

Flowers, Fruits, & Fingers

Preservice Teachers Write about Difficult Topics for a Child Audience

Brian Williams, Laura A. May, & Rhina Fernandes Williams

Introduction

Urban schools face tremendous challenges as structural factors place increasing constraints on teaching and learning (Cummins, 2002; Sleeter, 1992; Weiner, 2000). Yet ultimately it is the teacher, rather than the method or curricular program, that makes the difference in creating opportunities for success in the urban classroom (Bartolome, 1994; Cummins, 2002; Desai, 1997; Diaz & Flores, 2001).

Consequently, the sociocultural and political ideologies, beliefs, and philosophies that teachers bring with them into the classroom can have a tremendous impact on students' access to quality education (Bartolome & Balderrama, 2001; Bartolome & Macedo, 1997; Bartolome, 2008). No teacher is ideologically neutral (Bartolome, 2008).

Teaching and learning happen within a sociocultural and political context, with the teacher usually serving as the mediator of this context (Bartolome, 1997; 2008). As a result, the teacher's ideological stance affects her beliefs about student abilities, her attitudes towards students' families and communities, and how she positions students in relation to the instructional content.

However, it is not only a teacher's ideological stance that matters. A teacher's willingness to engage in critical examination of issues of inequity, power, and privilege is also important. Teachers have learned not to talk about issues such as race (Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003) and White dominance (Gutierrez, 2005/6).

Because "decentering power" requires

critical thinking that only dialogue can generate (Freire, 1970/2000), silence cannot be allowed to surround uncomfortable topics in education designed to prepare citizens for a democracy. The dialogic nature of education (Freire 1970/2000) requires that we also examine and develop their approaches to social justice topics with children, for "[w]ithout dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education" (pp. 92-93).

The authors of this article work in a university-based teacher preparation program designed to prepare teachers to serve in urban, historically underserved schools. Entrance to the program is competitive. Preservice teachers are selected, in part, for their rich life experiences and interest in working in high-needs schools. Even with this high-quality, diverse pool of preservice teachers, however, we persistently nudge our students to become more ideologically aware (Bartolome, 2008) and push back against deficit perspectives on urban schools and communities (Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semington, 2008; Dworin & Bomer, 2008; Valencia, 1997; Valencia, 2011).

This article reports on an analysis of an initial assignment in this teacher preparation program which is oriented towards preparing culturally relevant pre-service teachers for urban settings. Using constant comparative methods, we examined children's books written by the preservice teachers about an issue related to pluralism, activism, and/or social justice. The following question guided this study:

◆ How do preservice teachers in a program devoted to urban, multicultural education write about topics related to pluralism, activism, and social justice for a child audience?

◆ Specifically, we were interested in which course topics the pre-service teachers selected for their writing and how they wrote for children once they selected a topic.

Preservice Teacher Development

Attention to ideology has typically not been a part of traditional teacher preparation programs (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Darder, 1991; Haberman, 1996; Howard & Aleman, 2008). Evidence exists, however, that lessening the deficit orientations of preservice teachers is possible (Rogers & Mosley, 2008; Quartz & TEP, 2003). A growing body of research and theory examines preservice teacher development of cultural competence and non-deficit orientations towards their child and adolescent students (see, for example, Buehler, Gere, Dallavis, & Haviland, 2009; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Haviland, Gere, Buehler, & Dallavis, 2009).

Consequently, program faculty work diligently towards the development of a "broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows [pre-service teachers] to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 162). Because preservice teacher development is not an end unto itself but a prerequisite for the sort of discussions we hope to see them have with their own future students, we also see the need to monitor the development of their willingness to engage in this dialogue with children.

Because ideology works within culture, culture plays a valuable role in education. Culture, the ways in which a group of people makes meaning of their experiences through language, beliefs, and social practices, is continually constructed. But schools often fail to build on the experiences of all of their students. Nelson (1996) argues that content knowledge is often taught in a manner that values the beliefs, experiences, and knowledge of White, English speaking, upper and middle class students; other students' strengths and worldviews are often overlooked.

Consequently, some researchers (Atwater, 1996; Heath, 1983; Irvine, 1990; Lee, 1997) contend that a cultural discontinuity

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exist between some students (e.g., poor students, Black students, or Spanish-speaking students) and the mainstream, White, middle class culture that is prevalent in most schools. For example, in her study of eight African-American teachers, Ladson-Billings (1995) argued that there is often a 'discontinuity' between what African American students experience in their communities and the ways in which their teachers relate to and interact with them in the classroom. According to Ladson-Billings, traditional, or assimilationist teaching methods do not account for Black students' specific learning styles or the influence of these students' cultural perspectives on their learning. Consequently, teachers and schools too frequently under-serve some groups of students.

Effective teachers scaffold or build bridges between the knowledge students carry with them from their communities and what is being taught in an effort to facilitate the learning process (Ladson-Billings, 1994). By using these cultural referents in their teaching, teachers empower their students academically, socially, emotionally, and politically.

Although researchers argue that this culturally relevant pedagogy is an effective strategy, teachers who plan to implement it in their classrooms need a sound understanding of their own and their students' cultural identity, the content being taught, and the ways in which these elements interact in the classroom. The urban-focused program in which we teach and learn works from the understanding that from the very beginning of their initial preparation, teachers should be introduced to topics related to culture and equity.

Research Methodology

Research Context

This research study took place at a state university located in the center of a large urban area in the southeastern part of the United States. The program in which we teach and conducted our research is a two-year certification and master's program. They get their certificate after the first year, the master's degree after the second. It is for individuals who have an undergraduate degree—typically from a non-education field—and are committed to teaching in urban elementary schools.

A small percentage of these students come to us directly upon graduating from an undergraduate program. Most have spent at least a few years pursuing a career that is not in the field of education.

Some have worked in education in a role that does not require a teaching certificate (e.g., working at a daycare center, tutoring at a center designed to help children with autism, etc.).

The program was designed to address the large need for competent, committed, reflective teachers interested in working in urban schools. The program focuses on developing theoretical knowledge as well as practical classroom experience supported by intensive coaching and continuous professional development tailored to meet the joys and challenges of teaching in an urban environment. Through a Transition to Teaching Grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education, stipends are awarded to all students entering the program in exchange for a signed three-year service agreement to teach in high-needs urban elementary schools.

The first year of the program focuses on the knowledge of instructional content (pre-K through fifth grade), coaching in instruction, and management skills with an emphasis on culturally relevant pedagogy. The program is organized around four integrated strands of instruction: literacy, mathematics, culture, and classroom management.

In an effort to provide the preservice teachers enrolled in the program with the preparation needed to implement culturally relevant pedagogy, the program of study begins with an intense three-week course. Beginning each May, a cohort of 20-to-30 students begins the program with a six-semester-hour course entitled Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, co-taught by the first and third authors of this article. The course incorporates an overnight retreat intended to promote community building.

Through a process of critical discourse and reflection, students explore the meaning of culture and its influence on *the self* and *the other*, as well as the role that culture plays in teaching and learning. Within this course, students examine the influence of such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, language, culture, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, privilege, and power on teaching and learning in urban schools.

The course is designed to provide the students with (1) a broad understanding of the history of issues related to education in culturally and linguistically diverse communities and (2) contemporary perspectives on these issues as they pertain to the United States educational system. The course utilizes readings, discussions, simulations, and other activities to explore sociopolitical factors as well as structural

and cultural factors that influence the school achievement of students who come from diverse backgrounds.

In addition to the content related to the role of culture in teaching and learning, the course is also designed to cultivate an understanding and utilization of critical consciousness. The term, translated from the Portuguese word *conscientizadora*, is rooted in the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970). According to Freire, critical consciousness is realized through a critical investigation of the world and its inherent political, economic, and social contradictions (Freire, 1970).

Through dialogue, students question ideas, structures, and systems that are accepted as status quo. How are inequities structured in a community? How is access to capital denied to some groups? Who benefits from unearned privileged? This type of education is fundamentally different from Freire's idea of banking education used to describe and critique the traditional educational system. In banking education, teachers utilize their position of power to actively deposit ideas and knowledge into the passive, ignorant minds of their students. This type of education maintains the system of oppression and, more important, can teach students to accept their marginalized or oppressed status in society.

Shor (1992), speaks to these two forms of education when he states that "in forming ... students' conception of self and the world, teachers can present knowledge in several ways, as a celebration of the existing society, as a falsely neutral avoidance of problems rooted in the system, or as a critical inquiry into power and knowledge as they relate to student experience." The Culturally Responsive Pedagogy course is designed to provide a space for preservice teachers to develop a deep understanding of the system of education, begin the process of defining important problems, and consider ways to solve the problems through collective and individual agency.

This course covers a number of topics related to historical perspectives on pluralism in the United States of America as well as contemporary issues related to equity, social justice, and educational opportunity. Topics covered in the course include: early history of Europeans, Indigenous People, Africans in the New England colonies and United States of America, race and racism, cultural diversity, stereotypes, privilege, social class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, intelligence, and linguistic diversity.

In addition to this content, the course

examines how schools and other institutions structure inequality (e.g., school-to-prison pipeline, tracking). Finally, the entire course and associated content is framed by three key ideas: culturally responsive pedagogy, teaching as a political act, and collective agency.

We are not under the illusion that one course, no matter how thoughtfully implemented, can fully address all of these issues. Like Middleton (2002), however, we have found that important progress towards ameliorating deficit thinking occurs when we provide opportunities for our students to engage in critical reflection on their own beliefs and experiences from the very beginning of the program. While this is the only course that focus solely on issues related to culture, power, privilege, and equity in urban education, this content is embedded in the other courses which compose the program's course of study. Furthermore, we believe that this work impacts how they will teach.

Writing for Children

As participants in the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy course, students write an *original* children's book designed for use in a classroom as a means of engaging children in discussions or classroom activities about a issues related to pluralism (e.g., language, culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, or gender), an issue related to equity, power, and privilege (e.g., racism, censorship, or White privilege), and/or ideas related to activism and social justice (movement building, fairness, or collective agency).

The assignment is intended to challenge the preservice teachers to consider the ways they might incorporate the content of the course into their work with children. Furthermore, writing a children's book requires that students think deeply about ideas, unpack complex topics, and incorporate modes of interaction which are appropriate to and for elementary school children.

Beyond the text of the book, preservice teachers face additional requirements. The book must be written so an elementary school student can understand and enjoy it. It must contain illustrations that connect to and support the text of the book. The students must provide a written rationale at the end of the book explaining why they have chosen the specific subject of their book, the appropriate age-range of the audience, the intended goal of the book, and the possible uses of the book in an elementary school classroom.

There is no mandatory length for the book. However, students are encouraged to create books that can be read aloud by a teacher in a short period of time (10-to-15 minutes). Students begin working on and complete their children's books during the last two weeks of the course. They share their books with the other members of the cohort on the final day of the course.

As part of the children's book assignment, students are required to connect their book to the content or key ideas of the course. This connection is to be defined and related to the main theme of the book in a rationale on the final page.

Research Participants

Twenty-one students enrolled the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy course in the first year of the program comprised the participant group (one student of the 22 enrolled in the course declined to participate in the study). Of the 21 students, 91% were female. Self-identified demographics of the group were as follows: 47% African American, 5% Asian American, and 47% European American (non-Latino). The average age of the cohort upon entering the program was 26.5 years old with a range of 22 to 41 years.

These demographics demonstrate the diversity that typically exists within the program. The preservice teachers who enter the program tend to have different life experiences than those of most preservice teachers. In addition to the work histories that occur prior to beginning this teacher development program, our student cohorts are much more ethnically diverse than typical for both teacher preparation programs and public school teachers (Frankenburg, 2009; NCES, 2007).

Data Sources

Four sources comprised our data: the text in the children's books, the illustrations from the children's books, the rationales for the books written by the preservice teachers, and transcriptions from semi-structured interviews with the pre-service teachers about the writing of the books (see Table 1 for the interview protocol). Interviews lasted around 15 minutes and were transcribed by a graduate research assistant.

Analysis

Initially, all three authors read and re-read the children's books and purpose statements written about the books and closely examined the images that made

up the illustrations, taking notes during reading. During this first examination, the authors met weekly (four times) to discuss emerging findings. These discussions prompted the research team to begin a more systematic coding system of the texts. Each author then returned the children's books and purpose statements individually, describing these data sets more systematically.

The categories for this level of analysis were: book topic as defined by author, book topic as defined by reader/researcher, intent defined by author, illustration context, illustration content, characters, which characters hold agency, level of change, which characters are changed, obstacle to be overcome, solution to obstacles, how the solution was developed, and how the solution was implemented.

Because all but two of the children's books took the form of a fictional narrative, the research team then examined each of them through the lens of the following literary elements: characterization, setting, plot, point of view, and theme. Two separate charts made up of three of the data sources were then used to determine patterns across the text of the children's books. The interview transcripts were then examined for confirmation or contradictions with identified patterns.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established in several ways including: the involvement of three researchers with emic perspectives, use of constant comparative methods with four triangulated data sets, and the large number of interviewees.

Table 1
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

1. Why did you select the topic of _____ for your book?
2. Characters drive the story. Why or how did you select _____ as characters for your book?
3. For what ages do you think your book would be appropriate? Why?
4. What big thematic unit might this book fit into?
5. If given the opportunity, would you change your book in any way?
6. Have you used this book with children yet?
7. If you were to use the book in your classroom, how might you use it?
8. Are there any reasons that you wouldn't want to share this book with a child?

Limitations

This study is a snapshot, a look at one group of pre-service teachers early in their teacher preparation program. It does not attempt to track the development of pre-service teachers or follow through on the “seeding” that occurs through this particular assignment. Such longer-term studies are needed because teacher development is a fluid, dynamic process that begins well before the pre-service teachers enter our program and will continue throughout their (hopefully long) careers.

Furthermore, it is important to note that we were not able to tease out the extent to which the pre-service teachers found personal discomfort with the topics and to what extent they found the topics appropriate for an unknown future child audience.

Findings

We will first provide an overview of the topics the pre-service teachers chose to write about, with specific attention to which topics pre-service teachers chose as appropriate for a child audience. Second, we describe differences in the books according to the topics selected.

Selected Topics:

Which Were Employed?

Which Were Avoided?

In spite of the fact that the assignment was posed in a way that asked the pre-

service teachers to select from a long list of possible topics, the pre-service teachers tended to select from a smaller subset of the total. Analysis of the children’s books revealed that students limited their selections to topics that fell into these areas: no theme or topic, race or ethnicity, disability, family (including reference to same sex parents), immigration/language, and gender roles. Two of the books’ authors failed to employ a theme from the university course. Five books were about race or ethnicity. One was about disability. Two books were focused on family. Four books treated the topic of immigration/language. Five of the books (30%) focused on gender roles and the acceptance of non-traditional roles for men and women (see Table 2).

As can be seen from the above breakdown, some topics were taken up more often than others. Following Sleeter and Grant’s (2007) taxonomy of approaches to multicultural education, the pre-service teachers tended to select topics that fit into the human relations category often described as the “let’s-all-get-along” approach. Next we examine how the preservice teachers used the children’s book format to present these topics to young children.

**Abstractness of Context:
Characters and Setting**

The pre-service teachers used a variety of different types of characters and settings as they enacted their stories, ranging from invisible (a few books had no

characters) to highly realistic. A close examination of the characters and settings allowed us to analyze the concreteness of the children’s books.

At the most abstract end of the continuum were the books of two students, who rather than situate their texts as stories, elected to use text types that took the form of a uni-directional discussion (i.e., lecture) between author and child. These books allowed for considerable advice-giving to children. The research team found it difficult to categorize these texts. They were not informational, per se; neither did they take the form of a narrative. One student elected to represent the word respect; this book used the individual letters of the word respect to frame her advice-giving (e.g., “R is for recognize. Recognizing we’re different is not bad at all...”). Another student used her book, titled “Dream Chasers,” as an opportunity to encourage children to “hold on tight to [their] dreams.” As a result of their broad contextualization, these two children’s books did not really have characters or settings.

Outside of these two books that avoided any content from the culturally responsive pedagogy course, we found that the more abstract the context, the more likely an “uncomfortable” topic would be present. Within the course, we observed pre-service teachers engaging differently with the various course topics; some much easier to talk about (e.g., sexuality, race) than others (e.g., gender).

Table 2
Breakdown of Books Written by Pre-Service Teachers

	<i>Abstract Context (No Characters or Setting)</i>	<i>Fantasy (non-human characters, magic)</i>	<i>Realistic (disconnected from author’s personal experience)</i>	<i>Realistic (personal connection to author)</i>
<i>No theme</i>	Dream Chasers How Do You Spell Respect?			
<i>Race or ethnicity</i>		What Is Your Story? Fruit Salad A Tiger Tale The Flower in the Weed Ginger the Dog		
<i>Disability</i>		Just Junior		
<i>Family (reference same sex parents)</i>		The Family Tree	What Makes Us Different?	
<i>Immigration/ Language</i>		Scout and Valentine’s Adventure/ El gato en el arbol	Maya’s First Day of School Roberto’s Big Move My New School	
<i>Gender Roles</i>				Go Girl Just Not a Girly Girl Let Me Decide What I Want to Be When I Grow Up Rules for Raven My Book of Friends

When we examined the selected topics in combination while placing the children's books on a concrete/abstractness scale, we found a very interesting spectrum. The less sanctioned the topic (Jones, 2004), the more fantastical the characters and setting. Placing the children's books in three categories—fantasy (non-human characters), realistic but disconnected from author's personal experience, and realistic with a personal connection to the author—we could see a clear pattern.

Some pre-service teachers used fruit, trees, weeds, fish, and small mammals as their characters; these books tended to both address the more difficult to talk about topics. All five of the books about race in addition to two others fell into this category. Some pre-service teachers created human experiences with characters but these stories were disconnected from their own experiences in terms of gender, sexual identity, social class, race, ethnicity, and citizenship status. Only three children's books fit into this category, one about family including a reference to same-sex parents, and three of the four that fell under the category of immigration/language.

Finally, many of the children's books were more autobiographical in nature, connecting directly to the lived experiences of the author. The characters in these books were not only human, but tended to be more nuanced and lived in specific, real-world settings. Interestingly, all the books in this category treated the topic of gender roles.

Abstract Contexts as Risk-Taking

The pre-service teachers seemed to be able to neutralize, at least in part, some controversial topics by setting them in particular contexts. When writing for children about race or ethnicity, disability, and family (with reference to same sex parents), pre-service teachers consistently used non-human subjects as the main characters in the books. Animals, fruits, and plants were used as characters in these books.

For example, the book *Fruit Salad* used different types of fruit happily sharing a bowl with a consistent refrain at the bottom of each page, "They may not look the same on the outside, but on the inside, both are deliciously sweet!" At first glance, the research team expressed disappointment over this simplistic approach to discussing race relations.

When we examined the books next to each other, however, we discovered that every book addressing race/ethnicity or

disability employed fantastical characters. This led us to believe that, perhaps, the abstract, generic contexts provided a way for the pre-service teachers to engage with the more difficult topics rather than avoid them. A close look at the children's books about immigration allowed us to further explore this theory.

Across Categories

Four pre-service teachers addressed immigration/language with their children's books. One book, *Scout and Valentine's Adventure/El gato en el árbol*, incorporated the Spanish language throughout the book into the story. Furthermore, it also addressed immigration through the topic of unsanctioned border crossing. Though the characters were animals, the issues related to immigration were much more complex than those with human characters.

In both *Maya's First Day of School* and *Roberto's Big Move*, each set in classrooms with named teachers and students, the setting and characters were much more realistic. Yet the main characters' problems stayed at the level of language with quite simplistic solutions (i.e., teaching the children a few Spanish words made them appreciate the language, and therefore, the speaker of the language).

The one book written by a pre-service teacher who worked closely with her brother-in-law, who actually had immigrated to the United States from Senegal, was quite different than the other three. She included information related to the concerns of a new student to a new school and country; and, like the fantastical immigration book, included quite a bit of French into the primarily English text. This story also came much closer to the university course content, especially as related to the problem (e.g., difference causing lack of friends) and the solution (e.g., the children got to know each other better through talking).

Even though the characters (teacher/children), setting (classroom), and plot (new child arrives to classroom from another country) were quite similar, the way the immigration topic was addressed had more in common with the fantastical book that used animals as characters, providing further evidence that the more abstract context lessened the unease of the more politically-charged topics when an insider to the topic was uninvolved.

Authenticity and Risk-Taking

All five books written by pre-service

teachers who wrote about an issue they had personally faced related to gender roles. These books were highly personalized. Four were by women; each of these books could have easily carried the subtitle "a book about girl power." The other, written by a male student who had chosen elementary teaching as a career, was about how gender should not determine occupation.

Interestingly, this was quite a diverse group that, as mentioned earlier, did not fit the typical demographics of pre-service teachers. Though half were of color, only the White students wrote about race (using in fantastical contexts). There were also students who had firsthand experience on non-mainstream perspectives with other issues discussed in the university course, including sexuality and disability.

The only students willing to take the risks involved with writing from an authentic perspective wrote about gender. Furthermore, all of these students were African-American. These selections make us pause. It seems clear that some identities are easier to talk about than others. But it is also important to consider that personal identification with a topic might make it more difficult to discuss, not less. As can be seen in the next section, although the writing was difficult, reading the book to a child proved even more difficult.

Sharing (or Failing to Share) the Book with Children

Even though the children's books tended to avoid the more controversial topics, two-thirds of the pre-service teachers had not read their books to children in their placement classrooms when we interviewed them nine months later. There are many possible reasons for not sharing the books (e.g., lack of time in a rigid curriculum, author modesty). Fear of response to the topics also likely contributed to the decision of whether or not to share with children.

Those pre-service teachers who did write about the more controversial topics failed to share their book with children. Some stated the topic as a reason for not sharing. For example, Natalie, who wrote about different kinds of families including those parented by same-sex couples, said,

Some parents feel very strongly about having to be the ones to talk about stuff like that to their kids....parental concern would be my number one hesitation in sharing the book with a child. I am not sure how I would necessarily deal with that. I do feel like the book is very safe and just recognizing the various types of

families that exist but it is a very sensitive topic and parents are just protective when it comes to their children, so I guess I would have to give it a little more thought.

Those pre-service teachers who did share the book with children also took the political nature of the topics into account. For example, when asked, "Are there any reasons that you wouldn't want to share this book with a child?" Sarah said she would read her book to children because, "I can't think of any reason other than somebody getting upset, because there was a girl doing football and a boy doing gymnastics..." This sort of language related to uncertainty about people's response to the book's topic was consistent with this particular interview question, providing further evidence of heightened sensitivity to these topics.

Discussion

This article describes a study of children's books about multicultural topics written by pre-service teachers in response to an initial teacher preparation assignment. Using constant comparative methods, we found considerable differences among which topics were taken up and how they were written about for a child audience. Practical implications for teacher educators follow.

Expecting Too Much

First, it is likely that teacher educators often expect too much from a single course. It seems important that we as teacher educators value the significant work pre-service teachers do and the steps, however small, they make in the right direction. Second, it is important that we think carefully about our assignments; they are often much more complex than originally conceived. Third, preparing preservice teachers for the culturally and linguistically diverse schools they will enter requires that we center issues of diversity throughout the duration of the teacher preparation program.

Engaging with Difficult Topics

Though we've been using this assignment for years, this close analysis has provided useful information for our work with pre-service teachers. Pre-service teachers often struggle in multicultural courses; it is not uncommon for them to express considerable resistance to course topics. When we require students to attend

to difficult topics, however, teacher educators can learn a lot.

In this particular data set, we discovered that, though the pre-service teachers did indeed have sophisticated avoidance strategies, they were also making important moves towards engaging with difficult topics they have previously learned to avoid. The abstract Disney-fication that was initially concerning to the instructors/researchers ended up allowing for considerable risk-taking as the students who used these more abstract contexts engaged with more difficult topics.

Recognizing Complexity

Teacher educators should recognize the tremendous complexity involved in course assignments. The initial thinking behind the children's book assignment may have been quite simple (what do future elementary teachers learn from what we teach?). Our attempts to create an authentic assignment, one that real people do for real reasons outside of classrooms, with a built-in audience (student teachers reading the texts to their students during field placements) resulted in much more involved tasks.

Thus, the children's book assignment resulted in many other filters added to the already difficult task of risk taking. Pre-service teachers were not only expected to write about topics they have been socialized into not addressing and thereby potentially recording/exposing biases, but additional issues related to their assumptions about children were immediately mixed into this particular writing process (e.g., What makes for appropriate subject matter for children? Which ways of approaching difficult subjects are suitable for children?)

No Small Task

Asking pre-service teachers to examine—and change—ideological perspectives in ways that are productive for their future culturally and linguistically diverse students is no small task. It cannot be done in a single course.

In addition to needing considerable time—the duration of a teacher preparation program could easily be considered the minimum allowable—such time must involve concentrated focus on the issues being studied. It seems clear to us that these efforts must be part of all courses in a teacher education program, including content methods courses.

Unfortunately, in these days of stream-

lining programs and increasing attention to the standardized test scores of pre-service teachers' future students, our concern is that many teacher preparation programs are moving in the opposite direction.

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