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Dilemmas in Guiding Pre-Service Teachers to Explore Literacy Instruction and Diversity

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> The teacher performs a social function that is never innocent. There is no neutral nonpartisan sphere into which the teacher can retreat to engage student experience. (McLaren, 1998 p. 234)

This study focuses on the learning of a small group of pre-service teachers in a literacy methods course and their instructor, Cindy, a literacy methods professor. The pre-service teachers in Cindy's literacy methods courses conduct literacy practicum experiences at a local city school that is populated by children from non-dominant[1] backgrounds. When a colleague recently learned of Cindy's work with her students at the practicum site, she declared that we as teacher-educators are wrong to let our pre-service teachers teach in those schools. Novice teachers, she insisted, must first learn to teach literacy in less complex settings. That declaration exemplifies several documented concerns in education. The first problem relates to McLaren's quote above and the misconception that methods, strategies, and instructional frameworks can be adequately learned and taught in a disembodied and decontextualized manner apart from real children abiding in actual classrooms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Johnson, 2007). That is, some educators assume that teachers are neutral in their employment of strategies and methods. By neutral we refer to the notion that

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some educators believe they can engage in their work without attending to important issues such as race, class, sexual orientation, and gender. The second problem relates to educators who perpetuate (perhaps unwittingly?) deficit views of children from non-dominant backgrounds (Connell, 1994; Frank, 1999; Gutierrez, 2008).

These problems merit our attention because they relate to broader concerns about relationships between theory and practice with which we as individual educators, and as a field, must grapple (Gee, 2012). The first problem mentioned above relates to *what* we think we should teach and *how* we think we should teach it (i.e., the strategies, methods, materials we employ in our work and when and were we employ them). The second problem mentioned above relates to *whom* we teach (i.e., our attitudes about the children we serve as educators). Sorting out what we believe about children, academic content, strategies, methods, and materials and how we enact our attitudes is a thorny theory/practice dilemma that merits our thoughtful attention because our attitudes as teachers and teacher educators, and the manner in which we enact our attitudes, directly impact students' opportunities to learn (Banks, 2006; Gee, 2012).

The purpose of this qualitative investigation is to explore and describe one small group of pre-service teachers' reflections on their literacy instruction to children from non-dominant backgrounds, and to use this as a backdrop to sort out, and sort through, Cindy's work as a teacher educator. The pre-service teachers in the three-credit upper-level literacy methods course conducted their practicum at an elementary school (pseudonym, Evergreen Elementary) where approximately four-fifths of the children speak a language other than English as their first language. The pre-service teachers worked in small teacher-research teams of four people, designing and implementing a seven-lesson, literacy-related thematic unit that they taught to the children in one classroom. There were six teaching teams in the undergraduate methods class. Following each lesson taught at Evergreen Elementary the pre-service teachers met with their fellow teaching team members to debrief about and reflect upon their teaching each day. The research questions guiding this investigation were: (1) When did the pre-service teachers discuss diversity-related issues relative to their practicum experience? and (2) What did their discussions reveal about their attitudes towards children from non-dominant backgrounds?

Background of the Study

We drew on positioning theory (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Moghaddam & Harré, 2008) to explore how the pre-service teachers positioned one another and were positioned by Cindy, and others, to construct the story lines they enacted in their work. When human beings signal to themselves and others who they are and what they are doing, they engage in "recognition work" (Gee, 2012). Each particular social group has norms about how to speak, act, feel, and think. As well, however, the words, deeds, feelings, and thoughts of individuals within social groups will continue to shape and reshape group boundaries. In the same way that predictable patterns help us recognize and make visible individual's situated identities, so, too, do recognizable patterns form the "cultural models" within social groups. Cultural models, Gee (2012) explains, are those taken-for-granted "storylines" connected to the use of language and power in particular contexts. In short, cultural models are people's everyday theories about how aspects of the social world work. One of the biggest dangers of cultural models, according to Gee (2012), is that they often go unexamined and thus *unquestioned*.

During the course of social interactions, personal and social identities are formed and manifested as a result of three features: the actors' social positions, the storylines, and the social force of what is said and done within each social episode. Because constructed personas are fluid, they can change depending upon an individual's "location" within a given conversation and upon the assumed rights, duties, and obligations of each conversant (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999; Moghaddam & Harré, 2008). We are concerned with how pre-service teachers position themselves and are positioned by others (including Cindy, in particular, but also the overall teacher education program of which Cindy and the students were a part) in relation to children from non-dominant backgrounds. This matters, of course, because children's positions as students in classroom and school contexts determine their learning opportunities in those contexts (Banks, 2006; Nieto, 1996).

While one of our challenges as literacy teacher-educators is to prepare undergraduates with effective pedagogy pertaining to literacy instruction, our biggest challenge is to do so in a way that guides them to promote social and political equity with a student body population growing evermore diverse (Gay, 2010; Howard, 2006). When we address the former without careful attention to the latter, we perpetuate social and political inequity in our classrooms and schools (Banks, 2006; McLaren, 1998). Addressing these challenges places us squarely in the midst of theory/practice dilemmas. That is, as teacher educators, we must be aware of our attitudes, the ways we enact them, and the consequences of our attitudes and actions (Zeichner, 2009).

The work of Xu (2000) points to problems that can occur when pre-service teachers are not taught to promote social and political equity in the context of their literacy methods instruction. Xu found that even when pre-service teachers possess significant pedagogical knowledge, they often deny English language learners meaningful and effective literacy activities (Xu, 2000). Further, when pre-service teachers encounter difficulties in field-based lessons, they may attribute their failure to the youngsters themselves. This tendency to blame the "other" is the result of our society's long-running conversation about the "deficits" found in children of color and poverty (Bartoli, 1995; Rist, 1970; Zeichner, 2009).

Scholars have identified additional problems we must work to overcome as teacher educators striving to prepare future teachers to educate effectively learners from non-dominant backgrounds. First, university students may enter their teacher preparation programs with long-held negative attitudes about students from non-dominant backgrounds. Unfortunately, teacher educators may not afford their university students the opportunity to examine critically these attitudes (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Pajaras, 1993). When our attitudes towards students of color are problematic and remain unchallenged, we perpetuate the status quo of inequity in classrooms and schools (McLaren, 1998; Wold, Ballentine, & Hill, 2000; Zeichner, 2009). Second, those who do attempt to prepare pre-service teachers to work with children whose cultural and linguistic backgrounds differ from their own backgrounds do so with varying degrees of effectiveness. Many teacher educators, for example, arrange for their students to conduct fieldwork within inner city schools, but this practice alone may cause some pre-service teachers to feel like "outsiders," thereby intensifying attitudes of fear and prejudice (Merryfield, 2000). When left unchecked, these unexamined attitudes can reinforce negative stereotypes and deficit views of children. The studies we have reported on here illustrate the complexity of sorting out our attitudes and the attitudes of our students, as well as the complexity of working as teacher educators to shape positively the attitudes of pre-service teachers so that they enact instruction in ways that promote meaningful learning as well as social and political equity.

This study contributes to the current literature on working with children from non-dominant backgrounds and pre-service teacher education by critiquing Cindy's work (as an individual instructor and within the context of her teacher education program) with one team of pre-service teachers as they engage with children from non-dominant backgrounds. Our goal in this work is two-fold. First, we seek to get a clear sense of the pre-service teachers' thinking and understanding about working with children from non-dominant backgrounds by studying closely their debriefing conversations after teaching their children. Second, we seek to explicate Cindy's role in shaping the pre-service teachers' understanding about literacy instruction for children from non-dominant backgrounds.

Context and Methods

This study focused on work within an undergraduate literacy methods course entitled "Language Arts and Literacy 4-8." This course addresses literacy instruction for children in the middle grades, and is the second literacy methods course in a series of three that pre-service teachers take to meet state licensure and university graduation requirements. Many of the assigned readings encouraged reflection on cultural diversity including scholarly texts and articles about quality literacy instruction for children from non-dominant backgrounds (e.g., Au, 2006) and methods for developing case studies and reflective practices (e.g., Florio-Ruane, 2002). Moreover, each week the students were asked to reflect in writing and through class discussions on ways that the readings related to literacy instruction and informed their own practice as a pre-service teacher. Of the 16 class meetings, 3 of the weeks' themes (weeks 10, 11 and 12) dealt with "Developing a Context for Literacy Learning: Issues of Diversity and Literacy Instruction/Learning." Thus, almost 20% of the class time, as outlined on the course syllabus, was devoted to the issue of diversity and literacy instruction.

Our investigation focused on the practicum component of the course whereby 23 pre-service teachers worked with children at Evergreen School. The seven-session practicum component of the course occurred during weeks eight through fifteen of the semester. Class sessions prior to the practicum involved readings, writings, and discussions regarding literacy instruction and working with children from non-dominant backgrounds. Over 85% of the population at Evergreen School is comprised of children from non-dominant backgrounds.

It should be noted that the focus course was part of a larger undergraduate program that prepares and licenses elementary teachers. As part of state licensing, students were also required to complete at least one course related to diversity. Thus, students in this program encountered diversity-related issues in at least one other course in their program. The multicultural course, taught every semester and often taken in students' junior or senior years, surveyed various ways that race, class and gender underlie how curriculum and instruction is shaped in public schools.

We used a case study approach (e.g. Erickson & Shulz, 1992; Stake, 2005) as the framework for this investigation. Stake (2005) asserts that the thoughts and experiences of readers can be informed as they contemplate thoughtfully crafted case studies. Moreover, this specific case will not serve as a sample of work with pre-service teachers that can be generalized to all teacher education settings; rather, this in-depth look at one case of our work with pre-service teachers can serve as an example that other educators may find useful as they sort out their own work in teacher education settings (Wolcott, 2001). This particular case study focused on one pre-service team's debriefing conversations held after each of seven practicum lessons. We chose to focus on this group because we were concerned about their negative attitudes towards the children they worked with in their practicum. In short, all six of the pre-service teaching teams experienced dilemmas in their teaching, etc.; however, this particular team was the only team that demonstrated negative attitudes towards the children with whom they worked.

Participants

During the practicum, the small teams of pre-service teachers worked to design and implement a seven-lesson thematic unit focused on literacy. The team was composed of two women, Brandy and Betty, and two men, Sam and Mark. All four informants are European American from middle class-backgrounds. Brandy, Betty, and Mark were in their mid-twenties. Sam was in his mid-thirties. Betty and Mark were both identified as needing special education disabilities services on campus for learning disabilities. They both were also working towards dual regular education and special education certification. All four informants were in the final year of their undergraduate programs.

Cindy, the first author of the manuscript, was the instructor in the focus class. She is a former classroom teacher (for nine years). When the pre-service teachers in Cindy's class were working with children at Evergreen Elementary, Cindy observed the pre-service teachers as they implemented their lessons. She provided written feedback to the pre-service teachers during daily debriefing sessions after teaching at Evergreen Elementary. Cindy invited the second and third authors of this study (an English-as-a-Second-Language [ESL] colleague and a special education colleague in Cindy's teacher education program) to join her in analyzing data and critiquing Cindy's role as instructor in the literacy methods course.

Data Sources and Data Collection Procedures

Data sources from this investigation included field notes; seven sets of lessons and reflections written by the pre-service teachers (one set of lessons and reflections for each of the seven practicum lessons); and audio recordings of the seven one-half hour debriefing sessions recorded after each of practicum sessions. Cindy worked with a research assistant (a doctoral student in literacy) who helped to collect and organize data for this study.

There were 16 three-hour class sessions for this course. During seven of the class sessions (sessions eight through 15) the university class convened at a local elementary school several blocks from the university so that the college students could teach one-hour literacy lessons to elementary children for the first hour of their three-hour class session. The 23 college students were divided into six teaching teams. Each teaching team took over one upper-elementary classroom for the one-hour literacy lessons. Cindy spent 10 minutes observing each team teach during each one-hour practicum. She took notes on what she saw during the teaching and gave the notes to the teaching teams so that they could reflect on her comments, questions, and observations during their one-half hour debriefing sessions after teaching. After teaching their one-hour lessons at the elementary school, the college students then had 20 minutes to return to their university classroom where they spent one-half hour debriefing about their teaching experiences. Cindy posted the following debriefing questions at the beginning of each debriefing session: What worked during your lesson and why? What did not work during your lesson and why? How will you use what you learned about your students' learning during this lesson to plan your next lesson? From time to time, Cindy added additional questions for the teaching teams to discuss during their debriefing sessions. Cindy's research assistant took field notes during all university class sessions. She also helped to set up and organize the audio recordings of each teaching team's debriefing sessions. She collected, and organized by date and student, all written student work pertaining to the class.

Data Analysis Procedures

We analyzed data in the following way. First, seeking an overall sense of the nature of the students' course experiences, we read through all field notes paying special attention to any times that the focus pre-service teachers were mentioned in the field notes (Maxwell, 2012). Then, we read through the lesson plans and lesson reflections written by the focus case study students. This give us an overall sense of the focus students' course experiences as well as their planning for--and reflections on--their practicum teaching. Finally, all debriefing sessions of each group were professionally transcribed. Drawing on Gee (1999), we began analyzing the transcripts of the seven one-half hour debriefing sessions for the focus group by reading over copies of the transcripts with our research questions in mind and making margin notes about our thinking relative to our research questions.

After studying all of our data sources in this manner, we used memoing to begin sorting out possible themes pertaining our research questions (Hubbard & Power, 2003; Maxwell, 2012). Memoing is a way of using informal writing (i.e., memos or researcher journal entries) to begin to think through and analyze one's data. So, for example, as we read through each data source with our research questions in mind, we wrote analytic memos to ourselves about what we noticed in the data. Armed with our notes about possible themes from our memoing, we returned to the debriefing transcripts to discern, in more detail, the themes most relevant to the focus team's work with their children. As we read and re-read each of the transcripts, we noted the informants' dialogue regarding their experiences, attending most closely to the comments they made about working with students from non-dominant backgrounds (Gee, 1999). We identified specific times that the group raised issues pertaining to working with children from non-dominant backgrounds as they talked. Then we looked closely at the topics they discussed relative to this issue. We grouped those topics into the themes that were most prominent in their discussions (Gee, 1999). Additionally, we highlighted one portion of one particularly troubling conversation for closer analysis. Bourdieu (1980) refers to such troubling conversations in educational encounters as critical incidents. He argues that close examination of critical incidents can shed light on problems in education that merit our attention. We felt that a closer look at this critical incident could help us to explore the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards working with children from non-dominant backgrounds as well as Cindy's role in shaping their thinking/learning. Finally, we drew on other data sources (e.g., the class syllabus and copies of written assignments) to inform our interpretations of the debriefing session transcripts.

Findings

In this work, we characterize a small team of pre-service teachers' awareness and understanding of literacy instruction for students from non-dominant backgrounds. In particular, we explore when the pre-service teachers discussed issues pertaining to working with children from non-dominant backgrounds in their practicum debriefing sessions, what they had to say about the children, and what their discussions reflected about their attitudes towards children from non-dominant backgrounds. As well, we explore Cindy's role in shaping the thinking of the pre-service teachers. Ultimately, we seek to use ideas gleaned from this work as a foundation for making decisions about how to work more effectively with students like Brandy, Sam, Betty, and Mark in the future. In the first part of this section we identify when the teaching team raised issues pertaining to working with children from non-dominant backgrounds across their seven half-hour debriefing sessions. Then, we identify the nature of the topics they discuss and what those topics reveal about their attitudes towards children from non-dominant backgrounds. In discussing the latter issue, we explicate one particularly troubling episode that occurred during the group's final debriefing session and Cindy's role in shaping the thinking of the pre-service teachers during the troubling episode.

When Did the Pre-service Teachers Discuss Diversity Relative to their Practicum Experience?

Figure 1 addresses our first research question by summarizing our informants' dialogue related to diversity during their seven practicum debriefing sessions. Note that diversity for us included cultural and linguistic diversity as well as academic diversity. As Figure 1 illustrates, the team seldom discussed issues of diversity. Exceptions include sessions 5 and 7 where they discussed diversity-related issues 7 and 5 times respectively. We believe that the team's more extended discussion of diversity during session 5 resulted from Cindy's specific in-class requirement to relate an assigned reading on diversity to the students' practicum experience. In session 7, the extended diversity-related discussion primarily involved Brandy's repeated account of a situation whereby a child accused her of being a racist.

The third column in Figure 1 illustrates general diversity-related topics that the teaching team discussed. In the next section, we elaborate on the specific topics presented in column three of Figure 1 when we analyze the content of the team's discussions across the seven debriefing sessions. In general, the contents in Figure 1 concern us for at least two reasons. First, the teaching team seldom mentioned issues of diversity even though it was a stated focus of the course. For example, as noted in the syllabus, two major goals of the course were: (1) To recognize and problematize "deficit" views of children from non-dominant backgrounds, and (2) to foreground learners learning literacy as opposed to foregrounding generic, disembodied strategies and methods. Additionally, one of the eight objectives stated in the syllabus said, "…upon completion of this course students should understand ways to attend to the literacy learning needs of children from non-dominant cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds". Even though—as further discussion of the team's interactions will demonstrate—Cindy was not successful in helping this focus team achieve the goals of the course with respect to diversity, the syllabus makes it

Figure 1.
Discussion of Diversity-Related Topics during Practicum Debriefings

One-Half Hour Debriefing Sessions:	*Number of Times Team Discussed Diversity-Related Issues:*	*Diversity-Related Topics Discussed:*
Session 1	0	N/A
Session 2	1	1=Brandy's experience working with an African American girl during substituting
Session 3	1	1=working with special needs students
	2	2=lesson modifications for ELL students
	3	3= lesson modifications for ELL students
Session 4	1	1=perhaps a child doesn't understand English very well
Session 5	1	1=work with a special needs child
	2	2=Where classroom teacher placed special ed. children in the room
	3	3=special needs children's understanding of a story
	4	4=discussing an article they read in class; an ELL child had valuable information to share with the class
	5	5=ELL students need adequate attention in the classroom
	6	6=literacy ownership for ELL and special needs students is important
	7	7=teachers should use instructional strategies that help students identify words with accuracy and fluency
Session 6	1	1=discussed behaviors of a special needs kid
Session 7	1	1=reference to work at an at-risk school to explain students' behaviors
	2	2=altercation between Brandy and a student in her small group; speaking English and Spanish
	3	3=words that students didn't know because of cultural and linguistic background
	4	4=explaining Spanish-English language incident to Cindy
	5	5=explaining students' lack of understanding of vocabulary to Cindy

evident that issues regarding cultural, linguistic, and academic diversity and how they relate to literacy instruction were to play a central part of this course.

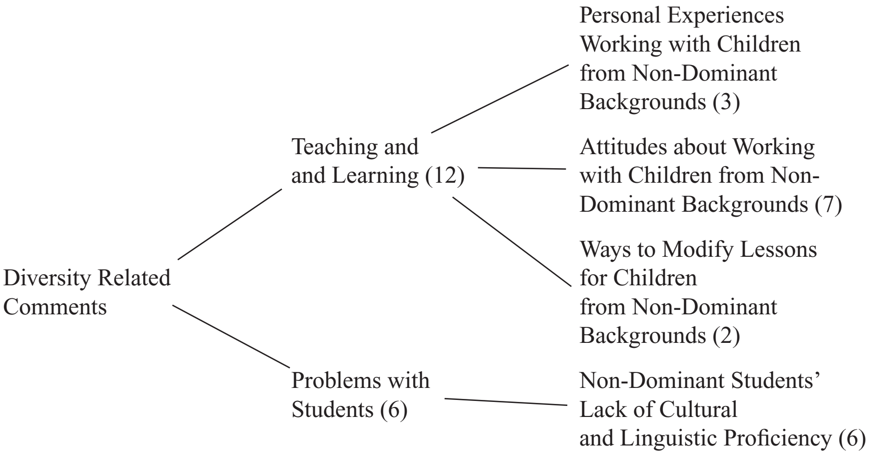
Second, when the team did speak about diversity-related issues, as was the case in session seven, it was in a manner that we find highly problematic. In the following section, we elaborate on the diversity-related topics the team discussed. As well, we analyze and interpret the problematic discussion that occurred during session seven and Cindy's role in influencing the thinking/learning of the focus pre-service teachers.

What Did the Focus Team Say About Diversity, and What Did This Reveal about Their Attitudes towards Diversity?

We looked closely at the diversity-related subjects identified in the third column of Figure 1 and categorized them by topic. As we explored the focus team's topics of discussion, we also sought to interpret what their discussions reflected about their attitudes towards diversity. First, we present the categories of topics that the team raised. Then, we explore the team's attitudes towards diversity as we analyzed their talk and Cindy's role in the team's discussions.

Diversity-related topics raised by focus team. As indicated in Figure 2, the 18 diversity-related topics fall into two broader categories and four clusters within these two categories. One broad category (12 of 18 topics) involves issues pertaining to teaching and learning, and the other broad category (6 of 18 topics) involves issues pertaining to perceived problematic student behavior. Thus, teaching and learning, rather than perceived problematic student behavior, was the primary focus of most of the group's diversity-related discussions.

Figure 2.
Taxonomy of Diversity-Related Comments


Personal Experiences Working with Children from Non-Dominant Backgrounds (3)
Teaching and and Learning (12)
Attitudes about Working with Children from Non-Dominant Backgrounds (7)
Ways to Modify Lessons for Children from Non-Dominant Backgrounds (2)
Diversity Related Comments
Problems with Students (6)
Non-Dominant Students' Lack of Cultural and Linguistic Proficiency (6)

The two categories of diversity-related topics that the team raised clustered in four areas. Team members mentioned their personal experiences working with children from non-dominant backgrounds on three occasions. There were seven items in the second topic cluster that involved the team's attitudes about working with children from non-dominant backgrounds. The third topic cluster included the team's discussions of ways to modify lessons for English learners. They raised this issue twice. The final topic cluster (6 of 18 topics) dealt with this team's perceptions of ELL students' lack of English proficiency. It is interesting to note that they mentioned this topic five of the six total times during the seventh and final debriefing session. The other time that they mentioned this topic was in session number 4 when they were trying to figure out why a child was experiencing difficulty in class. They determined that this particular child's difficulty with understanding may have occurred because he didn't know English very well.

Interestingly, of the four topic clusters we identified, we would only consider the final topic cluster (pertaining to EL students' lack of cultural and linguistic proficiency) to be negative and problematic. We interpret this to mean that even we have serious reservations about some of this team's conceptions of diversity, not all of their conceptions of diversity were problematic in our opinion. Moreover, all but one item in this particular topic cluster occurred during episode seven. As we analyzed transcript sessions, that seventh episode became a point to interest for us. It is to that troubling seventh debriefing session that we now turn.

The Troubling Seventh Debriefing Session

The seventh, and final, half-hour debriefing session for Brandy, Sam, Betty, and Mike began as all other sessions. A discussion prompt on the document camera directed each teaching team to critique the lessons that they had just taught with respect to what went well and why, what was problematic and why, and what they might do differently in the future and why. Finally, pre-service teachers were asked to discuss evidence of student learning pertaining to their lesson objectives. The teaching team devoted virtually the entire half-hour debriefing session to a discussion of an altercation that occurred in Brandy's group that day.

Before we share excerpts from that discussion we introduce two points for clarification. First, like all of the other teaching teams, this focus team worked together in one classroom. There were approximately 24 children in this particular fifth-grade classroom. Brandy, Mark, Sam, and Betty grouped the children by reading ability level. Most of each of the one-hour long lessons the teaching teams taught at Evergreen Elementary was devoted to working with the children in small groups. On occasion, however, the teaching team worked with the entire class at once.

Second, here's what Cindy (the instructor) was doing during the time that the groups were engaging in their half-hour debriefing sessions. There were six teaching teams in Cindy's class. During the hour that the teams were teaching, Cindy visited each of the teams for 10 minutes each. She provided written feedback to each team about the portion of the lesson that she viewed for each team. When the six teams met for their debriefing sessions after teaching, Cindy spent five-to-eight minutes with each of the groups that she had viewed that day. On this particular day, Cindy had visited the focus team for 10 minutes when they were teaching their lessons at Evergreen Elementary. Then she visited this team for approximately eight minutes while they were in the process of debriefing after the lesson.

While the primary topic that the teaching team discussed was Brandy's altercation with one of her students, the nature of the group's half-hour discussions seemed to fall into two fairly broad categories. One category involved the teaching team's use of language to construct their identities as comrades in their work at Evergreen Elementary. As suggested earlier in the paper, this kind of identity construction is referred to as recognition work by Gee (2012). The second category involved conversations that reflected conflicts between opposing cultural models. In this case, the cultural models for "doing school" that the teaching team ascribed to varied considerably from the cultural models to which the fifth grade children in the classroom ascribed. We draw upon excerpts from the seventh debriefing session conversation to illustrate and substantiate our interpretations relative to these two themes.

The Link between Language and Recognition Work

The social language that Brandy, Betty, Mark, and Sam employed during their debriefing sessions often revealed that they wished to be recognized by their group members first and foremost as fellow university students more than pre-service teachers. The following excerpt, recorded after the last practicum session, involves Brandy's retelling of a "racial" exchange she had with a fifth-grade student. In this excerpt she uses a vernacular substitution for "said" (e.g., "I'm like") 21 times. Betty shares this university student discourse with Brandy, and recognizes the verbal pattern. The two of them co-construct their identities as university students, recognizing themselves through the use of language. The informality of Brandy's discourse, and Betty's brief, but salient rapport-building contribution (i.e., "right"), signal to the members of the group, albeit subconsciously perhaps, that they are a particular *who* (university students) doing a particular *what* (commiserating about the language deficit of Mexican-American children). Absent from the exchange is the kind of language that would indicate they are soon-to-be-professional educators.

> *Brandy*: They do have a lot of problems writing and reading. Oh, and then today, this ticked me off because they're like, "Well, I ain't got no pencil." And I'm like, "You ain't got no pencil?" I'm like, "I don't think you have a pencil." And they're like oh, they're like, "We're Mexican, that's why and you're making fun of us cuz we don't know English." And I go, "Well, actually we're talking about reading and writing right now in English so you should probably try and speak it correctly." I was like, and I go, "And don't blame it on the fact that you're Mexican." I go, "That has nothing to do with it. There's people who speak English that don't know how to speak English."

> *Betty*: I used to speak that way.
>
> *Brandy*: Yeah, and I'm like…and then they said something else later. They were talking in Spanish and I'm all, "You guys, speak in English." And they're like, "Oh, you're just making fun of us cuz we're Mexican." I'm like, "It has nothing to do with the fact that you're Mexican." And I'm just like, "And I know Spanish by the way." They're all, "No you don't." I'm like, "Yeah I do. I do a little bit." Not enough to like really understand what they were saying but and they're like, "How do you know? You're not Mexican." Like everything was so racial today and I'm like, "It has nothing to do with the fact that you're Mexican. It's the fact that you're being a little brat right now." You now I was like…of course, I didn't say that, but I was thinking it.
>
> *Betty*: Right

It is clear from the content of this exchange that Brandy openly dismisses the language ability of her student, criticizing him for his perceived "failure" to speak Standard English. As Wolfram, Adger, and Christian (2006) explain, standard American English is not linguistically superior to other varieties of English; however, Brandy's verbal rejection of her student's speech positions the boy as socially and culturally inferior. While teachers may be unaware of the alienating effect their constant grammatical corrections have upon students learning English (Au, 2006; Perry & Delpit, 1996; Wong-Filmore & Snow, 2002), Brandy deliberately positions herself as superior to the boy by virtue of her "privileged" English dialect. First, she uses sarcasm as she criticizes his use of "ain't." Then she declares that she knows his home language, as she admits to Betty, when she cannot actually understand what the children say. Brandy recognizes her own status as a privileged speaker of a dialect of English, and in relaying this incident to the group, justifies her right to hegemonic positioning on grounds that the lesson involved English texts (It could be argued that Brandy's dialect was not professional Standard English; see Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 2006). On two accounts Brandy claimed cultural dominance as part of her recognition work: First, in criticizing the Mexican-American boy's use of English, and then in the retelling of the event to her fellow university students.

The children, however, engaged in their own recognition work during this encounter. In speaking the language of their home culture, the children signaled to themselves and to Brandy that they belong to a common cultural community. By resisting the efforts of the authoritarian outsider (i.e., Brandy), the students exert their right to communicate freely with one another. Brandy, perhaps threatened by her status as cultural minority among this group of children, attempts to regain her position of authority by using issues of standardized language to justify her hegemony.

A few minutes after the above excerpt was recorded, Brandy relayed the same "racial" scenario to Cindy. This time she alters slightly her language, perhaps in an attempt to conform to the expectations of university discourse. In this way, Brandy signals to herself and Cindy that she is attempting to be recognized as a pre-professional educator:

> *Brandy*: …they were on this big trip today, like they were using improper English and I said, and I like restated the proper way to say it and they said, well, you're making fun of us because we're Mexican and you're picking on us. And I said no. I said actually we're reading a book in English and we're writing in English, so you should probably practice speaking English…

Brandy referred to the "racial" incident nine times during the course of the 30-minute debriefing session, but when Cindy pressed the group to account for their professional judgment regarding this issue, Brandy suddenly changed the reason for her frustration:

> *Cindy*: When you guys were talking to Mr. Green[2] today, did you bring that up? Because I'm curious.
>
> *Brandy*: No. No, my main issue with him [i.e., when she spoke with Mr. Green] was they all had play-dough today. They were like passing out pieces of play-dough so each one of them were playing with this play-dough the whole time so I took up the play-dough and I said, and I go, well, here's what everybody's getting so wound up about. That was my only issue with him today so…Yeah.

By redirecting the conversation from issues of diversity to problems of play-dough, Brandy signals to herself and others that she is not to be held accountable for her ineffective (and destructive!) encounter with students from non-dominant backgrounds. She uses her language to position herself as a mere victim of circumstances that are beyond her control and responsibility.

Also problematic, however, is the fact that Cindy did not redirect the conversation to sort out with Brandy and her peers the negative encounter with the children. This, we would argue, was an important role that Cindy should have played as course instructor. In fact, by not redirecting the conversation and working with Brandy and her peers to explore and critique the problematic situation that occurred in Brandy's group that day, Cindy missed an essential opportunity to help Brandy and her peers critically examine their attitudes towards diversity.

Conflicts between Opposing Cultural Models

As the transcript segment below reveals, Brandy and her peers did not perceive of the students at Evergreen as "typical" or "normal." Group members viewed the correct cultural model for an American fifth-grader, regardless of the child's ethnicity, to be someone born in America who understood the idioms of Standard English.

> ***Sam***: I had to explain to them what curiosity means.
>
> *Brandy*: . . they were . . .
>
> *Betty*: That's why I totally skipped it cuz I skipped, I went straight to question 2 because I looked at that and I'm like, they are not gonna understand.
>
> *Sam*: Yeah, after I wrote it, I'm like they should understand that. Everyone knows that curiosity killed the cat, you know.

> *Betty*: Right.
>
> *Brandy*: Yeah. Well, see, I think that's a culture thing. That quote.
>
> *Betty*: Yeah.
>
> *Brandy*: ... But it's like, you guys are in 6th grade. You're going to middle school in like how many months?
>
> ***Sam***: Every ELL classroom we've gone to.
>
> *Brandy*: No, I know. No, the thing is is that, yes, but you cannot speak Spanish in the classroom so why are you gonna teach them how to speak Spanish? Why would you? No, I don't care. They can, if that's how they have to learn and they have to make the transition from English to Spanish, that's fine. By 6th grade, most, I guarantee you, most of those kids were born here in America.

Sam was surprised that he had to explain "curiosity." Betty did not even attempt to explain the term, knowing "they're not gonna understand." Brandy, although acknowledging the cultural connection to the idiom, considered the children deficit nonetheless, faulting them for ignorance in light of their "guaranteed" American birthplace.

The youngsters clearly did not fit the group's preconceived images of what a typical "American student" should look, act, and sound like. Consequently, the group's cultural model of "American student" clashed with the American student they found in real life at Evergreen School. When faced with this discrepancy, Sam and his peers lost their professional footing, and then compensated for their feelings of cultural disequilibria (Ryan, 1972; Wiggins & Follo, 1999) by blaming the children. "Everyone knows that curiosity killed the cat, you know."

Discussion

The discrepancy between what the pre-service teachers read, write about, and discussed in their university classroom and the manner in which they actually interacted with the children at their practicum site shed light on the role that Cindy played in working with the pre-service teachers in her care, and highlighted her ineffectiveness enacting meaningfully her attitudes about literacy and diversity in her own instruction in her college classroom. In describing Brandy's encounter with the children, three members of the group (i.e., Brandy, Sam, and Betty) positioned themselves as culturally and linguistically dominant, a situation that conflicts with our own cultural model of what a "pre-professional literacy teacher" should act and sound like. For example, Brandy did not offer her student a pencil, but rather criticized him for saying "ain't." Betty did not scaffold her students' understanding of "curiosity killed the cat," but skipped the issue entirely. Because the responses of the children did not fit the team's cultural model of "American student," and because they were unable to create an effective learning context for the youngsters, (Gutierrez, 2008), Betty, Brandy, and Sam resorted to imposing their own White, middle-class hegemonic values upon their students from non-dominant backgrounds.[3] Clearly, Cindy has a responsibility to positively and productively confront head-on such problems when they occur in her university classroom.

This situation in Cindy's classroom also raises broader programmatic concerns, however. Research (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gay, 2010; Howard, 2006) reveals that the process of changing students' negative attitudes about diversity-related issues (e.g., race, gender, linguistic diversity, sexual orientation, etc.) is long and arduous. There are no quick fixes; rather, instructors within programs must work collaborative and cohesively to shift students' attitudes across classes and time to bring about meaningful change (Gay, 2010; Gutierrez, 2008). At Cindy's university, both literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) faculty worked towards the common goal of preparing teachers to work with children from non-dominant backgrounds, but they did not collaborate in meaningful ways in that effort. It should be noted that just one committee in this teacher education program linked literacy and ESL faculty together, and it was charged with the responsibility of coordinating various activities aimed at the assessment of the program to ensure compliance with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and not curriculum development or problem-solving ways to deal with students' attitudes towards children from non-dominant backgrounds within particular classes. That was up to individual instructors, and Cindy and the ESL instructor in this program never had conversations about possible interfaces between their classes.

What approaches can faculty in similar circumstances employ? The answer to this question, we believe, emerged after Cindy taught this methods course when, as a result of a major state budget crisis, the college in which Cindy works was transformed into a profoundly different place in which faculty reinvented how literacy interfaced with issues pertaining to cultural, linguistic, and academic diversity were enacted in the classroom and mapped across the curriculum.[4] Work by Blanton and Pugach (2007, 2011) was informative in developing a more cohesive program. While their work primarily is focused on bringing together the fields of special education and general education, they recognize the need for teacher education programs to prepare teachers to effectively educate all children. Blanton and Pugach (2011) describe teacher education programs as three types: (1) discrete programs, in which teacher education is carried out as separate disciplines (i.e., elementary, special education, ESL); (2) integrated programs, in which programs are designed to accomplish curricular and instructional overlap, where not all students are expected to graduate with licensure or credentials in more than one area but they may if they so choose; and (3) merged programs, in which there is a single curriculum that all students are expected to complete, the curriculum is designed to integrate courses and field experiences to meet the needs of all students, and all pre-service teacher candidates are expected to graduate with two or more licenses or credential areas.

Prior to last year, the teacher education program in which Cindy taught was a discrete program (Blanton & Pugach, 2007). That is, individual teacher education courses primarily operated as silos in separate disciplines. However, when the recent budget crisis forced a restructuring of the College programs, the faculty created a merged program. To that end, faculty interacted together to rewrite courses, identified areas of overlap in the curriculum of the literacy, ESL and special education courses, realigned curriculum in light of state and professional standards but also thought carefully about the specific populations our pre-service teachers will serve. New assessments and new ways of thinking about assessment were developed to go along with the revised curriculum. The end result was a new teacher education program distinguished by a highly integrated curriculum in which students could receive dual licensure and/or endorsement in the following three areas: (1) ESL/elementary education; (2) early childhood education/elementary education; and (3) special education/elementary education. There was now no option for students to prepare to teach one set of students only; all program graduates would now be qualified to teach a diverse preK-12 student body.

Concluding Comments

It would be tempting to dismiss the troubles in Cindy's class as little more than the foibles of a single instructor and a few students, but that would overlook larger lessons on teacher preparation. First, as an individual instructor, Cindy had a responsibility to confront head-on—in a positive and educative manner—the problems she encountered in her class during that troubling seventh episode with her students. Second, this case highlights lessons that can be learned about ways that faculty from literacy, ESL and special education can collaborate in curricular and program design to begin to bridge gaps in student learning about working with children from non-dominant backgrounds. One of our biggest lessons from this case is the following: Beware of programs for the preparation of pre-service teachers which are little more than a list of classes that add up to the appropriate number of credits for licensure. They do little to instantiate the kinds of instructional and theoretical links between issues pertaining to cultural, linguistic, and academic diversity and literacy that are crucial to creating competent teachers.

Borrowed from Cindy's first-hand experience as a participant in the revision of the college curriculum and the work of Blanton and Paguch (2011), curricular mapping, committee participation and representation, in-class assessment of students' attitudes towards working with children from non-dominant backgrounds, and collaborative work across disciplines are suggested as approaches to link conceptual content in areas such as literacy to work with children from non-dominant backgrounds in more meaningful ways for pre-service teachers in teacher preparation programs. For faculty who prepare teachers as literacy or ESL specialists the solution to helping pre-service teachers to become competent professionals who work effectively with all students does not reside solely on the efforts of a single instructor. While we clearly cannot guarantee that Brandi, Sam, and Betty would have had more professional attitudes towards children from non-dominant backgrounds in our new program as compared to our old teacher education program, it is likely that a more cohesive overall teacher education program would have positively impacted these pre-service teachers' attitudes and learning.

A final advantage to cross-curricular collaboration is that discussions during collaborations can surface prejudices, misconceptions, and shortcomings that faculty members, themselves, need to address. As we mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Cindy was shocked by a colleague's admonition that she should be conducting practica in schools with White, middle class students. University faculty members, themselves, need to engage in the same thoughtful reflective work they ask their students to undertake.

Note

[1] The term non-dominant comes from Gutierrez (2008) and refers to children who are not White, middle-to-upper-class, and monolingual English speaking.

[2] Mr. Green was the classroom teacher. The teaching teams were each directed to use the last five, or so, minutes of class to talk with the classroom teacher to get feedback about the implementation of their lessons. This information could then be discussed during the debriefing sessions.

[3] For whatever reason, Mark did not engage with his peers in their assessments of the children they were teaching.

[4] We are abundantly aware that these changes came too little and too late to help students such as Brandi, Sam, and Betty.

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