Preparing White Student Teachers through a Critical Consultative Interaction Model

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Abstract

Demographic trends suggest that most Latino and Black schoolchildren attending city schools will have White classroom teachers. Consequently, the potential for cultural mismatches may impede meaningful teaching. In response, many teacher educators mull over approaches to prepare student teachers to effectively instruct all schoolchildren, especially Latino and Black youngsters. While many approaches, particularly methods pertinent to multicultural education, have become commonplace throughout teacher education programs, purposeful consultations between student teachers and schoolchildren about teaching and learning, are rare. This paper presents a "critical consultative interaction" model, comprising "the three r's" of: (a) regarding Black and Latino schoolchildren as resources, (b) raising the right questions of them, and, (c) reflecting on schoolchildren's responses, as an additional approach to prepare student teachers for city classrooms. Implementing this model positions future teachers to obtain pedagogical information from schools' primary constituents—schoolchildren. Doing so exemplifies democratic practice in a political yet public place called school.

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Introduction

The 21st century has ushered in a shift in the demographics of United States' public schools. Prior to the 1954 Brown vs Board of Education of Topeka, KS decision, the likelihood of Black youngsters having Black teachers was highly probable. Yet, since that time the probability of Black and now Latino schoolchildren having teachers unlike them is almost certain (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2003). While the pupil population in large city classrooms is approximately 42% Black and Latino (Nieto, 2004; Scarpa, 2005) statistics show that nearly 90% of the K-12 teaching force is White (National Education Association, 2003), female, and middle class (Zumwalt & Craig, 2008). Because this demographic divide creates a cultural mismatch that may impede meaningful teaching (Nieto, 2004), teacher educators continue to debate best-practice approaches in preparing student teachers to effectively teach all schoolchildren, especially Black and Latino youngsters. This paper offers an alternative approach called the "critical consultative interaction" model—explained later in this paper—in response to the teacher preparation debate.

The Cultural Mismatch

Even with the current explosion of technological advances along with the real and virtual mobility that commerce affords, many people in the United States still reside in segregated communities, having had no intimate friends and significant social interactions primarily with people unlike them (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Nieto & Bode, 2008). Most prospective teachers are White, female, and come from middle class backgrounds. As a result, they have minimal authentic understanding, if not a skewed perspective, of what life is like for youngsters who live and learn amid economic challenges (Orfield & Lee, 2005). National trends suggest that on average, Black and Latino schoolchildren attend high poverty schools (Orfield, & Lee) and are more likely to experience greater economic hardships than their White counterparts (Nieto & Bode, 2008; Sherman, 2006). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress report (2004), one-third to one-half of all schoolchildren do not match the conventional values and practices that are pervasive throughout U.S. schools. In addition, school district curricular mandates and procedures usually reflect the viewpoints of policy makers, politicians, and high level administrators, who have long been privileged individuals and influential groups (Kumashiro, 2004). Student teachers have limited first-hand, relevant and prior experiences with diverse groups and "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995/2006) to draw from and inform their instruction (Howard, 2006). Any cultural gap between instruction and student achievement is more a corollary than a cause (Villegas & Davis, 2008), and a "cultural mismatch" can interfere with the learning process (Harding, 2005; Gay & Howard, 2000).

A cultural mismatch in the classroom refers to an unawareness of the tacit rules, nuances, and idiosyncrasies that exist between teachers and their students principally due to racial and ethnic differences (Harding, 2005; Irvine, 2003). When teachers are unaware of students' identities or misperceive their academic histories, it is difficult to create, and provide pupils with appropriate learning opportunities (Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Appropriate pedagogy is academically and developmentally relevant, and socially meaningful to

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learners. Pedagogy that is irrelevant, inaccessible, and out of synch with students illustrates teaching that is intolerable, unjust and supports a deficit oriented standpoint that is grounded in a positivist paradigm, which undergirds conventional educational legislation (Bejoian & Reid, 2005) and mainstream practice (Gallagher, Heshusius, Iano & Skrtic, 2004).

To minimize cultural mismatches, teacher educators infuse multicultural education via cultural seminars, diversity workshops, innovative field experiences, and special lectures and conversations about race (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Banks & Banks, 2003). Teacher educators also introduce theories and practices that are referred to as "culturally synchronous" (Irvine, 2003), culturally relevant (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and responsive (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and recognize the "funds of knowledge" that all pupils bring to school (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Irrespective of the name, each approach is designed to assist student teachers in the discovery of instructional practices that fittingly meet pupils' academic needs and increase their intellectual development. Furthermore, many teacher education programs strive to help student teachers to learn to position school-age children to think and act in ways that are critical for their present and future lives—which is or should be the outcome for all schoolchildren enrolled in public schools (Meier, 1995/2002, Cook-Sather, 2002; 2007). Still, these practices rarely emphasize that an additional way for student teachers to learn about teaching is to purposefully engage, confer, and consult schoolchildren, especially youngsters with a history of being poorly served and undereducated. Perhaps this lack of emphasis stems from a societal perception that Black and Latino youngsters are deficient (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005).

Consulting Schoolchildren

Conferring with Black and Latino schoolchildren counters deficit ideologies (Gallagher et al., 2004). Historically, deficiency notions prevail when members of one group, often in the majority, think other groups, usually in the minority, are biologically inferior and physiologically deficient (Shields et al, 2005;Valencia, 1997). Within the context of education, deficit thinking typically manifests when school personnel, the majority of whom reflect mainstream culture, assume that schoolchildren primarily living and learning in the city—customarily referred to as "minorities" (Davis, 2009)—have "limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn, and immoral behavior," (Valencia, 1997, p. 2) or that their families are disinterested in their child's education (Garcia & Guerra, 2004; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). There is a belief in the intellectual and motivational inferiority of certain youngsters that silences and ignores their voices which is oppressive. Yet, conversely there are affirming perspectives that encompass consulting schoolchildren.

In recent decades, Julia Flutter and Jean Rudduck of the U.K. and Alison Cook-Sather of the U.S. have been advancing the idea of consulting schoolchildren. These scholars have put forth the notion that talking with and listening to youngsters about their schooling experiences becomes a progressive practice that allows youngsters to actively participate in their own academic development and improvement of school life (Shultz & Cook-Sather, 2001; Flutter, 2007; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004), and shapes policy and school reform (Cook-Sather, 2002; 2007;

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Thiessen & Cook-Sather, 2007). They, along with other scholars, note the logical and intuitive aspects of talking with schoolchildren about teaching and learning, including learners who are in early childhood (Duckworth, 2001; Dockett & Perry, 2003; Stafford, Laybourn, Hill, & Walker, 2003), bilingual (Ballenger, 2004; Gonzalez, et al., 2005), and with disabilities (Cook-Sather, 2003).

Literally and figuratively from where they sit, schoolchildren have an up-close vantage point of the curriculum, the classroom, and teachers (Cook-Sather, 2002; Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). While elementary schoolchildren have access to intricate classroom details, due in part to the 7-9 hours that they spend in one classroom with one teacher, and middle and high school pupils having more than twelve teachers by their high school graduation, it is reasonable and equitable to expect that student teachers will learn to obtain potentially useful instructional information from pupils. The information and feedback that is available positions student teachers to correct ideas and clarify misconceptions directly from schoolchildren and begin to develop new understandings about teaching (Bransford, 2000).

To be effective, the consultation has to be genuine and classroom teachers must assure pupils that their views will be heard; that their ideas and perspectives will be given careful consideration; and that pupils will hear back on their comments and explanations of decisions made because of the consultation (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004; Quicke, 2003). However, establishing this open consultative climate does not happen without support. Classroom teachers and school personnel must work together to create a trusting environment that will support such exchanges. In this way, educators are empowered and simultaneously empower schoolchildren with opportunities to critique, challenge, and work toward changing practices that are oppressive, ineffective, and fail to support worthwhile teaching and learning (Kumashiro, 2004). As early as the second grade, Black schoolchildren can recognize good teaching and are willing to "tell their side of the story" (Howard, 2001, p.132). While instances of teachers conferring with school-age children who are Latino (see Gonzalez, et al., 2005) and African American (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2001) occur, more illustrations are needed (Howard, 2001; Meier, 1995/2002).

Unfortunately, the lure of quick fixes via commercial curricula, the overemphasis on high stakes testing at the expense of exemplary pedagogy, and the fear of relinquished power, particularly to Latino and African American youngsters (Cook-Sather, 2002) competes heavily with consulting schoolchildren to help student teachers learn their craft. All educators have a need and responsibility to learn from schoolchildren (Cook-Sather, 2007; Meier, 1995/2002). Teacher educators must learn to view pupils as a call to service; to find ways to listen and assist schoolchildren who are underrepresented, and work towards eradicating the many hegemonic strictures against them in education and the world (hooks, 2003). It is useful and important to listen intently to multiple perspectives and to use the voice—or note the silence—of typically marginalized learners. Such attentiveness is useful and important in critiquing one's own pedagogy and improving the learning opportunities for all schoolchildren. Non-oppressive pedagogy is innovative and empowering. It is "education for the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994)—nurturing pupils' minds to become intellectuals and counter-hegemonic. "All [schoolchildren] are indeed capable of generating powerful ideas" (Meier, 2002, p. 4). Unfortunately, some educators continue to embrace the "pedagogy of poverty" (Haberman, 1996) that

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includes authoritative and didactic practices believed best suited for Black and Latino learners (Cook-Sather, 2002; Cushman & Rogers, 2005). This dominating perspective in big city classrooms means that schoolchildren will rarely have the opportunity to provide direct information to teachers about the learning process. There is an insidious and long standing practice of not listening to the voices of or requesting critical input from city children, many of whom are of color. Consequently, this prevents reciprocal opportunities for schoolchildren and teachers to receive and reflect upon information obtained from each other (Kozol, 2005).Consulting such schoolchildren about pedagogical matters is contrary to the conventional capitalist and oppressive schooling notions.

Clearly, a democratic teaching stance values everyone equally (Glickman, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Noguera, 2003). Equitable classrooms are democratic classrooms because they give all children, regardless of color or circumstances, the opportunity to achieve academically. Progressive teaching values the ideas of others, and uses that information to influence, shape, and improve practice (hooks, 2003; Nieto, 2004). True, consulting schoolchildren is a radical undertaking but has merit in that it views children as sources of knowledge and as co-developers of the curriculum which illustrates sensible, democratic practice (Shor & Pari, 1999). When teachers seek and use students' comments and ideas to inform instruction, it conveys a message of egalitarianism and a shared responsibility for the learning experience in a community known as the public school. Despite its political nature due in part to its access, origins and evolution, maintenance, and perpetuation, public schools are inherently democratic spaces for the greater good (Giroux, 2003). Democratic practices include developing pupil's capacity to think, discern, and function in today's world, as well as to operate in ways that are responsive to the growing and expanding diversity in United States public schools.

The "critical consultative interaction model" proposes an additional way to consider preparing student teachers, especially White student teachers, to aptly respond to the growing diversity in big city classrooms. It is a model that involves student teachers seeing every pupil, regardless of their circumstance, as a useful resource to understand teaching, talking with pupils in ways that they will understand what is being asked of them, and finally, once the information is obtained, reflecting on the methods used and data to begin shaping student teachers' nascent pedagogy.

Methods

As a research perspective phenomenology explores what it means for human beings to undergo an event (Van Manen, 1990), as they attend to and define the event (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). To that end, the study focused on the participants' interpretation of what they were learning about teaching from the schoolchildren via the consultations. The goal is not to speculate or solve problems—outcomes often associated with natural science. Instead, the objective is to "generate rather than test theory" (Flowerday & Schraw, 2000, p. 634) and offer a "template for understanding" (Gonzalez, et al., p. 95) capable of informing, shaping, and enriching the non-participants grasp of the event (Van Manen, 1990).

It is hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology that "describes how [the 'insider'] interprets the 'texts' of life" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 4) or their lived

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experience. It might be helpful to think of lived experience in three parts. One part refers to a human being and her or his lifeworld. With regard to this study, the human beings were the student teachers and their lifeworlds were their classrooms in the city. The second part of lived experience refers to the ways in which human beings encounter, describe, and understand aspects of their lifeworlds. In this instance, lifeworld is the encounters, events, and happenings student teachers had while in those classrooms. The third part of lived experience refers to the ways in which preservice teachers made sense, interpreted, and understood lifeworld happenings.

Although rooted in philosophical perspectives, phenomenology is fitting when examining life in classrooms including teachers' professional practice and their pedagogical concerns (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1994), which made it appropriate to examine the city based practicum experiences of these eight student teachers.

Participants

Boris, Carmella, Kameron, Jacqueline, Lisa, Matilda, Mary and Terri[1] were the eight White student teacher participants. "Five to twenty-five" is an appropriate participant number for qualitative inquiry grounded in phenomenology (Polkinghorne, 1989). They revealed anecdotes of growing up in working-class homes, traveling to international and national destinations beyond their local community, commuting to middle-class suburban communities to attend school, along with having gay and closeted peers, classmates of color, and best friends of varying religious beliefs. Such experiences diverge from the prevailing notion of "White teachers as homogeneous" (Nieto, 2003, p. 25) and culturally encapsulated (Howard, 2006).

Setting

The study took place in a large, New England city school district. City is used to contrast the terms urban and inner city—expressions that are pervasive code words and euphemisms to suggest twisted and skewed existences of certain people rather than note the goodness of their humanity and vibrancy of their community (Davis, 2008). During the study, the city's website revealed a thriving downtown shopping area, a financial district home to a branch of the US Federal Reserve Bank, and entrenched cultural arts reflective of myriad ethnicities comprising its 21 neighborhoods. Despite the 36 colleges and universities, and world-renowned medical area, providing unskilled, skilled, and professional employment, the city posted 4.8% unemployment and 23% violent crime rates. The pupil racial demographic of the city's school district was 15% White, 48% Non-Hispanic Black, 28% Hispanic, 9% Asian/Pacific Islander.

Jacqueline and Lisa were placed in 9th grade remedial English/literacy classrooms in the same school while Matilda and Terri were in 11th grade classrooms in another school, with Matilda in general education World History and Terri in a remedial English classroom. Boris and Kameron worked at a magnet middle school with 6th, 7th, and 8th grade youngsters in advanced and general education curriculum

[1] Participants selected pseudonyms to shield identity.

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tracks as well as with learners with IEPs. Carmella and Mary were in separate 4th and 5th grade general education classrooms in the same elementary school.

Data Collection

Interviews. Except for Boris, all participants underwent four 1-1.5 hour semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Because of a scheduling error, Boris underwent three interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into 12 to 23 page documents. The first interview obtained biographical information and presented the focus of the study. The second and third interviews occurred after two separate classroom observations—discussed in the next subsection. Both of these interviews allowed each participant to debrief following their teaching event and to help her or him reflect upon what might have been learned from the schoolchildren about teaching. The fourth interview occurred at the end of the practicum and was designed to obtain participants' overall perspective on their 14 week student teaching experience. Participants were also asked to discuss and interpret new pedagogical insights and concerns stemming from their consultative interactions with the schoolchildren.

Observations and School Visits. Except for a single visit with Boris, all participants were visited twice. Each visit lasted 2 to 4 hours and comprised an observation of a classroom teaching event and a meeting which served as the second and third interview previously referenced. An observation log was used to record participants' words and actions during their teaching event. Since pupil assent was not obtained, the observation notes focused on the student teachers' responses and reactions to pupils rather than on the pupils' behaviors.

Reaction papers and Journals. Each participant was asked to write a reaction paper following their teaching event. Participants were asked to note new insights about teaching and learning, resulting from their interactions with the youngsters. All participants maintained a reflection journal, but the frequency of writing and submission varied from daily to weekly, while the volume ranged from one paragraph to several pages per entry.

Data Analysis

Van Manen's (1990) thematic analysis approach was used to analyze across the corpus of data and within each case using a detailed or line-by-line manner. Thematic analysis is the reduction of salient features of the data usually comprising turn of phrases, metaphoric and unique expressions, and other extraordinary terms to locate meaning units and themes. Examples of salient features are participants' words of "getting at the root" of things and keeping their "finger on the pulse of the class," "Heart-to-Heart conversations" and "next year when I am a teacher." Unique expressions became in vivo codes while isolated phrases, sentences, and sentence clusters served as natural meaning units. This thematic analysis process led to the three themes of (a) regarding Black and Latino schoolchildren as resources, (b) raising the right questions of them, and, (c) reflecting on methods used and data obtained which comprise the model.

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Findings

Regarding Black and Latino Schoolchildren as Resources

Given the historical marginalization and under education of Black and Latino schoolchildren in the United States, the first step in the "critical consultative interaction model" requires regarding schoolchildren as useful resources (Howard, 2001). Student teachers must view youngsters as having ideas and suggestions for teachers to consider and draw on to inform teaching and learning. Among the eight participants in this study, such regard is implicit in their metaphors that suggest schoolchildren can be a resource. Participants felt schoolchildren could help to "get at the root of what's going on," "keep [their] finger on the pulse of the class," and help reveal "what's on their radar." Moreover, student teachers made explicit reference to schoolchildren as resources. Lisa considered the primarily Latino and Black pupils in her setting as resources.

> You learn from everything in your environment and that includes children deprived or not. Children are not just here to learn from you but also to teach you. Teachers can always learn from them. Children's experiences are part of teachers' education. We need to learn from them [the experiences] and be able to incorporate that [information] into the lesson.

Lisa acknowledged that people learn from their environment and because hers as a student teacher is the classroom, that it, along with the schoolchildren, provided her with worthwhile information. She also recognized that children bring their experiences to school and that those experiences should be a part of a teacher's education. She indicates that teachers and children should learn from each other and that the information that teachers gather should be incorporated into their instruction. Lisa's perception of Black and Latino pupils as resources whether "deprived or not" is of note because she makes no distinction among pupils. From Lisa's point of view, all schoolchildren, regardless of circumstance, are useful to teachers.

Jacqueline acknowledged the value in schoolchildren's ideas and feedback.

> I think I am the fortuitous one because the last semester I taught I didn't open myself up to learning. I was trying to survive and figure out what the hell I was doing. This time around it took me a few weeks to realize like the [children] had a lot to offer to me. Their feedback was very important….

Jacqueline felt fortunate to learn from schoolchildren, although by her own admission, the appreciation developed over time.

Boris felt that schoolchildren's feedback supplemented textbook learning.

> You don't learn from books only but from the kids and their reactions and what they say…. When I am out there by myself, and you say the wrong thing, they let you know. You don't say the right thing they give you more feedback and that's how I think you really learn how to teach.

Boris acknowledged that he could learn from the reactions and statements of schoolchildren. He credited them with correcting teachers' misstatements and

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providing instructive advice. Boris sees schoolchildren as an additional resource for his professional development.

The metaphorical and explicit regard that the student teachers have for Latino and Black schoolchildren as resources is in contrast to the deficit thinking that Latino and Black schoolchildren are substandard and intellectually inferior (Sheilds, Bishop, &Mazawi, 2005; Valencia, 1997). Despite participants' White middle class background which greatly influences mainstream and majority culture in the U.S., their views of schoolchildren as resources is contrary to deficit thinking and progressive. Progressive thinking is advancing, groundbreaking, and democratic—not oppressive. The learning experience is not a teacher-centered, adult led hierarchy, but rather values the ideas of everyone (Cook-Sather, 2002; Meier 1995/2002). Recognizing "[children] as sources of knowledge and as codevelopers of the curriculum is a democratic choice" (Shor & Pari, 2000, p. 7).

Student teachers agree that school-age children are situated to teach teachers, and provide them with potentially useful data. Through their metaphors and detailed explanations, participants revealed that the perspectives of Black and Latino schoolchildren can and will be beneficial to them as teachers. Participants were able to see beyond the all too often negative identity and circumstance projected onto Latino and Black schoolchildren, by mainstream culture, and considered them as resources on professional growth.

Raising the Right Questions of Schoolchildren

The second step in the critical consultative interaction model is raising the right questions of schoolchildren. Participants demonstrated this by asking schoolchildren about pedagogical matters in a manner that was developmentally appropriate for their age and comprehension level. An example of this occurred when Mary talked with 4th graders about their experiences in the literacy center. This understanding arose after first asking a 4th grader a close-ended question about her favorite aspect of school. In response, Mary received a simple, yet specific two-word response, "center time." Recognizing the limitations of the answer, Mary quickly realized the need to delve into the youngster's mindset for details. Mary followed-up with probing questions that directed the schoolchild to first, describe and detail center time, and then to explain her likes about it.

> One thing I learned was to probe for deeper responses when talking to students. When I did this, she seemed to tell a lot more. For example, when I asked her to tell me her favorite thing about school, she simply answered "center time." Then I said, "Tell me about center time. Why do you like center time?," she said that she gets to spend time with her friends. She also told me that she likes painting with her friends, using building blocks, writing, drawing, and doing puzzles. I learned that children need probing for clarification.

Incomprehensible questions will undoubtedly yield erroneous or unarticulated responses—a situation Boris realized when he said "if teachers don't say the right thing, [children] don't give feedback." Mary felt saying the right thing included "first discussing what constitutes serious feedback and advice," while Kameron indicated

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the classroom had to be "organized" and "classroom order had to be maintained" in order to consult schoolchildren. Student teachers felt youngsters had to be able to grasp the questions asked of them and that having an orderly process was necessary.

Another example of raising the right questions involved student teachers presenting themselves as novice teachers in the process of becoming teachers. They indicated being "a student teacher" and "new to teaching." Mary prefaced some of her requests for information by "tell[ing] them I am a new teacher and that I had not done this before and if you have any suggestions for me…" Lisa stated, "I tell them that I am brand new at this and I want to know what they think [and ask w]hat they think I can do to make it better." Along related lines, Terri compared herself to the children when she told them that she needed information because she was "just learning like you guys…."

While racial and socioeconomic mismatches between the teachers and schoolchildren have the potential to impede meaningful learning experiences, the student teachers in this study used developmentally appropriate practices to raise appropriate questions. By positioning themselves as learners and pupils, student teachers established genuine parallels with the schoolchildren that they could understand. The method was practical and given the significant amount of time that schoolchildren spend in schools. Establishing similarities between themselves and the schoolchildren exemplifies a progressive stance and democratic practice. Student teachers who see themselves comparably as students, disrupts the ingrained conventional teacher/adult-centered, hierarchical nature of schools. This repositioning of power shifts the purview of teacher as dominant knower and pupil as lowly learner to a place where they are co-developers who share the responsibility for teaching.

Raising the right questions also included using oral and written methods for formative and evaluative purposes. Questions were raised during the course of instruction and school hours. Expressing oral questions that were raised for formative purposes were apparent in student teachers' requests for help and guidance as a novice suggests a desire to build upon information that is received. Indicating that one is new to a situation or a pupil of something implies budding development; it signals that a person is in the process of growing.

Carmella provides another example of raising oral questions during school hours for formative purposes. She interviewed 5th graders as the first step in her inquiry project about the influence of culturally relevant children's literature on the learning process. In particular, Carmella hoped that the "initial interview with each child [would] hopefully shed some light on how [best] to support their academic growth."

> During my interview with Ofelia…I was surprised to hear… she clearly considered her "culture" Salvadoran, not Latino. She said Eve Bunting's *Going Home* was most enjoyable because the pictures kind of reminded her of her own culture, but the pictures from her culture were different. She pointed out that the pictures representing El Salvador are different from the ones in this book about Mexicans. When asked if she thought of her culture as Salvadoran, or Latino/Spanish-speaking, she quite firmly told me, "Salvador."

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> My interview with Armando offered a slightly different slant on how he defined his culture. He indicated that last year's social studies unit on Central America was the one time he's felt like his culture was represented in the classroom. When asked if he considered his culture as Central American, from Honduran, (where his family comes from), or Latino/Spanish-speaking, he told me Central American. Culturally relevant texts that *really* get at the heart of how students identify their culture seems a necessary to engage them.

Carmella's interaction with the schoolchildren is a significant example of the role that teacher educators can play in facilitating student teachers' consultations with schoolchildren to obtain meaningful pedagogical information. An inquiry project assigned through Carmella's graduate course led her to seek input from the 5th graders in her practicum site. Such encouragement aligns with Flutter, Rudduck, and Cook-Sather's acknowledgement of the underuse of consulting school-age children about teaching and learning. Positioning student teachers to ask schoolchildren about teaching is a practical approach to obtain information and foster new ideas to develop meaningful classroom practices (Bransford, et al., 2000). By these examples, raising the right questions happened orally and for formative purposes. Participants wanted pupils to provide them with information that could be used for planning instruction or improving future practice.

Student teachers also raised oral questions of schoolchildren for evaluative purposes. Usually at the end of a lesson or learning experience, student teachers sought youngsters' thoughts and feedback about the delivery and quality of a lesson. Mary's queries of "How did that work? Was that interesting to you? Do you think you learned something?" along with Matilda's questions of "Do you think this works, not work, should we trash it? and "What do you guys think about…?" evinced participants raising oral questions for evaluative purposes. Terri consulted 11th graders about the implementation of her integrated English and drama lesson.

> After I taught the lesson, I talked to a few of the kids regarding their thinking and I received lots of positive feedback. Many kids said that it was one of the best lessons I had taught because it was something new. The students also said they liked that they had the freedom to do whatever they wanted within reason of course. Other kids commented that they enjoyed [the activity because] it helped them learn the book a little better. One kid said that if he were the principal, he would give me an A for the day. Other kids who are more quiet or shy commented that they did not like it as much because they felt uncomfortable….

Terri received evaluative information about pupils' experience of her English and drama lesson. On one hand, pupils expressed their appreciation of the lesson because it was new, non-restraining, and fun. They enjoyed the opportunity to process the text in a unique way and if required to grade her, would assign Terri an A. Evaluative feedback was also critical, such as the time Terri learned that shy and introverted schoolchildren felt uncomfortable about having to read aloud or role-play characters.

On another occasion, Terri planned a "candid heart-to-heart talk" with pupils. She wanted to question them about their poor performance on a writing assignment.

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She spent an entire week planning lessons and leading activities to help children compose essays about *The Great Gatsby*. On the Friday prior to the Monday due date, she asked the children if they needed extra time and made herself available after school for extra help. The children assured Terri that things were in order and they promised to submit essays on time. They did. However, to Terri's surprise and disappointment, the bulk of the essays were poorly written. After consulting her university supervisor, she decided that, instead of blaming the schoolchildren, she would engage them in a meaningful conversation to understand the situation.

> Yesterday we had a big Heart-to-Heart. I had to really think about how I want to teach writing and the actual unit because a couple of my students, who worked really hard, seemed to shut down after I gave them their paper back. I thought of [the Heart-to-Heart] myself…. I knew that I wanted to talk with them. I was really frustrated so my supervisor helped me come up with a plan for how to use a Heart-to-Heart to approach [the situation]. Yesterday I put Heart-to-Heart on the agenda and asked the [children] if they had ever had a Heart-to-Heart…. We talked about what it means and then about the paper. I only gave them a week to do the assignment and they told me that was not enough time. Then they were like, "Oh, you are not trying to be like, 'your papers were terrible, and 'cause you think you know everything.' I think that I learned that they appreciated having the talk. After I finished talking, one of my students said, "Thank you."

As a result of the Heart-to-Heart with the pupils, Terri realized new things about teaching. First, she realized that the pupils needed sufficient time to compose a paper. Even with class activities and class time to write, one week was an insufficient amount of time to successfully complete the assignment. Second, frustrated, Terri realized that giving children a chance to provide evaluative information was a better way to handle her frustration than being confrontational with them. She sought support and advice from her university supervisor/mentor to devise a plan for raising evaluative questions of the youngsters about her teaching and their learning during the school day. Such outreach suggests that teacher educators can play a positive role in positioning student teachers to consult schoolchildren. A third lesson for Terri was discovering her pupils' appreciation of the opportunity to share their ideas. Apparently, they appreciated the chance to debrief and analyze the situation. In another instance, Matilda had a similar discovery about youngsters' responsiveness to her oral queries. Matilda indicated that the, "children seemed to appreciate the fact that someone…allowed them to voice their opinions on schooling."

The appreciation that Terri and Matilda noted for the schoolchildren is in contrast with the idea of deficit thinking often attributed to Latino and Black schoolchildren (Valencia, 1997; Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). The pupils' responsiveness counters the notion that Latino and Black youngsters are best suited for authoritarian and oppressive teaching practices. The fact that schoolchildren provided useful information to Terri and were welcoming of the opportunity to answer questions suggests that progressive, democratic practices are fitting with Black and Latino schoolchildren.

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Student teachers also raised oral questions of the schoolchildren after school, primarily for formative purposes of school time teaching events. Boris often consulted middle school pupils who were serving after school detention, with his cooperating teacher for late school arrival or inappropriate class behavior, or while they were "hanging around because they didn't want to go home," as was the case with a 7th grader. Matilda had similar after school encounters with 11th graders.

> It was after school and I needed to ask someone and he was there so I said, "Do you have a minute? Can you come and talk to me for five minutes?" Then with another girl it was the same thing when she was around after school so I asked her. Then another time…I did it another kid was hanging around and so he ended up joining in on the interview. But that was good to get different people.

Whether during or after school, for formative or evaluative purposes, elementary, middle, and high school student teachers raised oral questions of schoolchildren.

Raising the right questions in writing happened through letters and journal entries. Lisa's use of writing comprised a weekly letter activity with 9th graders that developed from an idea she had at the start of the semester. Originally used as a strategy to introduce herself to the schoolchildren, Lisa later thought, "It would really be cool to get them to respond. I thought they would rather write a letter than just to talk about…what they want from this class. I would have them [write] on Friday and then we could start fresh on Monday." Schoolchildren wrote about "What they didn't like and how things were going." Many of the letters included positive comments and suggestions for Lisa's instruction.

> [They made] many like positive comments…like "this is really cool"…. They would write to me…. Sometimes if…they wanted to see more of something or wanted to see less of something, I would get a whole bunch of letters like that. It was really good for me because I'd think, "OK well maybe we should change the way we're doing this." I remember quite a number of letters… that said, "We want more time to read." I'm never gonna argue with that. The newspaper articles kind of went by the wayside as a result of the kids… They said it [current events articles] was something that was discussed during the history class…. So, I kind of changed that as well….

Although not a prevalent practice in teacher education, Cook-Sather (2002) uses a "weekly exchange of letters between student teachers…and [children] who attend a local public high school" (p. 8). Cook-Sather acknowledges the difficulty for student teachers to entrust schoolchildren with the authority and realize children's capacity to contribute to the professional practice. Yet, Lisa was willing and enthusiastic about having pupils respond in writing to her questions about her teaching—a practice that she shared with Jackie who decided to invite her pupils to provide her with evaluative information about her remedial English/language arts course. Jacqueline's use of daily journal writing to obtain written information from the 9th graders in her classroom originated through her collaboration with Lisa. In an attempt to encourage writing, Jacqueline occasionally prompted students to provide her with evaluative information about her course.

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> In another effort to analyze my effectiveness in the classroom, and to highlight areas that need change, I provided the students with an opportunity to write me a letter. The prompt for this letter, which I provided for the students, was, "Please write me a letter about your experience in our class. Include things that you enjoy, things, that, you dislike, things that you want to change and things that you would like to see remain the same."

This collaboration between Lisa and Jacqueline illustrates why student teachers are often paired and grouped in the same practicum site (Bullough et al, 2002). As members of the same teacher education program designed to prepare teachers to work in city classrooms, Lisa and Jacqueline were placed in the same high school and worked with some of the same 9th graders.

Raising the right questions meant asking school-age youngsters to speak and write about their schooling experiences. Both Lisa and Jacqueline expected useful information about teaching from the 9th graders. As is the case elsewhere in the data, what is significant about this student teacher-pupil interaction is the use of developmentally appropriate behaviors implemented by student teachers that enabled Latino and Black schoolchildren to provide student teachers with useful information.

Reflecting on Schoolchildren's Responses

Reflecting on schoolchildren's responses is the third step in the critical consultative interaction model. Many interpretations of reflection exist (Reagan, Case, & Brubacher, 2000; Valli, 1997), including the careful consideration of important matters, along with being "open to the voices, opinions, and advice of others" (p. 68). Primarily through their journals and reflection papers, and sometimes during their interviews, each student teacher recognized the opinions and advice from the schoolchildren. In general, student teachers reflected on the use of oral or written methods to consult the schoolchildren. Participants also thought about the oral written information received, whether they considered it useful for current or future use "next year" when they are teachers.

Reflecting on oral methods included thinking about questions raised by pupils. Carmella was intrigued that 5th graders raised questions.

> I thought about how incredibly interesting to me their questions were. Ynis told me about some of the things she had learned. It was one of the first times that I remember her acting like an expert. What an important way for her to feel! Now, I wonder how I can encourage a change among the whole class toward this questioning behavior. I really have to think about how I might do this.

Student teachers also reflected on the fact that the youngsters made statements and comments during classroom interactions. Mary noted her "interactions [that] occurred during reading as a successful discussion with Aaron," a 4th grader whom she taught. Jacqueline thought about a 9th grader who "informed [Jacqueline] that the literary terms confused [the pupil] and that she would just rather read the entire chapter through, then discuss the important points and several others chimed in and agreed with her comments." Terri thoughts focused on what her pupils said about "note

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taking not being easy…." and her hope of "turning them on to note taking and not turned off." Matilda recalled how pupils' "use of open-ended questions got them thinking and helped to get their brains active," while Mary recognized that pupils' oral questions were for "trying to get a little bit into their thinking," which eventually allowed her to become inspired by the schoolchildren's advice. "The [pupil's] comments inspired me to try to examine more closely my patterns of which [pupil] I call on." Conversely, in one instance Kameron was annoyed by pupils' oral suggestions.

> I remember one time when I got really annoyed, not annoyed, but I had planned on doing poetry the last three weeks and then they tell me that they want to do something else which is fine. I guess that's what I got for asking them, right? So instead of writing poetry we did more reading.

Participants also reflected on the written methods that they used to consult the primarily Latino and Black schoolchildren about their opinions regarding the teaching and learning that they were experiencing. Noting the letters received from the schoolchildren and their willingness to offer advice, Lisa piled the "good and constructive responses," and admitted feeling "fortunate enough to receive useful feedback from the students regarding their classroom experiences and their learning styles."

> Those letters I am going to keep and reflect on them because I really saw myself through their eyes. I think that was a major thing that made me change my approach…. I find it very positive and encouraging to get feedback from them. I have been fortunate enough to receive useful feedback from the [schoolchildren] in regards to their classroom experiences.

In these instances, student teachers note the way in which they obtained information from Black and Latino pupils. The student teachers reflected upon the use of non-oppressive pedagogy, which is empowering because it recognizes the intellect of schoolchildren and that they have insight. Thinking about the use of oral and written means to receive advice and information from schoolchildren, especially youngsters who have long been marginalized and perceived as deficient, is a counter-hegemonic stance. All schoolchildren have opinions about their schooling experiences and therefore they should be welcome to and play a collective role in shaping and informing learning.

Student teachers also considered the utility of the information for implementation during their current practicum or in the future when they have their own classrooms. Lisa thought she could use her pupils' oral feedback during her practicum.

> I think that it is really important for them to be able to express their thoughts…Hearing their reactions, I really enjoyed that because it makes me see who they are as a students and I find that it is important because that helps me teach them.

For Matilda, teaching the schoolchildren meant "modify[ing] the lesson so it could be more manageable tomorrow," while Carmella contemplated using the information

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during her "next take over week." Terri acknowledged the need to be open and willing to try new ideas at any time.

> I think that this experimenting will continually enhance my teaching. By being willing to try out different things I will learn what works for the [schoolchildren]. I also think that changing instructional and delivery methods can keep the content fresh and exciting for them.

Participants also reflected on using the information when they were teachers in the future. Mary noted that the information from her 4th graders would be "something to take in the classroom" and Boris considered his plan to consult schoolchildren in the future because their advice helped him understand their willingness to work collaboratively.

> I plan to implement this in the future, there are a lot of things that I have to do but I will use this in the future…to see how much time [pupils] to do a project…how well they work together; how do they get along."

Reflecting on the use of oral and written methods to obtain information from schoolchildren positions student teachers to acknowledge their embrace of equality and belief in the idea that schoolchildren, historically viewed as unable, are indeed capable of speaking and writing about information pertaining to their learning within the context of school.

Conclusion

Collectively, the White student teachers in this study illustrate the critical consultative interaction model. Student teachers' statements and actions demonstrate their ability to regard Black and Latino schoolchildren as useful resources; raise the right questions; and reflect on the ideas and feedback from the schoolchildren. Through oral and written methods used during class time or after school, student teachers were able to obtain information for formative and evaluative purposes that can be immediately implemented or used in the future. This critical consultative interaction model offers teacher educators an additional or alternative approach to preparing White student teachers to effectively teach Latino and Black schoolchildren, and to consider how that information might shape a teacher's instructional repertoire for current or future implementation. To help student teachers aptly understand and implement the critical consultative interaction model requires new considerations for teacher educators and teacher education.

Recommendations

First, teacher educators must work to eradicate deficit thinking, particularly regarding Black and Latino schoolchildren. All too often, youngsters who live and learn in the city are blamed and featured as causing the problem, rather than recognized and celebrated as part of the solutions. The perpetual labelling of the lives of Black and Latino schoolchildren as marginalized and their experiences as minimal, rarely gives them significant opportunities to have a direct influence on teaching and learning, especially their own. Any schoolchild who regularly attends school is certain to see a range teaching. One way to obtain such data is by believing that all youngsters, regardless of their race and socioeconomic background, have the capacity

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to inform pedagogy. In fact, attending to the ideas and feedback from the schoolchildren themselves, rather than student teacher's interpretations of youngster's advice, is a limitation of this study. However, student teachers' experiences were the focus of this study.

Second, teacher educators must be willing to reexamine the prevailing approaches of preparing White student teachers to teach Latino and Black schoolchildren living and learning in the city. There are calls for innovative methods and new approaches to reconfigure the field experience as an option (Bullough, Jr, et al., 2002.) If the predominant use of top-down, hierarchical approaches still has teacher educators calling for ways to effectively prepare student teachers, particularly those intending to teach in the city, perhaps it is time to begin working from the base up. A productive farmer knows that an overworked ground will not yield a bountiful harvest. What must be added to the old ground is fresh soil full of rich nutrients to remake the earth useful. The critical consultative interaction model is an approach intended to rework the current, top-down approach of preparing student teachers to a method that positions student teachers to learn about pedagogy from the ground-up.

Third, teacher educators must understand the nexus of critical pedagogy, democracy, and education. As a societal concept, American democracy espouses equal regard for each of its members. Relative to schools and classrooms, its members include schoolchildren—all of whom should have the chance for full participation and parallel representation in every facet of the learning experience (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Meier, 1995/2002; Noguera, 2003; Shor & Pari, 1999). If American schools are believed to be places where democracy thrives, schoolchildren must have the opportunity to contribute to its existence and improvement.

Public schools are common spaces where all of its members should share and benefit equally. Preparing White student teachers in particular, to talk with and listen to Latino and Black schoolchildren about teaching and learning within public spaces, is right and just. Given the demographic changes in big city classrooms, perhaps it is time to consider how the youngsters in those classrooms might aid in methods of preparing future teachers to teach.

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Miscellany

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