiple voices in the process, and to challenge others who hold similar privilege. *This* is my experience. I am a White woman teaching primarily White women to teach diverse populations and I think I am, in that respect, typical of many teacher educators.

While recognizing effective ways to teach White women about diversity, it is essential to continue simultaneously addressing the need to recruit and retain preservice teachers and teacher educators from underrepresented groups. Although I will describe ways I have sought to disrupt my (and my students’) cultural assumptions while teaching classes of predominantly White women, this should not be the ultimate goal. Truly transformative experiences occur when the members of a group can offer distinctly varied and authentic perspectives in a conducive environment. These conditions are necessary for all people, regardless of race or gender, to gain a deeper understanding of diversity and to change the inequitable structures of society. In the meantime, I hope to continue to prepare my culturally homogenous groups of students to critically challenge how they see teachers, students, and schooling.

# Chapter 2
# The Demographics of Teaching and Teacher Education: The Need for Transformation

## The Typical Teacher

The often professed but rarely solved dilemma in teacher education today is that the majority of teachers and teacher education students continue to be White, middle-class, monolingual females (Zimpher & Howey, 1992; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) who often come from small towns or suburbs with very limited intercultural experiences (AACTE, 1987, 1989). The number of male teachers is the lowest in 40 years (NEA, April 28, 2004). Hodgkinson (2001) suggested that the "inner ring" of suburbs, those closest to city limits, are now diversifying similar to the inner cities (p. 8). He predicts that in small town and "outer ring" suburbs (where many teacher education candidates are raised) school enrollments will continue to be relatively unchanged (p. 8). Increased diversification of the school system will be felt in concentrated areas in states such as Florida, Texas, and California (Hodgkinson, 2001).

The fact that teachers share these many characteristics makes it more difficult for these "typical" teachers to be culturally responsive through curriculum, instruction, and management (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In addition, the mostly culturally homogenous populations of preservice teachers are continuing to be prepared by teacher educators much like themselves (Howey et al., 1994; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996; Hodgkinson, 2002), who are often lacking in the same kinds of intercultural experiences as their preservice students (Zeichner, 1996). Because most professors of education come from a background in K-12 teaching, the uniformity of the teaching force is perpetuated in higher education.

There has been little research done on the impact of a teacher's race on her students' achievement, possibly, in part, because there are fewer teachers of color. Dee (2004) suggests that race may play into student's achievement but what the research suggests more accurately is that teachers who share their students' race may serve as necessary role models. Race may also play a part in the teacher-student relationship with respect to the concept of "stereotype threat." This phenomenon occurs when students perceive that their teachers believe them to be less able based on their race (Steele and Aronson, as cited in Dee, 2004, p. 54). Dee's research does show that teachers who share their students' race are more likely to have higher expectations for those students.

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When considering the importance of race, one must recognize that the issues are not rooted solely in the color of skin but in social and political practices that are characteristic of particular racial groups. This might best be understood through a theory of Whiteness which Frankenberg (1993) says is simultaneously a privileged location, a viewpoint, and a set of cultural practices (p. 1). The concept of Whiteness moves the problems of racism into the realm of those who are also privileged by race.

Hyland (2005) describes White racism as something more than individual acts of bigotry. “White people are raised within a system and context that normalizes racial grouping and has educated them to a worldview that assumes that Whiteness is superior” (p. 432). Although most White teachers treat their students in ways that are well-intentioned and even “normal” according to their experience, their behavior often reifies the oppression inherent in a system of Whiteness. In studies on White teachers’ understanding of race, they often adopt a color-blind approach (Sleeter, 1992) or resist seeing Whiteness as a system of power and oppression (McIntyre, 1997).

Dee (2006) has also studied the impact of teacher gender on student achievement. He concludes that girls have higher academic achievement when taught by women, and boys do better when taught by men. This gender effect may also be related to the subjects that male and female teachers are more likely to teach (Dee, 2006). Sadker and Zittleman (2005) report that historically girls are more successful in demonstrating the qualities likely to attract positive teacher attention and school success. They report that “girls are expected to be docile, conforming, and willing to work hard” (p. 28) and they are “more likely to be quiet in class and be praised for neatness” (p. 30). They also note that girls experience learned helplessness more than boys and that girls’ self-esteem decreases as they enter adolescence.

Educational researchers have identified teacher characteristics that support what is commonly referred to as culturally relevant or culturally responsive teaching (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). There are also some White teachers who self-identify as successful teachers of their students of color (e.g. Paley, 1989). These teachers usually examine their own Whiteness and other forms of privilege, as well as employ anti-oppressive instructional methods. Despite these studies, the number of White teachers described in the literature as being highly successful with students of color is still much smaller than is necessary to reform our schools (Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998).

This marked homogeneity in the teaching profession, as well as in the colleges of teacher education, presents a pervasive challenge. How do we prepare teacher educators to prepare teachers to transform schooling into a just and equitable learning experience for all – given that many teachers have not experienced significant marginalization by unjust or inequitable schooling? I will argue that the discipline of self-study of teacher education practice is at least one way to reflect on and learn from these inequities, and it benefits both teacher educators and those they teach. Engaging all teacher educators in this transformation work can change the demographics of teaching and thus the experience of K-12 students.

## What Is Transformation?

Much of the research to date emphasizes the difficulty in significantly transforming preservice teachers' beliefs (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 2001; Valenzuela, 2002). Teacher educators have examined their influence on students within a single course (Kennedy, 1998), with the use of action research (Zeichner & Gore, 1990) and through the supervision relationship (Pennington, 2007) with poor results.

Despite these grim predications, schools of education continue to attempt to transform future teachers' beliefs. As "typical" teacher candidates continue to be a large percentage of those accepted by schools of education, teacher educators are experimenting with changes in course work to develop programs and faculty that may become more effective. Some of this work may provide insight into how schools of education might better prepare teachers, especially those that make up the majority of teacher education programs.

Transformation, as I use it in this book, is the continuous evolution of one's own understanding and perspectives in order to meet more effectively the needs of all students. It is marked by a disruption of values or cultural beliefs through critical reflection with the goal of more socially just teaching. It requires teachers to think critically and challenge ideas of how power and control are constructed in the world and mapped onto themselves. This process can help teachers understand their own cultural positions and to reflect on and analyze the reasons why they might find the behavior of a culturally different person confusing or objectionable. The transformation of teachers can also lead to more democratic classrooms where teachers recognize the power dynamics in educational processes and society (Brookfield, 1995; Beane, 2005). The primary goal is that through better understanding themselves, teachers will begin to better understand their students, especially those who are different from them.

The approach to transformation has many comparable terms in the literature – for example, cultural therapy (Spindler & Spindler, 1993), political clarity (Bartolome, 1994), critical pedagogy (Nieto, 1999a; Brookfield, 1995), inquiry as stance (Cochran-Smith, 2004), a listening stance (Shultz, 2003), and a minority perspective (Sleeter, 1995a). Pajares (1992) suggested that teacher education must require that students undergo the "mental somersaults" needed to challenge their own cultural beliefs (p. 317). In a review of the literature about professional growth of preservice and beginning teachers, Kagan (1992) provided a particular perception of teacher transformation by highlighting various studies that explain teacher change by means of "developmental stages" and "evolutionary patterns." Likewise, Sarallena (1997) described three stages of cultural awareness, and Tatum (1992) offered a theory of racial identity development. Howard (1999) contended that the goal for Whites should be a "transformationist White identity."

Howard (2007) describes transformative work as conducted in five phases: (1) building trust, (2) engaging personal culture, (3) confronting issues of social dominance and social justice, (4) transforming instructional practices, and (5) engaging the entire school community (p. 17). Similar to Howard, I believe this work starts with a personal relationship, learning about one's students, and then moving outward to the context and community. However, all five of these phases are very difficult to accomplish in a teacher preparation program, let alone in one "multicultural education" class.

Transformation is a continuous process, not an end. As in teaching, one does not achieve a level of mastery and then cease to grow. It is not necessarily hierarchical stages of development so much as it is a rounding out of understanding. The concept of transformation is not static. Wilkes (1998) suggested that we should expect our students to transcend our own level of transformation. She provides an excellent metaphor:

> There may be no end to this race, no finish line to cross. The ideas keep expanding and traveling from learner to learner, passed from one generation of thinkers to another, each one more vibrant, more exuberant than the one who went before. We have received the baton from our own teachers, mentors, models. We carry it for a time, but we run with it slightly differently than they did. Our arm movement, head movement, leg movement, and breathing patterns are our own. But we run as fast and as well as we are able. Ahead, we can see our teammate – ready and poised to take over the race. As we hand over the baton to them and watch them explode forward, we stand contentedly and cheer them on. (p. 205)

I interpret Wilkes' metaphor to describe this process as continuous movement between and among teachers and students. As teachers examine and reflect on their positions in society, they also model for their students how to continue this process creating a perpetual change action. Mezirow (1978) explains that our life experiences and cultural assumptions shape how we make meaning of new information. It would follow that when teacher educators provide preservice teachers with experiences in challenging cultural assumptions, then those preservice teachers' experiences will have an effect on *their* students' transformation process. In other words, by engaging preservice teachers in transformative experiences while simultaneously modeling one's own transformation process, a teacher educator is providing two experiences to the preservice teacher – how to be transformed and how to transform others. Thus, much like a ripple effect, the ability to critically reflect and challenge would further evolve and produce greater opportunity for change in society at large.

Brookfield (1995) referenced the process of critical pedagogy in which the teacher acts as a "penetrator of false consciousness" (p. 208), and "students are helped to break out of oppressive ways of thinking and acting that seem habitual but that have been imposed by the dominant culture" (p. 209). Saavedra (1996) wrote that preservice teachers "need the opportunities to confront their own situatedness, as male or female, and as members of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and economic groups" (p. 272). Howard (1999) described his experience of transformation as "breaking the seal on his own cultural encapsulation" (p. 17).

Embedded in the many descriptions of the transformation process is the idea of dispelling common assumptions. Spindler and Spindler (1993) referred to the transformation process as "cultural therapy"; "For teachers, cultural therapy can be used to increase awareness of the cultural assumptions they bring to the classroom that affect their behavior and their interactions with students – particularly students of color" (p. 29). (Note the assumption of the teacher as White. This reinforces the idea that transformation is most often associated with the "typical" teacher population.) Ultimately the benefit of this "therapy" is in helping teachers understand their own cultural positions and the perspectives of those who have culturally different behavior.

The concept of cognitive dissonance is not a new one. Many teacher educators have used the concept in their work. For example, Tidwell and Heston (1998) described this cognitive dissonance as "frustration" and believe it is essential to true learning. Similarly, Felman (1995) described this experience as learning through crisis and suggested that teachers should be interested not just in "new information, but, primarily, in the capacity of their recipients to transform themselves in function of the new-ness of that information" (p. 56). Newmann (1987) suggested that cognitive dissonance may lead to critical incidents where one is caused to notice a discrepancy between one's stated beliefs and one's actions.

Much of the multicultural teacher education literature describes how teacher educators are working to disrupt cultural assumptions through assignments, field experiences, and supervision. In a review of exemplary teacher education programs, Darling-Hammond (2006) recommended that "developing the ability to see beyond one's own perspective . . . is perhaps the most important role of teacher preparation" (my ellipsis, p. 234). Darling-Hammond further contends that preservice teachers who do not experience a powerful intervention will maintain a single cultural perspective that will make it difficult to understand students who are not like them. "The capacity to understand another is not innate. It is developed through study, reflection, guided experience, and inquiry" (Darling-Hammond, 2006, p. 234).

In *Walking the Road*, Cochran-Smith (2004) highlighted Project START, a school-university partnership in Pennsylvania that promotes transformation by encouraging students to problematize what they know about diversity. The program seeks to accomplish this by having students look at their unexamined assumptions about their own histories and backgrounds, about the backgrounds, experiences, and motivations of children and parents, and about the appropriate pedagogies for particular groups of students. Zeichner (1986) noted that when teachers take an inquiry stance on diversity, "they make problematic much of what is usually taken for granted about culture, learning, language, and power . . . [they] attempt to uncover the values and interests served by the common arrangements and structures of schooling" (as cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

As a teacher educator, Samaras (1998) expressed her desire to assist in the transformation of her students.

> I wanted to create a classroom aura that prompted students to work at the rough edges of their competence and understanding. I had envisioned an environment of cognitive dissonance in which students' notions of teaching were challenged by moral and intellectual discussions with peers, cooperating teachers, and professors, and where students were permitted to make and share their mistakes. (p. 63)

Similar to Samaras, other White female teacher educators (e.g., Ahlquist, 1991; MacGillivray, 1997; McIntyre, 1997; Rosenberg, 1998) have also struggled in their own pursuits to gain insight into how they create these opportunities for transformation with preservice teachers, especially those who are similar to themselves. It is a complex process whereby one is trying to pass on opportunities and experiences with a particular desired outcome, realizing that assumptions are made about both the process and the outcome. MacGillivray called it a “struggle within and against myself” (p. 470). Ahlquist (1991) referred to it as a “double-bind situation” where she felt “simultaneously like the oppressor and the oppressed” (p. 165). Teacher educators of color have also done self-studies about struggles in their preparation of predominantly White preservice teachers. Young (1998), an African American teacher educator, said her White students were initially extremely cautious about talking about race but that open and honest discussion provided opportunities for students to “develop multiple explanations” and “argue multiple points of view” (p. 111).

Some have criticized White educators for making Whiteness the center of multicultural pedagogy and reducing the complexity of learning to teach into a White teacher identity issue (e.g., Hernandez-Sheets, 2000; hooks, 1994). Certainly, the preparation of effective teachers for diversity includes a plethora of complex issues, not the least of which is race. However, the necessity for the transformation of student teachers is usually – though not always – based on the idea that most preservice teachers are White and have not experienced significant oppression because of this. Critical reflection about one’s assumptions is necessary and can be a transformative experience for any person, no matter what race. However, those who belong to the dominant culture, as do most practicing and preservice teachers, are believed to have less experience in recognizing their privilege and thus others’ oppression in our society (McIntosh, 1988).

## Transformation for Teachers of Color

In education programs, the process of transformation is usually promoted or directed by teacher educators who are also of the dominant culture, that is, White. This means both preservice teachers and teacher educators alike need to work toward transformation (see Garcia, 1997). In fact, the dual influences of White privilege among both teachers and students may indicate an even greater obligation for careful consideration of how that dominant social position affects equity in education. However, it is inaccurate to assume first that preservice teachers of color, for example, are not in need of transformation, and second, that the process would look the same for all populations. This further makes the understanding and facilitation of the transformation process more complex.

It is often assumed that people who are from traditionally marginalized groups are aware of oppression they and those similar to them have experienced, but this may not always be the case. For example, in one study 59% of Latino teachers said they felt unprepared to deal with Latino youth (Cox, 1993). In addition, being a member of one oppressed group does not necessarily cause one to understand or even have empathy for other oppressed groups (Kumashiro, 2000). It is important to keep in mind that identities are always partial and one’s identity is constructed through the interaction of various factors.

In contrast to the wealth of literature about preparing White teachers for a pluralistic student population, there is little scholarly work that focuses on preparing preservice teachers of color for diversity (Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Despite that, a small number of teacher educators of color have conducted self-studies that have significantly contributed to the literature in this area. Prado-Olmos, Ríos, and Vega Castañeda (2007) described their collaborative study of two multicultural education courses they taught to a class full of preservice teachers of color. They explain the underlying perspective of the courses to be “the importance of students knowing themselves and their own biases in order to be critical and effective teachers for the 21st century” (p. 90). The authors write about their experiences of sharing their life stories more easily and readily because of the solidarity they experienced with their students of color. Their approaches to the topic and the students were different because of who the students were, but in many ways the approaches were the same as they had used for primarily White classes. They still worked to make connections and build relationships with their students in a climate of caring and safety. They still worked to overcome cultural assumptions, though these were sometimes different from the ones White students held.

## A Caveat

The examination of one’s identity is complex, often painful, and significantly risky. Brookfield (1995) explained that, “experiencing critical reflection sometimes involves us in a return to childlike emotional states. Faced with the prospect of rethinking familiar assumptions, and knowing that this means we may have to change how we act, we run for any pacifier we can find. We are infantilized by the loss of old certainties” (p. 226). Additionally, conducting this transformation in the presence of others (i.e., a university or school setting) can lead to “cultural suicide,” which Brookfield said happens when, “people who make public their questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions and expectations find themselves excluded from the culture that has defined and sustained them up to that point in their lives” (p. 235). It is precisely this public vulnerability, however, that makes this kind of self-study of teacher education practice believable and more valid.

There are some serious ethical aspects to consider when challenging students’ deeply held beliefs. Pekarsky (1994), in a critical examination of the purposes of the Socratic method, asserted that moral growth is commonly associated with this method and that this technique is often used in transformation, to bring a student, “from smug self-confidence to perplexity” (p. 123). He went on to make the point that “having brought the student from unthinking prejudice to a state of perplexity,” a teacher should extend the process to the pursuit of truth (p. 123). Pekarsky argued that although Dewey claims that perplexity may result in something less than the truth but possibly “a more adequate set of beliefs,” teachers cannot be sure of the outcome of such perplexity unless they have a sufficient sense of the student’s belief system and emotional life (p. 126).

Creating cultural disruption for those not of the dominant culture should also be carefully considered because of the potential harm. Tierney (1993) examined the impact of value disruption on Native American college students. He wrote, "the system we have in place in colleges and universities is not culturally self-sustaining for minority students; instead, it is based on the belief that for success to occur, cultural disruption must take place" (p. 319). Tierney argued that for students who have a strong sense of ethnic culture, the threat of such a transformation could prevent them from attending college or cause them to drop out in order to preserve their cultural identity. This may sabotage attempts to recruit people of color into the field of education.

These cautions speak to the importance of teacher educators being experienced and skilled in the process of transformation, and becoming skilled in the process involves systematically and reflectively studying it. This is the juncture at which the practice of self-study becomes critical to the success of the transformation concept.

## Should/Can a Teacher Education Program Facilitate Transformation?

Recent controversies surround even the legitimacy of education programs seeking to impart or teach dispositions related to preparing teachers for diversity. In 2006, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) announced they had removed "social justice" from its list of dispositions appropriate for the education of new teachers (Wasley, 2006). Arthur Wise, President of NCATE, defended the action saying that although NCATE promotes the development of professional dispositions, the term social justice "is susceptible to a variety of definitions" (Powers, 2006). Critics claim that preparing students for social justice requires them to adopt a political ideology.

Although Haberman (1991) has championed the need for culturally responsive teachers, he argued that "values are caught more than they are taught" (p. 26); therefore, cultural awareness cannot be imparted by the university. He has suggested that young White women do not commonly have the necessary predispositions to best understand other cultures, so schools of education should screen applicants for particular values and admit only those who have them.

Some researchers suggest that transformation within a teacher education program is difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, Zeichner and Gore (1990) reported that teacher education is a weak intervention in transforming preservice teachers' beliefs. In a review of learning-to-teach literature, Wideen et al. (1998) found that few studies on programs that have sought to change preservice teachers' beliefs were successful.

Not withstanding these disparate voices, educational researchers continue to try to define what aspects of teacher education accomplish the benefits of transformation. In a comprehensive review of the research, Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) recounted several specific strategies that have been employed within teacher education programs which attempt to prepare teachers for cultural diversity. These strategies involve building high expectations among prospective teachers for the learning of all students; increasing the knowledge of prospective teachers about themselves and their place in a multicultural society; providing prospective teachers with cultural knowledge about the experiences, lifestyles, and contributions of various groups in society; and providing teachers with opportunities to develop competence in building relationships and in teaching strategies that will help them succeed in schools serving children and families with backgrounds different from their own. (p. 529).

Wideen et al. (1998) concluded that long-term interventions with a consistent message, small groups, and close relationships often characterized the programs that reported a positive change in preservice teachers' beliefs about multicultural education specifically. The most common recommendation made by researchers in the studies reviewed was that having beginning teachers examine their prior beliefs was an "essential first step in the process" of learning to teach (Wideen et al., 1998, p. 160). Programs that were designed to build upon the preservice teachers' beliefs as opposed to trying to replace them (i.e. an asset model) were more successful. Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) also suggested that there is consensus in the literature that the development of one's own cultural identity is a necessary precursor to cross-cultural understanding. But they say this development is most effective when students are part of a cohort, placed in field experiences with a diverse student population, and provided opportunities for guided reflection. Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) also noted that it is possible to provide profound experiences within education programs, but there is little research indicating how much of an impact they have long term on teachers' values, dispositions, or practices.

More recently Darling-Hammond (2006) in her book, *Powerful Teacher Education,* analyzed seven effective teacher education programs and concluded that although they were different in many ways, all of them demonstrated seven common features. One of those features was "Explicit strategies to help students (1) confront their own deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about learning and students and (2) learn about the experiences of people different from themselves" (p. 41). Despite this strategy as a distinguishing feature, the surveys on "Perceptions of Preparedness" administered to the graduates of the seven programs did not ask how well their teacher preparation prepared them to reflect on their own deep-seated beliefs and assumptions (pp. 61–63). It is assumed that engaging in this reflection leads to other intercultural competencies related to meeting the needs of diverse learners; however, similar to previous reviews, Darling-Hammond's study did not seek to confirm whether teacher education candidates had learned to maintain this self-reflective posture.

The literature has provided a plethora of ideas about how to support preservice teachers in transformation, but up to this point there has been little to document the successes of that work. Rather than accept the inevitability of failure, teacher educators need to understand how they might influence the way students begin to examine, and possibly reevaluate, their beliefs about social systems in general, but education in particular. In addition, they need to document the ways they have been successful in challenging their preservice teachers assumptions about teaching and learning. Self-study is one approach to this work and the one used throughout this book.

# Chapter 3
# Searching for Purpose

*"Education wasn't what he wanted to perform on the world…*
*He was after transformation."* In Mountains Beyond Mountains
*(Kidder, 2003, p. 44)*

## Finding My Purpose

What I teach my students and how I live my personal and professional life are to strive to serve a purpose. Once I understood that this was how I would feel fulfilled, I have spent my life trying to discover or refine my purpose, learning that completion would never be achieved. This development of my quest for achieving my purpose and enacting what I believe is what I would call, simply, my transformation.

Learning to have a purpose was my first step. Growing up Catholic in a traditional Midwestern family, my purpose was to please my parents, follow the rules of the Church, and become the kind of woman that women became in small town America. It is true that I challenged some of these expectations along the way. I believe these challenges to the norm, at that time, were intended to gain attention, but I did not know that these events would practice me in how to challenge with purpose. It was on the high school debate team where I learned to develop evidence-based arguments.

My teacher training did not prepare me to teach for a specific purpose nor did it encourage me to challenge the status quo. I received my education degree from a small Catholic college, which (like most teachers) I attended primarily because of the location. I delayed the required Biblical Studies class because I knew I would find it difficult to spend time studying something that I was not sure I necessarily believed. As self-prophesized, it was difficult to attend a class when the instructor, a well-meaning nun, responded to critical questions with, "Because that is the way it is. It is not for us to question." I think I would have developed a greater appreciation for my childhood religion had I found someone to engage me in my intellectual curiosity.

While teaching elementary and middle school for eight years, I was also a debate coach. I felt strongly that young people should develop the ability to articulate both

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sides of an argument. My involvement with debate as a high school student and as a coach definitely influenced the development of my purpose. I was not yet clear about my larger life goals, but I knew that being able to see multiple perspectives (or at least two opposing sides) was useful for being successful in the world. But these multiple perspectives were still being developed around beliefs (of the Church) or topics (as determined by debate organizations) that I did not choose.

As a classroom teacher, I wanted my students to enjoy school and do well academically, but I do not recall having a larger purpose for them. Certainly I thought it was necessary to adapt to their needs in order to teach them how to "do school" but not to challenge the ways in which we did school. I did not frame my curriculum or my instruction toward creating opportunities to respond to injustice or make a difference in the world. Indeed, I was not aware a difference needed to be made. I was, as were most of my young students, sheltered from the more profound experiences of oppression, and where it did happen, it was denied with a "bootstrap" perspective. (That is, if only that person worked harder, they could pull themselves up by their bootstraps.) Hard work was a most cherished Midwestern value, and all success could be attributed to it.

My orientation toward social justice most definitely began in graduate school. When I entered my PhD program, I found myself inundated with all of my misconceptions, biases, and poorly grounded, if not absent, philosophies. Most importantly, I realized that I assumed a great deal about who I was as a person, and as a teacher, and how that impacted students.

In my first semester of graduate school, I took a course that included my introduction to feminist theory. I was learning a lot but feeling very overwhelmed by the intensity of the experience. I do not remember what prompted it, but at one point I was sharing a story about Eliza, one of my former sixth graders and one of the few students of color I had taught over the course of eight years. As I told the story, my previously dysconscious racism (King, 1991) became clear, and this was emotionally painful to realize.

Another pivotal point in my transformation was when I viewed *The Color of Fear*[1] (Lee, 1994), a film that serves to articulate clearly the complexity of racism and the powerful influences of the White dominant culture. I literally sobbed after I watched the film for the first time. I felt moved to go out and end racism that very day. I reflected on my reaction: learning about racism made me feel sad, I don't like feeling sad, what can I do to make this sadness go away *right now*? This was the beginning of transforming my understanding of injustice into action. However, this action was initially prompted because of my fear of discomfort. I was moved to make myself feel better, not create a better world. My purpose was not yet well defined.

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[1] "*The Color of Fear* is an insightful, groundbreaking film about the state of race relations in America as seen through the eyes of eight North American men of Asian, European, Latino and African descent. In a series of intelligent, emotional and dramatic confrontations the men reveal the pain and scars that racism has caused them. What emerges is a deeper sense of understanding and trust. This is the dialogue most of us fear, but hope will happen sometime in our lifetime." (http://www.stirfryseminars.com/pages/coloroffear.htm)

I started meeting in an action research group with two graduate school friends. We wanted to study our practices as beginning teacher educators through our respective teaching assistant positions (see Schulte, Genor, & Trier, 2000). What surfaced for me was a need to look closely at how my understanding of my identity was changing and how that impacted my desire and ability to help preservice teachers understand their own identities. It became clear that before I could try to make sense of how to teach teachers to teach for diversity, I needed to first understand my own identity and the transformation of my perspectives on diversity issues. Meeting with similar peers provided a supportive network within which to challenge my understanding of the profession.

I continued to gain more understandings about race and develop my ability to communicate with others about the impact of racism on our self-image, in our daily lives, and in the classroom. I had sometimes intense and uncomfortable conversations with my classmates of color about privilege and oppression where I learned to engage in discourse in new ways. Some of my classmates challenged my narrow conceptions of gender identity and my own heterosexism. I often describe my graduate school experience as painfully exhilarating. I felt vulnerable and raw, but I was starting to appreciate those uncomfortable feelings as useful rather than needing to be extinguished.

While earning my doctorate, as a teaching assistant I taught courses and supervised student teachers. As I began collecting data for my dissertation, I began to refine what I wanted to do as a teacher educator and what I wanted my student teachers to do and be. I looked carefully at my interactions with student teachers and analyzed how I was able to engage them in the kinds of experiences I was having for the first time in graduate school. After all, if these experiences had been a part of my teacher education, would I not have been a better teacher? And by *better* I mean to say a teacher who has a clearly defined and meaningful purpose and an understanding of how to achieve that, as elusive as it might be. This is the point at which I started to understand that the institution of schooling was seriously flawed in the way it responded to the needs of all students, and I wanted student teachers to be able to do something to change that. This required knowing something about the many ways of being different.

It was also during this time that I was thinking carefully about the fact that the student teachers I was teaching were from very similar backgrounds as myself. In fact, the large majority of teachers in the United States are just like me: White, middle class, English-speaking, heterosexual, raised Christian, and from a small town or suburb. This understanding prompted me to challenge my own ability to prepare them to do something I had not done myself. How could I use our shared life experiences to guide them toward social justice perspectives and conversely how would these common characteristics create barriers to such development? I would spend two years collecting data and analyzing this work, learning how to draw on my identity to connect to students in relationship while using my own transformational experience to guide them in their own. This is when it was becoming clear to me that my purpose was to align my beliefs with my actions, as a teacher educator and as a person. Drawing on the work of Palmer (1998) and others, I was defining this as my quest for integrity. It is my goal, for my self and my students, to have integrity. Everything I do should attempt to serve this purpose.

I continue this quest, as a full-time teacher educator, to enact what I believe should be done to make schooling more just for all students. My transformation is a series of consistent and moderately significant events that have guided me toward a more academic study of the human experience. In contrast, Crawford (1996) described one traumatic event that initiated his "ethnographic turn" toward "living the ethnographic life" (p. 169). Whether it happens gradually or abruptly, this new way of seeing one's experience in the world increases one's frame of reference and as a result increases an appreciation for other ways of being.

## Helping Students to Find Their Purpose

I spend a great deal of time in my classes helping students to define their purpose. Many of them are surprised that this would be necessary for teacher training and have not considered carefully why they would do the things they want to do. Students who are naturally more reflective, or more experienced in self-awareness, tend to take up this process more easily. Just as in any relationship, I need to establish the safety necessary for the students to reveal their self-reflections and be vulnerable to look honestly at what they have been raised to believe. This is more painful for some than others, depending on their upbringing.

After the preservice teachers accept the need to have purpose drive their professional work, I provide them information and experiences that help them define their purpose and how they will work toward it. (Examples of these instructional strategies are described in Chapter 6 and 7.) My ability to do these things effectively is not only greatly affected both by my identities and life experiences and those of my students but also by the bureaucratic structure of the academy and teacher education programs. (These limitations will be further explored in Chapter 8.)

Rarely students choose a purpose for themselves that may not particularly support social justice or at times may even run contrary to it. For example, some students express a general belief that there is one best way to be (e.g. "American"), and it is the purpose of school to teach students how to be that way. Or, a couple of my former students have defined their purpose, in part, as a religious missionary and describe one benefit of being a teacher as showing students the Way. If this type of purpose is a deeply held calling, it is unlikely that a teacher education program will do much to change that perspective. However, it is my responsibility to educate them about and make them accountable to the legal protections within public schools, as well as counsel them toward contexts that might better align with their purpose.

## Purposeful Theoretical Frameworks

My educational philosophy centers on the social reconstructionist tradition. Banks & Banks (2005) described this approach to education as the most direct disruption to institutional oppression and defines four practices that are unique to a multicultural and social reconstructionist approach; they are democratic school practices, critical analysis of institutional inequality, the instruction of social action skills, and cross-cultural alliances. This reform tradition foregrounds the relationship between social conditions of schooling and practices that take place in classrooms toward greater social justice (Liston & Zeichner, 1991).

Within the social reconstructionist framework, there is much research about what teachers need to know to overcome the imbedded structures and practices that work against better education for a pluralistic society. In order to effect change, many teachers must begin by recognizing and then, if necessary, transforming their own attitudes and beliefs about teachers, students, and schooling shaped by the socialization patterns in education. Social reconstructionism also indicates that teacher preparation must equip prospective teachers to, “challenge established practices, institutions, and ways of thinking and conceive new and alternative possibilities” (Pai, 1990, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2001). But Goodlad (1990) found that most preservice teachers are not participating in teacher education programs that support the social reconstructionist tradition (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2001).

Social reconstructionism, and my personal approach to transformation, has roots in critical theory with a focus on self-reflective knowledge for the purposes of critiquing and changing society in emancipatory ways. Aranowitz and Giroux (1993) explained that transformative teachers use their own histories to shape the curriculum. This work might also be described as poststructuralist in the way that the concept of self is central to understanding how one understands social justice and engages in transformation.

Although it remains a hotly debated definition, I define social justice work as acts that acknowledge who has the power and work that distributes that power more equitably. As Noddings said, “A central question for every modern theory of justice is who has a right to what” (1999, p. 8). Within a social justice framework, difference is seen as an asset and diversity of perspective is valued. Beyond that, I believe that an orientation toward social justice requires us all to challenge what may be seen as “common sense” (Kumashiro, 2004). Therefore, creating a more socially just world requires us to do more than just see the world differently; it requires us to act in ways that improve upon the inequities that exist. Finally, I agree that the pursuit of social justice in education keeps the “focus of learning and teaching on learners as complex, social beings enmeshed in relationships of power and ongoing processes of self-construction” (Cook-Sather & Youens, 2007, p. 65). I believe that in order to effect change, in order to truly educate, many teachers must first experience a transformation of their own attitudes and beliefs about power and privilege among teachers, students, and schooling. My integrity lies in my ability to enact that principle.

## Self-Study Is Necessary for Transformation

In the conclusion of her chapter on multicultural teacher education in the first edition of *The Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*, Ladson-Billings (2001) suggested that preservice teachers continue to resist engaging with multicultural issues because teacher educators are trying to implement superficial multiculturalism without effecting fundamental change in the classrooms and schools. I would further argue that this approach is superficial because it does not address the pervasive problem of teacher educators' lack of understanding and reflection on their own transformation process (see Merryfield, 2000). Although there is a significant amount of literature describing how to prepare teachers to be multicultural, teacher educators rarely share their experiences of coming to terms with their own identities and how that impacts their ability to prepare teachers to be multicultural.

At the heart of this work is Merryfield's (2000) question, "How can teacher educators, who have never examined their own privilege or who have no personalized learning of what it feels like to live as the Other prepare K-12 teachers to teach for diversity, equity and interconnectedness?" (p. 441). It is not clear how many teacher educators are doing this kind of critical reflection, but very few are sharing it publicly. That may be because this kind of research is not valued in the tenure and promotion process or it may be because it is simply too painful or difficult, but it is clear from searching the literature that there is room for much more published research in this area.

A commonality among many of the self-studies of this type that do exist is the novice status of these researchers in the teacher education field. This indicates a very specific audience in need of more studies that will offer insight and knowledge about how to become effective teacher educators. It is also important for experienced teacher educators to continue this type of research. Excitement and humility in continuing to learn about one's own social group memberships, one's access to privilege, and ways to empower one's self not only make for better social justice education but also keep one in touch with the learning process in which students are engaged.

Self-study, and most practitioner research, creates very different knowledge than what is usually created through traditional educational research. This kind of knowledge is "characterized more by it concreteness and contextual richness than its generalizability and context independence" (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002, p. 3). But Merryfield (2000) explained that "it is the interaction of one's identity and contexts of power with the experiences that leads to consciousness of multiple perspectives and a process of meaning making that can be generalized to other circumstances" (p. 440). It is evident that this kind of practitioner knowledge has potential not only for the researcher but also for others who read it.

# Chapter 4
# Transformative Self-Studies: A Review of the Literature[1]

In "Parallel Journeys," the teacher educator struggled with how to transform her preservice teachers' beliefs about students and schooling. In this chapter, a review of teacher educators' self-studies will better explicate the transformation of teachers' beliefs about multicultural education by looking at one's own transformation in beliefs and practice. In addition, I will suggest that these kinds of self-studies in teacher education can contribute to a professional knowledge base. Hiebert et al. (2002) proposed that there are useful ways that practitioner research, in addition to traditional educational research, can build the knowledge base for teaching. Hiebert et al. focused on knowledge created in K-12 classrooms, but in this chapter, I will extend their ideas to suggest that teacher educator practitioners can contribute to the professional knowledge base following the same guidelines.

Hiebert et al. (2002) contended that in order for practitioner research to become professional knowledge it must meet three complementary and overlapping requirements. First, professional knowledge must be made public with the intent of not only communicating it to others but also making it open for discussion, debate, verification, and modification. Second, once this knowledge is public, there is a need to store it and make it available, over time, to other educators who may use it. Finally, professional knowledge must be verifiable and continually improving. Knowledge that is public and easy to access is much more likely to be tried and evaluated in different contexts. The knowledge created from these trials can then be shared publicly, thus revising and improving on the burgeoning knowledge base.

The requirements put forth by Hiebert et al. (2002) are very relevant to thinking about how self-study of teacher education practice can contribute to better understanding of how preservice teachers are prepared to teach diverse student populations. All practitioner knowledge is integrated with problems of practice. Self-study demonstrates that these problems of practice are also indelibly connected to the educator and that recognizing these connections can serve to bridge one's beliefs and actions in order to improve one's knowledge about one's practice. "Such knowledge informs future action and illuminates instructional decisions, creating praxis – informed, committed action that gives rise to knowledge" (Tidwell & Heston, 1998,

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter is found in Schulte, A.K. (2004).

A.K. Schulte, *Seeking Integrity in Teacher Education*,
Self Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices 7,
DOI 10.1007/978-1-4020-9302-9_4 © Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2009

p. 45). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) asserted that this creation of knowledge will not only add to, but will alter the knowledge base in education.

## Indicators of Quality Self-Study

It is important to note that my intent here is not to prescribe what makes a study self-study. Rather, I will provide some indicators that will help the reader recognize not only quality research but also self-studies that effectively model the process of transformation as a result of, or in concert with, the self-study. Quality self-study in general is indicated by (1) thorough descriptions of the context, data collection, and analysis; (2) thoughtful problematization of the researcher and her practice; (3) indications for how the study changed the researcher's practice; and (4) a description of how it might contribute to the knowledge base for teaching.

It is important to remember that self-study is the focus of the study, not the methodology (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Therefore, a variety of (most often) qualitative methods should be systematically employed to ensure scholarly validity. Feldman (2003) suggested that multiple representations and detailed descriptions of the data would lend to validity of the study. Often self-study is criticized for its lack of rigor or attention to the research process. This is not surprising given that I have found very few studies that provided an extensive description of what data was collected and how the conclusions or actions were indicated by the data. I sought studies where the researcher provided adequate explanation of a methodology that reflected sound and ethical data collection as opposed to just the telling of one's story. This kind of story telling has been shown to be meaningful and even effective in professional development of preservice teachers (Carter & Doyle, 1995; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991), but it does not necessarily constitute a self-study. Often missing in the studies was an explanation as to how the researcher made the link between evidence in the data and the conclusions or suggested changes to his/her practice. A compounding factor may be the difficulty in articulating this process. Both transformation and self-study require someone to be highly intuitive and continuously metacognitively aware of one's own learning and teaching processes. This is often difficult to comprehend let alone to articulate.

In addition to an adequate description of data collection and analysis, high quality self-studies provide a thorough description of the researchers and their context (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Within the broader multicultural education literature, researchers will regularly list a detailed description of the subjects of the study including their race, class, gender, etc. Often, however, they do not indicate how these specific demographics impacted the results of the study (Grant, Elsbree, & Fondrie, 2004). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) noted that self-study recognizes that who a researcher is, is central to what the researcher does, and this should be reflected in the results of a self-study.

A second criterion for quality self-study is the thoughtful problematization of the researcher's practice. Did the researcher not only appear to genuinely problematize her practice, but did she also involve others in critiquing the findings? This would involve the researcher in carefully examining her beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors through other perspectives. Without this critical perspective, it might be seen as merely justifying one's actions or frame of reference, or worse, be considered self-indulgent "navel-gazing."

Many proponents of self-study of teacher education practice argue that it must be engaged with an "other" (e.g., Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). The "other" is often preservice teachers, or in many cases it is teacher education colleagues. Within multicultural education studies, not without controversy, the critique is often by the societal "other," people from marginalized groups. Researchers often seek a "critical friend" or someone to provide another perspective; however, sometimes it is this critique that initiates the self-study (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2000).

Hiebert et al. (2002) suggested that when research is made public it becomes open to critique and debate. Published self-studies may act as a critique of or lens through which to view one's own self-study. For example, as a teacher educator engages in studying his own practice, he may read other studies that cause him to consider his data and experiences differently. Themes or dilemmas may be presented in another study that act as scaffolding, in a sense, for the teacher educator's current work. Thus, using other self-studies perpetuates the modification of ideas and creation of new knowledge for the teaching profession. (Chapter 5 presents an example of this process.)

Genuine problematization portrays a sense of humility and authenticity on the part of the researcher. Loutzenheiser (2001) described this as an active ignorance – "If I assume that I always have more to learn than I can ever know, especially about those less like me, those different from me, then I am never fooled into thinking that I am 'done'" (p. 199). However, authenticity should be indicated with reference to professional practice, not a purely personal reflection. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) warned that, "tipping too far toward the self side produces solipsism or a confessional, and tipping too far the other way turns self-study into traditional research" (p. 15). They also cautioned that an "authentic voice is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the scholarly standing of a biographical self-study" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 17).

Quality self-studies show actions the researchers took in response to the findings and describe how this ultimately changed their practice (Feldman, 2003). Even though the focus of a self-study is constantly changing, there should be a clear description within a self-study report that indicates how the self-learning is reflected in action (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Without this step beyond reflecting, self-study would not serve as much to further the teacher educator's practice or the field of teacher education in general. Hiebert et al. (2002) suggested that when researchers make public the changes that occur in their practice, others can read the study and apply aspects appropriate for their contexts. Thus, using other's self-studies contributes to the adaptation of ideas and creation of knowledge for the teaching profession.

Finally, a good self-study should explicitly indicate how it connects to educational theory and contributes back to the general knowledge base of teacher education.

Questioning the theoretical underpinnings of a practical venture “is vital to teacher education if the importance of the knowledge base for learning about teaching is to be recognized and valued in the educational community” (Loughran & Northfield, 1998, p. 8). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) contended that “for public theory to influence educational practice it must be translated through the personal” (p. 15). This personal study must then be situated back in public theory so as to extend the work of self-study to the broader realm of educational research.

At the very least, good self-study of teacher education practice should provide a thorough description of the educational context, as well as a descriptive analysis of the data and its implications for the researcher’s practice. However, I argue that when a researcher makes explicit her own identity and analyzes it in the way that she has problematized her students’ identities, she provides more information about how she understands the context outside of herself. These studies, then, provide other teacher educators with a greater understanding of whether or not her experiences will be meaningful and relevant to their experience. What follows are the analyses of a number of self-studies that address these criteria, with an emphasis on those that meet the kind of identity problematization that I suggest is so critical to building a knowledge base to better understand the process of potentially transforming preservice teacher beliefs.

## Teacher Educators Explore Their Own Identities

Little is known in general about the process that teacher educators undergo as they learn and develop in their professions as academics (Russell & Korthagen, 1995), but even less is known about how teacher educators make sense of their own identities, dispositions, and assumptions in the context of teaching for diversity. Jenks, Lee, and Kanpol (2001) suggested that most teacher educators have not had the transformative learning experiences necessary to provide them for their preservice teachers. Therefore, the field is ripe for studies that feature teacher educators negotiating the process of transformation both for themselves and their students.

Wideen et al. (1998) said that teacher educators’ background, perceptions, and images of power, “must be regarded as valuable and fundamental areas for investigation within the learning-to-teach ecosystem” (p. 170). Other studies have indicated a need for teacher educators to examine their own ideologies much like they engage preservice teachers (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1995; Graham & Young, 2000, as cited in Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2003). More directly than in any other professional preparation, teacher educators exhibit that which they want their students to be. Richert (1997) asserted that, “the cultural milieu of teaching renders it exceedingly important for teacher educators to reveal the learning requirements of their work and to model these learning processes in their practice” (p. 5). It is vital that teacher educators are willing to engage in quality self-study processes that we expect preservice teachers to use (e.g. Loughran & Berry, 2005). In the next section, I outline a variety of indicators that describe quality self-studies focused on issues related to diversity and transformation. These will serve to contextualize the sample studies that will follow.

## Studies by Teacher Educators, for Diversity

There are various studies where teacher educators seek to better understand their role in transforming preservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and/or assumptions about culture and race (e.g., Rosenberg, 1998; McIntyre, 1997; Young, 1998; Simpson, 2006; Pennington, 2007), sexuality (e.g., Mulhern & Martinez, 1999), the intersections of race, sexuality, class, gender, religion, and ability (e.g., Loutzenheiser, 2001), and language (e.g., Curran, 2002). These and other studies often focus on strategies or techniques in how to change dispositions. It should also be noted that there are many other examples of educators who similarly problematize their identity within the teaching process (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; Martindale, 1997; Orner, 1992; Palmer, 1998), however, this chapter deals specifically with those studies by teacher educators who work directly with preservice teachers.

Some teacher educators of color have published self-studies about the impact of their own race or cultural background on their teaching of multiculturalism (e.g., Oda, 1998; Obidah, 2000; Prado-Olmos et al., 2007). In addition, both queer and straight teacher educators have studied their ability to “queer the curriculum” with preservice teachers (Ressler, 2001, p. 179). It is unknown what other characteristics or experiences (e.g., physical ability, religion, class, etc.) might define the researchers' perspectives in the presentation of their research if these descriptors are not identified in the study.

Those researchers who do choose to engage in this deliberate reflective examination of self come to the study in multiple ways. Some teacher educators have engaged in self-study because they were actively seeking to align their practice with their theoretical and philosophical belief systems (e.g., MacGillivray, 1997; Regenspan, 2002; Meixner, 2003; Sevier, 2005), or they were trying to better understand the transformation they expect of their students (e.g., Schulte, 2001). Some were moved to study themselves and their practice by White students' resistance to multiculturalism (e.g., Ahlquist, 1991), while still others were motivated by complaints from students of color (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2000).

There are some men who engage in similar forms of self-study and write about it (e.g., Howard, 1999; Dinkelman, 1999; Sevier, 2005), but it appears that a large portion of these “transformation self-studies” have been conducted by White women (self-disclosed within the report of the study), sometimes in collaborative groups (e.g., Abt-Perkins, Dale, & Hauschildt, 1998; Genor & Schulte, 2002; Guilfoyle, Hamilton, & Pinnegar, 1997). Sleeter (2001b) corroborated this when she concludes in her review that research about multicultural teacher education in general presented an “overwhelming presence of Whiteness” (p. 94).

An important reason for analyzing these particular studies is that often the way in which we prepare preservice teachers to teach diverse populations is through their own study of self – their life experiences, beliefs, and biases. Loughran and Northfield (1998) noted that “recognizing dissonance between beliefs and practice is fundamental to action” within self-study (p. 7). I contend that engaging in and examining this dissonance is necessary for teacher educators when preparing teachers to effectively teach students from cultures different than their own because it provides a reason to change. Prior to having examined a disjunction of beliefs, there would be no incentive and no suggestion that change was needed.

## Transformation and Philosophical Alignment

One of the important benefits of self-study is coming to understand the contradictions and conflicts present in one’s theoretical beliefs. Without a conscious reflection on these events and one’s contribution to them, teacher educators would not understand as fully the modifications or adaptations needed for their practice and for others who seek to accomplish similar goals. This demonstrates the same type of commitment that is the goal for preservice teachers who teach diverse student populations. What follows are descriptions of self-studies that demonstrate a significant level of quality, as well as address the issue of diversity. All of the studies were conducted by teacher educators who were interested in the concepts regarding transformation and multicultural education as they related to preparing preservice teachers.

Many educators conduct self-studies in an effort to align their practice with their philosophical belief systems. Ahlquist (1991), a White female, examined her teaching of a multicultural foundations class in an effort to improve how she instructs her students, “to challenge the status quo in the hopes that they, as teachers of the future, will choose to take a stand in the interests of social justice” (p. 158). Ahlquist examined her teaching strategies and course materials to better understand how to more effectively engage the students in dialogue that led them to understand their role in contributing to and diminishing acts of oppression.

In this study, Ahlquist (1991) provided thorough demographics of her students’ race, class, gender, age, and religious beliefs. She described them as not having had a lot of experience with people who are “different” or not having considered the effect of point of view on their perception. Ahlquist analyzed student surveys, belief inventories, and examples of students’ writing. She also included her observations of class discussions and conversations with individual students. Although it is not clear what specific analysis process she used, it is evident that Ahlquist used these sources to better understand her students’ behaviors. For example, because many of the discussions with students resulted in a debate about teacher authority, Ahlquist questioned her position as teacher and her own agenda. Based on students’ reactions and comments, she believed her advocacy for social justice was perceived as imposition. She questioned what part she had in promoting the students’ resistance.

As a result, Ahlquist challenged her role as authority within her practice in this study. She considered her position as an academic, as well as a White woman, and how these characteristics influenced her ability to empower students. She problematized how students received her beliefs about multicultural education – weighing the balance between asserting one's worldview and imposing it. Ahlquist provided many ideas for how she might change her practice as a result of this study, however, the study was published before she implemented these ideas.

Ahlquist situated her study as contributing to the broader field of knowledge by outlining thirteen lessons she believes other teacher educators can learn from her study. These lessons included becoming more cognizant of the power relations in a classroom, continuing to expose and critique hidden ideologies, and alleviating student anxieties about dialogical teaching. She noted that this work is critical because most teacher educators have not had the benefit of the kind of education we hope our student teachers enact.

Many teacher educators working in the context of critical pedagogy have struggled with the impact of authority in the classroom. In Ressler's (2001) study, although she told her students she wished to be a facilitator, not an authority, she realized through reflection on her teaching and the students' reactions that she controlled all of the content of the course and tried to control the direction of some of the discussions. Ressler had interpreted the students' avoidance of some issues as resistance not realizing the students needed to explore their own understanding of identity before they could examine the issues with which Ressler was presenting them.

Ressler described this study as both participant research and action research. The study centers on a summer seminar about social issues in urban education with a focus on lesbian and gay issues in the classroom. Ressler provided a thorough description of the students in the course, as well as the data collected. She described how she used drama as a primary pedagogical tool to facilitate discussions about the intersections of race and sexual orientation. Ressler explained that drama often allows students to more easily express uncomfortable or difficult ideas and practice new roles as supporters of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth. Drama also allowed Ressler, as the instructor to, "move beyond my limited experience to appreciate the complexity of the experiences of my students" (p. 188). She says that once the students began to "step into role, I stopped judging them or worrying about their political consciousness" (p. 188).

Ressler described a variety of ways she would approach this course differently if she were to teach it again. She acknowledged that she had done extended internal work around her own identity as a Jewish lesbian and other issues of equity. Ressler made an assumption that her students had similar experiences with critical reflection that would guide them in understanding specifically the oppressive conditions for gays and lesbians in schooling and society. Ressler suggested that it is important for education students to first understand identity and institutional oppression, and then they will be able to dialogue more effectively about how to challenge the, "normative concepts of schooling and society" (p. 190). This is an implication for all teacher educators seeking to transform preservice teacher beliefs relating to diversity.

MacGillvray (1997) provided another example of a White, female teacher educator coming to terms with the contradictions in her theory and practice. She conducted a study about her course for preservice teachers titled *Basic Reading and Study Skills*. Within a feminist and critical pedagogy framework, she used self-study to examine how her authority and preconceived ideas about appropriate interactions between herself and students influenced her ability to be an effective critical pedagogue. MacGillvray recorded data for the whole semester, collecting student work, exit critique cards, in-class writes, in addition to keeping a journal. She also sought a colleague's critique of a "teaching story" (p. 479). MacGillvray used constant comparative analysis to distinguish episodes that defined her criteria for an "appropriate critique" by students. Within the study, she realized that she only recognized a student's critique of her or her teaching to be valid if it was explicit, private, and from an academic stance. This raises an interesting dilemma in seeking critique within the self-study process. Does the researcher censor the type of critique she will hear, making the critique much less meaningful?

MacGillvray provided examples of interactions with various students and closely examined her often-negative interactions with one particular student who did not meet her standards for "appropriate critique." MacGillvray reflected on her own cultural and familial experiences as important determinants of her beliefs about her relationships with her students. She wrote, "I am also questioning the level of my dedication to actually disrupt a system that privileges me in many ways even as it alienates me in others" (p. 486). MacGillvray articulated the need to live within the ambiguity of teaching. She recognized that the data collection and analysis, as well as the writing of the article, shaped her interpretation of teaching and researching. This suggests that the writing of the research actually contributes, in part, to the transformation process.

MacGillvray suggested the need for educators and researchers to consider their own personal biases and how that may influence their understanding of their practice. What MacGillvray did really well was situate her understanding of her own theories and practice in the work of other critical feminists. She also provided a very detailed description of her data and analysis, actually providing a rationale by noting that she does so because she recognized that "looking within ourselves is not a fully explored process in research" (p. 474). Instead of describing how she would change her teaching, MacGillvray explained that although she is learning how to consider teaching situations differently, she is still wrestling with how to change her teaching. Self-study, just as transformation, is a process that occurs over time, and this often prevents researchers from thoroughly describing the effects of their study.

This teacher educator did exactly what Feldman (2003) suggested to make self-study more valid; she did multiple readings and representations of the data. She juxtaposed exit cards with her journal entries, looking for similarities and differences, and then questioning what caused her to decide they were similarities or differences. She defined these analysis procedures as constant comparative analysis (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, as cited in MacGillvray, 1997) and reconstructive intersubjective analysis (Carspecken & Apple, 1992, as cited in MacGillvray, 1997).

## Seeing the Unseen

The three previous teacher educators all noted an ongoing challenge in their studies of how they were responding, in some way, to their students' behaviors or resistance as they struggled to engage them in components central to their educational philosophies. In the next study, the teacher educator had spent years designing a program to accomplish these same goals related to critical pedagogy and had become relatively confident that the program was accomplishing them. She discovered, quite surprisingly, that she had been blind to more than she had realized. In the article titled *Blind Vision: Unlearning Racism in Teacher Education*, Cochran-Smith (2000) described how she directed and taught in an education program she felt had been developed to focus on issues of race and racism in the context of schooling. She felt generally successful, until one event where students of color angrily critiqued the program. This led to subsequent discussions and Cochran-Smith's further study of not only the program in which she worked but her own assumptions about anti-racist teaching.

In the article, Cochran-Smith suggested the need to read teacher education as a text with explicit and subtext as well as a racial text. She wrote that viewing it as a text allows some "apartness" and ability to look critically at what we do. When Cochran-Smith examined the many sources of data derived from the evolution of the three courses she taught, she found that the attention to culture and race was increased, focusing on the inequities within schooling systems. However, the latter part of the courses focused on pedagogical theory that was drawn primarily from White teachers and scholars. Cochran-Smith wrote, "Reading between the lines of my own courses and of the larger teacher education curriculum revealed a White European American construction of self-identity and 'other'" (p. 181).

Cochran-Smith honestly and articulately described how, in her seminar class, she planned to respond to an impassioned critique about her attention to race in her courses. She revealed the contradictory position in which she discovered herself:

> I was about to teach them [the students] how a White teacher, who – notwithstanding the rhetoric in my classes about collaboration, shared learning, and co-construction of knowledge – had a great deal of power over their futures in the program and in the job market, how that White teacher, who fancied herself pretty liberal and enlightened, responded when confronted directly and angrily about some of the issues of race that were right in front of her in her own teaching and her own work as a teacher educator. (p. 161)

This study meets many of the criteria for quality self-study and offers other teacher educators a great deal. It provided a thorough description of a complex situation with very salient implications for teacher education at large. The researcher analyzed different courses within a particular education program over time. She served both as a director and teacher in this program, thereby increasing her opportunity to examine the issues from different positions. Cochran-Smith described her discussions with colleagues (some with whom she co-teaches) and preservice teachers that broadened her understanding of what the data revealed. She provided myriad of examples of how she attempts to improve her teaching and situates her work in the larger context of teacher education reform.

Cochran-Smith sought to consciously “alter the assumed definition of self and other” by constructing discussions where “we and they” shifted away from “we White people who are trying to learn to teach those other people – those people of color” to “we educators who are trying to be sensitive to, and learn to teach, all students – both those who are different from us and those who are like us in race, class, and culture” (p. 181). Often, much of how we teach “multiculturally” is based on a White perspective and delivered for White women. Therefore, teacher educators should not only teach teachers to critique the system but to think about how and from where the critique is framed. This only bolsters the argument that these self-studies need to be conducted by others, than White middle-class women. What follows are two studies where women of color examine how their race and culture impact their teaching of multicultural issues.

## Transformation by People of Color

Oda’s (1998) study is important in that it is one of a few studies where a person of color examined her own culture and its effect on her teaching of multiculturalism. She undertook the self-study with two purposes in mind: (1) to explore the effects of her Asian-American cultural influences on her classes and (2) to establish a foundation to help preservice teachers address multicultural issues. She taped and transcribed her course sessions and distributed questionnaires to the students. Using Kitano’s (1969) anthropological values framework, Oda analyzed the data for themes from the Japanese culture (as cited in Oda, 1998, p. 116). She also reflected on her teaching style, prompted by a student response, in contrast to a colleague with whom she jointly taught a multicultural course.

Oda’s major finding was that her cultural identity influenced her teaching. The data showed that she strove to maintain harmony, an honorable traditional Japanese value. “Living in harmony means that I consider and appreciate others. I give deference and credence to other people’s thoughts, ideas, and actions… I try to defuse anger by imposing thoughtful reasoning. I try to reconcile differences and look for ways of capitalizing on the differences” (p. 121). Oda also recognized that maintaining harmony could also create future conflict. When students were expressing harmful or ignorant ideas, Oda wondered whether her desire to promote harmony could actually prevent them from confronting those beliefs, or whether her desire for harmony minimized her ability to be assertive or aggressive in the fight for equity. Oda worried that this might ultimately have miseducative effects in preparing preservice teachers for diverse populations.

This teacher educator described how she could use what she learned in this study to be more thoughtful about how she presented material and interacted with her teacher education students. Oda also suggested that self-study serves as an example of how teacher educators can model reflectivity in addition to providing insights into professional socialization and career development in the academe. I would also contend that Oda's study provides an important example of why this type of self-study should not be essentialized as being only for White teachers. Oda aptly demonstrates that we all have cultural assumptions, and it is important to be conscious of them.

In another study, Obidah (2000) suggested that some of us who teach multicultural education "approach our classrooms far more confident about what we want to teach, than about how we will teach it" (p. 1036). Obidah described her theoretical framework as "critical multiculturalist" (p. 1036) and examined how her experiences and identity as an African American female with strong ties to her working class upbringing impacted the dialogues in her teacher education class, *Education and Culture.*

After several of what she described only as "pivotal moments" in the course, Obidah decided to systematically study her practice and sought student permission to write a research paper about their class. The students consented, and what ensued was a collection of various data including course papers, class notes, email messages, personal conversations, and self-completed student profiles. Using case study analysis methods, Obidah analyzed the data for the effectiveness of her pedagogy and her ability to create a liberatory environment in her classroom. Validity of the analysis was enhanced because Obidah sought feedback on the paper from students who took the course in order to check her perceptions.

The quality of this study is evident in the rich descriptions of five students and the analysis of their respective transformative experiences using actual quotes and classroom experiences. Obidah also provided a thoughtful analysis of her interactions with these students and her own assumptions about them. She concluded that the impact of the class both on her and her students has made her more aware of the challenges in mediating and disrupting social norms of teaching and learning, especially with regard to race, class, and professorial boundaries.

The most unique aspect of this study was that the researcher presented her findings with her students at the Georgia Educational Research Association Conference. This offers an excellent model for three things: making practitioner research public, including students/preservice teachers collaboratively in presentation of the study, and growing its status by presenting at an educational research conference. Obidah suggested in her article that reflection on our (educators') assumptions about how to teach multiculturally "herald the start of honing a more effective craft" (p. 1059). This speaks to the enormous potential of professional development in teacher educators.

## Collaborative Self-Study

Prado-Olmos et al. (2007), experienced teacher educators, conducted a group self-study where they examined the following question: "What does it mean for Latina/o faculty to work with preservice teachers/students of color on issues of diversity and multiculturalism?" (p. 86). These self-identified Chicana/o teacher educators used critical personal narrative and autoethnography to examine their experiences of teaching a summer institute in the Teach for Diversity Project. Prado-Olmos et al. provided a thorough description of not only their geographical and work context but also the political activity and state legislation that precipitated their vigilance in conducting the work of social justice.

Prado-Olmos et al. studied their teaching of two courses that examined the role of cultural diversity in teaching and promoted the development of skills to be culturally responsive. Twenty-two were students of color (17 Latino) and one student identified as Euro-American. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the data set: "(1) our intentional focus on dealing with difficult concepts (that we would not necessarily teach to the same degree in a mainstream classroom), (2) reaching out and connecting with students where they are, both academically and personally, (3) cultural renewal, or giving back to the community, and (4) developing the perspective that teaching is a political act" (pp. 96–97).

Throughout this study, the authors shared their personal stories as they related to their students and, notably, to the Chicano movement historically. They reflected on what made teaching these classes different from teaching classes that have a majority of White students. The teacher educators sensed that a greater level of trust and respect developed much sooner than their typical classes. Prado-Olmos discovered that her personal stories of being an English language learner that she had previously "told" were now "shared" (p. 93). "Teaching a course on diversity to a class of students of color was different than teaching to a largely Euro-American audience. Gone was the overt resistance we often face. Gone was the necessity we feel to prove our credentials to teach or to establish our objectivity" (p. 96). The authors conclude that transformative work must be conducted with students of color but how it is done will look different depending on the identities of both the instructors and the students.

What follows is another excellent example of not only collaborative research, but also one that models how self-study can contribute to the professional development of beginning teacher educators. Abt-Perkins et al. (1998) are a group of White female teacher educators who had completed graduate school together and then wrote letters to one another for one academic year in an attempt to better understand how their backgrounds and experiences influenced their practice and commitment to equity in their new environments. Their work drew on the frameworks of other feminist researchers who address equity in schooling (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hollingsworth, 1994; Hulsebosch & Koerner, 1993; Miller, 1990, as cited in Abt-Perkins et al., 1998, p. 84). These teacher educators defined it as "inquiry that is simultaneously personal and social as we seek both individual and institutional renewal and change" (p. 84).

This study provided thorough and thoughtful descriptions of the participants and their former and current contexts. The researchers suggested that their letters to one another provided an alternative fulfillment of the research, "cycle of questioning, self observation, and ongoing analysis" (p. 85). In the analysis of the letters, two common issues surfaced. One was how to prepare teachers to take into account students' cultural identities in their choices about instructional materials and content. The other was helping preservice teachers to understand how the context in which they teach and their students' ethnicity affect how authority is interpreted in the classroom.

Through analyzing the letters, the three teacher educators learned that they shared many of the same doubts and fears about teaching the "other" that their student teachers had. The three women discovered that they were positioning their preservice teachers as the "other."

> We learned that that perspective was part of our problem. We saw ourselves as teaching 'others,' as wanting to have answers, to give direction, to lead, to be 'expert,' rather than demonstrate through our own reflections how we, like the student teachers we taught, were engaged in a learning process of our own – one that did not differ substantially from theirs. (Abt-Perkins et al., 1998, p. 92)

Abt-Perkins et al. also realized that in teaching student teachers not to make assumptions, they often made assumptions about their student teachers. For example, Abt-Perkins, "coming from a working class background, assumed that her students' economic privilege meant that they were 'without social consciousness' and somehow 'deficient' for learning about equity and justice issues" (p. 87). They learned the value of collaboratively reflecting on their identities and contexts. They contend that it helped them to articulate a confidence in what they know, what they do not know, and what they must seek to know.

Both the honesty and vulnerability expressed within this study are what makes this research useful for others who might carry the same hopes and fears. However, the researchers discuss the vulnerability in sharing this process with their workplace colleagues as opposed to the safe space of the group. They argue that the letter-writing format and their personal relationships with one another integrates "soul bearing honesty" within professional self-study. In sharing their letters with a wider audience, they "hope to model how women in academia can address their work in terms of teaching 'passions, politics, and power'" (see Fine, 1992, as cited in Abt-Perkins et al., 1998, p. 86).

## Future Directions in Transformative Self-Study

In reflecting on the self-studies highlighted in this chapter, it is apparent that many teacher educators are authentically interested in improving how they challenge their preservice teachers in ways that will prepare them to meet the needs of all students. It is clear that how teacher educators improve their practice is significantly impacted by who they are and the experiences they have had which challenged how they understand not only diversity but also preparing teachers for it. Also evident was that although the significant homogeneity of the teaching force may have prompted the idea of transformation (as described in this chapter), this process is not exclusive to educators from the dominant culture. Thoughtful and systematic reflection on how we understand teaching and learning is a requisite of everyone involved in education, regardless of race, status, gender, etc.

In their review of needed research in teacher education, Ducharme and Ducharme (1996) recommended that there be more research overall about the preparation of teacher educators. They write that the teacher education research should model the studies of preservice teachers and should include long-term investigations, life studies, and shadow descriptions. This research should also focus on clearer identification of what teacher educators need in characteristics and training. “A heavier emphasis should be put on descriptive research (to understand a phenomenon) as a complement to improvement research (designed with intended impact on practice) in order to provide a sufficient base for conceptual and theoretical work” (Hall & Koehler (undated), as cited in Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996, p. 1043). The study of transformation clearly fits both these categories.

Self-study of teacher education practices is an important way of developing and articulating a pedagogy of teacher education (Loughran, 2002). In looking at the studies presented in this chapter, it is evident that careful and systematic reflection on one’s practice leads to important insights about the impact of self on teaching and learning. Clearly, one of the themes is that the transformation process is complex for both preservice teachers and teacher educators. These studies do not provide the “answers” for how to prepare teachers for diversity, but they suggest that there are many people struggling with issues that can inform how we know better. However, we need to move toward using this knowledge to impact teacher education in general.

The overall status of practitioner research, and self-study in particular, can be enhanced through continued publication and promotion of it. Obidah (2000) set an outstanding example when she described how she presented her research with her students at a statewide educational conference. This models the rare but valuable act of collaboration among teachers and students and improves the status of this work simply by being accepted for an educational research conference. The professional knowledge created through self-study in multicultural teacher education will serve but a few people, if it is not disseminated in quality and meaningful ways.

# Chapter 5
# Self-Study as Transformative Process

## Self-Study in the Teacher Education Research[1]

A thorough discussion of the many definitions of self-study is beyond the scope of this chapter. It is helpful, however, to look at how self-study, or research similar to it, is described in the teacher education literature. Because it neither prescribes a particular method nor promotes a single goal, self-study remains difficult to define. In the fourth edition of the *Handbook of Research on Teaching*, Zeichner and Noffke (2001) described self-study research as using "various qualitative methods" to focus on a "wide range of substantive issues" (p. 305). They offered examples of self-studies in different genres and compared it to narrative life histories and action research without specifically defining it in its own right.

Cole and Knowles (1998b) defined self-study research as "qualitative research focused inward" which primarily uses qualitative research tools such as observation, interview, and artifact collection (p. 229). More than just qualitative research, self-study is "post-modern in its perspective… self-study scholars attempt to embrace that uncertainty and reject calls for validity and reliability as they are traditionally known" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 235). Cole and Knowles (1998a) view self-study as a tool for broadening the concept of research. They specified two main purposes – personal-professional development and "broader purposes of enhanced understanding of teacher education practices, processes, programs, and contexts" (p. 42). The former provides a more practical goal for teachers to engage in reflective inquiry in order to improve their practice. The latter purpose is aimed at challenging what counts as research and knowledge.

Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) have contended that self-study is a formalization of reframing – a way to rethink and expose oneself "to new interpretations and to create different strategies for educating students that bring their practice into concert with the moral values they espouse" (p. 2). This is in line with what Dewey (1964) has emphasized as the importance of teachers being both consumers and producers of knowledge about teaching. He encouraged teachers to be reflective *and* to act on their reflections.

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[1] Portions of this section are found in Schulte, A.K. (2004).

A.K. Schulte, *Seeking Integrity in Teacher Education*,
Self Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices 7,
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A major element of the self-study process is critical reflection. Brookfield (1995) suggested six reasons why learning critical reflection is important: to take informed actions, to develop a rationale for practice, to avoid self-laceration (self-blame for student failing), to ground us emotionally, to enliven our classrooms, and to increase democratic trust. But reflection is not enough. “Reflection must be placed in action and look backward and forward to make choices about educational dilemmas” (Samaras, 1998, p. 62). In addition to this reflection, Cochran-Smith (2005) has contended that in effective practitioner research, “teacher educators need to know how to pose and explore important questions, collect multiple data sources that are convincing, analyze the data in line with their initial questions and their theoretical frameworks, and interpret the data including implications for local policy, practice, and programs” (pp. 224–225).

Whitehead has called self-study “living educational theory. It is living because, as people engage in understanding it, they learn more and their theory changes as they understand more. Further, because they are living what they learn, new knowledge emerges” (in Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 242). In support of that idea, Russell (1998) writes, “There is only one way to understand self-study, and that is to experience it personally” (p. 6).

## The Growth of Teacher Educator Self-Study

There has been a great deal of progress in the area of research on teacher educator practice. This type of research serves as an important way to conceptualize the ongoing professional development of faculties of education. Cochran-Smith (2005) explained that this approach to self-study “privileges neither scholarship nor practice but instead depends upon a rich dialectic of the two wherein the lines between professional practice in teacher education and research related to teacher education are increasingly blurred” (p. 221). Richardson (1996) contended that the field is lacking in studies on teacher educators’ beliefs and practices and that more of this research “will be particularly helpful in the improvement of teacher education practices” (p. 115). Ducharme and Ducharme (1996) also suggested that research on teacher educators as practitioners is an area that needs further research. They quoted Hall and Koehler (undated) in saying that there should be more emphasis on “*descriptive research* (to understand a phenomenon) as a complement to *improvement research* (designed with intended impact on practice” (as cited in Ducharme & Ducharme, 1996, p. 1043). This is an excellent distinction that promotes self-study of teacher education practice as a potential knowledge source for the field and not just good professional development for an individual.

Richardson (1996) and Borko, Whitcomb, and Byrnes (2008), in *The Teacher Educator’s Handbook (2nd ed.)* and the *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education (3rd ed.)* respectively, made cases for recognizing practical inquiry as an important contributor to the knowledge base. Although she never uses the term self-study within the practical inquiry genre, Richardson included reflective practice, clinical analysis, and action research, all methods that are employed in K-12 classrooms, as well as in the context of higher education. Self-study would seem to fit in many of these categories depending upon the extent of the inquiry and the topic or themes that emerge. Twelve years after Richardson, Borko et al. (2008) noted Zeichner's prediction (1999) of the growth in importance of practitioner research and cited evidence of this growth in the self-study field specifically.

The term self-study did not come into more widespread use until after the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practice (S-STEP) special interest group was formed in the American Educational Research Association in 1992. In early teacher education handbooks, there were very few references to the type of self-studies that focus on how teacher educators understand their practice of preparing teachers for diversity or social justice. However, publications such as the *International Handbook of the Self-study of Teacher Education Practices* (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004) and the journal *Studying Teacher Education* have provided contexts where these types of self-studies may flourish.

Despite clear advancement of the field, self-study continues to be described as a risky activity. Although many researchers (e.g., Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Schulte, 2001) see vulnerability as positive, necessary, and beneficial for the process, such susceptibility is not reported to be conducive to academic advancement (e.g., Cole and Knowles, 1995). In fact, hooks (1994) wrote that in the academy, "the self was presumably emptied out the moment the threshold [to the classroom] was crossed…there was fear that the conditions of that self would interfere with the teaching process" (pp. 16–17). Richardson (1996) defined self-study research as "teacher educator as researcher studies" and qualified them as "high-risk activities" (p. 114). Borko et al. (2008) later noted that despite the increase in scope and impact of the work, those who conduct self-study face "a number of substantial challenges" (p. 1033). Additionally, Bullough & Pinnegar (2004) cautioned that "the vulnerability felt by the teacher educator must be managed so that in its expression in teaching and in the reporting of the research no harm is done" (p. 340).

If one believes any of what is said about transformation, it would serve to support the process of self-study. Transformation *is* a study of self; the benefits of the process can be applied to the method. Therefore, I and other teacher educators who expect their students to engage in any type of reflection on the self must engage also in some sort of self-study if for no other reason than to practice what we preach. Samaras (1998) wrote, "I have come to believe that inducting preservice teachers to the self-study process, and practicing it myself, is my ethical responsibility to the teaching profession" (p. 74).

## Autoethnography

A form of self-study that is very underrepresented in traditional educational research literature is autoethnography. What follows are a variety of perspectives on autoethnography that support and/or define the kind of self-study used throughout my practice and the work in this book. In defining autoethnography, Ellis (2004) wrote, "I start with my personal life and pay attention to my physical feelings, thoughts, and emotions. I use what I call 'systematic sociological introspection' and 'emotional recall' to try to understand an experience I've lived through. Then I write my experience as a story" (p. xvii). From my perspective, an autoethnographic approach to self-study requires that the researcher specifically focus on the telling of her personal story as a way of better understanding the professional practice. Ellis's definition relates to a more psychotherapeutic approach to understanding one's actions in the world. This is similar to how Fowler (2006) described her third orbital of narrative analysis called "Psychotherapeutic Ethics."

Perhaps Simpson (2006) best described autoethnography as it relates to my own process of teaching and learning about diversity when she says, "Autoethnography is a way to think about power and knowledge in the classroom" (p. 72). Within her article, Simpson described and analyzed a particular racially charged classroom discussion and explains that "This interaction and my telling of it serve as a way to ground theoretical and practical questions, and as a way to situate the discussion of race, cultural studies, and pedagogy in the contexts in which we live" (p. 72).

## Reliability and Validity

In order to withstand the rigor of academic scholarship, self-study must meet standards of reliability and validity. Cole and Knowles (1995) defined six major issues in self-study: technical, interpersonal, procedural, ethical, political, and educational. Technical issues surround the facilitation and progression of the self-study process. Interpersonal issues are integral to the process when self-study is done in collaboration with others. Procedural issues are those that involve how the research is carried out, including the methods, timeline, and routines. Because self-study is highly personal and uncommonly revealing, ethical issues regarding confidentiality may be unusually salient. Cole and Knowles (1995) regarded the personal revelations necessary for self-study work as potential political issues when what can be very private analysis is read by those in the academy. Similarly, educational issues such as the acceptance of self-study research in the academic world constantly linger for those attempting to be professionally recognized for such research.

LaBoskey (2004) suggested five elements of the method of self-study: it is self-initiated, it focuses on improvement of practice, it is interactive, it uses primarily qualitative methods, and validity is defined according to trustworthiness. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) provided four standards for methodological rigor when discussing work similar to action research: the research question, generalizability, theoretical framework, and documentation and analysis. With regard to the research question, they say that although action research questions are not always framed in traditional educational theory, they are "implicit questions about the relationships of concrete, particular cases, to more general and abstract theories of learning and teaching" (p. 15). In other words, each situation "is a case of" some larger practice/theory dilemma.

A common critique of action research (and self-study) is its lack of generalizability. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) argued that not only are some teacher research questions similar to those that other teachers have, but in fact, it is often the generic educational research that misses the point when educators need insight about particular contexts. The idea of generalizability, in a sense, speaks to the recipe formula for teaching and denies the legitimacy of serious research questions emanating from individual classrooms. This work can be considered naturalistic research. By looking at a specific social situation in depth, naturalistic research can provide a fuller description and analysis of the particular situation (Tabachnick, 1989). Generalization has a different meaning for naturalistic research in that the study allows the reader to make the connections to another situation.

In describing classroom action research, Caro-Bruce and Klehr (2007) depicted the data collection and analysis as "a cyclical, iterative process" whereby "teachers judge the validity of their work on its systematic process, its trustworthiness to other practitioners, and its catalytic (leading to action) and democratic (taking other perspectives into consideration) qualities" (pp. 16–17). Anderson, Herr, and Nihlen (1994) recognized that if such research is to produce knowledge for traditional academia, then the definition of validity is an issue. They define tentative criteria applied to action research as democratic validity, outcome validity, process validity, catalytic validity, and dialogic validity. Each of these is explored more specifically below.

Process validity is achieved through triangulation of data as it represents experiences in teaching. A "critical friend" (Costa & Kallick, 1993) can assist in providing additional perspectives. In regards to process validity, Anderson et al. (1994) advised that special attention be paid to verisimilitude, plausibility, and intention. Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) suggested, "Being vulnerable in this authentic way and not in some Uriah Heap hand-wringing act is what makes this work ring with genuineness for most readers" (p. 243). Similarly, Ellis (2004) said validity may also be judged "by whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves or offers a way to improve the lives of participants and readers – or even your own" (p. 124).

Lather (1986) defined catalytic validity as "the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (as cited in Anderson et al. 1994, p. 31). It is suggested that a research journal is where this transformation may be recorded, and I have kept a journal continuously throughout my teacher education career. Putting my thoughts and recollections in writing often provides time to think carefully about what I do, and in the process, other insights surface.

Dialogic validity may be accomplished through collaboration or reflective dialogue with others. I commonly share my self-study ideas with students and colleagues as a way of opening up the dialogue among us. As a graduate student, I had a community of peers with whom I discussed these issues. We formalized our dialogue by meeting bimonthly in an action research study group. Each of us was studying his or her own practice as supervisors of students in our graduate program. As a full-time professor, these opportunities for dialogue are infrequent. For this reason, I initiate conversations with colleagues (interdepartmental and intradepartmental) and have maintained relationships with “critical friends” at other institutions since I entered academia.

## The First Study: The Dissertation

My adoption of self-study began in my doctoral dissertation. My project was a study that took place at University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison), a large land grant research university. Primary objectives of UW-Madison’s elementary education program are to prepare teachers with (1) “the attitudes, knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to work effectively with a diverse student population” (Zeichner, 1996, p. 133) and who are (2) “both willing and able to reflect on the origins, purposes, and consequences of their actions” in relation to social change (Zeichner & Liston, 1987, p. 23). This kind of critical reflection contributes to transform prospective teachers’ thinking about cultural diversity by helping them develop a conscious knowledge of “the influence of culture on the way we personally make sense of and respond to the physical, social, and spiritual world” (Hollins, 1997, p. 102). My study reflected the social reconstructionist tradition (see Zeichner, 1993).

Over the course of three years as a graduate assistant, I supervised student teachers in their final semester of the elementary education program. My duties as a supervisor were to observe student teachers and hold pre- and post-observation conferences approximately 4–6 times during each semester. In addition to observing student teachers in their field placements, I conducted a two-hour seminar for all my students each week. I received a new group of student teachers, between six and ten, each semester. My dissertation focused on two semesters, but previously I had been supervising for three semesters in the elementary program.

The forms of documentation and analysis used were similar to traditional forms of qualitative research such as field notes, interviews, audiotapes, and classroom documents (Cole & Knowles, 1998b). I sought to collect data that reflected my supervision practice, focusing on my working relationship with my student teachers. In order to obtain triangulated perspectives on this, I collected (1) their weekly journal assignments with my responses, (2) audiotapes of seminar meetings, (3) informal and formal feedback from student teachers, and (4) formal student teacher interviews. In addition, I maintained a personal journal that recorded my reflections on my experiences as a supervisor. Collecting and documenting my own observations supports the idea that many teachers are able to provide a truly emic view that outsiders could not accomplish. Some researchers (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) believe this actually makes teachers more suitable for the appropriate collection of data.

My journal has been part autobiography, part field-notes, part self-psychoanalysis. In my journal, I recorded events that were otherwise not documented. I also used it to have an inner dialogue about issues that were arising in my work as a teacher educator. My journal began as part of a course project with my advisor. I continued with the journal throughout my research, and occasionally I shared entries with my advisor in order to keep in touch about what was happening in my practice. In this way, the journal served not only as a reflexive device but as a bridge for the supervision relationship with my advisor. On one occasion, I shared a journal entry with a student.

Within my journal entries, I developed questions or concerns about how to do my job better. What evolved was a particular desire to have my student teachers learn to see things from multiple perspectives, much as I was learning to do in graduate school. In my attempts to help them solve the problems of their practice, I noticed how this broader perspective can help to explain confusing circumstances and provide a knowledge base from which to begin to think about possible solutions. In the spirit of encouraging my students to practice this perspective-taking, I have come to believe that it is my responsibility to adopt strategies that will provide more opportunities to challenge their perspectives and encourage them to adopt those that further the cause of social justice.

My journal has also documented the journey of how I came to know my student teachers, as well as helped to question my own preconceived notions about them. Within the pages, I set out my professional philosophies, as well as my own fears and doubts. I came to see my journal as witness to my own personal and professional transformation. It is a physical record of my evolution.

## Evolution of My Question

The birth of this study was in the fall of 1998, during my second semester of supervising student teachers. I began keeping a journal about my experiences and beliefs about supervision, continuing the journal, and beginning broader data collection the following year. I began data collection that involved my student teachers the next fall. I collected data throughout the semester, assessing the process as the semester progressed. In the following spring semester, I had different and fewer student teachers than I had in the fall, but I continued with data collection.

My plan was to analyze the first semester data before and during the second semester, so that my findings from the first semester would inform my practice for the second semester. Huberman and Miles (1998) call this “interim analysis.” I felt I was able to change things about my practice based on the experiences of the fall semester, as well as other semesters. For example, I reconsidered the use of teaching metaphors, because I did not feel I was explaining them effectively, and the students viewed it as a requirement as opposed to a meaningful reflection tool. I was also determined to audiotape more seminars than I had the first semester and have a colleague observe at least one of my meetings.

Because of my participation in a course about action research, I originally designed my study as an action research study. I approached the research primarily using the framework presented by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993). As early as September of 1998, I had formulated a question, which at the time was, “What are the methods I can use to help student teachers see issues of race, class, and gender in their classroom activities or philosophies?” (Supervision journal, 9/16/98).

The Saint Louis Action Research Evaluation Committee (1998) offered six criteria with which to determine a good action research question: significant, manageable, contextual, clearly stated, open-ended, and self-reflective. I had continuously reevaluated my question to determine whether or not it met these criteria. Because I felt this question was so vital to the development of teachers, it was important that my question be understood by educators outside my particular frame of reference.

During a discussion with a student in the action research course I was teaching, I had an important realization. Through her questions about my project, this student helped me to acknowledge that what I ultimately was looking for were only those opportunities during which I engaged in dialogue with students. I was collecting data about particular assignments or activities but realized that it was the way I related to my students that was of real interest to me. The idea of using methods or strategies stayed with me even though those terms were eventually dropped from my question. I moved beyond thinking about *what* I did to *how* I did it. I also realized that I became focused primarily on helping the student teachers uncover their own personal assumptions about teaching and students. I eventually decided on the following question:

> As a supervisor, how am I able to help student teachers challenge their assumptions about teachers, students, and schooling?

## Inductive and Deductive Analysis

My primary form of data analysis was to induce themes from the student teachers' written journals. After producing general themes from the students' journals, I used them to code the transcripts of the seminar meetings. Ryan and Bernard (2000) noted that when a researcher has identified and refined themes, and applied them to another text, "a lot of interpretive analysis has already been done" (p. 781). I constructed various "unit-by-variable" matrices (Ryan & Bernard, 2000) and compared them to determine whether or not the themes were confirmed in both data sources. Although the data presented were interesting, it represented information that I did not think was particularly significant for the study.

I turned to my personal supervision journal entries. Initially, I looked for supportive evidence for the themes I had generated earlier in the students' journals and seminar transcripts. Eventually, the journals revealed the themes that are presented in the literature: Whiteness, ambiguity, and the "good student" syndrome. Realizing these themes, I turned back to the student data and deductively drew on the excerpts that might support them. I also attempted to note instances that were negative cases, "cases that don't fit the model" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 782). What follows is a more specific description of the data analysis process.

I had collected copies of student teachers' weekly journal entries to which I had responded. Initially, I read through all the journals, because it had been four months since I worked with the first group students. As I re-familiarized myself with them, I examined my responses on their papers. I also shared a portion of the (anonymous) journals with my "critical friend" (Costa & Kallick, 1993), Jane, who pointed out patterns in my responses – namely, that I often wrote "interesting" with no further explanation and that I let their assumptions go unchallenged too often. After the initial reading and meeting with Jane, I read through each week of journals, coding the types of responses. My intention was to look at how student teachers' comments were challenged through probing questions or suggestive commentary. I coded the responses in the following way: (1) questions – general and probing; (2) commentary – general and challenging; (3) praise; (4) suggestions; and (5) encouragement/support. I also noted the number of "empty" comments I made which were things like "wow!" or "interesting." I constructed a table representing all of these data. I used this table to compare my overall responses to other students during that semester and later to the second group of students. See Table 5.1 for a sample of these data.

Another form of data was transcripts from three seminar discussions. After transcribing and rereading the transcripts, I began coding them using similar themes I had developed with the students' journals, tallying these in a table similar to the journal analysis. I also began to note the type and frequency of participation with particular students. During this coding process, I noticed the themes of White privilege, ambiguity, and "good students" that were present in the transformation literature I had reviewed. I had not consciously looked for these themes in the transcripts until they showed themselves. At this point, I reexamined the transcripts and my personal journal looking specifically for interactions that involved these topics.

At the end of the semester, student teachers were asked to participate voluntarily in an interview with an outside interviewer. The interview questions were as follows: (1) Tell me about Ann as a supervisor, and (2) How do you feel Ann contributed to your reflection on your ideas/assumptions about yourself or teaching? In order to provide context to the interview discourse, I transcribed the interviews myself. The interviewer assured the student teachers that their participation would not affect their grades, and, in fact, I would not even listen to the tapes until after the semester was over and grades were posted. Four students agreed to interviews the first semester. Only three student teachers were available for interviews the second semester. I analyzed student interviews, additional feedback, and course evaluations specifically for the student teachers' perceptions about their own transformation process and my effectiveness in assisting it.

**Table 5.1** Sample of student teacher journal data

| Name | Questions (probing) | Commentary (challenging) | Praise | Suggestions | Encouragement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kelly | 3 (3) | 5 (1) | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Samantha | 2 (5) | 6 (1) | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Anna | 1 (0) | 1 (1) | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| Donna | 3 (2) | 4 (0) | 4 | 0 | 1 |
| Dorothy | 5 (4) | 5 (4) | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Roberto | 8 (1) | 4 (1) | 5 | 3 | 1 |
| Laurie | 5 (5) | 6 (1) | 8 | 4 | 0 |

## The Meaning of Self in This Study

The "self" aspect of this action research project became more prevalent when I analyzed my supervision journal. My journal contained two years of entries, eighty-five single-spaced pages, so I used the full contents to examine how my perspectives had changed during the time I had been supervising. I began by reading the journal entries and creating a timeline that primarily represented the general evolution of my philosophy and seminar assignments, as well as my own reflection on the varied experiences. Before I began formal coding, I read through all the entries to reorient myself to the experiences. Then, I read through the journal and deductively selected verbatim entries that resonated with me. As I selected those "chunks," I began to code them into general themes that I labeled (1) my philosophy, (2) my own self-critique, (3) my relationships with my students, and (4) my own transformation process. These chunks were approximately seven percent of my journal. From these themes, I condensed pieces of data and created two main categories: "My Philosophy" and "Issues I'm Working On." I described the "issues" primarily as personal growth areas such as my need for control or my desire to be accepted by others. Within these categories, I created new subcategories and set aside subcategories that did not fit.

I found similar content in both groups, so I contrasted similar chunks in both groups. Not wanting to create an artificial binary, I sought to re-categorize the groups into race, control, and relationships. Huberman and Miles (1998) refer to this as "partitioning" or "unbundling" variables. What I realized as I created memos from these new groupings was that they fell fairly neatly into the similar categories I had referred to in the general literature as obstacles to transformative work: White privilege, ambiguity, and the good student syndrome. These themes will be examined in Chapters 6 and 7.

## Writing Student Teacher Portraits

I chose two students from each semester to demonstrate the ways in which transformative experiences occurred. The data helped me to determine which student teachers about whom I had significant data to support some evidence of transformative reflection. I used all the data sources to create a summary of the student teachers' transformation process, as well as how I was able, or not able, to contribute to it.

The portraits contain quotes from the data in order to lend authenticity to the story. Each portrait was shared with the respective student teacher to obtain "member feedback" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 277). I felt ethically obligated to share the portraits as a way of demonstrating the trust within our professional relationship. My intent was to let them know that my research was a genuine attempt to understand and improve my practice through them. I asked each student teacher for general feedback.

After I initially wrote the portraits, I returned to the individual students' data (journals, transcripts, etc.) to view it as a group. When I analyzed them before, I viewed them as single pieces of data among many other students' data. This helped me to see common themes. For example, I could see that Kelly had a consistent insecurity in her own ability to sustain enthusiasm and caring in this profession.

First, I have chosen to profile my interactions with Kelly[2], Samantha, and Dorothy in order to illustrate the ways in which I tried to facilitate transformation. They were three students with whom I felt I had made a personal connection, and this, in turn, allowed me to do more transformative work with them. I felt comfortable pushing them to be a little uncomfortable despite the many stressors within their student teaching experience. Part of me also believes they engaged in these conversations, in part, to please me, their teacher. This is perhaps a positive by-product of the "good student" paradigm. I also noted times in their journals where the student teachers recognized their own assumptions and reflected on them. After these three portraits is a contrasting description of my supervisory relationship with Roberto.

## Kelly

There were a few student teachers with whom I feel I did connect, and I believe this happened mostly through phone conversations. When Kelly called me for pre-observation conferences, we did not just talk about the lesson I would observe the next day. She often asked me for advice about understanding different teaching philosophies, and when I encouraged her, we also talked about the issues of Latisha, the only African American child in her class. I think Kelly was uncomfortable talking about race at first. During the seminar discussion about Peggy McIntosh's article, she said,

> But I'm seeing 25 different cultures, and I'm noticing it more because everybody's White so it's kind of standard except for one person. There are 25 different cultures, 25 different kids, 25 different ways I could teach. Granted there are some larger things that are similar. That is just one thing that helps me keep in mind – I read this and I understand it but I'm just trying to downplay this (race) idea (Seminar transcript, 9/29/00).

In one of our phone conversations, Kelly had said she was not sure how to talk about "these things," and I assured her that the discomfort was what made me think she needed to. A semester later, she would tell me that was what she remembered about multicultural teaching: that if it felt uncomfortable to "go there" then it probably meant she should.

Our conversations about Kelly's student, Latisha, were so compelling, I thought the situation would make a good vignette to use with my future students. Latisha attended a suburban, predominantly White school through the city's school choice program. When Latisha used African American vernacular in her writing assignments, Kelly asked me how to explain to her that it was inappropriate. Latisha also expressed some strong anti-White sentiment in a poem she had written. Kelly and her cooperating teacher were confused about why Latisha would choose to come to a predominantly White school if she disliked White people so much. It was a very fine line for me to talk about this situation when the cooperating teacher's views were very important to Kelly as well.

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[2] All names throughout the book are pseudonyms.

Kelly was quite observant of her cooperating teacher and other staff members in her school. She worried about becoming burned out or losing patience with her students. She referred to this in multiple seminar discussions and her journal.

> I'm so willing to give a chance and trust a kid and let him do it over. It's more important to learn the material than give an "F" and prove a point to him. But I've come to a realization that the other fifth grade teachers who have been doing it for like 30 years were sick of giving kids chances. They're not totally bad, but they're feeling less willing to put work into and, do teachers lose that? Do they ever start it? Do you just get really sick after 20 years of kids saying, "I didn't do this last night"? Do you just start saying, "F!"? (Seminar transcript, 11/10/99).

Following Kelly's comments, I redirected her concerns to the whole class. I tried to encourage students to think about student failure and how that is determined in today's schools and what we can do about that. We addressed problems of students who are traditionally marginalized in the school system.

Kelly was very thoughtful in her weekly reflections. In her journal response where she answered the question "How do my experiences as a 'good student' shape how I understand schooling?" Kelly wrote:

> At the beginning of my college career whenever I would see students who are different from me in their attitudes and behaviors in school, I would always wonder why they couldn't just change, and I was in disbelief of disrespectful behavior. My eyes have certainly been opened, and I now realize every child develops their understanding through extremely different situations. I really try to understand individual students, their learning ability, and their backgrounds (Student journal, 10/26/99).

In response to this journal entry, I wrote, "And you might understand 'disrespectful' differently than some." I also asked Kelly how she thought she was trying to understand individual students. But I also wrote "interesting, isn't it?" next to her writing. I found that I wrote "interesting" often on students' papers without any real indication of what I meant by that word. Was I just trying to identify with her experience, or was there more I could have said about her personal realization?

Kelly really helped me to become more comfortable broaching the issue of race. I think she helped me to speak directly without feeling self-conscious, because she was more self-conscious than I. After we both got past our anxiety about discussing the implications students' race might have on her teaching, we had some very insightful conversations about our role as teachers in recognizing those implications.

## Samantha

When I first met Samantha, I thought she was going to be a reluctant student. The very first meeting, she complained about the video requirements, saying she had video-taped herself before and did not think she needed to do it again, let alone twice.

She was absent the first seminar where the students shared their bag speeches, so her personal interests were unknown to me. She was in the PK-3 certification program, and I suspected she would have "the attitude" I had found held by many of the early childhood students. During the meeting where we laid out our expectations for the semester, Samantha acknowledged she was a perfectionist and feared failure.

> After my first observation with Samantha, I wrote this in my journal:
>
> …an observation in a 1st grade room. Two things stand out.
>
> One is I asked the student teacher to give me a rationale for the lesson: If the student said "why do I need to know this?" what would you say? We talked about it a little and finally I asked the cooperating teacher as a way of modeling the conversation and the cooperating teacher said no one had asked her that before. I immediately felt uncomfortable, like I had somehow called her practice into question, though she did not seem to react negatively. Later, the student teacher and I continued to talk about it and she said she didn't think 1st graders would ask that question, except for the "pistols." I said, "What does it mean that they don't ask?" The student teacher said she thought 1st graders just believed they were in school to learn and didn't need a reason to be motivated, and I asked if that was the only purpose in sharing a rationale. I suggested that even though they may not have a "developmental" ability to ask, does that mean teachers should not be required to share the reason? It reminded me of what Juanita said in a seminar the previous week. She used to work in the OR as a nurse and she said that she always talked to dead people while she was working on them, cleaning them or whatever. Even though the recipient of the care is not cognizant of what you are doing, do you still owe it to them to tell them why you are doing it? Would the practice of telling students these things help them in developing critical thinking skills down the road – plant the seed that it's okay to question? I feel a bit unprepared to answer this question in relation to early childhood learning. I will consult my friend who taught kindergarten (Supervision journal, 9/10/1999).

I emailed this part of the journal entry to Samantha and asked her for her response. I did not hear from her for quite a few days, and I became nervous about having exposed too much of my thinking process to a student. The next week after the seminar, I asked Samantha how she felt about my sending that email, and she said it was fine, that she just had not had time to respond. I was still nervous about whether or not she saw this as a flaw in my supposed "expert" position as a supervisor. Later, we had multiple communications about the journal, and I believe it was the beginning of the connection in our relationship.

Samantha, as many student teachers I have had, called me one night in tears, stressed out about her classroom experience. She was feeling incompetent and felt like her cooperating teacher did not support her or make room for what she wanted to do. I asked her many questions about what she needed and how she might get that. We talked for a long time, and I made a few suggestions about how to open up communication with her cooperating teacher, as well as how to cope with some things she could not control. During the conversation, I realized how much I related to Samantha and her fears. I remembered how frustrated I was about not being able to control certain things in the classroom and how that often caused me to fail or feel incompetent.

At the end of the phone conversation with Samantha, I recalled that many of my students had given me feedback that I was not positive enough. I quickly assured her that I did think she was a good teacher. I could hear the relief in her voice as she said, “I’m so glad you said that.” I had almost missed an opportunity to provide the support my position required of me.

In Samantha’s journal entries, I asked many probing questions and commented more than average. I also reported on my experiences with her in my own journal more than anyone else. She participated often in seminar and many of my probing questions were directed at her. I appreciated the way she took up the issue of alternative perspectives and struggled with it. She recognized how her experiences might help her understand her students. For example, she talked about how having been raised by a single mother may help her to better understand her students who come from single-parent homes. It was also during that seminar discussion that Samantha said, “One part of meeting kids’ needs is knowing them. The other half is knowing yourself.”

Samantha was one of the students I felt comfortable enough asking to do a final interview. She said that the ways I most challenged her thinking was through conversation and referred to the multiple conversations we had on the phone and in seminar.

> She’s definitely, definitely driven me to really think about what I’m teaching, why I’m teaching it, how I’m saying it while I’m teaching it, how my views come into the classroom without me knowing it. I feel that was a focus a lot of this semester in her seminars, our privileges from our own perspectives and our privileges of where we stand in society and how we teach. That is definitely something that has been enlightening for me this semester because you are in there daily (Interview transcript, 12/8/99).

In this relationship, I struggled at first to develop a rapport that would help me to broach sensitive issues. Because Samantha self-identified as a perfectionist, I knew that challenging her assumptions would probably be taken as personal lack of competency. I believe it was the connection we developed in our relationship that provided a more favorable context to help her see her own assumptions and biases.

## Dorothy

I knew from the previous semesters that I had to convince my students that I had the ability to supervise student teachers in kindergarten classrooms even though I had not personally taught below fourth grade. One of my new students, Dorothy, was placed in a one/two multiage classroom. Within the first five minutes of meeting her, Dorothy asked what grades I had taught. She attempted an impartial reaction, but I sensed her skepticism. Later, she told me that she had a former junior high school teacher supervise her in a kindergarten placement and in fact Dorothy had immediately mentally dismissed the supervisor when she learned of her upper elementary experience.

I would learn later just how many assumptions Dorothy had made about me over the semester, but I, too, had some predetermined ideas about her. The day I met Dorothy, she seemed extremely confident, a bit aloof. I had a definite sense that I was a hoop she needed to jump through and that she would not be needing much from me, because she knew everything she needed to know. I was notably surprised in our first meeting with her cooperating teacher that she was very cautious and even a bit insecure about her plans for the semester. I wrote in my journal that day, “It’s always good to save judgment” (Supervision journal, 1/31/00).

Our relationship continued to be fraught with miscommunications and misunderstandings. During an early pre-conference, I asked Dorothy about the rationale for her lesson. She said she did not know it and that she could give me a bunch of answers I wanted to hear, but she was doing the lesson so that I could observe her. I continued to press her for what students might be learning in the lesson and why that was important. What resulted was an excellent conversation about this complex lesson about analogies for first graders (Supervision journal, 3/9/00). In her final interview, Dorothy alludes to her frustration in that pre-conference:

> At first I was a little bit overwhelmed because she seemed really, for example, she seemed really gung ho about having us have a rationale, and I was like, for crying out loud, we’re like fifth semester, why do we have to keep having a rationale? But her intent of that was not, I guess I first viewed it as she was trying to check up on us to make sure we were doing the lesson, but really she’s trying to facilitate us thinking about why we were doing it. And that, after I realized that, I really appreciated that about her (Final interview, 5/3/00).

In her interview, Dorothy alluded to other assignments that she felt helped her to be reflective on her practice, including journals, the unit assignment, and the community perspective project. For her community project, Dorothy chose to eat breakfast with the kids in the free breakfast program at her school. The majority of these kids were bussed from the Dalton Street community, a low income housing project. Dorothy initially said she wanted to eat with the kids so she could just hang out with them and talk about things other than school. I believe the experience ultimately caused her to reexamine the way she understood how she relates to her students.

> For my community perspective [assignment] I decided to eat breakfast program with the kids. I never thought what would happen. I never thought this would happen. I was just able to establish a relationship with kids in my class and kids not even in my class who, a type of relationship I never would have been able to before because we didn’t talk about anything in particular. We talked about toenail polish and the numbers on the back of their spoons…that experience really impacted me. I just think, had I not done that, had I not been asked to do it, I never would have.
>
> I remember Ann saying you need to, at the beginning because I had been struggling with little kids in my class who live in the Dalton Street community who get picked up by a taxi, who don’t have a mom, or their mom’s in jail, and I remember Ann kept saying to me, “You have to establish relationships with your kids,” and I’m just like, how do you do that? When you’re in the classroom you’re supposed to be teaching them, you can’t be establishing a relationship with them. I really wanted her to give me a concrete way to do that, like a five-step thing, first you need to blah, blah, and she never did. She just kept saying it will come when you develop a relationship, and I’m just like. So when I did the breakfast thing, it was like oh, that’s what you’re talking about! Now I can teach these kids so much better, and I can be more effective because they know me as a person not as a teacher. I told them that my first name was Dorothy, they didn’t know that. Like that was super good (Final interview, 5/3/00).

I felt very satisfied as Dorothy’s supervisor that she had a “super good” experience with her students. This community project pushed her to engage in relationships she might otherwise have overlooked. It was an opportunity that Dorothy took advantage of and her perspective was transformed because of it.

## Roberto

I chose to profile my experiences with Roberto because I felt I had built little personal connection with him and was not instrumental in his transformation process. Roberto was very contemplative about his teaching. His journal entries consistently illustrate how long he has wanted to work with children, and especially those that grew up in circumstances similar to his own childhood. In his “Myself as Student and Teacher” essay, he alludes to this.

> Every time I would set my observations on a child “at risk,” in Reading Recovery, or just simply attracting a lot of attention for his/her behavior, I thought about myself…I have been thinking about children since I was a child, and I have loved them since about 16 years of age. It is in my heart to establish and maintain equity in the teaching environment and to lead them to truth (Student essay, 2/22/00).

Clearly Roberto holds a multicultural philosophy regarding the treatment of children in the school environment. However, it is not clear what exactly he meant when he says he wants to “lead them to truth.”

Prior to this semester, I could easily focus on the context of being a White middle-class woman working with student teachers mostly like myself. Having Roberto in my group significantly changed that. I viewed my relationship with him to be a real test of my ability to meet the needs of all my students. I had to confront my own insecurity, which comes from having so little experience working with people of color.

Besides my own insecurities, there were other things that I viewed as hindrances to my relationship with Roberto. I was slightly intimidated by his reserved seriousness. I suspected he was always thinking much more than he was saying, and this made me uncomfortable. Also, Roberto would be leaving after ten weeks to student teach overseas. So, as it always is with ten-week students, the time is usually spent fulfilling the requirements and verifying the student teacher’s technical competency to leave early. There is usually little time to develop significant personal relationships, let alone do the transformative work I seek to do.

Fortuitously, I believe Roberto did experience what I would call transformation, but I do not feel I necessarily contributed to it. In fact, at one point Roberto even expressed some doubt about whether or not our seminar discussion topics were meaningful. However, in three separate instances, Roberto reported an assumption that he had discovered in his classroom placement. During a discussion in seminar, he explained it this way:

> I thought well, one of the assumptions I had was me being of an ethnic minority background, and the way I grew up was kind of sad…I thought I would be able to understand a lot of these kids that attract attention, that are pulled out for this and that, that I see just something, they just generally attract a lot of attention. And it has to do a lot with, or maybe it so happens it’s African American students. I’m like, I’ll be able to empathize with them, and I can approach them in a way where other teachers that aren’t, that are with, can’t. So I made that assumption. And I’m realizing that I really don’t know crap. I don’t know. I don’t have the slightest clue of what these kids’ lives are. Nothing. We might go through some of the same stuff as kids, but it’s not the same. And I’m reevaluating that whole thing (Seminar transcript, 3/8/00).

It was important for me to experience this revelation with Roberto. It serves as a meaningful reminder that all people of color do not share a common perspective. Although I had probably read about it, I suspect this interaction with Roberto helped me to personally relate to the fact that each individual brings their own meaning to their experiences.

Although I perceived my impact on Roberto's transformation as minimal, I believe my supervision relationship with him greatly influenced my own personal and professional transformation. Sometimes teachers help students to grow. Other times, teachers cannot help but grow because of their students.

## Conclusion

Writing the student teacher portraits served to "reorient, focus, and energize" me "toward knowing reality in order to transform it" (Anderson et al., 1994). It required me to look at how I related to students, how they perceived my influence, and the different ways in which student teachers examine their own beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning. It provided me the opportunity to systematically examine my practice and collect data that might inform my future actions as a teacher educator.

There were certainly additional issues that surfaced in the data. However, it is significant that the prominent themes in my journal analysis were so similar to the themes I found my student teachers to be challenged by. I believe these similarities lend a kind of plausible validity to this work. It also has a certain authenticity because it requires a personal investment and a sense of vulnerability over the long term.

Studying my own practice during my teacher educator preparation brought an increased level of energy and commitment to my profession. When I began formal data collection, I felt much more invested in what I did and more responsible about doing it well. I did feel that I learned about how I was able to challenge student teachers' perspectives, but consciously reflecting on my teaching has provided me with opportunities to challenge *my own* assumptions about teacher education, student teachers, and schooling.

## Researching While Teaching

Since completing my dissertation, I have gone on to do what most doctoral finishers do which is to obtain a faculty position in an institution of higher education. As such I have continued to conduct my self-study in both formal and informal ways, acknowledging that having used self-study to learn how to *become* a teacher educator, I continue to use it to be a *better* teacher educator.

I also feel that my training as an action research facilitator has greatly influenced my study process. In their book *Creating Equitable Classrooms Through Action Research,* Caro-Bruce & Klehr, (2007) describe the activities in which members of an equity-focused action research group engage. I list them here because many of them relate to the way in which I engage in my research.

> Constructing a working definition of equity
> Writing about equity as it is observed in classrooms and schools
> Reading and discussing articles about equity
> Writing a story about equity in the teacher's classroom or school
> Creating cause and effect diagrams
> Reading other action research studies focusing on equity
> Interviewing school staff about diverse experiences with and concerns about issues of equity
> Having each group member share his or her racial autobiography
> Describing what it means to work for equity in one's school (p. 9–10)

The methods I employ in myself-study are aligned with those of action research in the sense that my data collection informs changes in my practice. My research takes the action research process closer to self-study in that I carefully examine aspects of my self that influence my practice. This is particularly important when the topic of my study is so closely connected to identity.

## My Ongoing Study of Transformation[3]

As a regular part of my teaching, I collect data that are reflective of my practice, focusing on my working relationship with my students. In order to obtain multiple perspectives on this, I (1) collect student assignments, (2) solicit informal and formal feedback from students, (3) engage in ongoing dialogue with colleagues about my interactions with students, (4) read current educational research and (5) keep a personal journal that documents my reflections on my experiences as a teacher educator.

Student assignments, such as autobiographical writing and self-reflection, are useful for assessing student self-perceptions and their understanding of the connection between the personal and the professional. As I collect assignments, I learn about how students perceive themselves and their beliefs and how I might structure assignments to encourage this reflection. I also structure assessments to help me gauge the level of understanding of issues related to privilege and oppression.

Student feedback takes many forms. As part of the tenure and promotion process I am required to have students formally evaluate my teaching. These evaluations can be useful; however, I regularly ask my students for more relevant and specific feedback. In addition, I collect information about issues related to diversity for the purpose of my self-study. If I am not sure how my students are experiencing certain topics, particularly ones that might be considered "sensitive," I ask the students.

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[3] Portions of this section were previously published in the proceedings from the Castle Conference 2008.

MacGillivray (1997) examined what she calls “appropriate critiquing” in her self-study (p. 476). She found that although she invited student feedback, she wanted it to be delivered in a particular manner that is explicit, in a private setting, and using an academic stance. This was a dilemma, since these types of “assumed” rules are precisely what she was striving to work against. I recognize this challenge for me also – to elicit feedback in a way that promotes student voice while acknowledging alternate routes by which that feedback might travel, whether I am comfortable with them or not.

In addition to ongoing conversations with colleagues in my department, I regularly dialogue with a “critical friend” at another institution. All these dialogues serve as a mirror on my practice. I share quandaries from my classroom, gather ideas for ways to respond to students, and receive difficult questions or observations about my own perceptions. The large majority of these conversations center on issues related to helping students understand issues of oppression. These dialogues often produce a “critical incident” (Newmann, 1987) that assists me in better understanding how to most effectively teach my students. Engaging in this work has increased the regularity with which I have sought out other perspectives. As a result, I believe my colleagues have engaged with ideas that they might not have otherwise.

One of the most satisfying parts of graduate school was reading provocative ideas and then getting to talk about them with others. As a tenure track professor, I have found that the focus has shifted dramatically from reading and talking to writing and publishing. It has been my experience that if my colleagues are reading current research, it is directed at producing their own publishable piece. The joy of reading a thought provoking article and talking to others about the ideas suggested therein is something I have to create, and even then it is almost always literature that will assist me in improving my practice. I have a stack of dated journals on my desk that are all there because something in their table of contents interested me enough to keep me from shelving it. Only the articles that speak to my immediate practical needs get read.

Although I continue to study the same concept of transformation, the focus of my study has turned from student teachers in a classroom placement (as it was in my dissertation) to education students in prerequisite classes. Because I supervise fewer student teachers now and with less consistency, I have come to focus my formal analysis of my practice on teaching coursework, especially as it relates to preparing teachers for diversity.

## Touching on Touch Points

The data (student assignments, feedback, dialogue, etc.) of my ongoing study are sources of continual analysis. As I develop themes or lines of inquiry, I make connections to other data, checking for confirmation or denial. Ellis (2004) has suggested that in telling an autobiographical story of how one experiences events, the “sociological analysis occur[s] conversationally” (p. 20). The following description is an example of the development of my analysis process around a particular event. At each “touch-point,” or moment of engagement, I added information and perspective to my understanding of the event.

One day in my classroom as part of a student-led activity, a student had drawn a picture and told what clearly she thought was a humorous story, but which I felt was disparaging because of the way she depicted people who live in trailer parks as “hillbillies.” I responded passively, first asking her in an offhand manner whether she was speaking as someone from that cultural group (as if this might make it okay) and then commenting that many of my family members have lived in mobile homes (hoping she will figure out that her comment offended me.) I heard the students behind me mumble what sounded like disparaging comments about the student who told the story. For some reason I felt stymied and was not able to respond in any other way. I was not sure how to call attention to her comment in a way that would not humiliate her since I believed that would defeat my purpose.

After class I stopped by a colleague’s office and told her about the incident. We brainstormed various things I might have said and what I should do next. Her experiences of having lived in Appalachia and her own dispelled assumptions about that culture informed me further. She and I debated about whether or not I should bring in my own personal response or keep it focused on the needs of future students. I decided to send the student an email asking her for more information about what she meant by her story and how she would respond to a student who told a similar story. The student responded by saying she only meant it as a joke and that it was modeled after a character in a movie she really liked. She said she would respond to a student who said something similar by complimenting him on his imagination and redirecting him to the task at hand. I was frustrated because she still was not getting the message I wanted her to get.

I decided to draw upon the personal relationship I felt I had developed with her. I wrote back explaining that I had taken offense to the remark because many of my family members have experienced discrimination for being perceived as “trailer trash.” I suggested it was possible that a student in her class may feel the same way and that I hoped that she would respond in a way that affirmed each child for who they are, regardless of what their house looked like. I did not hear back from the student.

As a third touch-point, I discussed this incident with my critical friend who challenged me even more than my colleague did about why I did not confront the comments in class. During this conversation I clarified for myself that I knew I should have called attention to the offensive story, but I was either more concerned about damaging my relationship with this student or unwilling to feel the discomfort this confrontation likely would elicit. This student often expressed a fear or frustration of being judged for her views. I had been working to encourage her continued engagement in the dialogue and praising her commitment to presenting her ideas, particularly because I felt many of them to be problematic. During the conversation with my critical friend I was able to develop possible dialogue that I would use next time. For example, I could ask her in the moment to tell us more about the character she was describing and engage everyone in a conversation about the stereotype.

A recent touch-point came when an issue of the *Journal of Teacher Education* showed up in my mailbox. I perused the article titles and turned directly to "Things Get Glossed Over: Rearticulating the Silencing Power of Whiteness in Education." In her study, Haviland (2008) detailed fifteen strategies that White people use to "insulate themselves from implication in social inequality" (p. 40). Within the article, Haviland related a classroom event very similar to mine, coincidentally also about the term "White trash." She described how she neglected to respond to the comment in the moment, and in the next class period she brought it up but let the student "off the hook" by using an indefinite structure and passive voice (p. 46). In her conclusions, Haviland suggested an alternative approach similar to what my critical friend and I had discussed. This article helped me identify and articulate the strategy I was employing to resist engaging with the offensive comment. It also served to affirm that others experience similar inadequacies and that I have the ability to create better alternatives.

It is interesting that both mine and Haviland's events happened to be about disparaging remarks about an oppressed White cultural group made in a classroom full of predominantly White preservice teachers. This raised a variety of questions for me to continue to reflect upon. Was it more difficult for me to disrupt the prejudice because it was not as obvious as racist remarks about, for example, African Americans? Did most of the White students even find it offensive? If my own family had no history of living in mobile homes, would I have been particularly sensitive to the remark? If there were a person of color in the class, would that have encouraged or inhibited my response in any way?

Simpson (2006), in her article *Reaching for Justice: The Pedagogical Politics of Agency, Race, and Change,* further informs my understanding of my own situation as she describes a conversation in her cultural studies classroom; two African American students (Robert and Gloria) and a White student (Paul) express their racially divided opinions on the story of Amadou Diallo, a black man who was reaching for his wallet and four White policemen shot him 41 times. Simpson questioned how to on one hand affirm all their rights to express their views, while challenging the views that perpetuate racist beliefs. Simpson asked, "How could I distinguish between my support for the expression of opinions and beliefs and my own sense of pedagogical responsibility in terms of clearly raising issues of justice and accountability, and still stand behind Paul's, Robert's and Gloria's choices to express their agency?" (2006, p. 79).

Although Simpson's classroom scenario involved a racially mixed class, the dilemmas with which she struggles are relevant to my own about affirming students while also challenging them. I used my analysis through this series of touch points to prepare myself for the next classroom event where I would be better prepared, maybe rehearsed, to respond to similar comments. Reading, dialoguing, and journaling about this particular event in my classroom provides multiple lenses through which I might develop strategies for more successfully responding to similar situations in the future.

For example, recently a student was referencing a local elementary school and called it "a weird school." I asked her to tell me more about what she meant. She described the school as having a diverse student population and many students from low socioeconomic status. She also mentioned it had an immersion program. I then asked her directly, “So, when you say it is weird, do you mean it is different from what you are used to? Or, what do you think is weird about it?” She responded, “Yeah, I guess it’s not so much weird as just really different.” In asking her to clarify and distinguish her use of the term “weird” I confronted her use of a disparaging term, and provided other language to express her perceptions. Although this situation may have been easier because the term “weird” may be considered less pejorative, the practice of confronting offensive language in the moment was important for me.

Ultimately I used the data collected at various touch-points to determine how I am able to meet my purpose, which is to effectively engage students in critical reflection about their perspectives. This ongoing process is a continual self-analysis that leads to more effective teaching practice. Although I would not characterize this work as a “research study” in the formal sense, meaning I do not do it in order to publish a paper about it, it most certainly meets the description of the process of self-study. Loughran (2002) said that as we engage in this ongoing self-study, the research focus “alters and, as adjustments are made, new insights and possibilities emerge. Hence the intertwining of teaching and researching is such that as one alters so does the other” (p. 243).

## Revisiting the Dissertation

In addition to my ongoing analysis of my teaching practice as described above, I have recently revisited the data themes of my dissertation. As a rite of passage or marker of time after achieving tenure and promotion, I dusted off the dissertation and reapplied a similar process to some new data.

## Written Responses

For my dissertation, I had collected and responded to the student teachers’ journals that they kept during their student teaching. I used these journals to examine the ways in which I challenged their thinking. Because currently I have been primarily working with students in prerequisite courses where they do not keep a student teaching journal, I used a major writing assignment, the Personal Practical Philosophy, to analyze my responses to their written ideas. I used the same categories to tabulate my responses. It is clear from the data that I have a much greater tendency to praise the students by most commonly using phrases such as “great point” or “excellent.” I did notice that although my vague response of “interesting” had disappeared, a smiley face, equally as vague, was gracing more than one of the papers. Although I did not see any examples of probing questions, I did continue to make some comments that challenged particular assumptions within the writing (Table 5.2).

**Table 5.2** Responses to personal practical philosophy papers

| Name | Questions (probing) | Commentary (challenging) | Praise | Suggestions | Encouragement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Myra[4] | 0 | 1 | 11 | 1 | 1 |
| Andrea | 0 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Krystal | 0 | 3 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Kendra | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 1 |
| Kallie | 0 | 5 | 6 | 1 | 0 |

There may be a few reasons why I relied more heavily on praise in these papers. I suspect that a large part of it is because of time constraints and the need to respond efficiently. But I also believe that by the time students write this summative paper about what they believe about teaching and how that might look in classroom practice, I have responded to a variety of other formative assessments where I may have done more probing and questioning. The students' journals in my dissertation were much more of an ongoing dialogue, but I have taken a more evaluative stance on the students' writing in these philosophy papers. Although this is not a congruent comparison, systematically looking at this data prepared me to think more carefully about giving much more substantive comments on future students' papers.

## Journal Analysis

Over the course of seven years as a full-time professor, I have amassed 65 single-spaced pages of journal that I describe in two parts. Part one of my journal, approximately ten pages, were written in my first year as a professor and focused on many of the same themes as my dissertation. I was continuing to refine my philosophies and still examining my understanding of race issues. Although I made a few entries over the next few years, my journaling became much more prolific in the three years prior to this particular analysis. During those three years, I engaged in distant critical friendships with three different colleagues consecutively. I wrote approximately 55 pages of personal reflections. Almost all of my entries in the second part o the journal continued to focus on some aspect of transformation work, analyzing my course activities and students' reactions to them. The term "typical" began to show up more frequently, usually describing the students who were enrolled in a special accelerated credentialing program in which I taught each fall semester. (These are the students characterized in "Parallel Journeys" in Chapter 1.) Typical, as used in the journal, generally meant White middle-class monolingual young women from culturally privileged backgrounds. These particular groups of students were magnifying my previous stereotypes about education majors.

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[4] Names are pseudonyms.

Although I continued to write in my journal about my work with students, a large number of my entries began to focus on my role as a social justice advocate among my department colleagues. I realized that in order to truly create transformation with the students in my classes, I needed to challenge my own assumptions about how this approach was understood throughout the teacher preparation program. I began to document interactions in meetings and professional conversations, my attempts at disrupting oppressive behavior, and my feelings about how who we were as faculty impacted how we prepared our students. I expressed many concerns about the marginalization of certain faculty members, in particular faculty of color. I believed those with “Othered” perspectives were becoming more and more disillusioned about our ability as a program to adequately prepare preservice teachers for a diverse student population. There are many examples of ways in which I tried to mediate the conflict, to control the discontent, dysconsciously (King, 1991) contributing to the marginalization. Words like “frustrated,” “overwhelmed,” and “exhausted” appeared frequently (collectively 27 times) to describe my struggle to continuously work toward social justice, both within my classroom and my workplace. I also documented some instances where I felt successful, but my private journal was primarily where I expressed the ideas I probably did not feel safe, or experienced enough to express publicly. These themes about collegial transformation will be further explored in Chapter Eight.

## Student Feedback

For my dissertation study, the student teachers were interviewed after their semester under my supervision. Impartial interviewers asked the students to describe me as a supervisor and how they perceived my ability to challenge their assumptions about themselves and teaching. I used the interview transcripts and additional feedback sources, such as course evaluations, to learn about how students felt about my impact on their transformation. Given the time constraints of being a full-time professor, I opted not to conduct personal interviews. However, I did analyze both university sanctioned Student Evaluations of Teaching (SETs) and other informal forms of feedback to help me determine if students felt I assisted them in challenging the assumptions they had about teaching and students.

The SETs asked: (1) What did your instructor do to make this class a good learning experience for you? (2) What could your instructor do in the future to make this a better class? and (3) How do you rate the overall quality of teaching? Most of the student responses on the SETs were related to the successful use of teaching strategies, and some of them commented on my passion and enthusiasm. Although few of the students specifically indicated that I had challenged them to think differently, one did write, “This class has even made me a better person. I feel more aware and knowledgeable.”

During another semester, SETs were not administered so I created my own final evaluation that asked these questions: (1) Name two or three assignments or class activities that stand out to you as being particularly useful or meaningful for you and why? (2) What have you learned about teaching from the instruction and/or design of this course? and (3) What recommendation would you make for changes to this course for next year? Most of the students highlighted assignments that taught them "how to be a teacher," but more than half of the students also described assignments that helped them to learn about their own beliefs and values. For example, one student wrote, "This assignment (the PPP) helped me look at my beliefs, thoughts, misconceptions, etc. and allowed me to learn about myself." Another wrote, "This article (Kumashiro, 2000) and discussions related to this made me realize my own personal biases and how I need to work to not alienate any students." A word commonly found in feedback used to describe me or my assignments was "challenging." It is unclear to me to what degree the framing of the questions impacted the types of responses from the students, but I believe the latter format requested more information about their learning as opposed to my teaching and seemed to elicit responses more related to my original interview questions.

## A New Type of Student Portrait

As I looked back at the student teacher portraits I wrote for my dissertation, I considered writing new descriptions of my more recent students. During this time I was reading Carolyn Ellis's book, *The Ethnographic I*, and was instead inspired to create the fictional story "Parallel Journeys" in Chapter 1 that portrays what are somewhat caricatures of my students but highlighted common characteristics or situations that I encounter with this particular population of students.

Although the writing format is slightly different, similar themes echo in the fictional story as in the portraits. The story describes how, over the course of a semester, I seek to develop the kinds of personal connections I alluded to in the student teacher portraits. It is clear that I still feel creating those relationships assists me in engaging students in more challenging conversations about privilege and oppression. Similar to some of the student teacher portraits, the story references the assumptions I make about my students and they about me. Also present is my ongoing analysis about my original question pertaining to how to challenge my students' assumptions about teachers, students, and schooling. The story, more than the portraits, focuses on the classroom practices that I believe support transformation. In Chapters 6 and 7, the themes from "Parallel Journeys" will be unpacked further.

# Chapter 6
# Common Challenges to Transformation

## Revisiting the Problem

The early parts of this book focused on the “problem” of White female teachers and the need to transform their perspectives so that they might more successfully teach students, particularly those who are culturally different from them. A first step toward this transformation is acknowledging the importance of purpose. But even after becoming clear about one’s intent to teach in socially just ways, there are other barriers that can inhibit fulfillment of that purpose. These challenges were alluded to in “Parallel Journeys” and again in Chapters Three and Five where I describe my own transformation. Additionally, these challenges may be heightened when a teacher educator is culturally privileged in many of the same ways as her students. In this chapter, I will explain some of the common barriers to transformation found in the literature and confirmed in my own research. I will also describe how I observe when these barriers to transformation do occur and the ways in which I attempt to overcome them. Although this chapter is structured around themes with particular strategies, Chapter Seven will describe more general approaches to responding to these challenges, with a focus on using student assets to do so.

Theoretically, students choose to complete a credential program whose mission aligns with their own. However, most students choose a college based on geographical proximity, not program philosophy (Tabachnick, Popkewitz, & Zeichner, 1979). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that many students who enter a particular teacher education program may be unaware of a program’s commitment to critical reflection and social justice. Haberman (1991) has argued that even when they are aware of a multicultural orientation most students who enter teacher education programs lack the dispositions that support transformative education.

One of the common features of powerful teacher education programs, according to Darling-Hammond (2006), is that they provide explicit strategies that help students “confront their own deep-seated beliefs and assumptions about learning and students” (p. 41). In these exemplary programs, issues of cultural diversity are taught not as static content but as an integrated approach to multicultural study. Even after an extensive study of these highly successful programs, the question remains whether any program, be it for three-weeks or four years, can adequately

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alter a student's deep-seated views of education. In the next chapter, I will argue that in fact, transforming preservice teachers' ideas about schooling very often requires that they look deeply at their own values and reconsider how they see the world.

Recall the themes from Chapter 3, where I outlined barriers in my own transformation. I was a good student in the sense that I followed the rules and behaved primarily for purposes of getting approval from adults. My lack of experience with people from other races was a significant point of revelation. My learning curve involved recognizing that I disliked discomfort and tried to control it instead of examining it as a point of learning. I saw myself as a good person who wanted to help students learn, but I had not been asked to consider how my identity shaped my life experiences or influenced how I understood others, particularly the students in my classroom. Not surprisingly, many of the themes I discovered in my doctoral study and that I continue to observe today with my preservice teachers mirror the experiences I had.

Simpson (2006) has asked, "How do I live with my students, and what does this living have to do with my goals as a teacher and scholar?" (p. 71). Although this question is important for all instructors to consider, the implications are unique when the instructor and her students are from a very similar cultural background because critically examining how one lives becomes even more difficult as it blends in with how all of "us" live. Although each person has varying personalities, and all experiences are influenced by the intersections of multiple identities, the more cultural lenses we have in common, the more likely we are to make assumptions about our shared values and beliefs. The privileges most often represented by preservice teachers, and usually shared with me as their instructor, are related to race, religion, sexual orientation, gender,[1] and class.[2]

## Privilege: White, and Other

All types of privileges have particular consequences for all people in our society, but these privileges are heightened or more acute in the public school setting, which may perpetuate them under the veil of "doing school." Students who were served well by the system and generally felt successful (i.e. they were privileged) usually did not experience significant types of oppression because they were more able to navigate the hidden rules of the White middle class.[3]

One of the most challenging issues to unearth or penetrate is White privilege. Many preservice teachers, as well as teacher educators, are from predominantly

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[1] Both the privilege and marginalization of females will be discussed more in Chapter 7.

[2] Although we often share language privilege as well, because students in my program take a variety of other courses related to issues of language, I do not spend as much time discussing it in my class.

[3] Although they are separate aspects of identity, race and class are closely linked in the expressions of oppression.

White communities where they may never have been confronted with their Whiteness. McIntosh (1988) has asserted that Whites are carefully taught not to recognize their privilege nor do they understand racism to be more than single acts of hate. She described White privilege as “an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious” (McIntosh, 1988, p. 1).

Howard (1999) has also provided a clever metaphor for the suffusing nature of White privilege and oppression:

> Racism for Whites has been like a crazy uncle who has been locked away for generations in the hidden attic of our collective social reality. Everyone knows he’s living with us, because we bring him food and water occasionally, but nobody wants to take him out in public. He is an embarrassment, yet our little family secret is that he is rich and the rest of us are living, either consciously or unconsciously, off the wealth and power he accumulated in his heyday. Even though many of us disapprove of his tactics to gain his fortune, few of us want to be written out of his will. (p. 52)

Since schooling in the United States is designed to best serve White students, racial privilege is often veiled by a particular construction of achievement and appropriate behavior (Delpit, 1995). Students who are well served by the school system are often unaware that others are not. Typically, White people have taught the traditional school curriculum and represented White people as those who made our country what it is (McIntosh, 1988). Students of color are often marginalized in racially diverse schools, in part because they do not conform to particular social and linguistic structures that best serve White middle-class students. Schools whose demographics are largely minority students traditionally have the fewest resources and the most inexperienced teachers (Shields, et al., 1999). In her research, Ferguson (2000) found that Black males are disproportionately disciplined and referred to special education.

Many Whites view our society as largely just and open to those who are willing to work hard. Few are aware of the systemic and institutionalized racism that is prevalent in the United States. When (if) Whites become aware of the connection between history and current conditions, they usually dismiss it with, “I didn’t do it. Why punish me?” (Sleeter, 1995a, p. 19). Sleeter (1995a) also suggested that Whites resist critically examining the structures that maintain racism because “people are very reluctant to question institutional structures that protect what they have” (p. 23). Because White privilege is dependent on the oppression of “Others,” it is imperative that Whites engage in a process which assists them in transforming their often limited conceptions of our nation’s racial history.

Even well-intentioned investigations of Whiteness among majority White student groups are complex. The dialogue can result in “White talk” where the talk “serves to insulate White people from examining their/our individual and collective role(s) in the perpetuation of racism” (McIntyre, 1997, p. 45). Haviland (2008) further articulated this phenomenon in White dominant education settings as “White educational discourse (WED)” which is characterized by language that is powerful and yet power-evasive (p. 44). Haviland (2008) outlined a variety of discourse markers that help to explain the ways Whites talk about race without actually engaging in transformative multicultural education.

McIntyre (1997) called the infusive nature of this White discourse a “culture of niceness” (p. 121). This culture of niceness can penetrate White dominant groups and institutions, serving to further relegate talk of difference to fewer and fewer spaces. To call it a *culture* of niceness, however, may reduce it to just a “cultural” way of being instead of the institutional discrimination that it is. I would argue it is less a culture of niceness than a “conspiracy of politeness.”[4] Pennington (2007) described how discussing Whiteness with her White female students felt impolite and improper. Pennington’s students reported that talking about race could be offensive and make others, and themselves, uncomfortable. Moon (1999) agreed that “for some White women, it sometimes seems that simply seeing or noticing race borders on impoliteness” (p. 192).

The use of the term *conspiracy of politeness* as opposed to *culture of niceness* draws attention to the fact that this “nice and polite” way of talking avoids having to address the real and uncomfortable issues of privilege and oppression. The conspiracy is that those who persist in engaging in this type of White discourse, no matter how good the intention, are actually complicit in the perpetuation of White privilege.

## Responses in Practice

Although the students I have taught generally have spent little time discussing any type of societal privilege, the kind that evokes the most anxiety is racial privilege. In my experience, many students feel either denial or guilt when learning about White privilege. I try to present a variety of statistics, as well as personal narratives that will help students see the results of White privilege, but some students still refuse any acknowledgment of it, claiming either that it does not exist if one does not ask for it, or that if privilege does exist it is connected only to economic status and not race. Women in my classes often receive McIntosh’s article on White privilege (1988), a staple in many multicultural education courses, more successfully than men quite possibly because McIntosh juxtaposes White privilege with male privilege. Of the few men I have had in class (and some women), several tend to suggest that White privilege, if it exists, is a result of slavery which is a historical phenomenon and irrelevant today. They dismiss examples of racism as described in McIntosh’s article as isolated incidents and/or separate from their experience. It is common for students to call on their own economic deprivation to support that they are oppressed as well, and so people of color are no different from them. Some White students who do accept that they may receive benefits because they are White are anxious to suggest that they should not have to give up that privilege but that all people should receive those benefits. Here is an example of a conversation with a White male in one of my classes:

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[4] I am not the first to use this term, but I am not able to attribute it to a particular source.

Jordan: I don't agree with the author [McIntosh]. She makes it out to be that White men expect power and should give up their power to make minorities feel better. When, in reality, nobody should have to give up anything. We should just bring everyone up to have the same privileges and benefits. It's [the article] way too negative."

Me: Okay, I see what you're saying. But the way I interpret that article is that White people are treated a particular way just because they are White. That they get benefits just because of their skin color, not because of the content of their character, and that that's not okay. That no one should be privileged, or oppressed for that matter, because of the color of their skin."

Jordan: Oh. . . . maybe I see it the way I do because I'm a White male."

I believe that in this interaction, Jordan internalized the concept that who we are influences the way we see things. I was using language similar to that of Martin Luther King Jr. and applying it to the other side of the equation. Although nearly every White child learns from the "I Have a Dream" speech in grade school that a person should not be judged by the color of their skin, they rarely recognize that judgment as a phenomenon that might be applied to themselves.

I can understand why White people do not want to believe that, for example, store personnel would follow Black customers throughout the store. Reading personal testimonies seems to provide only so much validity to those who are so removed from the experience. One time, a White female student of mine who worked security at a department store confirmed that profiling absolutely happened where she worked. She expressed how problematic she now thought it was to be trained to do that. Because her personal experience validated this truth, she was able to move on to integrating this knowledge into her work as a future teacher. As a White person, she may have been more credible to some of her White classmates. This fact, of course, perpetuates White privilege as it honors "White testimony" over the statistics and narratives of people of color. However, at the same time it also is an example of White people helping White people accept that institutional racism exists, rather than always relying on people of color to be the catalyst for this revelation.

It is very painful for me when, after reading about institutional racism, a student of color in my class realizes that she has been discriminated against. For example, one time a Latina student wrote in her paper that in high school she had asked a teacher about taking an Advanced Placement course, and the teacher laughed at her and asked her if she really wanted to do that. In retrospect, she thought that maybe this teacher did not think she was capable of taking an AP course. I have had a few students of color express a new consciousness about the impact of institutional racism on their lives. Even if these realizations were necessary for these students' development, I cannot help but feel that in my attempt to afflict the comfortable, I have also afflicted the afflicted.

When students *are* able to acknowledge privilege, the students (particularly women) sometimes say they feel guilty. I have never talked with students about why they experience guilt, but I do offer that guilt is an unproductive emotion and that we should just accept that *it is what it is* and talk about what to do about it. Sometimes female preservice teachers describe White privilege as “depressing.” This appears to me to be in some way related to the nurturing and compassionate aspects of teaching; the preservice teachers feel badly that institutional racism exists; they do not consciously promote racism, but they want to help their children who will be the recipients of it. Or, the students feel anxious because of their inability to control the situation. Recall in Chapter 3 where I describe my intense response to *The Color of Fear* and my desire to end racism immediately. Avoiding the feelings of discomfort and only focusing on the solution can set up a deficit perspective, whereby preservice teachers focus not on ameliorating their own White privilege but only on loving the children so much so as to make the oppression less harmful. Kumashiro (2000) defines this approach as “Education for the Other” and argues that this approach positions the Other as the problem.

I often begin my discussions about the concept of privilege in general, and then focus on White privilege specifically. I try to impart that society is often set up to benefit people with certain characteristics, and when I offer a variety of characteristics, as opposed to focusing just on race, the students seem to be more receptive. Sometimes they have experienced oppression related to their ability, size, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc. My goal is to seek the tension point at which students acknowledge that different kinds of oppression exist, while not making inequity all about a particular type of oppression. I try not to equate all types of prejudice and at the same time recognize that all parts of our identity are fluid, contextual, and influence one another. In the following sections, I have selected issues of privilege (in addition to White privilege) by which I have been most challenged personally. I will describe briefly how I address these barriers in my own practice.

## Religious Privilege

Since schooling in the United States traditionally recognizes Christian holidays, even some students who are not raised Christian come to accept that in December they will make Christmas decorations in art class and sing Christmas songs in music class. This enculturation process is marketed through teacher stores and our popular culture at large. The assimilation of this holiday into mainstream culture is so assumed that students often argue that Christmas is not a religious holiday anymore, so teachers can celebrate it as a secular holiday. Sometimes Christian students refute that, but most often it is I who makes the argument that suggesting Christmas is not a religious holiday can be, in fact, offensive to Christians who might remind us that “Jesus is the reason for the season.”

On the occasion that I have had students of varying faiths, Christian students have had many more opportunities to contrast their religious experience. For example, Jewish students in my class have expressed their fear and alienation in some contexts and their experiences with anti-Semitic slurs. But the story of injustice that seemed to really impress the other students was when the Jewish students spoke of their sadness at never getting the perfect attendance award because their High Holidays were not excused as national holidays. When such a lack of religious diversity exists in a classroom, providing the multiple viewpoints should not fall only on the few students who might be members of a minority religion.

Religious beliefs and practices often influence perspectives on other parts of identity as well. Gender equality, homosexuality, and socially acceptable (i.e., Western) practices are examples of topics that often cross religious lines. In my community, there is a large population of families from the Hmong culture. Although many Hmong people have converted to Christianity, there are also many who practice traditional shamanism. The practices of shamanism can seem very strange, and even objectionable, to a teacher who does not understand its spiritual importance. Therefore, it is particularly important to educate preservice teachers about situations they might encounter, when they have students in their classroom who may participate in religious practices that seem very different from the ways in which they practice their faith.

Some of the most difficult oppression about which to engage in dialogue usually stems from beliefs or values grounded in religion, the most notable example being homosexuality. First, I know that I will probably not change a belief system that has developed over 20 plus years nor am I completely sure that I should. Second, any perception of my attempt to do so would be in contradiction to one of my stated educational goals, which is to create a safe space for students and to honor who they are. Yet, the type of oppression that can be caused by these beliefs must also be addressed.

One way to honor students I learned from a video about the history of American public school. In this video, Henry Nava, a Mexican American talks about his experience learning English in the public schools. He tells a story of how he received corporal punishment for speaking Spanish at school. In response to that incident, he says to the interviewer, “You do not make someone more by taking something away from them” (Patton & Mondale, 2001). I apply this quote to students who have belief systems that do not always embrace acceptance of all ways of being. I recognize that these beliefs are an important part of who they are and try not to deny their right to that set of beliefs. Rather than characterizing it as something they have to give up, or that they are wrong for having these beliefs, I suggest that the information I am sharing with them can add to their understanding. I encourage them to try to incorporate diverse ways of being into their larger religious beliefs or purposes (e.g., the golden rule, loving your neighbor as yourself, etc.) However, this is not done without complexity either.

Judgment of others is often rooted in religious beliefs, but I have found that the easiest way to teach teachers to reserve judgment is to remind them that children have little or no control over their life circumstances. They do not choose their religion, their economic status, their parents’ sexual orientation, whether or not they have a home, etc. Whenever preservice teachers get judgmental about, for example, people who are gay or students who have “strange” cultural practices or, even, parents who are drug addicts, I bring it back to a comment from a video we watch called *It’s Elementary.* In the video, the teachers are debating whether or not they should be teaching students that it is okay to be gay. Finally, one woman says, “I think what we’re telling them is, ‘It is what it is.’ It’s not right, it’s not wrong, it’s not good, it’s not bad. It just *is*. It is what it is” (Cohen & Chasnoff, 1996). Instead of spending our energy debating the rightness or wrongness of different ways of being or the bad habits of parents, let us focus on how we achieve our purpose in light of this information. How do we affirm all children as people regardless of their life circumstances and in addition to their cultural characteristics?

## Homosexuality and Heteronormativity[5]

Whether discussed within the context of religious beliefs or not, issues related to homosexuality are not something that many teacher education students who grew up in culturally “sheltered” environments have explored. Students in my classes often relate stories that they had friends in high school who later came out to them or that they met people in college who were gay or lesbian, but they had not thought much about the fact that they might need or want to discuss homosexuality in their future classroom. This topic, again, does not naturally resonate with many of them because they do not have personal experiences with this content as a student.

The impact of heteronormativity is often seen in my preservice teachers’ descriptions of themselves. During community-building activities in my class, heterosexual students (usually all or nearly all my students) routinely reveal their comfort with and commitment to heterosexuality through references to boyfriends, fantasies about “Prince Charming,” and dreams related to being a traditional wife and a mother. Since schooling in the United States is designed to mirror the gender expectations of our larger society, students who are heterosexual are often unaware that others are not (Kumashiro, 2000). The traditional school curriculum has represented our important historical figures as heterosexuals or ignored their sexuality altogether. References to homosexuality are hushed, ignored, or relegated to the home. Unfortunately, this becomes hidden curriculum that can be more powerful than if the teacher attempted to address the issues.

Given that heterosexual identities are so comfortably public for most of the students I have taught, I am usually aware of their sexual orientation. Often gay and lesbian students have felt safe to disclose to me, and sometimes to the class, but I know there are others who may be questioning or have not chosen to identify themselves. Because of the marginalized nature of the topic of homosexuality, I have employed a particular strategy that I believe allows it to be more present. I routinely refrain from any references to my sexual orientation in my classes, that is I avoid any discussion of that part of my personal life and I use gender neutral language. My rationale for this intentional "deception" is two parts. First, I attempt to deny my heterosexual privilege in solidarity with gay and lesbian teachers who do not have this freedom. Second, keeping this aspect of my identity unknown often causes students to question it and, I believe, heightens their attention to the impact our identities can have on the way we relate to one another. I believe the ambiguity of my sexuality, and I know the students have questioned it among one another, sometimes makes more complex how some of the students think about our discussions about sexuality. If they assumed I was a lesbian, they may question my "agenda" or be more thoughtful about the language they use. My use of gender neutral terms, in addition to challenging assumptions of heterosexuality, models an awareness of heteronormativity. If it happens that I am inadvertently "outed" as a heterosexual, or if I choose to reveal it, I then provide a model of a straight person resisting homophobia.

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[5] The term was coined by Michael Warner in 1991 in his *Social Text* article, “Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet” (*Social Text*, 1991; 9 (4 [29]): 3–17.).

Many of my colleagues and a few of my friends disagree with this strategy. Some feel it is intentionally deceitful and that this alone makes it unethical. Others suggest that it is hypocritical on one hand to conduct activities that help us get to know one another and build relationships but on the other, purposely omit one aspect of who I am. Still others simply want to feel free to share any part of their lives without thinking about it. My rationale for engaging in solidarity with gays and lesbians who are not safe to share such information is often met with disbelief or disinterest.

Many students appear to experience great tension and anxiety every time homosexuality is discussed. When asked anonymously how she felt about teaching about gay and lesbian issues, one student responded: "I will.... But they are sinners and it makes my blood boil." Through videos and class readings, I try to offer that disrupting heteronormativity at a young age might cause students to grow up seeing homosexuality as normal or within the realms of possible family structure. As a class, we often need to explore fears about "exposing" children to gay sex practices (which usually leads to some good discussions about teaching sex education in general) and contradicting family values that might oppose homosexuality. My focus is always on the idea that *it is what it is;* teachers *will* have students with gay family members, or who are gay themselves, so how can that teacher honor those children for that uniqueness?

## Gender

Although complex, homosexuality is generally an easier topic to discuss than other lesser known gender identity issues. The suggestion that there might be more than two genders is usually confounding to students. I can relate, as I was also stunned to learn the multiple gender identities that people might experience. However, I think it is important to persist in assisting students to consider the range of possible experiences that their students might encounter. Kumashiro (2002) suggests that a child who has difficulty identifying with the characteristics typically ascribed to either boys or girls can experience some amount of trauma in having to line up by gender, compete in gender segregated teams, and even use gender-specific restrooms. Although I am not optimistic that my students will go out and rally for gender neutral bathrooms, I choose to believe that posing the questions causes them to think more carefully about why they would segregate by gender.

In a mixed-gender classroom, I find it easier to engage in critical discourse about gender bias because there is usually a critical mass of both genders. This offers a robust set of experiences from which to draw and usually provides for spirited discussion. However, it is not uncommon in many of my classes for there to be one man or no men. Given the amount of gender bias against girls documented in schooling (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005), one would think that the typical female teacher education candidate would have experienced gender oppression. Unfortunately, this gender bias often goes unchallenged or, worse, it is attached to socially rewarded behaviors seen as successfully "doing school." (This is discussed further in Chapter 7.) Consequently, boys are often perceived as discipline problems.

Some female students deny ever experiencing oppression being a woman. They might say something like, "I've always been able to do anything I wanted." When examined, it is largely because everything they have ever wanted is goals within a feminized framework. This is reinforced when I highlight the disproportionate number of women in teaching (and conversely the dearth of women in educational administration). Most students agree that the population of teachers should more accurately reflect the gender and racial make up of the students; however, a few female students routinely will insist that women freely choose teaching because they have a passion for it and that women who really want to teach are better than men who are, they believe, probably ambivalent.

## Socioeconomic Status

Since schooling in the United States (including the academy) is designed to best serve students from the middle class, economic privilege is often veiled by a particular construction of language and achievement (Delpit, 1995; hooks, 1994). Middle-class students are often unaware that poverty is not just about having fewer financial resources; those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds may have different life experiences that influence the way they see the world (hooks, 1994). In addition to promoting middle class behavioral norms, the traditional school curriculum has also represented economic wealth as being an important life ideal (i.e., "The American Dream").

Many practicing teachers in my area (and nationally) have been inserviced in the work of Ruby Payne and have read her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (2003). There has been a great deal of debate about Payne's research and conclusions. A popular critique of her work is that it is steeped in deficit model thinking. Those who advocate Payne's framework often focus on the resources that students from poverty lack, and most of these resources are defined from a middle-class perspective. For example, what Ruby Payne (or more importantly the teachers who read her work) considers spiritual resources and what those students and their family consider spiritual resources could be different. Yes, children in poverty may have particular needs, but Payne oversimplifies how these needs are defined. Schools need to respond more to what students bring, rather than what they do not, and schools need to be more accommodating of a variety of ways of interpreting those needs. Teaching the “hidden rules” must be done in conjunction with a real examination of what *has* to be a rule. In talking with teachers who have read Payne’s work, I believe there is some cultural understanding that occurs, but I am very concerned about how Payne’s work gets disseminated and interpreted and possibly reinforces these negative and inaccurate perceptions of students and their families.

Some of the most noticeable deficit thinking is seen when talking about students living in poverty. Because many preservice teachers understand the only indicator of poverty to be simply a lack of money, they think the solution lies only in helping their students to establish wealth. This perspective is conveyed by a preservice teacher who spoke benevolently about her poor student and said, “I just wanted to take him home and adopt him.” Although this perspective is likely rooted in her love and affection for children, it is indicative of the uncomplicated understanding of the broader causes and effects of poverty.

Because of my own personal interest in and connections to community services for homelessness, I invite speakers who share stories of local youth served by a county program. For their self-designed final project, I usually have at least one student per semester choose to volunteer at the local homeless shelter. These students’ final presentations have consistently represented the more profound experiences with difference. What almost every student reports is that guests at the shelter look just like “us”.

## Conclusion

Although they believe they have a clear understanding of the discrimination of others, the concept of privilege is new for almost all the students with whom I have worked. Helping them comprehend the effect of privilege on their own lives is a significant challenge, let alone preparing them to educate their students in these topics. I think teaching these concepts in pedagogy courses may cause students to engage with them more, because they perceive it as part of their training to be an effective teacher. I have found that when I model social justice-oriented activities that they could use with their elementary students, the preservice teachers learn simultaneously. However, a risk of doing this identity work in conjunction with teacher preparation is that students will only see it as something they need to teach students but not engage with themselves. For this reason, it is imperative that teacher educators model their own self-study and direct their students in similar reflection.

# Chapter 7
# Responding to the Challenge

## Transforming Deficits into Assets

Culturally responsive pedagogy supports a view of students whereby their cultural backgrounds and life experiences are incorporated into the practices of the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Irvine, 2003). Although the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy is an anti-hegemonic response to meeting the needs of students from “diverse” backgrounds, I will suggest that overcoming the challenges to transformation could be more successful if teacher educators use the concept of cultural responsiveness to draw on the assets of White female teachers. If I believe that all teachers should differentiate instruction in ways that best meet the needs of students, then my sense of integrity requires that I do the same with the preservice teachers who are in my classroom.

Much of this book has addressed a common question many teacher educators ask: “How can I get my White middle class women to not have a deficit perspective about their students?” Of course, this begs the question: What deficit model do we as teacher educators hold for White middle-class female students? Generally speaking, those who complete teacher education programs who fit the “typical” teacher characteristics lack significant experiences with diversity, and these students often do not even realize they are lacking in these experiences. However, if teacher educators are to prepare teachers to understand multiple ways of being in the world, then we need to approach our students as we want *them* to approach *their* students. When I instruct preservice teachers about how to avoid a deficit model when learning about students, I encourage them to focus on the strengths that the student brings to the class and to the teacher-student relationship. I also suggest that they build upon those strengths to develop additional skills necessary for success and honor the child for who he or she is while challenging him or her to grow.

Given this framework, I ask the following questions about my “typical” preservice teachers: What strengths and life experiences do middle-class White women bring to the profession? And in what ways can social justice-oriented teacher education programs draw on those strengths to give them the skills to be successful teachers of students from diverse backgrounds? How can I honor them for who they are, while challenging them to see beyond their own perspective?

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In this chapter, I will use my own practice to describe ways in which I attempt to draw on preservice teacher characteristics that are often perceived as deficits to more effectively prepare them to be culturally responsive. Although Chapters 6 and 7 describe practical strategies for challenging preservice teachers' cultural assumptions, changing the attitudes of teachers is not enough to transform the education system. Chapter 8 will expand the focus from transforming preservice teachers, to transforming teacher education more broadly.

## Getting to Know Me

I have the luxury of teaching three prerequisite courses in an integrated block schedule, as described in "Parallel Journeys" in Chapter 1. This structure provides me the freedom to sequence the content of the coursework in a constructivist manner, building on new knowledge and linking it to prior experiences. Early in the semester, students engage in autobiographical activities reflecting on their identities, values, and beliefs. At the same time, they acquaint themselves with the demographics of the teaching force relative to the student population. I assist them in comparing their identities to those of the "typical" teacher, sharing my own identities simultaneously. I ask the preservice teachers to hold that knowledge and understanding, while we spend a significant amount of time learning about who will be in their classrooms. As we study different types of identities that will make up their students, I am simultaneously skilling the preservice teachers on how to engage in civil discourse which usually also means teaching them how to manage their fear and anxiety around issues they had never talked about before. At some point, who they are is juxtaposed with who their students will be, and I say, "this is what it is, now what do you need to do about it?" (By then, it is my hope that they should accept that some action is warranted.) This leads first to the development of a purpose and philosophy,and later to curriculum development and instructional strategies. Although many of my activities were described in "Parallel Journeys," the following sections will provide further examples and analysis of ways to respond to the challenges of transformation while drawing on the assets of the preservice teachers.

Differentiated instruction and constructivist learning theories suggest that students need to be met at where they are and that teaching methods should draw upon students' background knowledge and experiences. For many of the students I teach, their prior experiences with talking about oppression or issues of identity are limited. Therefore, early in a course I try to assess their personalities and capacity for disagreement or conflict. A tool such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is useful to get students talking about their personal processing styles.[1] In his study, Lawrence (1982) found that 63% of teachers had a "feeling judgment" style, and my own unscientific analysis of my students suggests that the percentage is even higher than that. “Feelers” like to decide using personal feelings, they value harmony, and they feel unsettled by arguments and conflicts (Lawrence, 1982). Some have challenged the validity of MBTI (e.g., Lorr, 1991), but regardless of whether or not everyone believes that the MBTI is completely accurate or not, just helping students to build awareness about their processing style can be instructive for the students and me. I find that doing it as a whole class exercise allows everyone to make connections for themselves and to each other. Despite that we are alike in many ways, we can also see how we are different from others in our class. The biggest advantage to these types of activities is that they give students a framework to understand and develop their own oral participation in future class discussions.

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[1] There are a variety of studies that examine the relation of MBTI typology to effective teaching (e.g. Rushton, Morgan, and Richard (2007) includes a review).

## This Does Not Feel Good!

Because privilege and oppression are such complex and multifaceted ideas, it is difficult to assist students in acquiring a deep understanding of them in a short amount of time. The space in which students often get stalled in their transformation is when dealing with the discomfort of acknowledging their own privilege or prejudice. Because most people do not like to feel badly, the feelings of shame, guilt, and sometimes anger block their ability to see outside their own experience. These reactions are understandable when experiencing what Kumashiro (2000) calls the “crisis of learning” about oppression. Students will often attempt to assuage the negative feelings instead of persisting in an understanding of oppression. It may be difficult, while students are in the midst of this emotional angst, to intellectualize about, for example, the benefits Whites have today as a result of slavery. Therefore, I attempt to preempt the angst by first discussing the effect of conflict and the feelings of discomfort it engenders for most people. We reflect on our own personal approaches to cognitive dissonance and examine our reactions.

Once I establish an expectation that some of us will likely experience uncomfortable feelings during this process, it is not so surprising when it occurs. I see the discomfort, and I say, “Remember we talked about how this might happen. Where is the discomfort coming from? How can you use that to better understand the information?” When the students say things like, “This is depressing. I don’t really want to talk about homeless children,” I comfort them and acknowledge the inevitability of the discomfort. I empathize with them and situate it within their purpose: “Yes, you’re right, it can be depressing. Aren’t you glad that now you know about it, you can be a teacher who will improve the schooling conditions for children who are experiencing homelessness?” I praise them for being willing to share how they feel about it and for engaging with the topic instead of turning themselves off from it. This method is very effective for many of my students who were enculturated into this nurturing approach by their teachers. It is a familiar pattern of relating. It also appeals to their purpose to make a difference in the lives of children. When I arrange all the knowledge about oppression as a necessary step in the process of meeting their purpose, the students seem to resist less.

I try to affirm students all the time for who they are. I acknowledge their strengths and tell them what I appreciate about them. I learn about who they are through strategic assignments, as well as during conversations before and after class. I offer some of who I am. This develops trust and a positive relationship that sets the stage for future interactions where I challenge them in ways that might not feel as good. I am sincere when I build these relationships, but I also recognize that this work is optional for most professors and in some of my own classes. Many authors have proposed that a supportive, nurturing environment reduces the anxiety inherent in the transformation process (e.g., Young, 1998; Samaras, 1998), and I agree that deeper relationships make me feel safer to engage in some of the conversations that are likely to occur. From experience, I believe it also makes my students feel safer. However, I must not sacrifice critique for the preservation of contentedness. As a member of the same cultural group as many of my students, it is not always natural or clear to me when or how to do this.

I must also acknowledge that the way in which I demonstrate care and promote psychological safety for my students is culturally defined (see Irvine, 2003). A culturally homogenous context makes it more likely that we share an understanding of how to demonstrate care; however I must ask myself, does my own need for a “safe space” perpetuate the privilege created by White teachers affirming White teachers? There are those who dispute the benefits of intellectual safety. Henry (1993) downplayed the need to make students feel safe and encourages teacher educators to incite their students rather than placate them. She says there “is nothing safe about engaging students in rigorous and critical ways” (p. 2). Haviland (2008) concurred that in the effort to create safety and comfort, teachers may actually be complicit in promoting a privileged White discourse. Therein lies a tension for this transformation process, particularly for a teacher educator who struggles with the same types of privilege and expectations as her students.

## The Ambiguous Nature of Learning to Teach

Those who have succeeded in the current educational system – in the case of preservice teachers, well enough to be accepted into a university – often have difficulty recognizing the need for change. Therefore, it is important for potential teachers to critically examine their experiences as students in a system that, in many cases, fostered their success as students. Those who *do* acknowledge a need for reform, struggle with not being given the answers for how to change. They are even more frustrated by the prospect that there are no universal answers. Ahlquist (1991) described how her students resisted talking about issues of race, class, and gender because they thought it idealistic or utopian. They told her, “Just tell us how to teach multiculturally” (p. 160).

Some of this fear of ambiguity might be additionally understood by looking at characteristics of the current college-aged generation. American citizens born after 1981 have been termed by Howe and Strauss (2000) as “Millenials.” Despite the fact that Millenials are more ethnically diverse than any other generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000), the population of teachers continues to be mostly White middle-class women (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Millenials tend to accept their generational peers' cultural differences, but they are unlikely to challenge a society that may not do the same (Hamel & Guzley, 2008). Given the influence of the Millenials' collective mindset, their willingness to accept authority, follow the rules, and shun dissent could exacerbate a discomfort with ambiguity (Howe and Strauss, 2000).

Critically challenging deeply held assumptions about schooling often engenders perplexity and uncertainty. Elbow (1986) compared the complexities in learning to teach with those in learning to write. He argued that

> Good teaching seems a struggle because it calls on skills or mentalities that are actually contrary to each other and thus tend to interfere with each other.... I concluded that good writing requires on the one hand the ability to conceive copiously of many possibilities, an ability which is enhanced by a spirit of open, accepting generativity; but on the other hand good writing also requires an ability to criticize and reject everything but the best, a very different ability which is enhanced by a tough-minded critical spirit. (p. 142)

Students often enter a teacher education program with preconceived ideas about learning to teach. One of those preconceptions is that as beginning teachers, they essentially will acquire a set of methods – usually the same ones they experienced as students – to transmit knowledge. The requirement that they view teaching as a form of social change may contradict these perceptions. Richert (1997) suggested learning to deal with this kind of incongruity should come early in teacher preparation, and all aspects of schooling should be cast as problematic rather than as a given. Instead of simply adopting the conventional wisdom, she recommends we teach teachers to "use what we know in the service of what we do not know" (p. 77).

## It Is Never *Not* About IT, and It Is Never *All* About IT

In responding to preservice teachers' discomfort when learning to teach, I try to be explicit about the ambiguous nature of human relationships in general. They often want concrete answers, and while I try to give them some, I continuously have to remind them that all this information is dependent on their context and their students. Each time we talk about using aspects of one's identity to explain one's experience, I suggest that it *is always* about that aspect of one's identity but never *all* about it. For example, when talking about children who are English Language Learners I explain that having a native language other than English impacts their experiences in school in many ways; however it is not the only factor that influences their experiences. For instance, the length of time they have spoken English, the type of native language they speak, the regional values around language and culture all influence the degree to which a student may be oppressed or privileged because of their language. The same is true for native English speakers. The dialect, speech patterns, and the community values might influence the degree to which students experience discrimination. It is always a factor, but it is never the only factor.

## The Good Student Syndrome

A challenge to transformation discovered in my doctoral research, usually related to the privileges of being White middle-class and female in the American school system, is what I have termed the “good student syndrome.” A “good student” is defined here as one who does school well. In general terms, good students enjoy school, follow the established rules, are rewarded by the school system, and are socialized into achieving in traditional ways. They often seek out praise and reassurance to verify that they are meeting expectations of achievement.

Many researchers have argued that students of education typically bring with them “cultural myths” (Britzman, 1991) and an “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975) that provide views of teaching that are personal and nonanalytical. So much of what they bring to the teacher preparation program is ideas about teaching formed when they were students themselves. When describing the kind of teacher they would like to be, the preservice teachers often reference teachers they had. When describing how to deliver content, they describe instructional activities they enjoyed as children. Even after learning how to use different instructional strategies for students with different learning styles, they still feel most comfortable using styles that were effective with them when they were students.

Often times preservice teachers who I might describe as good students recount stories of “playing school” when they were children, and they have a particular script about how school happens. For example, they might describe lining up their stuffed animals, their siblings, or the neighbor kids and giving them worksheets to complete. These stories provide insight into how these preservice teachers have conceptualized the work of teaching and how enamored they are by the rituals of the profession.

Because they are often high achievers, preservice teachers are faced with a great deal of pressure to learn everything that they perceive as essential to succeed in their own classroom. The uncertainty and ambiguity of learning to teach are commonly frustrating for those who learned to simply regurgitate the “right” answers. There is a balance necessary so that “students become sure enough of themselves as teachers that they can remain dissatisfied with their practice and continue to search for ways to improve it” (Gomez & Tabachnick, 1992, p. 132).

It makes sense that people who want to spend their career inside a school, in most cases, had a fairly positive experience when they were students. Occasionally I have a student who has had a very negative schooling experience, but they are usually the people who waited to pursue teaching as a second or third career, after they could get perspective and began to see how they could be better teachers than the ones they had. By and large, people who go into teaching were served by the school system.

Although women experience gender discrimination in the larger society, because schools are feminized institutions, White middle-class girls might find themselves at an advantage when meeting the conventional expectations of schooling. Many girls learn to be teacher pleasers. Girls, more than boys, behave in ways that are traditionally more acceptable for school and experience less discipline referrals (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). They learn a particular pattern of behavior that conforms to the institutional norms and experience success as a result. I describe this as the gold star experience. I grew up reading the textbook, defining the vocabulary words, answering the questions at the end of the chapter, getting an A (or a gold star) on the test, and feeling very, very successful. Most of how I learned was linear and in a predictable environment with accepted routines and, on many levels, this worked for me. This is part of what makes some students so challenged by designing their own final project as was described in "Parallel Journeys." One might argue that I am privileged with my students in this way. At first glance, I fulfill many of their expectations of what a teacher is and this may afford me some amount of latitude from the outset. However, it also encourages their assumptions about who I am as a teacher and it has the potential to seduce me into more culturally shared oppressive practices rather than disrupting them.

## The Good Teacher Syndrome

This persona of the good student translates for many education students into their vision of the "good teacher." Preservice teachers often describe the archetypal teacher as a paragon, hero, or savior, drawn to this label as one of their reasons for teaching. Some of my preservice teachers have said things like "I want to be the person who makes *the* difference in a child's life," and even "For many kids school is the only safe place and I want to save them." We talk about how teachers are portrayed in movies like "Dangerous Minds" and "Freedom Writers" (not coincidentally both White women). My students almost always laud the main characters as the ideal teacher persona. I challenge the students to really analyze what it means to be a "savior." This is one of the lessons I learned as a new teacher. I thought my students were totally and completely dependent on me for their success, so when one of my students failed, I was wholly responsible. I try to help my preservice teachers understand that there are so many factors that contribute to a child's success (and failure) and to portray teachers as saviors denies the importance of these other variables.

Because most of my students are raised Christian, sometimes I appeal to their religious understanding of the term savior. I ask, "Is that really what you mean? You want to be the sole *redeemer* for every child in your classroom?" It is true that in some cases, teachers do provide crucial support and encouragement that can be critical to whether or not a child thrives in his or her environment. I try to connect to their desire to be a meaningful role model for their students but challenge them to consider the responsibility and the arrogance in being the only person responsible for saving the students. To enter the profession with a personal goal of being the ultimate force in a child's life is setting up a teacher for failure. It is also the wrong paradigm to promote an effective community of learning.

Pennington (2007) contends that teacher education programs socialize women to "save" children who are "at risk." If a preservice teacher sees her "assignment" as saving students, and she has been conditioned to complete assignments thoroughly and completely to a preordained conception of success, then she may become even more focused on what a child needs as opposed to what the child already possesses. If that preservice teacher has not had the opportunity to consider different conceptions of success, then she will strive to make that child just like her. Pennington (2007) warns that when confronted with the fact that most often teachers cannot save children from their life circumstances, White women may resort to adopting a victim stance. Dwelling on our inability to control factors that prevent our students from achieving allows us to absolve ourselves of the responsibility, never having to acknowledge that the very way that we understand the situation contributes to our inability to do anything about it. Teaching *is* about making a difference in a child's life, but it is not *all* about that.

## I Really Love Kids!

When asked, "Why do you want to be a teacher?" almost anyone who has taught preservice teachers can attest to the far too common responses: "I really love kids" and/or "I had this great teacher who really cared about me." I asked one group of preservice teachers why they were passionate about teaching and 14 of 18 responses had aspects related to their love for and desire to help children. Most of these responses also revealed a deficit model of children, but instead of trying to change their motivation for teaching, I try to capitalize on this depth of commitment in order to promote a more transformative perspective of schooling. All the students accept that the needs of all children should be met, but many of them do not realize the knowledge base necessary to do that effectively. It is my job to prepare them to care for children within a new framework.

## New Ways of Doing School and Talking About Teaching

It is my observation that students going into high school teaching are more accustomed to studying education as a discipline because they specialize in a subject area, such as history or math. Elementary education students tend to conceptualize teacher training as learning what to *do* and how to *be* in a classroom, rather than a study of the profession. Elementary education students focus much of their attention on collecting ideas and activities they can use in their proverbial toolbox. It is not unusual to hear stories about how, since they were young, they have been keeping a collection of ideas on what they want to do as a teacher and how they want their classroom to look. What they typically have not spent much time doing is looking at the role of educators in our society. Many teachers want to have an impact but often that effect is through individual students. They say things such as, “I want to be *that* teacher who they remember their whole life.” By and large these women choose teaching because they feel connected to children and feel like they can be good role models.

I find that preservice teachers are often most comfortable talking about why they want to be a teacher as opposed to what they think the purpose of teaching is. When asked what they believe the purpose of schooling is, many students resort to writing about why *they* want to do it. Or they understand this writing assignment to be the regurgitation of what they have read in a text about the multiple historical purposes of schooling in America. Many students are actually surprised that I would want to know what they think the purpose ought to be, and a few have mentioned that they are kind of embarrassed they had not considered this question before. Some students need to be convinced that they do or should have an opinion about the purpose. This is not how they understood learning to teach, and I think they are unused to having the agency in determining their purpose.

All this self-reflection is essential for the learning that follows where I help them define what it would look like to serve their purpose. As we study topics related to classroom management and lesson planning, I say to them, “Now, if you believe A, then B would serve that. But if you believe X, then Y might more effectively accomplish that goal.” Eventually we build on it so that by the time they write their personal practical philosophy, theoretically, they are able to articulate “*This* is who I am and *this* is who I plan to teach. I want to accomplish *these things* as a teacher and in order to do that, I would do *these things* with my students.” Of course, these concepts are still largely abstract and theoretical. They use their own experiences as a student, their time in classrooms, and what they learn from classes and other teachers to establish *and critique* this philosophy. I assure them that these ideas may change and morph over the course of their time in the profession but that it is easier to get to where you are going if you know where that is.

Regularly a few of my students will cry (and sometimes scream) through the philosophy paper, doubting their ability to do it, demanding more direction in exactly what to say, and unsure of whether or not to trust that I want them to write what they believe, not what I want to hear. (Very rarely are these ultimately in conflict.) I try to provide opportunities before, during, and after the paper is due to ask questions, to talk to one another about their ideas, and to express their anxiety about it. This can be difficult for me, because after all, I’m a “feeler” too, and I do not like them to be mad at me because I am making them think in ways that are new to them. I have to practice not reacting to their stress and encourage them regularly that it will be okay.

Despite the drama, when the paper is complete, students rave about how rewarding it was, how it totally affirmed their choice to be a teacher, and made them feel confident that they can do it. They take a lot of pride in their schoolwork, and they are often very proud of this paper at the end. This is the feeling they are seeking – the warm and fuzzy sense of achievement that they grew up being socialized to value. I try to appeal to that strength and use it to my advantage.

Sometimes students are overwhelmed by the vast amount of information regarding culture and identity. In addition to the realization that there is so much to know, students are often weighed down by their own self-awareness. This is another time when I draw on my relationship with them to empathize with their fears and encourage them. One student who was older than my average student, in her mid-thirties, said to me, “There is so much to know. I’ve gone my whole life not knowing any of this and now I learned a whole lot in a short amount of time. What if I say something that offends someone? What if I make a mistake?”

I asked her, “What do you usually say when you make a mistake?”

She answered, “Well… I usually say I’m sorry.”

I responded, “That works.”

It is really that simple, but because many of the issues related to difference feel taboo to us, students are more worried about saying something inappropriate. I always try to follow up this conversation with a “no pain, no gain” discussion. If we do not venture to try to learn more about people that are different from us, we will never grow. I try to remember to keep reminding the students that if they are struggling with the ideas, then they are probably doing something right. I also try to share my mistakes and misconceptions when they occur. Students are often surprised by my willingness to admit my weaknesses because they are acculturated into the image of teacher as expert. My intent is to identify with the students in making mistakes and for them to feel relieved when I model some ways to recover from them.

## Getting Perspective

Understanding others is, in large part, about perspective taking. One strategy I have used to help students consider the perspectives of those not like them is in using classroom scenarios. I provide the preservice teachers with a vignette that illustrates multiple characters with some type of conflict. Because many students are socialized into the idea that teachers should know how to respond to every situation, their first impulse is to describe what the teacher did wrong or what they think ought to be different, in other words, to judge the situation. To help them reflect on this reaction, I require them to talk about the scenario only in terms of what questions they have about the situation. They can only ask about information they think they might need to know that is not revealed in the description. I caution them not to make statements in the form of a question, and I monitor groups closely providing feedback about appropriate types of questions. Even then, invariably groups have questions in their list that are judgmental or reveal an assumption. For example, the question “Why doesn’t the father care about his child’s education?” implies that the father’s behavior was motivated by a lack of care about his child as opposed to needing to know more about why the father reacted the way he did. I assist them in either removing these types of questions from their list, or helping them to rewrite the question in a way that is more about collecting information than making judgments. A revision might be, “What was the father’s experience with school?” These types of questions better help a teacher understand someone else's perspective, rather than just react to it.

Sometimes I offer scenarios where the teacher appears to be, on the surface, inequitable or unfair, and I challenge the preservice teachers to explain what set of circumstances not described in the scenario could make this situation fair or acceptable. For example, one vignette describes how during a small group lesson on adjectives, a teacher released one student, who had shown mastery in adjectives, from the assignment to go to the back of the room and work on a Mother's Day project. Invariably preservice teachers see this situation as inappropriate. Some believe the teacher should make the student do the assignment, even though he has mastered the content, because everyone else has to do it. Others think the teacher should have developed an enrichment assignment in adjectives. When pressed, some students will think of circumstances that might justify the situation. One student thought a reasonable explanation was that this particular student had two moms and he did not have time to finish both his projects during art class.

Requiring preservice teachers to ask questions about what they do not know and restrain their urge to "solve the problem" is often uncomfortable for them. I believe it challenges their ideas about what it means to learn to be a teacher. This process of asking questions first is practiced over the course of other assignments, skilling the preservice teachers in not making assumptions about a situation. In addition, students engage in role-playing the perspectives of stakeholders in a child's education. They must practice using the words that an angry parent, or a concerned school psychologist, or an overworked principal might use to express their perspectives, underscoring that everyone involved in a child's education deeply cares and wants success for the child. I remind the preservice teachers that these are the ways good teachers truly love their students.

In addition to learning to take on multiple perspectives, Schultz (2003) has argued that a "listening stance" is necessary for teaching across differences (p. 8). Schultz distinguished listening from observing by explaining that listening implies interaction. She suggested that careful listening allows learning that is necessary to reframe difference as strengths but also acknowledges that listening is not enough if the listening does not lead to action. Not only can listening and perspective taking help preservice teachers construct teaching as learning, but it encourages them to engage students in this same type of process.

When promoting a social justice approach to education, it is important that in addition to understanding a variety of perspectives in general, that particular attention is paid to what Irvine (2003) has called the "cultural eye" (p. 29). This view of teaching focuses on not just another view of a situation but, in particular, the ways in which, for example, African American teachers see themselves as a strategy in closing the achievement gap. This type of perspective taking honors the cultural knowledge one has and is able to use in understanding others from that culture. Being aware of this concept can help White teachers see how cultural perspective shapes the larger context of education.

In the spirit of student voice and shared discourse, I want students to feel like they can express their perspective, whether or not it will be popular or I will agree with it. It would be disingenuous of me to ask a student for her perspective and then tell her it is wrong. This continues to be a difficult tension for me. Sometimes students challenge comments made by their peers, or I am able to play devil's advocate by offering additional contexts to examine that perspective. But often I have to make a spontaneous decision about how to respond to an oppressive comment in class while attempting to balance many purposes.

At times I intentionally allow a comment to go unchallenged. I usually do that for one of two reasons. One reason would be that I trust that I can bring more information in future discussions that will allow me to come back to that idea. For example, I have situations in class to write a scenario that would require the students to analyze how such a belief would play out in a classroom. Another reason for my lack of response is that I just cannot think of a way to challenge the speech without devaluing the speaker and/or losing my composure. In some cases my emotional response is so visceral that I have to not react so as to maintain a respectful stance (recognizing that in general my students and I all understand respect in the same way). The challenge is being very honest with myself (and seeking other perspectives) about when I fail to disrupt oppressive discourse. I may be rationalizing my fear of confrontation or of alienating my students.

When I do challenge students to explain their beliefs or acknowledge a bias, I depend on the trust I have built with a student to encourage her to engage with me rather than shut down or give in by saying what she thinks I want to hear. I thank her for having the courage to talk about what she thinks, *especially* if she feels many people in the room might disagree with her. I validate the person but sometimes question ideas. All this, however, has the potential to be steeped in White educational discourse, as discussed in Chapter 6.

The tensions remind me a little of salsa dancing. When taking salsa lessons, I learned that the integrity of the dance lies in maintaining a sturdy frame while responding to the push and pull of your partner, making the dance look effortless. In the midst of a sensitive discussion with students, I try to maintain the integrity of my purpose (e.g. to reveal bias), pushing the ideas while receiving any "push back" with respect. I encourage "my partner" to continue practicing the give and take even if we step on each other's toes once in a while. Usually I encourage others to "cut in" to offer additional perspectives that might make us better dancers. Similar to salsa, the whole process is usually intense and afterwards I feel relieved and exhausted.

## Culture Group Presentations

As has been repeatedly stated throughout this book, the teacher education literature professes White teachers' lack of knowledge about other cultural groups. I contend that although they do lack some personal experience, they "know" quite a lot about ethnic groups through media and popular culture. It is my goal to help make that knowledge conscious and unpack their understanding of it. One of the assignments I have students complete is a culture group study. When we begin to look at how ethnicity might shape one's experiences, we look at broad questions derived from Peregoy and Boyle (2001) such as: Who has authority in the family? What are common rites of passage? What constitutes a family? What roles are available to whom and how are they acquired? Which foods are restricted? How are illnesses treated and by whom? and How important is punctuality? (p. 11). I ask the students to consider these questions for their own family and culture, and we talk about examples they already know from cultures other than their own. For example, some students describe bar mitzvahs and bat mitzvahs as common rites of passage in the Jewish culture.

This assignment is intended for the preservice teachers to learn about particular cultural/ethnic groups they are likely to encounter in the schools in our area. (I prioritize these cultures, though there could be other reasons to research additional ethnic groups.) The goals are to examine the depictions of this culture in media and popular culture, to gain some insight into what students from that culture might experience in our schools and society, to determine any commonly accepted cultural norms that might assist a teacher in better understanding a student from that culture, and to research school programs and community resources that would support a teacher in meeting the needs of all students. In addition to their own research about the culture, students must read a novel, watch a movie, and talk to someone with appropriate expertise. Students complete this assignment in groups and then present to one another. This group jigsaw format helps students to support one another in the process of looking deeply at a culture, skills them in researching a variety of sources for information, and ultimately provides information about a number of different cultures in the community. It is my hope that this one assignment will provide a model for them to learn about others in the future.

I continuously engage students in comparing and contrasting their own experiences with others, and reminding them that not every person of every group ascribes to any particular characteristics. The tension is helping the students understand that some people share cultural characteristics with a group, but that those characteristics do not define a person. Just as being a White female does not define them as a teacher. In other words, it is never *not* about *it*, but it is never *all* about *it.* This is another area where a discomfort with ambiguity can get in the way of engaging with the content.

Another tension of studying particular ethnic groups occurs when a member of that particular group is in the class. (A different tension exists when there is not.) Sometimes when presenting their study findings, students are visibly anxious about using the correct terms, not stereotyping, and most importantly for most of them, not offending anyone. Although I do not think it is a satisfactory response in and of itself, I attempt constantly to encourage everyone to share their emic perspectives and to reinforce that each characterization made must be checked with individuals. I encourage the students throughout the process and praise them for doing the challenging work. Most of the time, I am as uncomfortable for them as they are.

## Cultural Simulations

Although students cannot truly know how another person sees the world, they can be placed in situations that will attempt to replicate what having a different perspective might feel like. Simulations are an experiential process that requires students to take on a perspective in a situation that they may not have experienced before. I use the cultural simulation game called “BaFá BaFá” (Shirts, 1977) in my class. In this simulation, two cultures are developed. The Alpha culture is a relationship-oriented culture; the Beta culture is a highly competitive trading culture. After the participants learn the rules of their culture and begin practicing it, observers and visitors are exchanged. The ensuing misunderstandings and misperceptions are then debriefed as a full group.

My students usually are so engaged in playing the game that they are not aware of the metaphor being created. Not until after the game is done, when we are processing the activity, do they begin to see how their behaviors simulated those in cultural interactions. We discuss how their reactions in the game are similar to the way people act in real life.

I recall one of the best examples of this game being a “light bulb” moment. In a class period prior to the simulation, a student was recounting a story of people she knew who were on welfare, and from her perspective, abusing the system. I attempted to reveal the kind of oppression, frustration, and desperation that might induce a person to feel entitled to receive government money, but it did not seem to make sense to her within her worldview. While playing BaFá BaFá, some members of the Beta Culture began taking advantage of the Alpha Culture members during the game. Their normal civil demeanor disappeared and was replaced with confusion, which became frustration, and that grew into hostility. One student even came over to me to show where a visitor from the other culture had scratched her in a tussle over trading cards. During the group processing period, the student who had recounted the story about the welfare recipient noted that she was so frustrated that she was being ignored and excluded by the other culture’s members that she began to cheat them when they came to her culture. She was surprised at how mad it made her. I said to her, “Hmmm, you were so frustrated that the culture did not serve your purposes that you resorted to cheating and taking advantage of others. Does that sound like another conversation we had?” I could see the look of recognition in her eyes. She smiled. I smiled back – victory, this time.

## Homogeneity, Almost

As I organize curriculum, I begin with an overall approach to understanding oppression and privilege, exploring the many aspects of identity and sources of bias. Course sessions are dedicated to different aspects and the interrelatedness of identity (gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.) and then students do their presentations on particular ethnic groups. It is important to prepare students, as I discussed earlier, to study these topics in a way that is a powerful learning experience and does not promote essentializing or exoticizing aspects of the culture. Each of the identity markers create different complications depending on the makeup of the class. Traditionally my classes, particularly the cohort model illustrated in Chapter1, are made up of a large majority and a very small minority (usually one or two people).

In "Parallel Journeys" I described how at the beginning of every course I engage students in a conversation about our names. We all have a name even though how we feel about our name and where it comes from is different for each of us. When a person's name is an ethnic marker, it carries a different meaning. In the story, Mariana is sensitive to the conversation the class has about the pronunciation of her Hispanic name. Even though the English-speaking students in the class (everyone except her) genuinely offer to say her name with a Spanish pronunciation, she minimizes the importance of it and is clearly uncomfortable even discussing it. If there were a few other students with names that might be considered "ethnic" or have pronunciations that are not native to English, the conversation would have the potential to have more voices and be richer as a result. In the story, Karrie offers her frustration with having her name pronounced with a long 'a,' but because the pronunciation is not connected to an ethnic culture that experiences additional prejudice, it may not carry the same complexity of experience. As an instructor, I wonder how I affirm that Karrie's attachment to her name is real and meaningful but distinguish it from someone whose name is regularly mispronounced because it is not perceived to be "American." Do I encourage the shared experience or do I distinguish them as different experiences? If there is just one person in the room with a name that has a non-English pronunciation, does making the distinction further alienate the "Other?"

In order to provide multiple perspectives that are not represented in the classroom, I utilize personal narratives, videos, and guest speakers. Of course none of these should be seen as *the* representative perspective for that group; however, time constraints usually limit the ability to provide a representative variety within an identity. Therefore, although it is important and useful to provide first person accounts of their experience as a member of an oppressed group, this perspective needs to be considered within a multitude of experiences. This is particularly true if, for example, a guest speaker advises students to handle the topic differently than how the instructor had advised them. For example, when talking about gay and lesbian issues, I encourage students to begin to incorporate, in age appropriate ways, "alternative" family structures or mentions of sexuality in their curriculum. When the leader of the Pride Club on campus came to speak to my class, she told them that she did not think they should have books about "my two moms" or things like that in elementary grades, because students who have gay family members or are gay themselves might feel singled out and very uncomfortable. As the instructor, I tried to probe her comments, helping to explain my rationale for encouraging teachers to do this, but she remained skeptical that teachers could do it in a way that would not harm gay students. This was a very tricky situation, as I had invited a person from this group to share her experience and perspective as a lesbian and her perspective was in contradiction with what the heterosexual professor suggested that teachers ought to do. How I processed this visit with my students was very delicate. I wanted to honor the speaker's contribution while also suggesting that some gay (and straight) people, like the ones in the video we saw, believed these were good things to do. Initially I had panicked, but as we discussed it, I felt like our speaker's fear of being humiliated in grade school was communicated very strongly, and ultimately, the goal of any anti-homophobic curriculum is to prevent humiliation. I tried to help the students to see multiple ways of achieving that goal by examining their students and their context.

Another dilemma occurs when students of color, more often those who are of mixed race, have spent most of their life "passing" as White. First, I usually only learn this information, if the student reveals it to me through assignments or discussion. Then, it is not always clear to me how much I might call on this part of their identity. If I know that some students might be open to exploring that part of their cultural identity more, I can initiate assignments or class activities that will provide an opportunity for them to explore and maybe share their feelings about that aspect of their ethnicity, if they feel comfortable. Sometimes, only the student and I will have investigated these ideas through writing and personal conversations. Other times, they feel empowered and safe enough to offer experiences that inform our collective understandings.

Sometimes, students who have "passed" much of their life have adopted an assimilationist perspective and deny that their cultural heritage needs to be acknowledged in any particular way. On occasion, students of color have argued against multiculturalism as being too "Politically Correct" and overly sensitive. Generally speaking, I think when students read about a stranger's experience and then hear their classmate's experience that contradicts the stranger's, they are inclined to believe their classmate. Although I want to honor everyone's perspective, when the one person in the room who has the potential to represent an oppressed perspective denies that his or her group is oppressed, it can heighten the tension and jeopardize the goals of the class. These are the situations that cause me to seriously question my privileged role in teaching members of an oppressed group about their own oppression.

## Conclusion

My agenda is to help preservice teachers to be so satisfied with and inspired by a transformative approach to teaching that they will be dissatisfied with any way that is less than authentic. I want them to use their drive to achieve, to be a "good student," to accomplish the work of social justice. I also caution them that it will not be easy, they will not be perfect, and their ultimate goals will always be ideals. But having a compass will be essential for getting somewhere close to their destination.

At a minimum, I hope to help preservice teachers become culturally self-aware by examining their own perceptions and actions in reference to the others' cultural experiences and backgrounds. If they can combine this understanding of the complexity of the impact of culture on experience with their profound love for and belief in all children, then regardless of how inexperienced they are in particular culturally responsive techniques, they can approach teaching as an opportunity to learn. In order to encourage this, preservice teachers need to transform their perception of teacher training from “what to do” to “how to be” and accept the ambiguity of both teaching and culture as complex and constantly evolving.

This is not easy work. On one hand, I am challenged just with disrupting my own cultural assumptions about those who are different from me that attempting to do it with others often causes me to feel overwhelmed and inadequate. I regularly question whether or not I am the best qualified to do it. On the other hand, I firmly believe it is the responsibility of privileged persons to challenge oppression. And, primarily working with students who are culturally similar to me has allowed me to have many mirrors, reflecting back values and beliefs that were a significant part of my own upbringing. This aspect of homogeneity can actually assist me in continually reflecting on my own assumptions and biases.

# Chapter 8
# Critical Friends: An Exercise in Flea Biting

Since my beginning as a teacher educator and researcher, as described in Chapter Five, I have utilized what Costa and Kallick (1993) have called a "critical friend" perspective, both individually and in teacher inquiry groups. These friends have ranged in experience from beginning to veteran teacher educator and vary in their personal and professional backgrounds, but what they have in common is that they have all been interested in better preparing preservice teachers to understand issues of privilege and oppression as they relate to schooling.

Vera and I met at a major educational research conference where we connected through our common interest in discovering the ways in which teacher educators defined the term social justice. Our shared commitment to preparing teachers for diversity evolved into more than a year of regularly scheduled and purposeful conversations about the work we do in our respective contexts. The following dialogue is an endeavor that grew out of our ongoing conversation and specifically focuses on exchanging ideas related to the challenges of preparing teachers for K-12 schools. The dialogue is offered as a representation of a way that engaging critical friends' work can support individual and collective efforts to better understand one's own ideologies, perceptions, and assumptions. We not only learned from our commonalities but also distinctions in our personal and professional contexts.

The themes of our dialogue include but move beyond just challenging the perspectives of the typical teacher population, to examining the broader scope of teacher education. This dialogue elucidates that teacher educators need to be clear about how well prepared they are to do what they ask their preservice teachers to do. We began the dialogue with an enduring question:

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This chapter is written by Ann Schulte and Co-author Vera Stenhouse.

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## What are the Biggest Challenges to Preparing Teachers for Diversity?

V: I will answer by questioning the question. My first thought is that this question is broad and highly decontextualized. At the same time, I feel the question opens up a lot of possibilities in terms of how one might respond and thus provides insights to any respondent's perspectives.

In the literature, assumptions to which such a question relates involves racially white, monolingual and usually, generally speaking, most can finish the sentence as it relates to class, sexual identity, and religion. Less attended to are nuances of identity within racial constructs or that teachers not in a structurally dominant group (Montecinos, 1995) are specifically imagined in such type of inquiries. First, the range of unique experiences within one racially marginalized group is not addressed, and it is often assumed that members of a disenfranchised group can "translate their cultural knowledge into culturally relevant pedagogy and content" (Montecinos, 1995, p. 110). Second, when talking about preparing teachers for diversity, it is less likely that marginalized teachers come to mind, in part related to a limited construction of diversity, presumed homogeneity of experience and disposition, and the assumed advantage that marginalized teachers would have with marginalized students. Perhaps that leads to one of the biggest challenges which is asking the right types of questions in order to appropriately understand and actively engage the processes involved in teacher preparation.

A challenge persists that teacher preparation is less than the sum of its component, particularly institutional, parts. For example, the Web site, informational brochure, admissions, matriculation, program of study, state and national policies (Zeichner & Conklin, 2005, describe the multiple levels that inform teacher preparation) are all various aspects that make up the total experience of "preparation" in a teacher preparation program.

Embedded in the question of diversity is the potential assumed understanding of what constitutes "diversity." Not uncommon is the notion I have heard that racially homogeneous groups are "not diverse" – a contention I discourage – first, because of the construction of a racial identity as somehow based on a biological reality, which is not real and also because it discounts the multiple dimensions involved in personal, social, cultural, economic, and political identities. Additionally, invocation of "diversity" in various discussions in which I have been engaged rarely includes "white students" (Derman-Sparks, Ramsey, & Edwards, 2006, not withstanding) as a facet of defining diversity, which becomes problematic if "social justice" applications to PK-12 are only reserved for "the Other."

So challenges in preparing teachers include questioning the questions we ask in teacher preparation efforts, the underlying assumptions in the problems and questions posed in our work, and the ways that key terms are defined and applied.

A: The summary of these challenges is a great framework for reflecting on, as well as constructing our work as teacher educators.

What *are* the most important questions to ask? And how much consensus would we get on that question? For me, our questions should always stem from our shared purpose. All of my professional work should support the greater purpose for my students and education at large. Even if we were able to get consensus on our broader purposes, how aligned would they be across the spaces you mention (i.e. local program, state and national policies, etc.)? And how much is our purpose shaped by our identity? Because I can only change that which is within my control, I focus my professional development and scholarly work on that which is important to me and will serve my greater purpose for my students, most of whom happen to be white middle-class English-speaking females.

Yes, I agree, it is far too easy to lump the teaching population into a homogenous group. It becomes even easier when one's experience confirms these generalizations, at least on a surface level. However, acknowledging the nuances of "difference" among students, beyond race, class, gender, and language requires teacher educators to engage in meaningful relationships with their students, getting to know them as individuals. Most teacher education institutions are not designed to allow this level of engagement, although efforts in some programs are being made toward these ends (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Our society attaches a great deal more weight to aspects of identity such as race, class, and gender. Therefore, it is not surprising that the literature tends to lump this homogeneous group of preservice teachers together using the "typical" demographics.

Having said that, I do believe it is important to acknowledge the underrepresentation of males and people of color that do exist in the K-12 teaching force as problematic so that researchers will attempt to address this situation. Although some of my students believe White women can provide enough care for all children, I really believe that if the teaching force more closely resembled the student population, the opportunity for overcoming institutional injustice increases because more varied perspectives are part of the process. Can white middle class women offer varied perspectives? Absolutely, but not as authentically if more teachers truly did experience life in significantly different ways.

Finally, definitions of "diversity" and "social justice" are regularly debated in the literature. I agree that too often, diversity is only defined by social constructs such as race. Although it might be intellectually lazy to define diversity according to socially constructed identity factors, it does provide language to talk about difference with preservice teachers. As alluded to before, teacher preparation programs rarely provide the time and course work necessary to deeply challenge that these social constructs should be addressed at all. I also worry about the tendency for privileged persons to disregard the need to look at difference, if we reduce the institutional oppression discussion down to the idea that "we're all just humans and people are different."

V: First, to your final point about definitions of "diversity" and "social justice," I believe a major conundrum is defining "diversity" in multiple ways without "undermining" the salience of race. I often talk about how individuals establish a hierarchy of oppression that reflects the key issues "required" to address social justice. I also feel that once you establish such a hierarchy (which often happens in the classes focused on diversity), inherent are “losers” and “winners.” I tend to stress Dr. King Jr.’s words “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Yet, what is and is not a matter of justice is still open to interpretation and contradiction.

I am thinking about how much each of our own assumptions inform the way we respond to the initial prompt question. I also wonder how much researchers consider the ways in which questions are posed that also indicate a position on a proposed “problem.” Even posing the problem is an indicator of a belief or value. How much of our conversations in academia focus on the fruit, branches, and leaves but rarely the roots? How does being a teacher educator influence the degree to which an investigation of the roots is institutionally encouraged or expected? How does our acknowledgment of the relevance of context in our work serve an ideology not best suited for current expectations on viable research?

A: I completely agree that we don’t spend a lot of time considering our own perspective and how it influences what research questions we ask and the way we understand data. Sadly, I would have to say these are not the questions I think about when doing the daily work of teacher education. I want to focus on the roots, but the fruit is ripening. I try to prune the branches to keep the growth from getting out of control. Pests are invading the leaves; I do not want to use toxins but I’m unwilling to allow the bugs to take over the tree, so I’m picking them off by hand. And then there are the moles. Blind, cute, not actually chewing on the roots, but displacing everything around them making it difficult to nourish the roots. It takes time. At the grange meeting I ask, “What about the roots?” and the other gardeners say, “Right, the roots, they are very important, but I got these moths and worms eating my leaves and branches. When I am able to take care of the pests, I can think about the roots.” My point is, I agree that we should be asking more questions about how we as teacher educators perpetuate the injustices, especially when we are aware of our complicity. I just have not figured out how to do that and continue to manage the bureaucracies of the profession.

V: Your extension of the metaphor is very telling when it comes to what I also perceive as some of the challenges in teacher education. I think your point regarding managing the bureaucracies of the profession is well taken and why I see so much of our own complicity as teacher educators in reifying the same issues our candidates relay, yet we tell them that they must try and keep “fighting” in order to be the change we ask them to be in their work. Also, while the general bureaucracies of teacher education apply, additional political, social, and economic spheres institutionally and structurally affect research, teaching, and service related to matters of “diversity.”

I have a difficult time understanding how individuals can be patient with ongoing injustice. Not that it may not take time but in some instances I question whether time is really the issue or whether it is a matter of priority and focus. I find that I do question the ways I think about possible research questions, their implications for the population I might be interested in, and what role I play in whatever sphere of research, teaching, or service in which I might be involved. I tend to think about these things in my daily work in teacher education because I have come to recognize that many of us are busy with pests. Pests do serve a purpose which is usually to keep us from what could be a more fruitful purpose of tending to the roots. If we come to understand what every element in an ecosystem of teacher preparation might have to offer the growth and development of a collective of human beings who have chosen to be teachers, perhaps we could reframe what pests, moles, moths, and worms mean. Indeed, it is usually the bugs that have the power to manifest an infestation strong enough to dismantle the strength of the roots. By the time you take care of the pests, you run the risk of having a hollow standing shell that looks firm but in reality is easily swayed by whatever force of nature comes its way.

A: It is very interesting to me that I said that these questions are not the ones I think about when doing the daily work of teacher education, and yet my journal analysis reveals that I am thinking about them all the time. I guess I just do not feel I have time to respond to them effectively. As is typical of many teacher education programs, I'm also surrounded by colleagues who share the same institutional privileges I do, and I feel like it makes all of us blind to what is really happening. There is not enough cultural disruption in our every day experience that requires us to question or prioritize our approaches to diversity. We are too comfortable doing what we have always done with students who respond well, for the most part, to that way of doing things. Intellectually we might understand the pursuit of social justice, but practically it does not feel "natural" so we are unlikely to engage with it for too long. I say "we" because although I can see these things happening and can make changes in my teaching practice, I still do not feel as successful as I should be in addressing injustices on an institutional level.

I also find it highly hypocritical that we (some of us) charge our preservice teachers to go out and "be the change," but we ourselves are unwilling to do the challenging work of self-reflection. Certainly there are many forces (pests, if you will) that we allow to distract us from prioritizing transformation: the bureaucracy and privilege of the academy, the political attacks on public education, an overall preoccupation with achievement and consumption. And so maybe part of the answer is that we reorient our perspective to see these deficits as assets. Maybe we focus on preventing the use of all our energy in working against a system and instead use that system to achieve goals that are more socially just. Is that possible?

V: Your last thought and question about working the system for justice is not new. In fact, it is a contention that produces debate between deconstructing versus reconstructing a system to prompt effective long-term change. I think that whether one works for or against, within or outside a system, it is important to acknowledge that indeed a system actually exists – that a schema is in place. I believe this to be a point of importance in teaching teachers. Also, what would it mean to have a socially just system rather than working on a system to make it "more" socially just?

I notice that the concept of "time" keeps coming up over and over again. You say you feel you just don't have the time to respond effectively to questions you feel are important to your work. Time is a matter of concern expressed here in relationship to higher education and K-12 schools. Professors and K-12 teachers alike express the constraints that limited time places on their efforts. This suggests that time is absorbed in ways they would rather not be engaged. Time and effectiveness do not necessarily have to be mutually exclusive; however, I am clear that time is very salient in the lives of academics especially both those who are tracked in the system or run parallel tracks that have them deeply vested in the system (e.g. tenure, tenure track, clinical, adjunct, and so forth). The question seems to be what are we spending our time doing? Whose interests do our efforts serve? What are the things that happen that cause people to drop whatever they were doing and tend to some need or issue? Do we not have occasion to make time for certain things that demand our immediate attention?

I also question your assurance that not enough cultural disruption happens in everyday experience that prompts questioning or prioritizing approaches to diversity. It might be a matter of what people are attuned to noticing. I also think about whether or not cultural disruption has to come from a visible or audible "other." If so, such a need has implications for teacher preparation as a whole. For instance, Sleeter (1995b) talks about how her classes that were not homogeneously White tended to prompt different types of meaningful learning. It also could mean "out of sight out of mind" for issues not physically represented "at the table." How do people in spaces of systemic privilege come to "see" injustice?

You raise a point I think merits further illumination which also relates to cultural disruption. I want to trouble the idea of what is natural. Discussion regarding diversity and social justice work tends to inform individuals and collectives about the need for individual and systemic reform, deconstruction, transformation, and so forth. Even as my students and I talk about social inequities, I try to point out that they cannot forget that the "system," as is, does work for some people. Disruptions occur that are supposed to bring "us" to a more expansive "ideal" of democracy. In essence, that which was "unnatural" before, moves into a more normative space.

How does anything begin to feel "natural" if, for one thing, it is not engaged in repeatedly and critically? Of course, one would have to work through the "unnaturalness" first. It actually takes active conscious work in most cases. Consider your initial comment regarding how you do indeed think about the questions you pose in your daily work but at first you shared that entertaining the questions was limited. Perhaps it is more fair to say that you have been posing questions all along for a while now and they have therefore become "natural."

In a zero sum game, are deficits not necessary? One's prescribed deficits have to work in favor of framing someone else's assets. Imagine if we just focused on what we could do as human beings rather than what we say we lack. Probably there is more to this but I will stop here for now.

A: I will start with the concept of time since that seems to be prominent in my reasons for not being as successful in social justice work as I think we (the collective we) ought to be. It certainly is true that I (we) can choose to spend more of my (our) professional time working toward aims that I feel truly transform education for the better. It is also possible that there are times during which, accreditation meetings for example, change does happen. I recall journal entries where I bemoan the time spent on accreditation work, but in the next paragraph I am celebrating the meaningful conversations I had with colleagues about the ways in which we think about the importance of diversity. I spend a lot of time doing bureaucratic things (e.g. meetings and paperwork) because I feel obligated or expected to, and probably because I was a good student and deep down I like to complete high quality work, on time, and receive the recognition that goes with that. As I establish greater privilege (i.e. tenure) in the academic system, and as I get more experience in challenging the system, I feel safer to either question or disregard particular events that I feel distract me from more important work. I would always like to be doing more, creating more change, but I do as much as I know, and the more I know, the more I try to do. Having said that, I concur with you that when marginalized perspectives are not represented on a regular basis, they are overlooked. Many times I only see cultural assumptions when they are made visible to me. When operating within a highly culturally homogeneous environment, these assumptions are less likely to be made apparent. I am (we are) required to seek them out through reading and dialogue, in other words, making the search more "natural." (I wonder whether it indeed will ever feel "comfortable." I personally have no expectation that this work will ever feel comfortable for me.) I believe this is the only way a largely White teacher education faculty can adequately enact transformation.

You say, "One's prescribed deficits have to work in favor of framing someone else's assets. Imagine if we just focused on what we could do as human beings rather than what we say we lack." From my perspective, focusing on what we *can* do is using our assets, rather than succumbing to our deficits (what we lack). It really does speak to your questions about time and do we really have time, or am I just focusing on what we lack (maybe even making excuses)?

As I write this, I am acutely aware of how much of this work is technically optional for me in a system and environment that does not really require it of me. So I wonder, how do we assure that all those who prepare teachers are compelled to engage in this work?

V: Early in your previous response, you mention "transforming education for the better" and later you discuss "cultural assumptions." In my estimation, truly transforming for the better is contingent on cultural assumptions. It harkens back to what I was saying in a previous exchange regarding the frames by which we make meaning of our educational systems as either working for or against particular populations knowing that as is, the education system, for some, does "work." How a libratory learning environment (in classrooms/schools or during faculty meetings) works and what it looks like is based on cultural assumptions and tangible and intangible associations with strengths and weaknesses, deficits and assets, and power and privilege. I am still working on an understanding of how privilege in the academy accrues through acquiring tenure. Does getting tenure confer more *time* or more will? Hmmm, is it a sense of having more "control" over possible consequences for action and inaction? Is it a sanctioned feeling of entitlement? The idea of tenure as a "safety net" for activism is one that I have heard before from a variety of activist professors and other people, in general. I am trying to think through just how tenure is a benefit to agency because it can depend on the perspectives for which you are advocating (or not). Additionally, it leaves implicit that individuals who (would) advocate earlier and perhaps stronger as pre-tenure are perhaps silenced or muffled by the institutional norms that might resist more radical (and timely) shifts. Therefore, continuous development of dual (multi) states of consciousness are the work of some and not others. I believe it goes back to what would feel "natural" or "comfortable." As you say in your aside, "I wonder if it indeed will ever feel 'comfortable.'" In some ways I wonder if "comfort" could be an initial indicator of transformation (what used to be difficult becomes easier – more natural or expected, if you will), but prolonged comfort can form into plateaus or diminishing returns further suggesting that discomfort is a requisite element in the process of transformation.

Focusing on what we can do is important. Do you think anything exists that we cannot do? Is it only a matter of what we will do or how we could do something rather than actual ability? As the discourse around social justice begins to grow in various places, an accompanying concern is to what degree is social justice rhetoric being appropriately applied? We seem to be shifting in education to a place where invoking social justice (just as diversity or multicultural education) has become more "natural," even if contested; however, the quandary is not limited to the "what" but in the "how" and "why." Much of my own interest in terms and language around these issues rests in acknowledging what words and ideas actually mean to people and how what they say they mean is enacted. The beauty of higher education is imbedded in its tenure structure; there are three ways in which "rhetoric and reality" is to be carried out – research, teaching, and service.

I wonder whether our material trappings socialize us to believe that we have valuable "things" to lose, if we take certain types of risks in our day-to-day lives. ("Things" might be tenure, a job/salary, access and opportunity, social status, constraints on choices/actions, and so forth) With my students, they often want me to tell them "what to do," and I believe I frustrate them by saying, "it depends." I am not comfortable telling them what types of risks they should take because each of them is different and their stories are not the same; consequently, I feel it would be presumptuous on my part to just insist on them taking particular actions without understanding the potential consequences which include making a world they feel is unjust more just. What I can focus on is that as unique as they are, they have decided to invest themselves in the education system with specific attention to urban school populations. From this vantage point, we navigate how they choose to spend their time and energy, risks they take in their own learning inside and outside class, and contributions they make to the growth and development of their cohort learning community (inside and outside courses).

As a person of privilege, racial privilege in particular to your situation and your students', your insight in the last couple of sentences signals a point that relates to my previous paragraph. You share:

> As I write this, I am acutely aware of how much of this work is technically optional for me in a system and environment that does not require it of me. So I wonder, how do we assure that all of those who prepare teachers are compelled to engage in this work?

Your first sentence confirms for me why this work might feel hard and disjointed for my students at times. Much of what they experience in their teacher preparation program may, in fact, be "technically optional," but for me it goes back to for whom they believe a "better education" is merited and for what ends. How they move through this process depends on their cultural assumptions, what they are willing to be challenged by, and how their actions will be informed. As for the second part, you ask a question that is a response to our initial question regarding the challenges to preparing teachers for diversity. Why should teacher educators engage in work that is "technically optional" from an institutional (i.e. higher education/academia), social, political, economic, or historical standpoint? What does prompt individuals to engage in the work? By what criteria or filters do teacher educators assess how and what they might do to challenge the system? How do we learn what enables us to feel safer to either question or disregard particular events that distract from more important work?

A: I do believe that social justice work is often perceived as "optional" at the teacher education level in much the same way that multicultural education is done during Black History Month. Many programs offer "diversity" courses as one (maybe two) of a slate of required courses taught by the "diversity person." It is as though teaching for social justice is approached in the same way as literacy methods. In fact, as you alluded earlier, my students also say to me, "Just tell me how to teach multiculturally," as though there is a three-step process to follow. This is why I try not to focus on *how to* teach multiculturally, but rather on how to see people and teaching in a new way. By "new way," I mean that I approach the act of teaching from the perspective of being in relationship. Very often, preservice teachers begin the program focused on learning what to do, filling the proverbial toolbox full of tricks, activities, and discipline systems. But I spend most of my time with them teaching them how to think about problem solving, communicating, and interacting with others (and Others), children in particular. I want them to learn about the problems, the miscommunications, the negative interactions with the hopes that they are compelled to correct them. I cannot always tell them what to do to correct them, but I hope I can instill the idea that change is needed. Just knowing there are new ways to see, think, and experience is sometimes half the battle.

Although I do believe diversity work is technically optional for many, for me it has become almost the entire purpose for what I do, professionally and personally. As a result of my own transformation I now live my life differently; I see privilege and oppression in ways I have never known before. Having this "sight" has meant that the work can no longer be optional for me. I will not be complicit. Unfortunately, this does not mean I actually am *never* complicit because my privileges still assure that I most certainly am; it just means that when I know better, I try to do better. So, how does this make me different from teacher educators who do not choose to "see" privilege or oppression or who see but feel no compulsion to change the injustices? I am not sure. You say in a previous response that you have a difficult time understanding how individuals can be patient with ongoing injustice. So I guess the question is how does one inspire someone to have an ongoing impatience with injustice?

V: As I revisit our ideas, I realize that in the context of our prompt question, it seems important at this point to reiterate the need to think about the work of teacher educators and the ways injustice is actually recognized, understood, and addressed by themselves and their students. What does social justice work by individuals look like within groups in which they hold privilege in comparison to other spaces where marginalization persists?

A: I guess I want to return to my suggestion that appealing to a person's strengths or assets increases the chances that the person will receive and retain what you are helping them to learn. What aspects of the schooling bureaucracy, particularly those that privilege the privileged, might we use to support the work of social justice? The hiring, tenure, and promotion processes could be used to reward those, both privileged and marginalized faculty, who challenge the inequities in the system (Irvine, 2003). Being patient with impatience might also be key. I mean that developing relationships and continuing to engage with my colleagues in the conversations, the questions, and the reflection, despite my own frustrations, is the only way to try to establish more "natural" collective habits.

There is that tension I find so often in social justice work; while providing support we must not become complacent. Recall the power of pests. If social justice advocates can continue to find the strength and support (such as through critical friendships) to "pester" our privileged colleagues, perhaps we can accomplish programmatic transformation. An example of this is noted in my journal a few years ago. Another critical friend told me how she was inspired by a talk by Marion Wright Edelman. Edelman used the "flea" metaphor, saying that even a small flea, if it bites hard enough and often enough, can make even the biggest dog miserable. My friend wrote,

> "This helped many of us, I think—at any rate, we used it throughout the rest of the conference. If you situate your work in the larger context, then maybe you can first of all free yourself somewhat from the notion of "having to do it all" in your institution (focus, that is, on what you do do rather than what you don't). Secondly, it can remind you that in the larger context, you are not alone—there are many other fleas out there doing small, yet significant things where they can" (Personal communication, LaBoskey, 10/14/05).

For me, I know the greatest sense of achievement will be having the "flea" work become natural, maybe even comfortable. If this can happen, I believe it will only happen through determined and systematic study of the self.

# Afterword

## Authoring as Transformation: Personal Reflections on Learning While Writing

Writing this book has been transformative in and of itself. As I expressed my beliefs, described my practice, and edited my language I was acutely aware of how much I was growing in my perspective. Dialogue about my work took on new forms. I was fortunate to have a committed critical friend during this time who helped me to examine that which I could not see up close. I was often requested to describe my book to friends, colleagues, and even strangers who sat next to me on a plane. All of these conversations served to not only help me develop new understandings for and about myself, but they raised awareness about the issues with others in ways that may not have happened otherwise. For these reasons, I am grateful for the opportunity to author this book.

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