

Students Find Their Place in History

Using Theatre to Expand Pre-Service Teachers' Multicultural Awareness

Shannon M. Stanton & Gilberto Gonzalez

Scholars for decades now have argued for the importance of multiculturalism in the United States, as we become a more diverse society (Banks, 1988; Gay, 2000; Han & Thomas, 2010; Ladson Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 1985). Multicultural education has the potential to provide a curriculum that is inclusive, offering multiple perspectives, and concerned with equity. Banks (2010) notes that the term multicultural education is used to “describe a wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, and people with disabilities” (p. 7).

It is without question the responsibility of colleges and universities to make sure teachers are prepared to meet the needs of the students they will teach. This includes the need to provide cultural relevancy within a curriculum that still remains very Eurocentric. As the discussions around multicultural education grow, there is a rising concern about how it will best be implemented in the classroom—if it is to be implemented at all.

In most teacher education programs students are exposed to the literature about multicultural education through readings, discussions, lesson planning with a multicultural focus, and various other activities, but too often there is no true connection with the material. Studies have also shown that White pre-service teachers tend to be resistant to multicultural education (Gay & Howard, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). It is therefore essential that pre-service teachers be not only receptive to teaching a multicultural curriculum, but have both

the understanding of why it is important and the relevant skill set to take into their future classrooms.

To address these needs at our college, we created two courses, one in theatre (Gonzalez) and the second in education (Stanton), with the goal of getting pre-service teachers to experience a multicultural curriculum in a more intimate way. This article offers an analysis of the midterm course project that linked these two courses. In the theatre class, *Improvisation for Teachers* (IT), students were asked to express archetypal characters found in migration stories as a way to get them to connect the themes of multiculturalism they were learning in the education course, *Heritage, Identity, and Empowerment* (HIE).

What follows in this discussion on multicultural education is our methodology, an analysis of one of our assignments in the paired courses, and implications for teacher education programs.

Multicultural Education

Fundamentally, multicultural education encompasses a movement in education that seeks to make education equitable for all groups of people. To that end, Bennet (2007) writes:

Multicultural education in the United States is an approach to teaching and learning that is based on democratic values and beliefs and affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world. (p. 4)

Gay (2000) refers to culturally responsive teaching in which teachers teach students from their own cultural perspective. Ladson-Billings (1994) identifies culturally relevant teaching, advocating that the perspectives of students must be present in the curriculum. Banks (1988) provides a framework of four different types of multicultural curriculum reform:

the contributions approach, the ethnic additive approach, the transformative approach, and the decision and social action approach. (Editor's note: For a detailed further discussion of Banks' framework see pages 39 and 40 in this issue).

Common to all of these models is that the goal of multicultural education is to provide *all* students a lens for studying events from the perspectives of different ethnic groups. Nieto and Bode (2008) advocate making “history of all groups visible by making it part of the curriculum, instruction, and schooling in general” (p. 8). This allows students of color to identify with what they are learning yet at the same time allows all students to receive a balanced understanding of history. Nieto and Bode further elaborate that effective multicultural education

... needs to move beyond diversity as a passing fad. It needs to take into account our history of immigration as well as the social, political, and economic inequality and exclusion that have characterized our past and present, particularly our education history. (p. 5)

In many states, policy has embraced the importance of including multicultural education in teacher education by establishing requirements that students take core courses that deal with diversity. California legislation (Senate Bill 2042) mandates that our teacher education programs have components in all of the courses that will enable pre-service teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations. The linguistic course work includes specific strategies for working with English language learners (Fillmore, 1989; Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Soto-Hinman & Hetzel, 2009; Teale, 2009), but it is when we encounter the culturally diverse learner that many of our classes have taken only broad and general swipes

Shannon M. Stanton is an assistant professor in the Department of Education and Gilberto Gonzalez is an assistant professor in the Department of Theatre Arts, both at Whittier College, Whittier, California.

at what that curriculum might contain.

As teacher educators we need to address the cultural side of learning as specifically as the linguistic component. Within Banks' framework (1988) he stresses the need to move beyond additive to more transformative approaches where the goal is an "infusion of various perspectives, frames of reference, and content from various groups that will extend students' understanding of the nature, development, and complexity of U.S. society" (p. 74).

While this gives students a strong initial base from which to work, there must also be some commonly recognized methodology on how to implement such approaches in the classroom. For this to occur, multicultural education needs to be integrated more clearly within the standard curriculum. This has become more difficult in a test-driven era in which teachers are constricted by scripted curriculum and mandatory blocks of time for test preparation.

DomNwachukwu (2005) points to this tension between the standards-based curriculum and multicultural education. He notes that teachers are conflicted and view multicultural education as yet another goal to pursue within their already overly full teaching schedules. DomNwachukwu argues, however, that multicultural content can in fact be incorporated within the standard curriculum. He addresses this issue by identifying ways to integrate a multicultural lens within a seven-step lesson plan: (1) goals and objectives, (2) materials and resources, (3) anticipatory set or entry, (4) instructional input, (5) guided practice, (6) independent practice, and (7) assessment/evaluation.

To this end, we focus on allowing the pre-service teachers to experience a multicultural curriculum in which they and their students can see themselves in an authentic way. With the growing diversity of students in our classrooms, particularly here in California, it is important that all teachers know how to incorporate a solid multicultural focus within their own teaching. In the following sections of this article we describe how our pre-service teachers connected to a multicultural curriculum, how they came to understand the need to implement such a curriculum in their future classroom, and how we equipped these evolving teachers with the classroom skills to do just that.

Methodology

We teach at a small liberal arts college

in California. A quick glance at the spring 2008 course schedule reveals an unlikely first-time pairing of two seemingly different disciplines involving courses in Education and Theatre and Communication Arts. The pairing of courses contributes to an essential component of collaborative teaching and learning by combining the efforts of two professors from these different disciplines. Students enrolled in both courses and the professors observed, contributed to, and attended one another's classes.

Shannon Stanton and Gil Gonzalez, two tenure-track faculty members, prepared this combined offering to embrace notions of teaching and learning about multicultural education alongside the craft of improvisational performance. The objective of the HIE course was to provide teachers with the tools to promote cultural relevancy with not only their students of color, but with all students. Methods for teaching students about their heritage within the confines of the standard curriculum are stressed. For the IT course, the goal was to teach techniques of improvisation and the application of it in performance—specifically conditioning the body, voice, and characterization.

As mentioned previously, teacher education programs are required to include courses that focus on diversity in the classroom. At our college, in addition to the second language acquisition course, there are two other courses for prospective teachers that address these requirements. One focuses on the historical and sociological issues of race and education and the second looks at various pedagogical styles that can be used to prepare teachers to work with diverse populations. What was missing, and thus the reason for creating the new paired courses, was to add a "how to" element. Specifically, we wanted to see how creating a classroom assignment that combines theatre elements and education theory would enhance the students' receptiveness and understanding of multicultural education.

Each course met twice a week on alternate days for 80-minute sessions throughout the 13-week spring semester of 2009. IT had an enrollment of 12 students while the HIE course consisted of 10 students. Since concurrent registration for the paired courses was not required, there were three students in the IT course who did not take HIE and HIE had one student not registered for IT, however that one student participated in all the joint assignments. Eighty percent of the students in the HIE class were pre-service teachers. Fifty percent of the students

were White (including Jewish), 30% were of Latino descent, 10% were African American, and 10% were Asian.

Our analysis looks at three parts of the midterm project (See Appendix): these included the outline of the students' performances, the actual performances (which were recorded), and a written reflection of their performances in addition to student journals collected weekly throughout the course. Taking a qualitative approach, we coded for themes and patterns that were represented throughout all the data (LeCompte, 2000).

In the analysis of the midterms and journals we found two key issues relevant to educators of pre-service teachers and teachers of K-12 education: (1) That embodied practice allows students to take ownership of history; and (2) That White students were not immediately "in tune" to multicultural issues, but with time made genuine progress towards an understanding for the "why" of multiculturalism. The following discussion elaborates on both of these key issues.

Analysis

Students often lament that learning history is boring or that they do not see the connections to the present day. They only study history because it is a requirement for a class grade, or more common today, it will be on a standardized test. Sadly, after the test is taken, the information is soon forgotten. We see this often on the late night talk show with host Jay Leno's "Street Walking," where he asks various questions one would think the average American should know (i.e., Who was the 16th president? How many stars are there on the United States flag?), yet these are usually answered incorrectly. Many may discount late night television as a joke, but it does point to the fact that there is ignorance about common history among the American public. This can become more of a problem with our students of color, particularly when these children have few connections to the curriculum in terms of identity and heritage and are inundated with images that do not reflect themselves, or the values of their culture. Kunjufu (1984) comments:

If America and its numerous media define beauty as light skin, long hair, fine features and any color eyes but brown as beautiful, haven't they also defined ugly? It must mean the exact opposite. It means dark skin, short hair, broad features, and brown eyes are ugly. (p. 25)

Embedded in our standard curriculum in schools, there are few opportunities for minority children to make connections and identify with what they are learning. The areas of literature, history, science, and mathematics rarely (aside from ethnic history month celebrations, where the same people are mentioned) spotlight African Americans or other minority people as contributors. The HIE course was developed as a way to address these issues; the IT course was developed as a way for teachers to feel comfortable teaching the material by giving them physical ways to convey the information—an embodiment of the content.

Whereas the HIE class provided the students with the literature on multicultural issues, it was in the IT class that students learned what it meant to embody an event. Embodied refers to experiential knowledge that involves senses, perception, and mind/body action and reaction (Matthews, 1998). We were strategic about allowing the students to experience the curriculum in multiple modalities. In the IT course students learned how to make use of space, work with their bodies, exhibit emotion, and how to interact with an audience. These skills were also brought to the HIE course. As students read the literature we engaged in activities that would allow them to “experience” it in an embodied way. The following discussion about the midterm will serve as an example.

Owning Our History

In both of our disciplines there is a notion of ownership with regard to the content learned. For theatre the focus is on knowing the character and scene well enough that you become “one” with the character. In education, ownership involves students learning beyond the purposes of taking a test and for a grade, but being able to use the information for purposes of their own. It becomes part of the information that they *know*, like one’s name.

The pairing of the classes revealed a natural way to enhance ownership in both fields. With the midterm assignment we found the students took ownership three ways: connecting to personal family history, researching a historical moment relevant to their history, or appropriating another’s historical story to be their own.

Personal Family History

The students were asked to focus on the concept of migrating, and the first resource for some of the students was

their family. Using a primary or secondary source, these students were able to connect their families to historical events. Two students, both Caucasian, will be discussed in this section: Mary and Jennifer (the names are pseudonyms). Mary connected to a written history in a tangible way—she spoke with a living source. Jennifer through secondary research found information about one of her ancestors. In turn they were able to take the research and embody the information through performance. They developed their historical character, added dialogue and props, and performed for an audience.

Mary interviewed her grandparents, and then supplemented those interviews with research about the time period. She then created a monologue that focused on her grandfather’s entrance into World War II as a fighter pilot. For this assignment she “became” her grandfather, complete in uniform and stature. Going beyond the live narrative activities sometimes done in classrooms, she assumed the emotions of that particular time period, his mannerisms, and the essence of who her grandfather was in 1942. She began:

I was raised on a farm in Iowa, the nearest town, Ionia, had a population of about, oh maybe 150 people. In the early 1950’s most of my friends were either going to be farmers like their fathers or they were moving to the cities to work in the factory. I didn’t want to do either, I decided instead to see the world by joining the navy. I enlisted in 1954, I was 17 years and 11 months old. The journey to boot camp was the first time I’d ever traveled by myself and the first time I’d ever left Iowa. I traveled first to Des Moines. I got on a train with a couple other guys and headed for San Diego. It was so exciting coming through the mountains in a train.

Another section of her performance talked about her grandfather’s return home and conflict with his father:

I had a choice, re-enlist or go back to Iowa. I called my parents and asked about jobs, I turned right around and told the Navy to sign me up for another six years. I had thirty days leave after getting back to the states so I went to visit my family. It was during this visit I found out why my father wasn’t supportive about my choice to join the military. My father had fled Germany during WWII because he disagreed with war and violence, he paid for his voyage, but he was essentially a stowaway and he told me stories of being able to hear the German soldiers banging around checking for stowaways.

As Mary portrays her grandfather in this

performative piece, you clearly see the story of history come alive. No longer is it just dates, events, and text, but there is a personal story embedded here that is directly connected to her. In her reflective journal she writes:

As for the actual research and connections to my heritage, I would do this project again and again as every member of my family if I had the time. I learned so much about my Opa and my Oma (that’s German for grandpa and grandma), which I never would have thought to ask before.

Here we see her clear excitement for learning history. History is the story of lives lived in the past. And yet so often in classrooms we have relegated it to words on lifeless paper. Mary’s grandfather’s narrative informed the facts she learned about WWII, and more importantly it gave her a reason to want to connect to and learn about WWII. She states she would do this with “every member of my family,” and that alone would connect her with several historical moments.

She also writes:

I really am glad to have been able to talk to my parents and learn about how we ended up who and where we are. I learned a lot about my Oma and Opa that didn’t really have to do with heritage, just who they are and where they are coming from’ and I really appreciate that knowledge and I think it will help me appreciate them better as well.

Clearly there is a disjoint between her definition of heritage and her experience. Though Mary states that it “didn’t have to do with heritage” she proceeds to define heritage as “who they are and where they are coming from.” In researching her family history she discovered her heritage, but she was not yet able to make that connection this early in the course. This supports research by Sleeter (2001) which finds White students bring very limited in cross cultural experiences. Students of color, on the other hand, typically bring more multicultural perspectives and experiences to the classroom and are more readily able to connect with the curriculum. At this time Mary was still under the impression that heritage was for the “other” and not for her.

A disconnect of another sort happens with Jennifer, who is also White. Some students, instead of talking to a primary source, researched an event that impacted their ancestors. Jennifer researched a family member, though not someone as close on the family tree as Mary’s grandfather. Jennifer focused on earlier roots of her

ancestry, when the colonies were first being founded in America. Her ancestor, Standish, was part of the military that came over on the Mayflower. She writes:

My favorite part about preparing for this piece was the initial research. I had known for years that Standish was in my family tree, and I knew that he was a military supervisor on the Mayflower, *but that is all I knew (emphasis added)*. I was so surprised to see how much he actually did for the colony. I was taken aback that there was a 50-page poem written about him 200 years after his death.

This presents a dual-edged sword: a positive and a negative. The Plymouth Colony is an historical event studied in every school, beginning in elementary school and throughout middle and high school, yet it wasn't until this class that Jennifer was able to make a connection that her family was very much a part of that immigration story. She states that her favorite part was the research; she was researching history that had a direct connection to who she is—to her identity.

In her embodiment of Standish she proudly wore a blue coat, carried a sword, and displayed all the formality that came with being an English officer in the military. She came to class anxious to deliver her performance, and could hardly wait until her turn. Once again, this speaks to students excitement about learning history this way—how it gives them a genuine connection and they are therefore more apt to engage at a higher level.

Yet in this connection a critical component was missing in her reflection—the multicultural component. Her reflection lacked the depth to critically analyze the event from multiple perspectives. She writes:

My favorite story about him was the one with the encounter between Hobomok and Peckout. While it, unfortunately, is about killing Indians, I think that the context of Peckout's murder is somewhat inspiring. Standish was being put down but Peckout, but he ignored the native American's words and rose to the challenge anyway. Despite the murder, the story is about overcoming obstacles, and using determination to achieve goals.

In this response Jennifer glorifies her ancestor's killing of the Native American, stating "it was somewhat inspiring." She clearly misses the point and perspective of the Native American, with the dismissal "unfortunately, [it] is about killing Indians," but highlights the manifest destiny history, one that honors the Europeans' mass destruction of lives and land. There

is no critical reflection given to the other perspective. Sleeter (2001) writes, "most White pre-service students bring little awareness or understanding of discrimination, especially racism" (p. 95).

This was evident in the HIE, but we have found that with more time and assignments those students were able to think about heritage differently and connect to the need for a multicultural curriculum. By the end of the semester both Mary and Jennifer had deepened their understanding of multiculturalism and were able to view their own education with a more critical lens. Jennifer writes in a later assignment about her experience in school during the 4th grade:

Also, in fourth grade, since I am from Northern California, we took a trip into gold country. I thought this was a great way to learn about the life-style. But we didn't talk about how anyone else lived except for the miners and panners. It was a pretty White-based education...I remember playing Oregon trail, but that still comes from a White historical background. (Journal, 2009)

Here she is able to point out the limitations of her childhood curriculum as it only allowed for one perspective—a White one.

Similarly, in a later journal, Mary writes:

In the "Westward Ho" reading I highlighted at least the initial time the indigenous populations were mentioned in the reading. Overall, they were mentioned very sparsely and there was no mention whatsoever of how they felt, where they went, what they did, aside from the Mexican's winning independence from Spain and being upset about the Americans in Texas. I'm really sad to see that, because the history of Native American Nations is so diverse and interesting. (Journal, 2009)

Mary, too, had come to see the limitations of the curriculum. She makes a point to recognize that the detailed story of the Native Americans, "how they felt, where they went, (and) what they did," was omitted entirely. Thus, clearly, movement was made in both of these students' reflections, movement towards an understanding within themselves as well as why such information should be taught in their future classrooms.

Researched Event

Another student, Lily (Asian and Latino descent), researched the history of the Hawaiian annexation. She states, "what I thought I knew, I never *really* knew at all. The story of the Hawaiian annexation is

not something that should be glorified." Assuming the role of an innocent girl during the time of the annexation, she recreates a fictitious scene, but a possibility based on her researched information, of a girl eavesdropping and not understanding what was being discussed around her. In it she imbues the tone of a child-like state. She adds the legacy of a song identified with Hawaii, but given new meaning to all those who watched her performance. In her reflection she writes:

My grandparents, Popo and Goong Goong, who were Hawaiians by association and by some percentage of blood never called us Americans. My grandmother would sing that song, "Aloha Oe" with sadness sometimes as she prepared for or made the bed and although it took me some time to understand what it meant, I now realize that it must have been repeated behavior. It must have been something that she learned growing up from her mother, and her from her mother. We are Hawaiians always. We are Hawaiians always.

A powerful moment comes here, the song of her heritage, one she heard her grandmother sing repeatedly, was given new meaning. Such history is often overlooked in our traditional school history and this allowed Lily to reconcile her Hawaiian heritage with her American one. She beautifully portrayed this in her performance as well as in her write up, ending with the statement that she is "Hawaiian always."

Leticia also presented a unique case. She came to office hours (Stanton's) because she was worried she wouldn't be able to do the assignment since she didn't know her family. She is a child of the foster care system, and she just knew she was of Mexican-American descent. When I explained that it did not have to come directly from her family tree, but could be of ancestry as well, she let out a sigh of relief and began to research. Her performance focused on the *soldaderas* of the Mexican Revolution, women who earned a living by traveling with the soldiers as their cooks. She wrote:

I not only learned about the Mexican Revolution, the women's role during this era and how the war initiated immigration but also how these two courses connect. Performing our immigration stories gave use the opportunity to learn about [our] heritage and history.

Leticia reenacted the struggle and fear a *soldera* may have had during that time. Her research led her to discover a group overlooked in the standard curriculum. Though one could argue that the Mexican

Revolution automatically connected with the heritage of Leticia, it was the role of the women in the war that gave her a whole new perspective on history and the role of immigration.

Both Leticia and Lily were able to make clear connections to what a multicultural curriculum could encompass. Their stories were wrought with disillusionment, fighting for survival, inequity, and are the stories nearly always glossed over in the standard curriculum. Yet, in our classes, here they were able to share these stories as a common discourse of history that matters.

Appropriation of a Historical Moment

Another way students addressed the midterm prompt was to appropriate stories that could have been stories from their past. In other words, they could recreate scenarios based on true caricatures of the past. One student, Sophie, of Jewish descent, reenacted a dialogue of escape. She wrote:

The monologue I chose to work on came from the play "Gypsy" and was a piece that I was very familiar with. As a child I would practice being this character, Louise (aka "Gypsy Rose Lee") in the mirror of my Grandmother's guest bedroom. I instantly remembered the special connection I felt towards the character and this piece specifically. Louise has such demand and power in her voice that triggers feelings of power and strength in myself. As I worked on the piece more in depth I felt as though I (Louise) was fighting for what she wanted throughout.

This was a story that was already very much a part of Sophie's discourse. She states that as a child she rehearsed the story in her mirror. This idea of ownership becomes unique in this example because it was not something she just learned once and forgot long ago. She began to own the story as a child, and as she became older her understanding of that story and what it meant to her deepened. Sophie brought a discourse that was integral to her childhood to the classroom curriculum. This is exactly where we want to go with multicultural curriculum, honoring the students' funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 2001).

What came across clearly through the presentations is that there are several ways to immigrate. So often when we think of immigration stories we think of coming to America, but within this assignment we also saw stories of immigration to war, immigration of loss, and a story of

survival during a war. Everyone's story needs to be told.

Within the standard curriculum students are seldom asked to make personal connections for and to themselves and therefore much can be missed. Narratives are a powerful teaching tool, and coupled with the theatre arts as an embodied practice it becomes even more authentic. Students were invested in researching the stories and were able to bring history alive by adding their voice to the event.

Many of the historical events referenced related to topics normally taught in the standard curriculum: Colonial America, World War II, the Holocaust, the Mexican Revolution, and Hawaii's annexation (a topic not taught as much in the other 49 states), yet these students were just now owning these events. Their perspective, whether from a cultural stance or familial one, now made that historical event much more relevant.

History is the story of the past, but what happens in the past always has a direct connection to what is happening in the present, and to get students to make those connections with their personal lives is a most powerful tool.

Implications

There are several implications from our paired courses that can be drawn to the field of teacher education.

First, the use of embodied practices within a multicultural education course will allow pre-service teachers to experience the curriculum in an authentic way. Several of the reflections stated, "I wish I would have learned this when I was in school." Mary specifically stated:

I love learning about different approaches to multicultural teaching and I think that not only is this a better way to teach that addresses the needs of multicultural classrooms and students, but it is also just more interesting. (Mary's journal, 2009)

Students who experience assignments like our midterm are more apt to realize the importance of a multicultural curriculum, and will be more likely to implement such material once they become teachers. Mary further states that "as a young student [she] would have loved the opportunity to do the activity we are doing now."

Another student, Lily, wrote with special emphasis: "DR. STANTON, I AM SO EXCITED FOR THIS I WANT TO TEACH RIGHT NOW!!!" She elaborates:

I simply must tell you that I think that

this is an amazing approach to learning. It is excellent to think of them as assets and as moldable. Working in tandem with their cultures and their belief systems rather than erasing those parts of them is powerful.

Both Mary's and Lily's experiences will allow them to be better able to help their own students experience a multicultural curriculum. Learning from the curriculum of our paired classes, these students were better able to understand the "why" of multicultural curriculum. There had been something lacking in their own schooling experience, and they now were able to articulate those gaps in their education.

A second implication, though not specifically discussed in the prior analysis, is the use of theatre as an avenue of teaching and assessing. Instead of using didactic models of teaching, where the teacher does all the directing, talking, and information sharing, the use of theater provides opportunities for all modalities of learning. Students are able to engage in research that is meaningful to them, and create a "live" curriculum for others to "read."

Furthermore, the performative presentation provides another means of assessing a student's knowledge of information learned. If students show evidence that they understand their topic, this is often a better way to assess than a test; especially since this will become information that they own for life. Clearly, these are the types of assessments we want to have take place in K-12 education. Not only did the students present their research, but they were the audience for other students' immigrant stories. This class provided a framework for them to experience why this type of education is important and therefore will be the fuel that drives them to implement such learning on their own.

Lastly, and one of the most significant findings was that White students were able to participate in ways that made them more receptive to a multicultural curriculum than they were historically. The word multiculturalism is often tagged "minority" education, or seen as being for students of color only. Some scholars have even made arguments alluding to the fact that it is an isolationist curriculum or Afro-centric and as such should not be taught in the schools. (Hirsch, 1987; Schlessinger, 1991). But as many other scholars note, multicultural education is for everyone, and especially for White students (Banks, 1993; Sleeter, 2001). It provides an opportunity for everyone to connect to the curriculum.

One of our main problems has been

trying to get our White students to “buy-in” to the need for it. Studies have shown that White pre-service teachers tend to believe stereotypes, have a color blind mentality, do not think it will be relevant to where they will work, and have little to add to the conversations about discrimination, social justice, and racial equality (Gay 2000; Ladson-Billings 1994; Sleeter 2001). Or they shut down, as one student told me happened in another class she took, “I was made to feel very bad.” Some critics may say that that is the students’ problem as their “White guilt” flares up in a world of privilege. But as Sleeter (2001) so clearly points out, though our communities of color are increasing, the teaching population is not; education is still a profession dominated by White females.

Therefore we submit that it is in the best interest of students of color for White pre-service teachers to not just take the required diversity course, but to become receptive to the content in the course that can spark a genuine understanding and a commitment to execute multicultural education in their own classrooms.

While initially all courses should make a point to include European culture as one of the perspectives—that which the dominant curriculum always addresses—we raise caution to not do with multicultural curriculum what the dominant curriculum does, but rather to seek balance. The fact that Mary, Jennifer, and Sophie were able to share their migration stories right along with the African American, Mexican American, and Chinese/Hawaiian stories allowed for a common discourse as an entry point to discuss migration.

Indeed, Mary points out in her reflective journal:

Even if a teacher has an entirely homogeneous class I think that the HIE curriculum is a great asset. The HIE curriculum is much more interesting and dynamic than the one dimensional Eurocentric curriculum which is so prevalent now. (Student journal, 2009)

Interesting enough, this is the same student who told one of us (Stanton) that she hated the other education diversity class, because she was made to feel bad for being White. So she shut down and as a result was not able to receive the information. We are not advocating for sugarcoating the truth, but we are advocating for presenting multicultural theory in a way where everyone can participate in the curriculum.

Further research will need to follow regarding what actually happens in the classrooms taught by teachers who have

experienced this type of preparation. We submit that this experience will make them better prepared than a typical course or a week of multicultural content within a course would.

Conclusion

Assignments that allow pre-service teachers to experience a multicultural curriculum in a meaningful way are needed within the teacher education curriculum. While it is understandable that most teacher education programs do not have a theatre course requirement, there is much that can be done in education courses alone. One of us (Stanton) is planning such an offering in our education program and looking forward to incorporating the techniques that were learned in the other’s (Gonzalez) course.

These paired courses also revealed that whereas the students of color were able to make these clear connections early on to the multicultural curriculum, the White students needed opportunities and exposure through course content and activities in order to be more reflective (1) about their own experience and (2) why it will be necessary to provide these types of experiences within their own classrooms when they are teachers.

As educators of pre-service teachers and proponents of multicultural curriculum, we need to do everything within our pedagogical tool kit to get *all* students to understand the importance of multicultural curriculum and the ways to implement it within their own classrooms. It must also be the goal within such a pre-service class for consideration to be given to where each student is beginning in the conversation of multiculturalism and what it will take to move them along the continuum toward a more democratic classroom.

References

- Banks, J. A. (1993). Multicultural education: Development, dimensions, and challenges. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75(1), 22-28.
- Banks, J. A. (1995). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee-Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. New York: Simon & Shuster Macmillan.
- Banks, J. A. (2010). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (7th Ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Bennet, C. I. (2007). *Comprehensive multicultural education* (6th Ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Brooks, J. G., & Brooks, M. G. (1999). In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- DomNwachukwu, C. S. (2005). Standards-based planning and teaching in a multicultural classroom. *Multicultural Education*, 1(1), 40-44.
- Fillmore, L. W. (1989). Teaching English through content: Instructional reform in programs for language minority students. In J. H. Esling (Ed.), *Multicultural education policy: ESL in the 1990s* (pp. 125-143). Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Institute for Study of Education.
- Fillmore, L. W., & Snow, C. (2000). *What teachers need to know about language*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Geneva, G., & Howard, T. C. (2000). Multicultural teacher education for the 21st century. *The Teacher Educator*, 36(1), 1-16.
- Han, H., & Thomas, S. (2010). No child misunderstood: Enhancing early childhood teachers’ multicultural responsiveness to the social competence of diverse children. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 37(6), 469-476.
- Hirsch, E. D. (1987) *Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kunjunfu, J. (1984). Developing positive self-images & discipline in Black children. Chicago: African American Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss.
- LeCompte, M. D. (2000). Analyzing qualitative data. *Theory into Practice*, 39(3), 146-154.
- Matthews, J. C. (1998). Somatic knowing and education. *Educational Forum*, 62(3), 236-242.
- Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (2001). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.
- Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2008). *Affirming diversity The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (5th Ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Schlesinger, A. M, Jr, (1991). *The disuniting of America: Reflections on a multicultural society*. Knoxville, TN: Whittle Direct Books.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2001). Preparing teachers for culturally diverse schools: Research and the overwhelming presence of Whiteness. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(2), 94-106.
- Soto-Hinman, I. & Hetzel, J. (2009). *The literacy gaps: Bridge-building strategies for English language learners and standard English learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Teale, W. H. (2009). Students learning English and their literacy instruction in urban schools. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(8), 699-703.
- Wills, J. (1996). Who needs multicultural education? White students, U.S. history, and the construction of a usable past. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 3, 365-389.

Appendix

The following is the paired assignment prompt for the midterm performance project required in the *Heritage, Identity, and Empowerment and Improvisation for Teachers* classes:

Midterm Course Project Assignment

History gives us a story of coming to America, glorifying some immigrants while degrading others. The true story is that everyone's immigrant story is powerful and should be heard/studied.

This assignment asks you to go back to your roots for the immigration story of your family—if you (like many of us) have multiple identities, create that story to express who it is you are. You should engage in active research to execute this project: interviewing relatives, archival and Internet searches, become familiar with your heritage(s) and cultural background(s), etc.

Based on your research, choose a specific time period (or span of time, i.e., the 19th century or the Civil Rights movement), and create a monologue that communicates who you are. By developing this monologue, it is expected that you will also create a character (not a caricature) that is honest, forthright, and sincere. Your objective is to express the story (or stories) of your roots in a structured manner.

It is expected that you will costume your character (the costume can be representational of your heritage or an actual authentic costume piece), and use actual props when needed, otherwise space props may be used throughout. The piece should last 5-6 minutes, and be outlined in the same fashion as done for your solo improvisation piece. You are expected to engage the audience, when appropriate, at least one time in your piece, without asking questions.

The anticipated outcome for this assignment is that there is room to improvise, while expressing your unique story with an essence of character that is your own. In addition to the outline, a bibliography of all source materials will be submitted, and a 1-2 page self-reflection on the experience will be due the day after you perform.