

“Everything They Were Giving Us Created Tension”:

Creating and Managing Tension in a Graduate-Level Multicultural Course Focused on Literacy Methods

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While growing up I did not learn about my culture nor did I gain cultural values through my community ... I do not think I was allowed to have a culture because I am a White, middle-class American girl from the suburbs.

—Karen, a beginning teacher.

Karen wrote this comment online as she responded to a reading about cultural values during a teacher preparation course titled “Literacy Methods for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students.” Karen’s statement is not unusual: Many White, middle-class women who enter the teaching profession are not self-aware of cultural backgrounds or how cultural influences shape ways of doing and thinking (Larke, 1990; Lawrence, 1997; Lawrence & Bunche, 1996).

Sleeter (2001) came to similar conclusions in her review of literature on multicultural teacher education: White beginning teachers bring very little cross-cultural knowledge, experience, and understanding to teaching. Additionally, they often possess stereotypical beliefs about diverse students and they have little knowledge of racism, discrimination, and structural aspects of inequality. According to Sleeter, many teachers believe that if they recognize racial differences of their students or discuss issues of ethnicity in their classrooms, they might be identified as insensitive, or, worse, racists. Yet if teachers ignore their students’ ethnic identities and linguistic diversities and their own unique cultural beliefs, percep-

tions, values, and world-views, they will most likely fail to be culturally responsive (Irvine, 2003).

This article describes several instructional practices that were used in a teacher education course to help teachers explore their own cultures, appreciate differences, and transform their previously held views and assumptions about multiculturalism. By exposing beginning teachers to a range of instructional practices and diverse readings carefully selected to broaden and challenge previously held ideologies concerning diversity, Lori Czop Assaf, the first author, hoped to create a social learning environment where teachers could decide what ideological understandings would be persuasive for them.

As Irvine (2003) suggested, in order to prepare teachers for multicultural classrooms, teacher preparation programs must “create opportunities for beginning teachers to grapple with, reflect upon, and assimilate complicated issues associated with their own personal, social, cultural, and ethnic identities” (p. 17).

Instructional Models That Support Ideological Becoming

Teacher educators who are committed to multicultural education confront controversial issues that force individuals to become aware of and further develop their own ideologies that influence how they view children and teaching (Au & Raphael, 1999; Hernandez, 1989; Sleeter, 2001). Several studies (e.g., Allen & Labbo, 2001; Barton, 1999) and a review of literature (Sleeter, 2001) have suggested instructional models to help beginning teachers effectively meet the needs of diverse students by integrating methods courses (e.g., reading methods, social studies methods) with explicit instruction and discussion

about multicultural issues such as racism, discrimination, social justice, critical pedagogy, and cultural practices (Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). The goals of these models are the same: To reflect on one’s cultural self, to explore others who are culturally different from oneself, and to examine one’s own ideological perspectives that relate to effectively teaching diverse populations.

There are several notable instructional models designed specifically for literacy-related courses (e.g., reading and language arts methods courses as well as more courses about literacy development). For example, Ada and Campoy’s *Authors in the Classroom: A Transformative Education Process* (2004) provides a series of ideas for autobiographical sketches and stories to help teachers and students understand themselves as culturally situated individuals. Ada and Campoy’s model is much like Schmidt’s (1997, 2001) ABCs Model; both entail some “looking inward” in order to help teachers understand their roles and commitment to working in diverse communities.

Using Schmidt’s ABCs Model, teachers create an Autobiography to enhance understandings about self and learn about others through a *Biography* of someone who is culturally different. Then they *Compare* the relationship between self and others by creating a list of similarities and differences. They use these understandings to fashion their instruction to meet the needs of diverse student populations by creating lesson plans to connect home and school.

In similar fashion, Florio-Ruane (2001) used autobiographies and biographies as a means to engage teachers in a process of self-discovery and appreciating differences as they read and wrote about their teaching experiences in an on-going book club. The underlying assumption for each of these instructional models is

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that in order to grapple with complicated issues related to multicultural education and challenge deeply held belief systems, teachers must first know themselves and make cross-cultural connections to culturally different others.

In the course described in this article, some of these instructional models were utilized; however, we propose that multicultural teacher education might also be thought of as a way of spurring tensions, thus prompting teachers to consider their own ideologies that will shape their classroom interactions and instruction. Thinking of multicultural education in this way broadens the host of instructional practices that could work to shape teachers' ideologies.

Viewing Tensions with a Bakhtinian Lens

The idea that teachers "grapple" rang true in the course described in this article. There were many moments during which teachers in the class felt their ideas and assumptions came into conflict with the theories and practices that were upheld as important for multicultural educators during the course. We call these moments *tensions*, referring to Bakhtin's notion that tensions are always present when one learns in an ideological environment. To further explain this theoretical lens, we explain Bakhtin's notions of ideological becoming, tension, and discourses.

Ideological Becoming

The idea that teacher educators should have a hand in shaping teachers' ideologies might seem objectionable at first glance; however, Bakhtinian theory suggests that humans are always in a state of "ideological becoming" as we move through our lives learning from others and that ideologies shape the ways in which anyone interacts the world. According to Emerson (1981), Bakhtin's notion of ideology does not carry a strong political edge but does not exclude the development of a political idea system as part of ideological becoming (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

Ideological becoming is not necessarily the development of isolated concepts or ideas; instead it is the development of a whole person, including complex ideas and concepts. In this sense, teachers' beliefs and choices about what types of language to promote or accept in their classrooms are ideologically driven. How teachers respond to their students' cultural diversity, literacy, and linguistic patterns and whether they

teach critically are also ideological decisions (Freedman & Ball, 2004).

Bakhtin's theories on ideological becoming focus on individual growth and how individuals are firmly placed within social contexts. In other words, the individual influences the social world and the social world influences the individual, and these influences are often tension-ridden.

Tension

When teachers are told that their own beliefs about language or their assumptions about their students' cultural backgrounds will influence their students' learning, they often express a desire to confront their beliefs and assumptions; however, these confrontations are often full of tension. This is because ideological becoming happens in an "ideological environment" (Bakhtin, 1974, p. 14) and learning in such contexts can be filled with tension and conflict.

Bakhtin (1981) argued that struggles are inherent to the process of coming to new understandings: "The importance of struggling with another's discourse, its influence in the history of an individual's coming to ideological consciousness, is enormous" (p. 348). However, as individuals struggle with these tensions, they develop their own ideologies. The same is true for teachers: As they struggle to make sense of their own and others' ideological beliefs and assumptions, they will further develop their own.

Teachers can best develop their ideological beliefs if they are privy to a multitude of perspectives. Bakhtin's theories imply that ongoing dialogue with others provides conceptual tensions that lead to learning. According to Bakhtin (1981), "our ideology development is ... an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological view points, approaches, directions, and values" (p. 346). Learning occurs when humans go through a process of selectively assimilating or borrowing the words of others via written or oral discourse. Therefore, the role of the *other* is crucial to our ideological becoming because the more choice there is of words to borrow, the more opportunities there are to learn. The same is true for teachers: They require a host of discourses from which to choose as they undergo ideological becoming.

Discourses

In any course, but especially in courses dedicated to the aims of multicultural edu-

cation, teachers confront perspectives from a multitude of discourses—often quite different from what they are used to in their own backgrounds. When diverse discourses or voices interact, humans struggle to assimilate discourses that they feel make sense. For the sake of explanation, Bakhtin (1981) reduced these multiple discourses to two distinctive types of social discourse: (a) authoritative and (b) internally persuasive (p. 341).

Authoritative discourse is inflexible and infused with socially acknowledged authority. Bakhtin (1981) claimed, "It [authoritative discourse] is a prior discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it among other possible discourses that are its equal. For example, the authority of religious dogma, or of acknowledged scientific truth..." (pp. 342-343). Internally persuasive discourse is "denied all privilege, backed by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society" (p. 342). It is what a person thinks for herself, what ultimately is persuasive to the individual (Freedman & Ball, 2004). As a person interacts within society, authoritative discourses can actually bleed into and become internally persuasive discourses. Theoretically, the two discourses are always in back-and-forth movement as an individual's ideologies are shaped. As individuals socially interact, they negotiate and struggle between these two forms of discourse.

The internally persuasive discourses teachers bring as they enter teacher preparation programs influence their ideological becoming even as they engage with new discourses with courses. As Freedman and Ball (2004) explained, beginning teachers "bring a range of internally persuasive discourses to a course, which have been influenced by authoritative discourse that shapes traditional approaches to teaching mainstream students" (p. 12). For Bakhtin (1981), as individuals are exposed to multiple perspectives different from their internally persuasive discourses, they experience tension and struggle with new ways of thinking.

These struggles emerge in social environments where individuals meet, clash, and grapple with each other. This is how ideologies develop. And, when extended to the context of teacher education, the notion that authoritative and internally persuasive discourses are in constant tension allows for us to think about tensions as productive catalysts for spurring teachers to rethink what discourses will be internally persuasive for them.

In this article, we describe several instructional practices that induced tensions in a course designed to address how literacy instruction can best serve culturally and linguistically diverse students. Of course, what induces tension in one circumstance or for one teacher might not for another. We encourage teacher educators to review these practices as flexible ideas (as any thoughtful teacher would) rather than a prescriptive list and concentrate their efforts on selecting a host of instructional practices to spur tensions.

Context and Evidence

Assaf taught "Literacy Methods for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students," a masters-level course in a post-baccalaureate teacher certification/master's degree program. She designed the course to help beginning teachers come to understand themselves as cultural beings, understand literacy and language as a cultural practice, and extend these understandings to inform multicultural curriculum and instructional practices. The class met for three hours one evening weekly over 15 weeks. Eight beginning teachers (two Hispanic females, four White females, one Black female, and one White male), with a range of teaching experiences participated in this study.

Caitlin McMunn Dooley was a participant-observer during the class meetings and conducted out-of-class interviews with members of the class, asking about their learning and experiences in the class. Using data collected from the teachers' course assignments, online reflections, field-notes, individual interviews, and our own reflections, we inquired whether and when the teachers felt tensions as their ideologies were shaped. In interviews led by Dooley about a month after the course ended, the teachers were asked to verify findings from preliminary data analyses as well as other questions such as, "Did you ever feel tension in the class? If so, when?"

From our analysis, we describe several instructional practices that served as catalysts to motivate tensions between authoritative discourses and a wide range of internally persuasive discourses. Each of the practices described here were referred to by at least one member of the class as tension-inducing. We have organized our report around three questions: (1) What instructional practices pushed beginning teachers to struggle and experience tension between their authoritative and internally persuasive discourses? (2) How can tensions

be created and managed in a multicultural teacher education course? (3) What are the challenges and opportunities?

Question 1: What instructional practices pushed beginning teachers to struggle and experience tension between their authoritative and internally persuasive discourses?

Cultural Selves

Several practices were intended to make the teachers more self-aware of cultural influences on their experiences, behaviors, learning, and assumptions. Oftentimes, the teachers reacted to these practices, saying, as one teacher did, "I never thought of myself as having a culture."

Mental Imaging and Life Sketches

The teachers wrote about and visualized important people, places, celebrations, memorable events, school experiences, and family customs from childhood as a way of understanding culture and self. On the first day of class they read the poem "Where I'm From" by George Ella Lyon and were asked to close their eyes and image a time in their life as a child. In order to help the teachers visualize their life experiences, memory mind maps were modeled and practiced by the teachers (Stafford & Dunning, 1992).

Assaf asked questions such as "What do you see around you? Where are you? Who is with you? What things are you doing?" After 10 minutes of mental visualization, teachers sketched their memories on paper, including as many details as possible. After their sketches were finished, teachers labeled each important part of their sketch with a short description. Following this activity, as the teachers shared their life sketches with classmates, several mentioned that they had a newfound understanding of their own culture.

Culture Bags

The teachers created cultural bags to represent their life experiences, using their life sketches to guide what objects to put in their bag. First, teachers made a list of at least 10 objects that represented their cultural selves. These included pictures, music, jewelry, clothing, a book, a journal, etc. Next, they collected these objects and placed them in their bag. They decorated their culture bags and brought them to class the following week. With their classmates, the teachers shared their bags.

During this share time, each partner took notes and jotted down questions related to the cultural artifacts. Having notes and questions on-hand helped to extend the conversations after all of the items in the bags were shared.

The teachers then created a list of similarities and differences they identified while sharing their culture bags. We heard teachers share comments such as, "I never thought we were so different. We look so much alike!" Or, "I never really thought about how regional differences influenced the way we talk to kids."

Cultural Autobiographies

The teachers wrote their cultural autobiographies as described by Schmidt (1998). They used their life sketches, culture bags, and questions from partners to launch their autobiographical writing and were also asked to include education and schooling experiences, reading and writing memories, family, religious traditions, recreation, victories, and defeats in their final autobiographies. When complete, autobiographies were shared by volunteers with the class. Many of the beginning teachers struggled with what aspects of their autobiographies counted as culture and/or individual factors. Several struggled with including unpleasant and painful memories in their narratives and questioned the importance of these events on teaching and learning.

One teacher wrote about her experience completing the autobiography as "difficult and challenging." She shared, "Describing my childhood has always been difficult for me because I didn't really like much of it." Another teacher explained, "It was really painful exploring these topics and sharing them with others. But now I can see how we bring all of these experiences to teaching."

Cultural Others

Several practices were intended to create opportunities for teachers to get to know someone who is "culturally different" from themselves so that they could begin to confront assumptions or stereotypes that they might have held.

Biographies

As explained by Schmidt (1998), the teachers conducted three in-depth unstructured interviews of a person culturally different and wrote about her key life events in a 5-7-page paper. Next, teachers

transcribed their interviews and generated questions to explain their data based on our previous discussions in class. While doing this assignment, teachers grappled with finding someone culturally different than themselves. Interestingly, even though the teachers were encouraged to interview another person who was ethnically or socio-economically different from them, many chose a friend or an acquaintance from work or church to interview.

As one teacher explained, "we are friends and I already feel comfortable talking with her." Once the teachers identified a person to interview, writing a person's biography was difficult for many of the teachers because they did not want to misrepresent another person's life story and found it "challenging to question another person about their cultural practices and values."

For example, one teacher wrote that she had never been an advocate of inter-racial marriages prior to interviewing her friend Patty; however, Patty grew up in an inter-racial family. The teacher explained,

I did not want to make her feel bad that I held reservations about the fact that her parents had an inter-racial relationship, even though I had been brought up to see this as a no-no... I had not yet examined my own feelings and attitudes about inter-racial relationships, so this made me feel uncomfortable.

Cross-Cultural Analysis

The teachers created a Venn diagram that compared the similarities and differences between themselves and their interviewee's biographical information. They used their Venn Diagrams to write a paper that specifically described the differences between themselves and the person they interviewed with explanations of personal discomfort and admiration.

Cross-cultural comparisons and analyses were shared with classmates during each step (biography, cross cultural diagram, and cross-cultural analysis paper). As teachers shared, we wrote down comments made by the teachers and asked them to reflect on their experiences interviewing and comparing themselves to another person. Many grappled with identifying differences and preferred to identify similarities, claiming that differences pulled them apart but similarities drew them together. One teacher shared, "It was safe to be alike and just look over differences and appreciate that...but I couldn't do it anymore."

Comparing their life stories with

another culturally different individual served as a catalyst for pushing teachers to question their deeply-held biases and stereotypes about certain cultures and ethnic groups. Through close inspection, some came to see that their stereotypes were not descriptive of individuals they had interviewed. Karen explained, "I did not personally believe that coming from a lower socioeconomic class or being anything other than White would put you at a disadvantage for learning. I see now that I have unconsciously placed labels on Rob (interviewee) I've become aware of these stereotypes." From a Bakhtinian perspective, the teachers' internally persuasive discourses were being influenced by the experiences of their interviewees. As they assimilated another person's life experiences and critically questioned their own stereotypes, their ideologies were shifting.

Multicultural Curriculum

Several of the practices were intended to help teachers to make curricular decisions that could allow for more varied perspectives and information sources within their future classrooms.

Curricular Connections

The teachers created a one-page proposal that outlined a lesson idea for using autobiographies, biographies, and cross-cultural analyses (Schmidt, 1998) with their students. The proposals reflected the teachers' commitment to multicultural education and cross-cultural understandings throughout their professional life. They used their proposals to create a multicultural thematic literacy unit organized with a set of 10 texts (related children's books), two language charts (Hoffman & Roser, 1991) to document student literary responses, three reading activities related to the text set, and an original readers' theatre.

This assignment challenged many of the teachers' beliefs about the role multiculturalism plays in literacy instruction, and the importance of home/school connections. It also forced them to move beyond deficit beliefs about students and their parents. Many wrestled with ways to apply their literacy units with students. For example, a teacher explained, "I started to see that in order to be a good teacher you have to be willing to step into the culture of your students. You can't just give them your culture and say this is the way or the school's culture ... but I am trying to figure out how I am going to do that."

Others struggled with finding ap-

propriate texts to meet the needs of the students and expressed frustration with the age-appropriateness of their multicultural units especially with young children in Pre-K and Kindergarten.

Discussions, Readings, and In-Class Activities

During the course, the teachers were assigned readings that confronted many of their previously-held beliefs. These readings were supported with in-class and online discussions as well as with particular in-class activities such as developing visual representations and inviting guests to speak about issues presented in the readings from a more personal perspective.

Course Readings

The course readings challenged and often threatened teachers' personal and social identities and contradicted their personal frames of reference. Table 1 includes a list of articles and films that confronted teachers deeply-held ideas and beliefs about culture, literacy, and language. Some teachers expressed emotional shock or "cognitive dissonance" (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001) either in class discussions or online. They experienced tensions as they encountered ideas that felt unpleasant or challenged their previous beliefs.

For example, like other researchers and teacher educators have reported (e.g., McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001; Willis & Meacham, 1996) articles such as McIntosh's (1988) "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" forced teachers to examine issues of power, race, and White privilege and challenged core beliefs about being White, middle-class teachers. Other readings that caused teachers to feel discomfort included Kozol's (1991) *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, Delpit's (1995) *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, and McMillon and McMillon's (2004) chapter titled, "The Empowering Literacy Practices of an African American Church."

Course readings often served as an authoritative voice and threatened teachers' previous beliefs and concepts about the educational system, power relations between teachers and students, and discrimination. A few teachers objected to course readings, stating that the authors either "blamed teachers and schools for everything," or "lacked viable solutions." Assaf responded to the teachers' resistance by encouraging teachers to openly discuss their issues in class and in our online discussion board.

Online Reflections

The teachers voiced their opinions, understandings, and disagreements with course readings and with others' beliefs in their online reflections. Five times during the semester, teachers responded to course readings by posting online reflections to an online discussion board. Online, teachers summarized course readings, examined their questions and concerns, and shared any "aha" moments. In addition to posting online reflections, teachers were required to respond to their classmates' online reflections. We read online postings, clarified misunderstandings and answered questions related to course readings.

Online reflections and responses made

it acceptable for teachers to disagree and discuss tensions related to the course readings and class discussions. McFalls and Cobb-Roberts (2001) described an awareness of mental discomfort due to cognitive dissonance as metadissonance. They claimed that metadissonance reduces resistance to difficult readings related to diversity issues. Online reflections and responses to peers provided a space for teachers to become metacognizant of their tensions and to articulate their feelings in a safe place. Online responses also served as discussion starters for face-to-face class meetings and helped the group respond to specific issues and personal concerns.

T-Charts

T-charts were used as visual representations to help teachers examine their previous beliefs about literacy and culture and newly presented understandings. For example, the teachers were asked, "What is literacy?" In groups, they brainstormed ideas related to literacy. Next, the class came together, identified common ideas from their group work, and wrote them on a large T-Chart. On the left side of the chart, the teachers wrote their initial comments. They wrote learning about books, concepts of print, reading/writing, letters/sounds/words, recognition of signs and symbols, numbers, comprehension, and recognizing types of sentence structures.

Table 1. Print and Media That Prompted Tensions.

ABC News/ABC Media Concepts (1970/1991). *The eye of the storm* [W. Peters, Director/Writer/Producer]. Mount Kisco, NY: Center for Humanities/ABC News.

Bausch, L. (2003). Just words: Living and learning the literacies in our students' lives. *Language Arts*, 80, 215-221.

Delpit, L. (1991). A conversation with Lisa Delpit. *Language Arts*, 68, 541-547.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: The New Press.

Flores, B., Cousin, P. T., & Diaz, E. (1991). Transforming deficit myths about learning, language, and culture. *Language Arts*, 68, 369-379. Reprinted in 1998 in M. F. Opitz, (Ed.), *Literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students* (pp. 27-38). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Freire, P. (1970/2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum.

Gonzalez, N., Moll, L., Floyd-Tenery, M., Rivera, A., Rendon, P., Gonzales, R., & Amanta, C. (1993). Teacher research on funds of knowledge: Learning from households. Educational practice report 6. National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. University of Arizona.

Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: Crown.

McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack*. Retrieved on October 27, 2004, from <http://www.utoronto.ca/acc/events/peggy1.htm>

McMillon G., & McMillon, R. (2004). The empowering literacy practices of an African American church. In F. B. Boyd and C. H. Brock (Eds.), *Multicultural and multilingual literacy and language contexts and practices* (pp. 280-303). New York: Guilford Press.

Moll, L. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory into Practice*, 31, 132-141.

Mun Wah, L. (Producer), & Hunter, M. (Co-producer). (1994). *The color of fear* [Motion Picture]. Oakland, CA: Stir-Fry Productions.

Nieto, S. (2002). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives for a new century*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Nieto, S. (2003). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. New York: Longman.

Opitz, M. (Ed.) (1998). *Literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Powell, R. G. (1989/1998). Johnny can't talk either: The perpetuation of the deficit theory in classrooms. *The Reading Teacher*, 42, 670-674. Reprinted in 1998 in M. F. Opitz (Ed.) *Literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students* (pp. 21-26). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Rueda, R., & Garcia, E. (2003). Assessing and assisting performance of diverse learners: A view of responsive teaching in action. In A. I. Willis, G. E. Garcia, R. B. Barrera, V. J. Harris (Eds.), *Multicultural issues in multicultural literacy research and practice* (pp. 203-222). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Schmidt, P. R. (1998). The ABC's of cultural understanding and communication. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 31(2), 28-38.

Schmidt, P. R. (2001). The power to empower: Creating home/school relationships with the ABC's of cultural understanding and communication. In P. R. Schmidt & P. Mosenthal (Eds.), *Reconceptualizing literacy in the new age of multiculturalism and pluralism* (pp. 389-443). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Twiss, L. L. (1997/1998). Acceptance and caring are at the heart of engaging classroom diversity. *The Reading Teacher*, 50, 602-604. Reprinted in 1998 in M. F. Opitz, (Ed.), *Literacy instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students* (pp. 53-56). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Worthy, J., Rodriguez-Galindo, A., Assaf, L. C., Martinez, L., & Cuero, K. (2003). Fifth-grade bilingual students and precursors to subtractive schooling. *Bilingual Research*, 27, 275-294.

Table 2. Children's Books That Prompted Tensions.

Voices in the park. Browne, A. (1998). New York: KD Publishing.

Skin again. hooks, b. & Raschka, C. (2004). New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Family pictures: Cuadros de familia. Garza, C. L. (1990). San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

In my family: En mi familia. Garza, C. L. (1996). San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

The upside down boy: El niño de cabeza. Herrera, J. F. & Gómez, E. (2000). San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Pepita talks twice. Latchman, O. D. & Delange, A. P. (1995). Houston, TX: Piñata Books.

My name is Jorge on both sides of the river: Poems in English and Spanish. Medina, J. & Broeck, F. V. (1999). Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

The keeping quilt. Polacco, P. (1998). New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Mr. Lincoln's way. Polacco, P. (2001). New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

Pink and say. Polacco, P. (1994). New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

My very own room: Mi propio cuartito. Pérez, A. I. & Gonzalez, M.C. (2000). San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Esperanza rising. Ryan, P. M. (2002). New York: Scholastic.

Hey you! C'mere! A poetry slam. Swados, E. & Cepeda, J. (2002). New York: Arthur A. Levine Books.

In order to get teachers to think about the social nature of literacy, teachers were asked to recall their life sketches and their autobiographical assignments, to think about their experiences with literacy growing up, and to discuss their connections with literacy, emphasizing the idea that literacy is contextualized. New ideas were written on the right side of the chart. These included: Processing, problem solving, listening, signs/symbols, environment plays a role, equal to understanding, reading/writing specific things like a church song book, a bill or a restaurant menu, and meaning/comprehension.

We discussed how literacies change depending on time and place and how literate practices take place in any setting at all ages. This chart and the culture T-chart served as instructional references that teachers used throughout the semester to revisit their previous understanding of literacy and their new learning. One teacher stated, "I thought literacy was just reading and writing not all of this other stuff." This traditional perspective of literacy was based on the teachers' previously held beliefs and past experiences in school and represented their authoritative discourse about reading instruction.

The T- charts allowed the teachers to revisit old and new concepts and talk about their discomfort as their ideas about literacy were changing. Another teacher said,

When Professor Assaf asked us to define literacy that day on the board and we wrote all that stuff that we thought was literacy and finding out that we knew nothing. That wowed me right there...Just learning that literacy is more than reading and writing...now I look at everything around us differently. I'm looking at how others speak to me, what language is, how it is spoken, even art.

Guest Speakers

Two guest speakers were invited to the class to provide personal, unique perspectives on cultural influences on literacy. One guest speaker, Naveen, was from India, attending graduate school in the U.S. Prior to his visit, the teachers researched a tourist website from his hometown and wrote down five questions related to his culture and educational background.

When Naveen came to our class he shared many interesting stories of going to school in India, the social class structure, and his goals for coming to America. The teachers then explored similarities and differences between their life stories and

Naveen's cultural background. As a class, we discussed these similarities and differences and how they made us feel. We also discussed discomfort in asking questions and feeling intrusive.

The second guest speaker, Cecilia, a bilingual woman in her early 20s, shared about her experiences in school as an English Language Learner (ELL) and the struggles she experienced with teachers and school policy. Cecilia's personal accounts matched much of what we were reading on subtractive schooling (Valenzuela, 1999) and bilingual education and illustrated real-life experiences of discrimination.

One teacher wrestled with Cecilia's story and how it impacted her self-image and professional goals as a bilingual teacher. One teacher explained,

Cecilia was holding on to something that was part of her bilingualism and I felt like I was letting go of something that was part of me... and it got me thinking. Being a bilingual teacher... why I am doing this? Just because I have Spanish in my background, so what? Why is that so important to me?

All of these instructional practices highlighted, and the carefully selected course readings, influenced the ways in which these teachers came to think about multiculturalism and literacy instruction and ultimately contributed to what was internally persuasive for them (Freedman & Ball, 2004). As Bakhtin (1981) explains, the internally persuasive discourses of these beginning teachers will continue to change and be shaped by multiple social interactions with others. In the section that follows, we explore multiple strategies that teacher educators can use to create and manage tensions in a multicultural teacher education course.

Question 2: How can tensions be created and managed in a multicultural teacher education course?

Developing a deep sense of connection between members of the class created an environment of mutual respect, trust and caring. This sense of connection was cultivated through the building of community, shared empowerment, opportunities for shared reflection, and the use of multiple teaching approaches.

Building Community

We built a community of learners

where teachers felt deeply connected to their classmates by sharing their personal narratives, cross-cultural analyses, and everyday stories of being a teacher. In order to set up an environment that was both challenging and safe, the group worked together to construct ground rules for our class discussions.

Building on Bucher's (2004) suggestions for difficult discussions, the class agreed on the following expectations: (1) Be as open and honest as you feel you can be; try to move beyond your comfort zone; (2) Respect each person's right to be heard and to share their own experiences; (3) Be an active participant; (4) Realize that we are all learners and teachers; and (5) If someone pushes a "hot button" of yours, it is okay to let the group know what it is and how it makes you feel.

These ground rules served as guidelines for how personal understandings were shared and challenged. For many of the class participants, this preliminary step towards creating a more democratic environment challenged what they perceived as the teacher's role as "rule maker." Several teachers mentioned that they appreciated this as a model for their own classrooms.

We explored our similarities and differences as individuals and related these discoveries to teaching in diverse schools. Developing mutual respect and collegiality among members of the class opened channels for sharing heartfelt dialogue where individuals were more inclined to share uncomfortable views and feelings. The teachers reported that they took more risks and shared their personal learning stories when they felt respected and honored for their individual contributions. As the teachers worked together and struggled with authoritative and internally persuasive discourses voiced in class and in the course readings, a community of learners provided a space for collective thinking and transformation.

Shared Empowerment

The teachers were involved in the shaping of course discussions and encouraged to take ownership for our class culture. They jointly created class expectations. Additionally, they were asked for feedback on course content, teaching approaches, and the learning environment. We built a shared commitment towards listening and learning from each other's perspectives and exploring how our intentions guide our decisions and actions about multicultural teaching and learning.

Reflection

We encouraged thoughtful reflection of individual thinking, attitudes, and behaviors that caused tension. We examined our learning experiences from the course readings, class discussions, and other class activities. We used an online discussion board to ask questions of ourselves and of one another while considering new answers for troubling problems. These reflections allowed us to reflect on our belief systems, assumptions, and biases. They helped us to examine our prejudices and privileges often taken for granted as teachers.

Multiple Teaching Approaches

In order to match teachers' diverse learning and cultural preferences, we used a variety of teaching approaches (e.g., small/large group discussions, role playing, graphic organizers, movies, guest speakers, reading children's picture books), and different course assignments (e.g., online and face-to-face reflections, group projects, personal narratives). Light-hearted and serious discussions were balanced through the sharing our own confessional, often humorous, stories of teaching in diverse communities.

Much like Valerio (2001) discovered, using humor helped everyone feel more comfortable with each other and allowed the teachers to see those who were more experienced as fallible individuals also on a journey of self-discovery and cultural understanding. Flexibility, a key component in Assaf's teaching plans, also kept the teachers' needs and concerns foremost important in our teaching.

These support strategies, described above, helped the teachers to challenge their existing internally persuasive discourses and motivated them to struggle with authoritative discourses within their own cultures. We created a learning environment that built connections between individuals, supported open expressions of emotional discomfort, and pushed teachers to examine their own ideologies in comparison to others.

In the last part of this article, we discuss multiple challenges and opportunities for a maintaining a multicultural teacher education course where ideological becoming is nurtured.

Question 3: What are the challenges and opportunities?

The rich and complex ideological envi-

ronment inside our multicultural literacy teacher education course yielded numerous opportunities for teachers to decide what would be internally persuasive for them. In other words, it offered plenty opportunities for teachers to further develop their ideologies as they prepared to teach in diverse classrooms.

The instructional practices utilized throughout the semester helped teachers explore their cultural identities and become sensitive to cultural biases. They reconceptualized literacy as a socially-situated practice and confronted deficit myths related to English Language Learners.

As teachers shared in class and through online reflections, they were exposed to multiple voices and viewpoints that influenced their developing ideologies. By becoming metacognizant of tensions and struggles imposed by discussing difficult issues such as race, power, and discrimination, the teachers came to understand the complexity involved in teaching children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For instance, one teacher shared how the concepts around subtractive schooling transformed how she viewed her experiences as a young child and her future as a teacher:

A lot of things were told to me that I was supposed to assimilate. And basically I did. And it was this class that I finally felt, because I always used to feel like I was dumb, and I finally felt that, you know, I'm not dumb. It is the system that makes people feel that way.

Creating an ideological environment is not without many challenges. Teacher educators must establish a balance between creating tensions and nurturing a safe learning environment without alienating individuals. If teachers feel threatened or silenced they will resist the very issues we hope to impress upon them. They will rely on authoritative discourses that inform traditional modes of teaching and learning instead of integrating new ways to think about multicultural education. If this happens, teachers will continue to teach the way they were taught (Lortie, 1975), reproducing inequities and discrimination in schools.

Finding course readings and implementing effective instructional practices that bring in multiple voices and viewpoints take much effort. Not only do they need to be able to facilitate appropriate multicultural topics, they need to examine their own identities and personal barriers when addressing issues of diversity and

race. Banks (2001) suggested that White faculty are often quite fearful of dealing with race issues with students, regardless of whether they teach White students or students of color, because the faculty do not feel equipped to do so. White faculty fear they will make a serious mistake and be labeled a racist.

We made many mistakes throughout the semester and openly disclosed these mistakes with the teachers in the course. For example, one day in front of the entire class, Assaf asked a Mexican-American teacher to translate a Spanish script into English, not realizing that she was not a fluent bilingual reader. Put on the spot, the teacher attempted to translate the piece but became very embarrassed and stopped abruptly. She admitted to the class that she was not a proficient Spanish reader and that she was terribly ashamed by her lack of knowledge. Assaf apologized to the teacher and the others within the class, explaining that her own assumptions about the teacher's Hispanic background and confessing that she had put the teacher in a very uncomfortable position as a learner. Assaf's false assumption about the teacher started a class discussion on stereotypes and how our views effect our teaching.

This was only one example that illustrates the need for faculty to position themselves as learners and avoid traditional authority roles as sole holders of knowledge. They must be willing to be vulnerable, model risk-taking, and disclose personal information to their students in order to demonstrate their willingness to experience tension and struggle with challenging issues. At the same time, teacher educators must be aware of the constraints facing them as they attempt to convey ideological changes.

As students journey through tensions brought up by controversial course topics, teacher educators' expertise and knowledge base are often called into question. Students typically blame teacher educators for their feelings of uncertainty and call into question the importance of a course specifically addressing multicultural education (Willis & Meacham, 1996). Teacher educators must expect hostile attitudes by some students and find creative ways to uphold their own self-respect and commitment to multicultural teaching and learning.

Supporting Teachers' Ideological Becoming

Hernandez (1989) argued that teacher educators who teach multicultural educa-

tion courses too often focus on curricular or content aspects of multicultural education and rarely deal with the process of changing teachers' belief systems related to multicultural education. This article presents a host of practices that have supported teachers' ideological becoming as they prepare to teach in classrooms serving culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. By using a Bakhtinian lens, we invite teacher educators to understand their task not as a series of curricular implementations, but rather as a means for inducing the tensions necessary to nurture the development of teachers' beliefs and ideologies.

Lastly, as Banks (2001) and others (Irvine, 2003; Sleeter, 2001) remind us, preparing teachers for the multicultural classrooms of today and the diverse classrooms of tomorrow is a process that will not be accomplished by taking a single teacher education course. Universities and teacher education programs must collectively make commitments to integrate multicultural instruction with all teaching methods courses. Changes by teacher education programs should be accompanied by reforms in K-12 schools where well-prepared teacher education graduates work with caring, sensitive teachers committed to recognizing and valuing diversity. Within these schools, teachers need to be empowered to make decisions, develop curriculum for their students, and feel connected to the community (Irvine, 2003).

Creating ideological environments that challenge teachers' deeply held assumptions and views that constitute their internally persuasive discourses and provide multiple viewpoints and voices is a process that takes time and commitment. Although we will always be contributing to an imperfect process, we can still strive to provide opportunities for teachers to experience the tension necessary to transform ideologies. As one teacher explained,

I thought some of my old ideas were complete and then I thought of some new things that I was learning, and I am trying to absorb all of the information.. and say 'yeah, I agree.' But do I really? Is that what she is really saying? Or do I have a better grasp of it? Everything they were giving us created tension.

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