

## Chapter 6

### **Thinking outside the box: Fostering racial & ethnic discourses in urban teacher education DO NOT CITE OR QUOTE.**

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The ability to differentiate instruction and teach a range of children is essential for in-service and pre-service teachers. However, nurturing and developing pre-service teachers to teach in urban schools and communities requires additional tutelage. Teachers must know how to think critically, solve multifaceted problems, master content knowledge, and then transfer these skills to children. They must know what they know, be able to articulate that knowledge to children, and acquire knowledge they do not themselves possess. The role of teacher's work dictates that they provide a variety of instruction to meet content area, individualized and group needs; facilitate, monitor, record, assess and evaluate the learning goals of each child; manage classroom actions and activities; handle the needs of students (physical, behavioral, emotional, mental, social, cultural, racial, ethnic and linguistic); and walk in the shoes of children (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Berry, 1999).

Given these challenges, screening those who want to become teachers is imperative. The demand for teachers has brought forth people from all disciplines of life: retirees, career changers, bright-eyed recent graduates, and young adults who became captivated while in high school. This variety of applicants still remains homogeneous by racial and ethnic distinctions. Given this dilemma, educating pre-service teachers about the racial, ethnic, cultural, and

linguistic needs of children is imperative. These factors must be embedded as these candidates' develop and engage in the art of teaching.

As the only African American female professor in a large elementary education department at a comprehensive state university, I was one of several minority faculty members hired to teach the multicultural education course. My role would be to unlock the knowledge, research and practice within multiculturalism, and to make it palatable for a mostly white upper middle class female student body. This task was further contextualized by the need to address the predominately Latino, Spanish speaking, urban communities where these pre-service teachers would begin their careers. Balancing the needs of pre-service teachers, the university, the community, program accrediting agencies, and my philosophy of educating the whole person became the challenge in administering this practitioner course. Most of my pre-service teachers had never been exposed to this curriculum. Occasionally a student verbalized their unfamiliarity with this "new" knowledge and why such knowledge was excluded from their educational experience. I offered feedback, extrapolated where I could, and then would redirect them to further literature. What I appreciated the most was these candidates' commitment to become teachers; this was one thing they were sure about. My job would be to educate pre-service teachers in a dose of reality.

This study examined whether the combining of critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy aids in developing transformative educators who can teach culturally and linguistically diverse children Through the examination of pre-service teacher's responses to an open-ended question (What does it mean to think outside the box?) posed at the beginning and end of the semester, student perspectives, knowledge and growth are analyzed and articulated. This is an examination of one professors lived experience and interpretation.

## **Combining critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy**

According to Biesta (1998), in the 1980s critical pedagogy experienced a shift from the importance of class to that of race and gender. In the 1990s, other shifts emerged such as culture in and out of the classroom, identity and identity politics, and multicultural education. Biesta suggests that critical pedagogy has also engaged on a theoretical level with feminism, postmodernism, poststructural and postcolonial theories. However, the effects of critical pedagogy on practices in the classroom have been debated (Biesta, 1998; Ellsworth, 1989). This study seeks to broaden the theoretical and practical underpinnings of critical pedagogy, multiculturalism (Ball, 2000; Obidah, 2000; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), race and ethnicity (Omi & Winant, 1994), and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000) as a prelude to racial and ethnic discourses in urban teacher education. That is, if all of these disciplines are aligned then classrooms should be open for discourses in social, historical, political, racial, ethnic, cultural and all other contexts. Thereby, pedagogy is transformed and the learner more informed.

Culturally responsive pedagogy seeks to analyze what we do as practitioners and how we think as educators. It is a place to look at “education for critical consciousness” (hooks, 1994, p. 36). This type of reflective analysis is consistent with what practitioners are required to know and to do as part of their work. Culturally responsive pedagogy is about “teaching, and the teaching of concern is that which centers classroom instruction in multiethnic cultural frames of reference” (Gay, 2000, p. xix). The critical components are “*cultural self-awareness* and *consciousness-raising* for teachers” (Gay, 2000, p. 71). Therefore, the focus of this pedagogical act is to create culturally responsive and critically conscious practitioners.

Like multiculturalism, discourses on culturally responsive pedagogy should always be seen through the lens of race and ethnicity (Ladson-Billings, 1996a, 1996b; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Mattai, 1992, Milner, 2003; Young, 2001). By racializing culturally responsive pedagogy, ideology doesn't fall victim to "Toon Towing"<sup>1</sup> the reality of race and racism in schools and schooling. That is, the articulation that "race" matters as a socially constructed phenomenon must be authentically represented in all contexts, particularly "culture-centered frameworks" (Lynn, 2004, p.160). To speak and act for children and communities of color and not acknowledge the impact of race and racism is to engage in "cartoonish" discourses about educating other people's children and perpetuate the "dominant racial ideology" (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 86).

Peter McLaren states that "critical pedagogy examines schools both in their historical context and as part of the existing social and political fabric that characterizes the dominant society" (McLaren, 1994, p. 167). Theorists of critical pedagogy value the practitioner or teacher as a social and moral agent, transformative intellectual, and cultural worker (Giroux, 1988; Hooks, 1994; McLaren 1991, 1994). Thereby, pre-service teachers' culture, identity and experiences is the foundation for their learning (Giroux & Simon, 1989). Critical pedagogy, as a historical, sociopolitical and educational practice, becomes transformative when it reciprocates through professor and pre-service teacher interactions.

Given the challenges of schools and educating children, teachers need to be versed in the socially constructed experiences of their students, understand how schools reproduce inequality, acknowledge how the dominant society oppresses subordinate cultures, and advocate against disempowering children, schools and their communities (Giroux, 1988). At question is the connection of what teachers do and how they perceive, react, and articulate. In terms of

educating future teachers who will in turn educate poor and minority children, there is much knowledge to generate, translate, revise and discard. Pre-service teachers should understand how the dominant culture denounces the cultural ways of being, doing and seeing expressed by minority groups. They must investigate their own “cultural capital”<sup>2</sup> and explore their cultural histories and cultural experiences (Giroux, 1988, p. 7). These majority-raced pre-service teachers have to acknowledge and understand the power and privilege they possess, that as gatekeepers to knowledge their cultural, racial and ethnic dispositions can enhance or inhibit the academic achievement of underrepresented groups. Critical pedagogy asks pre-service teachers to expose the system that supports their economic, political, social and educational well being. They must see and understand domination, and refuse to be an active member in the oppression of others. This is a difficult task for the young and privileged.

Broadening critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy enables the flow of critical analyses in race, ethnicity, class, power, gender, and language within the context of schools and schooling (Gay, 1995; McLaren, 1994). Without the uniting of culturally responsive pedagogy, critical pedagogy remains an intellectual interpretation of the elite rather than a practical application for the masses.

### **Racializing culture & critical pedagogy in context**

African American women scholars and educators have been articulating their experiences in the academy (Benjamin, 1997), particularly the linkages between multiculturalism, race and critical pedagogy (Ball, 2000; Gay, 1995; King, 1991; King & Ladson-Billings, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1996a, 1996b, 1998; Obidah, 2000). Ladson Billings (1996b) proposes that leading student discussions about race can be a conduit for discussions about oppression and marginalization. Students in her graduate course wrote short essays examining their identities.

The students of color were quickly able to articulate their ethnic identities; however white students were reluctant to respond, or chose other essay topics. Those white students who chose the topic “identity” produced longer and more in-depth papers about “self” and other forms of oppression they experienced. These graduate students soon found an inclusive space for discussions of race, rather than focusing on perspectives of white guilt.

Ball (2000) and Obidah’s (2000) research utilized critical pedagogy as a theoretical frame through which to articulate the empowerment of the individual and its transformation as they acquired a cultural knowledge base. Specifically, Ball (2000) focused on how three African American female in-service teachers implemented critical pedagogy to help children transform their lives. Each teacher participated in community-based classrooms where 98% of the children were African American. Ball found two key concepts prevalent in the instruction of these teachers. First, the teachers emphasized an understanding of themselves to all the children, who then reflected on perceptions of self in the context of society. Second, the teachers wanted their students to be proactive in their interactions with the world. Ball illustrated through the examination of “discourse patterns and pedagogical practices” the execution of critical pedagogy as a theory that converts into practice (p. 1006).

Obidah (2000) engages in a reflective study of her own classroom (a college level course titled *Education and Culture*) where she took on the role of a “critical multiculturalist”, or one who understands the need to analyze multicultural education from a theoretical and practical perspective (p. 1036). Obidah framed her study in the research on critical pedagogy and multiculturalism. In a class of 29 (5 males and 24 females, 11 white and 9 African American, and 2 biracial), students began learning how to critically reflect on their ideologies about culture and education. Obidah used a variety of teaching strategies and tools (small and large group

discussions, films, presentations, etc.). Through the promotion of liberatory pedagogical practices, students began to reveal themselves through discourses on identity and race. Obidah found course content and pedagogy that focuses on race, ethnicity, class, gender and other forms of multiculturalism can be challenging to mediate within the class structure. Furthermore, as her professorial authority was questioned and challenged she realized that there must be a negotiation of comfort zones by professors and teachers. Obidah carefully characterizes her experience in the role of a critical multiculturalist as “moments of resistance, reflections and revelations” (p. 1042).

King’s (1991) research advocates that pre-service teachers develop “self-reflective,” “critical,” and “transformative emotional growth experiences” (p. 134). She taught a graduate Social Foundations of Education course that provided white students with a “liberatory pedagogy” focusing on issues of oppression in society and students’ ideologies about diversity and inequity (p. 144). King situates her findings in what she describes as “dysconscious racism,” a type of racism which implicitly accepts the norms and privileges of the white dominant culture. The dysconsciousness is further described as “an *impaired* consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race” (p. 135). King had 57 students respond to an open-ended question about the inequities between black and white infant mortality. She found that students responded in uncritical and restrictive ways, thereby exhibiting this dysconscious racism. King suggests that teacher education needs a form of “cultural politics” that addresses the “cultural rationality of social inequity in modern American society” (p. 143). In this way students can move towards a liberatory pedagogy.

This study, like Ladson-Billings’, Ball’s, Obidah’s & King’s, expands the research of African American female scholars and the field of teacher education by offering insight into

black women's pedagogy, challenges, triumphs and personal reflections in the academy. Moreover, it provides practical implications for actualizing a liberatory pedagogy, cultural self-awareness, consciousness raising, critical pedagogy, and racialized discourse all of which are needed to educate urban teacher educators.

The work is more broadly situated in the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy as an "understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge" (McLaren, 1994, p.188). As future educators, these pre-service teachers are the purveyors of knowledge and power, and they must understand these issues from a macro and micro level. Through the analysis of pre-service teachers written discourse an understanding of how power relations are shaped and transformed is revealed (Fairclough, 1995a). To become a transformative educator, pre-service teachers must rethink their individuality and engage others in inclusive ways.

### **Methods**

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000), qualitative research has evolved over time, and we are presently in the "seventh moment," in which the fields of social science and the humanities are "sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom and community" (p. 3). This study operates within this traditions' attempt to engage pre-service teachers in critical conversations: discourses from pre-service teachers about racial, ethnic, social, economic and political issues related to teacher education, and to thereby prepare candidates for urban schools and communities.

### **The course & its content**

This research began at a comprehensive state university on the west coast with a population of 33,000 students. The teacher education program offered teaching credentials and master's degrees. The education program was accredited by the National Council for



Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and state certified. The multiple subject teaching credential program for elementary teachers served over 1,000 full-time and approximately 40 part-time per school year. Most of the candidates engaged in a year-long program of course and field work resulting in an elementary education teaching credential.

I taught a prerequisite course in multicultural education titled *Cultural Pluralism in Elementary Schools*. The goals of this course were to help pre-service teachers examine their beliefs and values, explore the history of ethnic and racial groups, expose pre-service teachers to classroom practices and materials that promote equity, and demonstrate strategies for learning about children. This was one of three courses that focused on diversity, equity, urban schools and children of color. The other two “diversity” courses, offered in the one-year program, focused on educating second language learners.

As a prerequisite course, *Cultural Pluralism in Elementary Schools* was offered during the Fall, Spring, Intercession, and Summer sessions. During the semester, eight to 10 sections of the course were offered. Given the number of professors, lecturers and adjuncts who taught the course, quality control was an issue. Therefore, all course instructors used the same text: *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice* (1999) by Christine I. Bennett. Some of the topics this text covered included “Multicultural schools & teaching,” “Themes of assimilation and pluralism,” “Theories of learning style and multiple intelligence,” and “multicultural curriculum development.”

Through this process it was hoped that all pre-service teachers would be exposed to the same curriculum content. I added supplemental readings to my course that provided a more in-depth examination of issues critical to educational research and educating culturally and linguistically diverse populations. For example, I incorporated a reader containing articles such

as: Lisa Delpit's (1988) *The silenced dialogue*, John Obgu's (1990) *Minority education in comparative perspective*, Donaldo Macedo's (2000) *The colonialism of the English only movement*, William Watkin's (1994) *Multicultural education: Toward a historical and political inquiry*, and Richard Valencia's (1997) *The evolution of deficit thinking*.

### **The pre-service teachers**

This study examined student responses from seven cultural pluralism courses I taught during the years 2000 and 2001. Five courses were taught in 2000 and two in 2001; four courses during the semester, one during intercession, and one during the summer. The racial and ethnic make-up of the pre-service teachers was 87% white, 7% Latino American, 2% African American, 2% Asian American and 2% other.

### **Pedagogical strategies**

Given that the course was designed to increase pre-service teacher's knowledge of diverse cultures in their schools and communities, and to help them develop a multicultural perspective, a variety of pedagogical strategies were used throughout the course. In particular, the class assignments included lectures, discussions, group activities, student presentations, fieldwork, and opportunities for critical analysis of attitudes and beliefs. Student assignments included: weekly critical response journals, cultural group presentations, a multicultural children's literature project, a case study of a 2nd language learner or a speaker of a dialect, and the final research paper. There were additional assignments and activities that could not be mentioned or included. This analysis focuses on one culminating activity: "Thinking outside the box."

### **Data collection & analysis**

Pre-service teachers were administered an open-ended question (What does it mean to think outside the box?) in order to assess their responses on the first (pre-course) and last (post-course) day of the class. From the seven courses (Spring 2000, Intersession 2000, Summer 2000 [two classes], Fall 2000, Summer 2001 [two classes]), 158 pre-course responses and 158 post-course were collected from participants. Responses without “pre” and “post” course answers were discarded.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was the method of analysis adopted because it “studies both the power in discourse and power over discourse” (Titscher, et al., 2003, p. 146). The texts are analyzed using a variety of ways and means (Fairclough, 1995a). First, student responses were typed and categorized by session and date. Then the responses were examined for their “thematic structures” or their associations in terms of topics or themes (Fairclough, 1995b, p. 29). From the pre-responses, the following thematic structures began to emerge: single dimensional perspective, bi-dimensional perspective, multidimensional perspective, and metamorphosis. Thereafter, the responses were coded according to these thematic structures. The same process of analysis proceeded for the post-course responses. The thematic structures retrieved from the post analysis became awareness and transformative perspectives. Once thematically structured, the most representative samples were included in this chapter. Explanations of the themes came from the analysis of the responses; thereby the analyses yielded definitions of each theme.

If texts are indicators of social change, then through Fairclough’s (1995a) discourse analysis, changes in the text should be revealed through the thematic structure. That is, the text should exhibit changes from the pre-responses to the post-responses. The pre-responses should

provide samples of pre-service teacher responses before instruction, and the post-responses should reveal teacher responses after a variety of instruction, facilitation and assessment.

Participants responded to the question as an in-class, non-graded activity. They were told that there was no right or wrong answer to the question posed, and were asked to write their names on the paper so that their responses could be returned at the end of the semester. I informed participants that I was very interested in what they were thinking. I believe the question was non-threatening, and that it was viewed by pre-service teachers as a typical class activity.

Generally, student evaluations from these courses were highly rated at 85% or better on a 100% excellent scale. The evaluations asked for student responses to the instructor's teaching, expectations, feedback, knowledge, preparation, clarity, responsiveness, and professionalism.

### **Thinking outside the box: pre-course responses**

Giroux & McLaren's (1992) analysis of language and experience might best serve to describe the pedagogical strategies that translated from university professor to pre-service teacher. In this case, the majority of the pre-service teachers are from the dominate culture; therefore their learning must be that of agent, transformer, and activist. First, pre-service teacher's knowledge is viewed as a primary source and is validated within the context of the class. Second, they are provided with the space to critically analyze their lived experiences and how they perpetuate dominate forms of knowledge. Third, pre-service teachers are provided with spaces to articulate and reconceptualize their developing critical literacy.

Given that the pre-service teachers in this course were either recent college graduates or career changers, no assumptions were made regarding what they did or did not know. On the first day of class, I review the syllabus and take any perfunctory questions. During introductions I instruct candidates to interview the person sitting next to them and then tell us something

interesting and memorable about their new peer. At the end of the first day of class, I write the question “What does it mean to think outside the box?” on the blackboard, and distribute blank sheets of 8 1/2 x 11 paper, allowing unlimited space for student responses. If time permits students discuss their answers within a small group and then respond in a whole class discussion. Through this process, student’s knowledge is validated within the context of the class (Giroux & McLaren, 1992). Lastly, I collect the one-page responses with the intention of revisiting this question at the end of the course.

Although the question posed does not clearly define a direction, considering that the question was asked in a multicultural course, students connected their responses to content specific to the course and/or knowledge they already possessed. I found students to be quite curious in this process.

The pre-course responses yielded thematic structures (Titscher et al., 2003), including single dimensional, bi-dimensional, multidimensional perspectives, and metamorphosis. The single dimensional perspectives focused on what the individual should do or be able to do with the knowledge they possess. Most of these responses were written in the third person; hence pre-service teachers distanced themselves from the topic or the class. The single dimensional perspectives presented a narrow point of view, and demonstrated that further thinking in this area was required in order to understand one’s cultural capital or acquire a critical consciousness. Alternatively, it could also indicate an answer provided simply to satisfy the participation requirements of the course. For example, many students responded that to think outside the box meant simply to “be open-minded.” For example, Nikki G. exhibits this single dimensional perspective in her response:

Thinking outside the box, means opening your heart and mind. This takes place when you are secure and love yourself first. To think outside a box is opening your eyes from the blur of convictions, prejudices, and stereotypes. To respect and forgive is how to think outside the box. (Nikki G., Spring 2000)

Nikki G. uses the pronouns “you” and “your” to focus on what the individual should do. In this case, the individual should open their heart and mind. How a person does this is not articulated; however, it is assumed that the reader would know what this means. Nikki G. suggests loving and feeling secure about oneself. Therefore, the way outside of the box is one that must be tackled internally rather than externally. A person should take off their “rose colored” glasses or un-blur their own prejudices and stereotypic dispositions, and show respect and forgive. It is not totally clear what Nikki G. poses here; however the mention of respect and forgiveness could suggest that which the person must do for themselves and others. So the focus of the single-dimensional perspective is the improvement of oneself without outside interference. Change is, therefore, thought to come without external interference or interventions.

The bi-dimensional perspectives offered an interpretation that included the individual focus, and also a consideration of other groups of people. These responses demonstrated thinking into and through the question posed: these responses seek to provide some meaning and context for their answers. In this example, Angela H. contemplates the condition of thinking outside the box:

Thinking outside the box is being able to see life from someone else’s point of view. My “box” is white, American, middle-class, female. I think outside that box only when I can experience or attempt to experience what someone else’s

view may be that has a different box. Thinking outside my box is not an easy task; often some people never can, while others choose to think that getting to know someone different and experiencing their culture, perspective, and life, in a non-judgmental situation is helpful. However, I do not believe one could ever truly think outside their own box, because it is within that box that they view and experience other's boxes. (Angela H., Intercession 2000)

Consistent with the bi-dimensional perspective, Angela H. begins to consider other people in her response, hence demonstrating thinking “into” and “through” the question posed. Angela H. personalized her response by race, class, nationality and gender – a white middle class American female. She wanted the reader to know the position in which she was historically, personally, economically and socially rooted -- that her identity was that which constructed herself and her response. Angela H. acknowledges that she has a choice whether to experience “someone else’s view,” and that this is not an easy task for a white female middle-class American. However, others choose to engage “other” people because they find it helpful. This non-judgmental engagement with “others” and their lives and culture is difficult for Angela H., and not something she would do voluntarily. Angela H. ultimately sees her biased view of the world as one that will not change, because she is permanently affixed in her box and beliefs.

The multi-dimensional perspectives offer more complex responses that focus on the individual and group, movement beyond the box, and the box itself. These responses were more inclusive insofar as they spoke to both the individual and the group (e.g., one person, many people, individual, crowd, one’s mind). There is a freeing or freedom of thought and space that is also articulated. The pre-service teachers describe it as being “free of judgments,” “encountering new ideas,” and “to stretch one’s mind.” The responses specifically indicated how one can move

outside the box (create new ideas or philosophies, dream, hangout with a different crowd, go to a new church). The box is quantified, qualified and personified as that which isolates or traps a person. Participants describe this condition in words such as: boundaries, limitations, glass ceiling, personal bias, identity, environment, language/dialects, social space, geographic space, ethnic space, and way of life. In contrast, to be outside the box means that one may feel uncomfortable or the need to be defensive. Judy K. exemplifies a multi-dimensional perspective in the following response:

The box represents the space one lives in--social space, geographic space, and ethnic space--anything that is familiar to oneself. To think outside the box is to go beyond what is familiar and comfortable, and to stretch one's mind. In other words, to step outside of the box and see what's out there. Perhaps it's something uncomfortable or disagreeable, but it's there! So thinking inside the box is like living inside the box and knowing only the rules and way of life as it is inside. (Judy K., Spring 2000)

For Judy K., the box represents the multiple spaces a person encounters in their life-world. The familiarity makes that space comfortable and safe. Thinking outside the box forces one to see in a new way. Judy K. views living inside the box as a way to isolate or separate oneself and seems to represent a developing perspective counter to isolation.

The metamorphosis perspective demonstrated a focus on the individual, the group and a knowledgeable interpretation of the question. This survey of responses indicate that participants considered both the individual and the group. They interpreted the question to mean that the individual or group must move either physically or mentally. Specifically, they defined this as: "transport myself," "imagine myself," "removing myself," and "thinking outside society." Given



that the responses began to consider others in the context of self, they experienced a metamorphosis. For example, Carol S. writes the following:

To transport myself outside of my own comfortable life that is filled with the expectations I have for myself, as they pertain to me and those around me. To engage in alternative thoughts and ideas that confront me that I may not have acknowledged, understood, believed, or to which I would not readily conform. To stop and imagine myself in these new or alternative situations, and begin to envision or exercise my role from outside my box. (Carol S., Summer 2000)

Carol S. demonstrates a metamorphosis perspective as she considers herself in the world of others, and a letting go of the box in which she isolated herself. Through her willingness to explore and learn, Carol S's interactions with this outside world shifts her thinking, and she began to engage in a vicarious exploration of this new world. This new world is where Carol S readily stays and chooses to participate in a role. Given Carol S's newness to the field of education she continues to experience a metamorphosis, but does not grow intellectually.

As indicated by these four thematic structures, pre-service teachers provided multiple responses based on their existing knowledge base. These responses indicate that pre-service teachers sought to move their thoughts beyond the box; however, they did not have the words, context or knowledge to expand their understanding. That is, they could not grow in thought or knowledge without acquiring new information or knowledge to build upon what they already knew. To grow or expand as human beings entails a process of establishing a foundation and then allowing the learner to construct and reconstruct their own knowledge, thereby combining both knowledge and power (McLaren, 1994). I do not believe participants sought to give the

professor what they perceived she wanted to hear. Further, the range in themes speaks to the necessity to refine student thinking to become that of an educator.

These pre-course responses revealed that a depth of knowledge and critical consciousness needed to be developed throughout the content of the course. Specifically, the pre-service teachers needed to move toward a more culturally responsive and critically conscious knowledge base about themselves and the people in their social spaces. They needed to examine their cultural capital as it related to the content of the course. Furthermore, I needed to help those who see the world from a myopic perspective to expand their view. My goal was to provide an environment where multiple perspectives from culturally diverse peoples could be heard, to provide enough research where candidates could make decisions about what they felt was true or not. In my courses I believe that if pre-service teachers come to this knowledge themselves then they are more likely to remember the content, more likely be able to translate it to others, and then finally competent enough to teach it to others. I never simply pour information into their head, but rather allow students the time to come to the knowledge on their own. I provide the artifacts and then ask students for a critical and/or reflective interpretation of the data. Through the content of the course, pre-service teachers are challenged to “move beyond” their comfort zone (hooks, 1994, p. 201). Ultimately, they must decide whether to move into, through, or beyond their box.

### **Thinking outside the box: Post-course responses**

On the last day of the course participants again respond to the question: “What does it mean to think outside the box?” Their responses are thematically structured as awakening and transformative perspectives. The awakening perspectives all reveal additive knowledge acquired through critical content reading and written evaluation, interactive class participation, active

listening, conscious engagement, repetitive assignments, and high expectations for learning and/or the acquisition of knowledge. Participants demonstrate a desire to be aware with phrases such as: “I realize,” “I now understand,” “I felt,” “I find,” “I really consider,” “I have come to realize,” and “I was unaware.” Here the word “I” is used in a self-reflective rather than egocentric manner. To transform self-reflection is one of the first steps. Candidates’ responses also indicate that they now consider others on a physical, mental, and emotional level. To connect with people physically, mentally and emotionally, pre-service teachers suggest the following: “walk in another person’s shoes and imagine or internalize their feelings . . .” (Natalie B., Summer 2000); “consider a persons’ cultural background and their reasons why they are who they are . . .” (Candice M., Summer 2000); “take the time to understand other cultural backgrounds . . .” (Kelly M., Fall 2000); and “extend far out of the box . . . learn about other cultures . . .” (Terry S., Fall 2000). These excerpts illustrate an investment of time and energy in getting to know people who are different than themselves. In these examples, participants grapple with giving some aspect of themselves to get back knowledge, recognition or personal satisfaction. This is the reciprocal nature of transformative educators. All these responses offer solutions or results-oriented reactions based upon their new knowledge. Pre-service teachers write, “if we expect to find solutions to the inequities that exist in society... this is even more crucial for future teachers . . .” (Natalie B. Summer 2000); “consider a person’s cultural background . . . It’s really a much more exciting way of life.” (Candice M. Summer 2000); “coming to understand others is a step up to changing myself . . .” (Kelly M. Fall 2000). Terry S. describes her awakening as follows:

After learning the information I have through class texts, and hearing about experiences of classmates regarding multicultural education (and the need for

it), I have come to realize that I have lived inside “the box”. I felt I was open-minded and educated about aspects of other cultures, but I have learned that that is not enough to be multiculturally educated--enlightened. I am going to have to extend far out of the box by taking it upon myself to learn about other cultures rather than wait for the information to come to me--like the information that has come to me because I was required to take this class. I don't want to think inside the box. I was unaware, until later into this course, that I was in it. (Terry S., Fall 2000)

For Terry S., her interactions with multicultural research literature and ethnically diverse pre-service teachers have helped her to discover the sheltered reality of her box. Her enlightenment begins with her willingness to explore others cultures and their life worlds. Terry S. feels responsible to take an active role in her learning. This type of active responsible learning is that which awakened educators must possess to become culturally competent and critical conscious educators. An awakening begins the process of transformation.

Transformative educators consider others before themselves, and this consideration is compassionate, caring, and critical. They use terms like, “I found,” “I feel,” “someone else's,” and “our.” These transformative educators seek to understand all that people are and can be, and have already made a personal and professional commitment to improving themselves and the lives of others. They are selfless insofar as they critically understand, interpret and postulate the differential world of others and themselves, and incorporate an intellectuality that transcends ‘into, through and beyond.’ For example, Cassay J. exhibits ‘into, through and beyond’ as she describes her emotional connection with others:

Thinking outside the box means to live, experience, and understand someone else's perspectives in order to be agents of transforming lives into a better one. Thinking outside the box means loving people, having a commitment to people, believing and having faith in people's capabilities, and being humble to not impose our own views and perspectives on others. Thinking outside the box means finding a common ground to be on along with various people with various backgrounds and beliefs. (Cassay J., Summer 2001)

Cassay J. exhibits qualities of a transformative educator in her desire to emotionally and spiritually connect to "other" people. Her selflessness reflects her willingness to put aside her own views to learn about and from others. This "common ground" is what makes students, teachers, and communities transform. Cassay J., like other respondents, speaks to pieces of this transformation; however, the transformation of the human spirit is manifested collectively:

. . . having knowledge of other cultures is not thinking outside the "box." Having the knowledge, along with a realistic view of their social standing, historical context of culture, political fights, and endured oppression begins to go outside the "box." Just understanding these things is not enough. You have to take it a step further. You must embody this information and make it available to others. (Steven M. Intercession 2000)

Transformative perspectives of pre-service teachers alter self and critically construct and reconstruct knowledge. They hypothesize about the "what if's", and create new knowledge. Transformative perspectives revamp the self in the process of their own learning. Educators that transform, like Steven M., are also keenly aware of those who don't get it. As agents of change we must also engage and help inform those who haven't acquired a critical consciousness or

examined their cultural capital. This is the knowledge of empowerment. “To discover another’s truth . . .” (Joanna N. Summer 2000), “to be agents of transforming lives into a better one . . .” (Cassay J. Summer 2001), “jump out of our own mindset and find the key to theirs . . .” (Lynn S., Fall 2000) are statements of transformative thinking. They exemplify a consideration of other’s in all ways, that as educators we are responsible for active participation in the process and end products, and that we must be locksmiths rather than gatekeepers of knowledge.

Transformative perspectives demonstrate a re-invention of knowledge other than that taught in the classroom. Pre-service teachers in this course discover their own “ah ha”, and thereby the knowledge becomes an organic growing entity in itself. This representative sampling of responses demonstrates that through a series of culturally responsive, critically conscious (Swartz, 2003), self-reflective, and race-based activities (Milner (2003), pre-service teachers can begin to examine their cultural capital and move toward culturally responsive thinking, doing and being. The hope is that these pre-service teachers will be more likely to critically analyze the macro and micro perspectives as it pertains to issues such as urban schooling, the hidden curriculum, standardized testing, race-based educational agendas, social inequities and the like. Essentially, transformative teachers see the world for what it really is; they are not tenants of Toon Town.

### **Conclusion**

I did not realize the complexity of what a transformative educator should possess until the final analysis of the theme: transformative perspectives. My definition of transformative educators reads as follows: Transformative educators critically understand, interpret and postulate the different world of others and themselves, and incorporate an intellectuality that transcends ‘into, through and beyond;’ their practice is always culturally responsive and

critically conscious. McLaren (1994) and Giroux (1988) understand the transformative intellectual as the teacher who engages in a special social or political practice. Gay (2000) argues for the transformation of student thinking, and hooks (1994) advocates for a classroom where “transformative pedagogy” takes place (p. 39). The transfer of emancipatory knowledge can only happen when teacher educators and pre-service teachers work together in the transformation process. Thereby, an understanding of the relationship between power and knowledge can be realized on macro and micro levels (McLaren, 1994).

The transformative educator is an individual who can take the knowledge they acquire along the way and extrapolate the good, critically analyze the bad, and then teach others the rewards and repercussions. These educators are not static beings; they are always learning and relearning. They speak from informed perspectives, and guide others to new knowledge. They transform human beings in an effort to change the world for the better.

Transformative educators have life-long awakenings that transcend them as human beings. They continue to strive towards cultural consciousness, to search for meaning. Transformative educators never cease to amaze themselves; they are always creative, critical, conscious, and crazed about the work they do. To transform means to reinvent oneself and the knowledge that an individual possesses. A transformative educator is active and visionary.

### **The practice**

When teaching a multicultural education course, it is imperative to use a variety of instructional strategies that focus on enhancing and altering candidate’s perceptions and ideologies. Throughout this course participants were exposed to racially, ethnically, historically and culturally specific curriculum content with the goal of developing a racialized lens in which to begin seeing the world. Through the analysis of self, culture, race, and language, they learn

how to relate better with people who are socially different (Gay, 2000). Thereby, pre-service teachers are “developing socio-civic skills for effective membership in multicultural [urban] communities” (Gay, 2000, p. 20). Ultimately, the goal should be to get pre-service teachers to reflect on their beliefs, values, perceptions, prejudices, and biases, and to re-evaluate inaccurate and negative assumptions. They must critically analyze the knowledge they acquire and disseminate.

In order to create racial and ethnic discourse in the teacher education classroom I suggest the following:

- Have pre-service teachers acknowledge their ethnicity and engage in some discussion of cultural capital. They must invest in discovering their ethnic origins, so have them share their own ethnic and racial experiences. Invite yourself into the conversation only after participants have shared their experiences or when needed, but keep it brief. Connect your discussions to those of participants, and avoid the limelight.
- Create an environment where student’s knowledge, experience and histories are validated and supported.
- Provide a variety of assignments and activities where pre-service teachers discover their biases, dispositions, attitudes and feelings. Create conditions for those with ethnocentric attitudes and behaviors to self-discover. In doing so, students will hopefully engage in introspection and evaluate whether teaching culturally and linguistically diverse populations is within their capacity.
- Facilitate discussions, activities, assignments, etc. It is best not to over-lecture in these types of courses; this allows the group to construct and generate their own knowledge. If pre-service teachers generate knowledge themselves, they retain it longer.



- Allow a variety of activities where pre-service teachers can voice their opinions and engage in fact finding, and stimulating awakenings. An awakening is more conducive to retention than those ideas and concepts that are memorized. Be a resource, not a road map; let candidates find their own awakenings. An awakening is a life long journey, not a semester's event.

### **Combining culturally responsive and critically conscious practitioners through race**

Combining culturally responsive pedagogy and critical pedagogy seeks to help pre-service teachers develop “critical knowledge” (Giroux, 1988, p. 8). The knowledge acquired through the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy and critical pedagogy develops an educator who is prepared to teach diverse urban populations. “Schools need prospective teachers who are both theoreticians and practitioners, who can combine theory, imagination and techniques” (Giroux, 1988, p. 8). Therefore, combining these practices can provide pre-service teachers with the comprehensive critical content needed to move their perspectives from single dimensional through metamorphosis to awareness, and finally, evolving transformative educators.

Pre-service teachers must be taught to “think racially.” As some teachers, professors, politicians and policy makers see learning about multiculturalism as a necessity, discussions about racism are seen as the unnecessary evil. Many “white pre-service teachers” denounce the history of racism in the U.S. as not their problem, and refuse to see how the past informs the present. This suffering and the knowledge it brings must be acknowledged by all. hooks (1994) argues that there is a “particular knowledge that comes from suffering” (p. 91). I would add that those who don't know of this suffering must use their experiential concepts of suffering to step out of themselves and understand the suffering of others. Consequently, they must engage in a

vicarious, spiritual form of suffering -- of consciousness to be able to transform the lives of poor and minority children.

## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Toon comes from the word cartoon. Toon Towing is a metaphor for engaging in acts of colorblindness, racial oppression, racial discrimination, racial profiling, etc. Therefore, the enactment means that the purveyor ignores reality and engages in a cartoonish representation of reality. Toon Town is the place where toon towing manifests.

<sup>2</sup> Cultural capital is when a society “distributes and legitimates certain forms of knowledge, language practices, values, modes of style” (p. 5). Those forms that receive high value are deemed legitimate where others are seen as inferior. Cultural capital in schools can also be defined as ways groups socialize, walk, talk, act, move, dress and behave. Schools are the place where class distinctions and the dominant societies culture are defined, articulated and enacted (Giroux, 1988, p. 5).

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