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## The Western Sydney Rustbelt: Recognizing and Building on Strengths in Pre-service Teacher Education

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*Abstract: Preparing pre-service teachers to address the disparities in educational attainment that occur in settings with complex demographics such as high poverty and super diversity (Vertovec, 2007) require a theoretically driven contextual and spacial (Soja, 1996) understanding of disadvantage. This understanding highlights the structural and systemic inequalities that exist between the rich and the poor and limit social and economic mobility for disadvantaged students in schools. This paper uses a conceptual and spacial understanding to focus on the strategies implemented by a primary and secondary pre-service teacher program to support and improve pre-service teacher learning of disadvantaged schools. We detail approaches to learning that support pre-service teachers in attempting to consider how their own ethnicity and culture shapes practice and may disrupt the effects of poverty on educational outcomes to make a difference in the lives of their students.*

### Introduction

Teaching in the twenty first century requires new thinking about what constitutes effective and engaging teaching and learning. “Former conceptions of knowledge, minds and learning no longer serve a world where what we know is less important than what we are able to do with knowledge in different contexts” Friesen (2009). Recent research has equated quality teaching to the commitment that teachers make to the vocation. Durka (2002, p. 7) for example, asserted that “the work of teaching is an activity whose meaning is larger than the sum of its parts”. This implies that teachers and pre-service teachers in particular not only have the knowledge and competence to teach well but should also possess a strong commitment to the profession (Department of Education and Training, 2004, p. 6; Teaching Australia, 2009, p. 3) and to all students they teach in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2001, p. 6). Teacher quality has become a prime tenant of new reform agendas evident in for example Government blueprints like the *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning – A Blueprint for Action* which identifies high quality candidates into initial teacher education, and quality measures on graduation, as key components of the quality agenda (NSW Government, 2013). This is further reflected in The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) that requires pre-service teachers to be: *responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds* (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, p. 4). These documents provide an important framework to guide and facilitate teacher professional learning. ‘Teaching Australia’ (2009, p. 1) states that “research has clearly and convincingly established that good teachers make a difference to students’ life chances and the best teachers make the most difference”. It is evident

therefore that teacher quality, coupled with the teacher's capacity to cater for diversity, has the most positive impact on student learning.

In this manuscript we consider teacher quality and catering for diversity by focusing on the ways we engage our pre-service teachers in supporting and improving their learning for super-diverse, disadvantaged schools. We detail two approaches undertaken in our primary and secondary program these include assessment opportunities that require pre-service teachers to acknowledge and build on their own cultural and linguistic resources and an opportunity to participate in a community engagement program.

### **Preparing Pre-Service Teachers within a Complex and Dynamic Context**

Western Sydney is characterized by successive waves of migration from the earliest settlers who displaced Aboriginal people of the Cadigal nation, to the most recent immigrants and people from countries in conflict in some areas of Africa and the Middle East. The population of Western Sydney continues to grow with 35% of the total population coming from more than 170 countries and speaking over 150 different languages (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Western Sydney University, in the suburbs of Greater Western Sydney is situated in an area where shifting identity politics are contested preparing pre-service teachers to work in this context requires a reflexive analysis of the temporal, spacial and historical dimensions at play within classrooms in this super diverse region.

Primary and high school enrolments and enrolments in our pre-service teacher courses reflect Australia's increasing diversity. Western Sydney pre-service teachers and many others like them, have knowledge, understandings and expertise that have supported them in being placed in graduate teacher education programs, but teacher education research suggests that their knowledge and skill is rarely leveraged to advance our understanding of teaching for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Anderson & Stillman, 2013; Safford & Kelly, 2010). Almost all of our pre-service teachers are drawn from Western Sydney and in our pre-service program we seek to encourage our students to call on their own cultural and linguistic knowledge and skill to enhance our collective understanding of working in super-diverse communities.

In this complex and dynamic context we are mindful of Freire's contention that teachers and students must learn from each (Freire, 1970), we aim to motivate and prepare pre-service teachers to be active agents in their own professional development and hence in determining the direction of schools. We work towards not merely translating theories into classroom practise, but making it necessary to read both the word and the world. We contend that this form of learning could be framed around Soja's (1996) trialectic of *space* where *space* is conceived as spatiality, sociality and history, which are inseparable and interdependent and where we "begin to think about the spatiality of human life in much the same way that we have persistently approached life's intrinsic and richly revealing historical and social qualities: its historicity and sociality" (Soja, 1996, p.2).

Soja speaks of conceived space, perceived space and lived space. Encompassing a dialectic that includes spatiality–historicity–sociality, Soja argues that human geography has as much scope and critical significance as life's historical and social dimensions. He argues for an equivalent and required balance between critical, spatial, historical and social thinking; this theorizing offers a lens through which to view the ways systematic and structural inequalities impact educational opportunity and achievement. The naming of what counts as first or second space is configured here to map and compartmentalize a space for looking at teacher education and its response to addressing the learning strengths and needs of schools and students in super-diverse contexts. In attempting to understand what is privileged or

dominant and what is marginalized in the real and every day of education, schools and classrooms, we look to formalized institutions, policy documents, teacher education research and the lived experiences of pre-service teachers and their students.

### **A Spacial Trialectic**

Soja's first "perceived" (1996, p.10) space is the actual physical space, that which exists and is material. The second layering is the "conceived" (Soja, 1996, p.10) space, the mental space and the third is the "*lived* Spaces of Representation" which is a combination of the physical, geographical space and the mental cultural assemblies of space. Firstspace is "fixed mainly on the materiality of spatial forms, on things that can be empirically mapped" (Soja, 1996, p.10) and in the context of this discussion could be an example of everyday language that a student acquires from the space of the home. Secondspace comprises "thoughtful representations of human spatiality in mental and cognitive forms" (Soja, 1996, p.10). Secondspace could hence refer to the formal, institutionalised academic knowledge that is acquired from the space of the school/university. Soja (1996) developed his concept of Thirdspace, as a way of bringing together Firstspace and Secondspace. In developing Thirdspace, Soja draws upon the work of Lefebvre (1991), Foucault (1984, 1986) and bell hooks (1994). The 'lived' thirdspace makes it possible to "set aside the demands to make an either/or choice and contemplate instead the possibility of both/and also logic..." (Soja, 1996, p.5). Third space can hence create new interpretations of everyday and academic knowledges as it is "produced in and through language as people come together" (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo & Collazo, 2004, p. 43). Third space can hence be used to consider ways of knowing and for example "challenge, destabilize, and expand literacy practices that are typically valued in school" (Moje et al. 2004, p. 44). Thirdspace then can be viewed as a way to navigate through pre-service teachers diverse linguistic and cultural resources (everyday languages and knowledges) and then apply them to formal academic content knowledge and the creation of future possibilities. This is where pre-service teachers consider and make explicit links between their everyday and academic knowledge in order to advance reflection, learning and action within their classrooms.

We ask our per-service teachers to position themselves and their future students and communities as knowledge producers and experts with real insights. We ask them to consider how their own ethnicity and culture shapes practice and to begin to recognize how this is centrally important to their teaching practice. We ask them to conceive of spaces where they can be pedagogically reflexive and reflective, responding to students learning needs by employing relevant and meaningful curricula and classroom practices. In this way, teaching and learning may occur in a mutually constitutive space, a third space that shifts the social organization of learning and reconsiders what counts as valued knowledge (Gutiérrez, 2008). A space where teachers and students tap into the resources they all bring to their classrooms.

In the following sections of this paper, we turn our attention to practices within our primary and secondary pre-service program examining the relationship between educational opportunity and achievement. This is viewed through an examination of large scale policies and practices that address the rapid growth in student diversity and the changing contexts and demands of preparing teachers to work with students from a variety of economic, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. We examine the ways we prepare our pre-service teachers to create a transformative space, a third space that builds on their own and their students 'funds of knowledge' (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005). We argue that in this space there is potential to support pre-service teachers in designing meaningful, engaging learning that critiques the ways educational practice reproduces systematic inequality but can also

invigorate educational practice and opportunity in classrooms and in educational practice more broadly.

### **Perceiving Space through Mapping Policies in Teacher Education**

Within each of Soja's (1996) conceived spaces it would be possible to ascribe meanings to teacher education and teacher quality, especially for early career teachers as they transition from university to schools. The interest in Soja's (1996) notion of space is oriented towards the social and cultural meanings that are made by pre-service teachers through practice. The concept of spaciality links to the need for pre-service teachers to cross the practice-theory divide with improved relationships between universities and schools (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Teachers and teacher educators need to forge new partnerships for student learning (Zeichner, Payne, & Brayko, 2015), and teaching and teacher education need to address the higher order skills and knowledge for teaching diverse student populations (Allen & Penuel, 2014; Cochran-Smith, Ludlow, Grudnoff & Aitken, 2014).

These concerns open up a range of trepidations connected to quality teaching and the conceived space and perceived spaces as exemplified by Soja (1996, p.10), where the relationship between teacher education and the wider policy environment is explored. The perceived space for example would acknowledge the extent to which teacher education programs meet policy requirements and the assessable outcomes from the teacher training. In Australia and the international arena, there is a significant emphasis on improving teacher quality due to the recognition that teachers have the greatest 'in school' influence on student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Australian programs such as the Greater Teaching, Inspire Learning (GTIL), the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA), National Partnerships, the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (AGQTP) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) as well as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) all focus on teacher quality and an investment in teachers' professional learning.

Preparing young people for a culturally and linguistically diverse society necessitates that the global economy is driven by global educational reform focused on increasing accountability measures. In this context, global discourses link teacher quality to school improvement (OECD, 2005). Measures and evaluations of teacher quality are realized in professional standards documents, and in Australia these documents provide a framework for teacher education curriculum and teacher professional development.

### **First and Second Space: Policy Practice and Research**

An examination of educational space(s) requires a consideration of the contextual historical, geographical and social conditions and how these conditions both shape people and the actions they take to shape their conditions. In teacher education, reflection on the space(s) one inhabits can be directly linked to changing one's relationship to space and attending to social transformation (Gruenwald, 2003). This is realized for example in the focus on globalisation and the ways it impacts the educational endeavour.

In recent years, many disciplines and fields, ranging from sociology and anthropology to cultural and literacy studies have grappled with the issue of how global flows and globalisation phenomena influence situated social practices (Warriner & Wyman, 2013). Soja

(2010) argues that globalization has accelerated the urban condition, suggesting that while time and history define human development and change, space is filled with politics, ideology and other forces that change our lives and challenge us to engage in struggles over geography.

In thinking through Soja's (1996) notions of spaciality, we consider how policy is demonstrated in the *real* space of the classroom. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) requires pre-service teachers to: *Demonstrate knowledge of teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds* (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, p. 4). Australian Curriculum: English (ACARA, 2012), acknowledges Australian students' linguistic diversity however, we can argue that the Australian education system frames linguistic homogeneity as the norm and maintains what Coleman (2012) describes as a monolingual and monocultural orientation. The Quality Teaching framework in New South Wales public schools (New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2003), contends that ... 'pedagogy that promotes intellectual quality ... requires some means by which teachers link the work of their students to personal, social and cultural contexts outside of the classroom' (p. 7). While teachers are tasked with recognizing and building upon students' skills and understandings, for the most part, bilingualism and hybrid language practices are silenced.

While, policy documents in particular focus on quality teaching, improving pre-service teacher training and the quality of pre-service teachers' learning are essential, integral parts of the teaching profession. This is based on research that suggests that the first phase of the learning continuum is often the most influential for pre-service teachers' professional development (Endedijk, Vermunt, Verloop & Brekelmans, 2012). While the traditional practicum experiences of teacher education programs develop pre-service teacher professional teaching skills, few policies however consider the impact of community engagement programs on teacher professional development. In reflecting on first and second space in our complex context, we seek to be cognoscente of the resources our pre-service teachers and their students bring to schools through the process of migration for example. As we consider policy, practice and research we ask how these resources can be acknowledged, cultivated, and leveraged as resources for learning and for addressing educational equity. Within the conceived (Soja, 1996), space of teacher education which includes course content and assessment, field placements, school and university pedagogies and practices, there is potential to position this professional knowledge as foundational to the third, lived space within increasingly diverse educational environments.

### **Conceiving Space through Course Content**

Building on the work of several scholars (Bhabha, 1994; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejada, 2003; Moje et al., 2004; Soja, 1996) in the next section we take up Gannon's (2010) theorizing by positioning third space as disruptive. This space may operate to disturb normative or deficit perceptions of diverse students' abilities, and instead, recognizes and builds on their cultural and linguistic knowledge. We consider how the integration of knowledges and discourses from different spaces can be theorized to articulate the construction of 'third space' for pre-service teachers' learning.

### Primary Program

We are mindful that many of our pre-service teachers have navigated diverse cultural and linguistic spaces, encounters that have formed their conceptions of language and its relationship to identity, culture and social group membership. As educators we must begin with recognizing that human beings, and learners, exist in a cultural context (Freire, 1970). Ladson-Billings (1994) important work on Culturally Responsive Teaching pedagogy called on educators to recognize the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning. This work has had a significant impact on teacher preparation programs particularly in the US. Building on this work Gruenwald's (2003) 'critical pedagogy of place' connected the social-historical with the geographic spatial as worthy sites of research. Recent work on culturally-sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012) builds on this tradition and reminds us that in the context of schooling, fostering the development of belonging and engagement for marginalized students can mean conceiving of space and place as a site for the negotiation of learning. In our conception of space, we consider the multiple languages, registers and linguistic codes our diverse students deploy in their everyday places. Places then are not local only but always operating and constituting themselves in relation to other places and the spaces in which they operate. Too often the affordances of place as a source of learning are frequently ignored and compounded by continuing policies and practices that fail to consider local contexts. Engaging pre-service teachers and learners in being reflexive and reflective can support them in going beyond their immediate realities and the challenges of their context.

Although unevenly distributed, many Australian schools include Aboriginal students and those from migrant and refugee and backgrounds, young people who speak many different languages and dialects of English. In 2016, NSW government schools contained 33.1% of students from language backgrounds other than English (NSW Government Education, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2017, p.1). The cultural and linguistic diversity that characterizes classrooms and Western Sydney classrooms in particular increases the complexity of pre-service teachers work. Many scholars have elucidated the clear disadvantages that exist for some groups, including refugee background students (Mathews, 2008; Woods, 2009) who may have suffered trauma and may have little or no formal education. Despite this, these young people bring complex ways of knowing that can enrich learning for all and they communicate effectively with family and community in languages and dialects in diverse and complex ways that go unrecognized in school.

In turning to the interplay of spaces and the *real* space of what teachers actually do, a considerable body of research demonstrates that young peoples' everyday learning, and their increasingly diverse and dynamic literacy experiences and complex, multilingual practices (Cox, 2015; D'warte, 2014, 2015; Hull & Stornaiulo, 2014; Pennycook, 2010) are not commonly reflected in schools (Garcia & Yip, 2015; Gutierrez et al., 2011). Scholars contend that allowing linguistically diverse students to showcase their linguistic funds of knowledge in classrooms, not only serves to acknowledge and appreciate students' proficiency but also, emphasizes their achievement and enhances their learning potential (Cummins & Early, 2011; Prasad, 2013). While teachers' ideas and beliefs about language and learning, impact all students, for many linguistically diverse students, difference is often interpreted as deficit (Comber & Kamler, 2005; Gorski, 2011; Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martínez, 2009). Language is inextricably linked to students' identities, experiences and most importantly, opportunities to learn. Addressing issues of identity, agency, and power in the production of knowledge (Lewis, Encisco, & Moje, 2007) makes affirming students' and indeed pre-service teachers' extant cultural and linguistic repertoires crucial.

In the primary language and literacy units, pre-service teachers are engaged in self-reflexive inquiry to examine their multiple positions and subjectivities. In particular, this involves, examining, interrogating and resisting deficit discourses about diversity and difference that may be part of their own ongoing experience. Opportunities are created for pre-service teachers to think historically and to read and write about themselves and their futures as social, historical actors (Gutiérrez, 2008) in increasingly diverse educational environments. While we ground this work in pre-service teachers own knowledge and experience, we discuss dominant ideologies about language, learning and expectation that abound in educational practice. We challenge pre-service teachers to consider the power of their views and their own strengths and skills. We engage pre-service teachers as linguistic ethnographers, to explore the role language plays in their social and cultural lives. They use visual mapping and analysis to examine the diverse multilingual, multimodal, socio-cultural and socio-linguistic, practices in their everyday worlds. Engaging pre-service teachers as linguistic ethnographers elucidates first space and second space principles (Soja, 1996, p.10), facilitating the use of Soja's (1996, p.10) third space to examine possibilities for future teaching that have emanated from their own ethnographic explorations.

Cultivating what scholars describe as young peoples' increasing transcultural and translanguingual competencies, (Garcia & Yip 2014; Hornberger, & Link, 2012; Reynolds & Orellana, 2014) requires a reimagining of literacy pedagogies. Pre-service teachers turn first to themselves to view multilingualism as the norm and examine new pedagogical practices that take up new understandings about bilingual and plurilingual competencies. Building on ones' entire linguistic and cultural repertoire requires identifying both their own strengths and their students and then investigating ways to leverage them to create curriculum that supports learning and achievement of crucial language and literacy benchmarks. By calling on their own linguistic and cultural skills, knowledge and understandings they are encouraged to use and develop a range of bilingual pedagogical resources. In completing reading and e-literacy case studies, they apply a critical eye to the texts they use, examining how these texts reflect or ignore the diversity of languages and experiences within Western Sydney classrooms. Course work requires an exploration of school communities and cultivation of ongoing community partnerships. In one such partnership with a high profile Western Sydney sports team, pre-service teachers work with students in local schools to compose stories to be entered in regional competitions where the best stories are read in multiple languages by bilingual members of the sports team. These resources can be used during professional experience placements and in future teaching, further validating their own and their students' resources, interests and languages.

Soja (1996, p.10) contends that space is being created collectively. In our pre-service program we look to engage our primary pre-service teachers in attending to how language learning is locally and globally experienced and historically influenced by both policies and practices and their own and others' subjectivities. Societal and institutional mandates have been slow to recognise the complexity of language/s and literacies across all domains of students' lives. The relationship between students' school and out of school language and literacy practices and experiences has important implications for equity in educational outcomes, most particularly in culturally and linguistically diverse, 'disadvantaged' schools. An examination of the critical, spatial, historical and social dimensions in this context, elucidates how one language and or language variety may be seen as superior, desirable, and necessary, while others will be seen as inferior, undesirable, and extraneous (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). In a climate of high stakes testing many low SES, linguistically and culturally diverse students' communicative competence is often erased or narrowed and they frequently encounter negative assumptions about their abilities to perform linguistically and academically. Attainment of the dominant language and culture often positions students in



need of remediation which has clear implications for pre-service programs, particularly in addressing the way belief systems about language and culture become internalized and normalized and the ways these impact feelings of aspiration and change for culturally and linguistically diverse teachers.

We aim to build on our preservice teacher's linguistic resources and 'community cultural wealth' (Yosso, 2005) to inform educational practice. We bring the temporal, spacial and historical dimensions of increasing linguistic and cultural diversity and their relationship to educational opportunity into sharp focus, by supporting pre-service teachers to imagine the classroom space as critical and transformative. Building on the work of (Gutiérrez et al., 2003) and her explorations of third space and language learning, we ask our preservice teachers to consider how the formal and informal and the official and the unofficial spaces of the learning environment can intersect to create the potential for deeper or transformative learning. This learning and subsequent teaching builds on their own and their students' funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, et al, 2005) most particularly their linguistic and cultural knowledge and considers ways to leverage it for academic success in school.

### **Secondary Program**

Schools in Greater Western Sydney, where most education graduates will work as teachers, now enrol a large number of children and youth from refugee backgrounds. These students represent a "high risk group which faces great challenges in terms of adaption to the school system, acculturation, social adaptation, English language learning, and eventual academic success" (Brown, 2005). Between 2004 and 2010, the number of refugee background students arriving in Australia increased considerably with almost 43 per cent of all humanitarian arrivals under the age of 18 (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). Jenkinson et al's longitudinal study of humanitarian and refugee entrants in Australia notes significantly lower education rates, in general, for women, including nearly 20% who have never attended any school at all (Jenkinson, Silbert, De Maio, & Edwards, 2016).

A high proportion of refugees on humanitarian visas experience social disadvantage and ultimately lower access to opportunities and resources. Hence, as school populations become more diverse in cultures and languages and prior life experiences, the need for pre-service teachers to better understand and work with issues of disadvantage and difference in the classroom becomes critical. For pre-service teachers this means being able to understand and examine their own values and beliefs about the role of teaching in creating equity, access and cross-cultural understanding. By exploring how learning takes place in a variety of settings, modes and conditions and by engaging pre-service teachers in critical sustained reflection on their emerging practice, these secondary pre-service teachers are able to design rewarding educational experiences underpinned by principles of social justice and educational equity. To this end, the secondary program and primary program, engages pre-service teachers in an alternative community based practicum where they are challenged to move to the real, lived space that combines both their personal and academic spaces, and in doing so, develop their knowledge, to unpack and repack it, to analyse and synthesise it, to transform the knowledge, so that they can make it their own. As a teaching tool, in the secondary program it involves a blending of community engagement activities with the '*Diversity, Social Justice and Learning*' content unit in order to engage pre-service teachers in activities that address real community needs. Here, Soja's (1996) 'thirdspace' can act as a useful example of spatial imagination by showing how things can be different and may go some way to address deficit discourses that locate diverse individuals, families and communities at the margins of society.

The core secondary teaching unit is designed to introduce pre-service teachers to the roots of social differences and social inequalities; to motivate and inspire engagement through critical pedagogy; to stimulate pre-service teachers to gain a critical understanding of the role of schooling in broader social contexts, including the relevance of sociological perspectives to this awareness. Pre-service teachers are encouraged to subject their lived experiences to reflection and experimentation. Texts and readings that reflect a relevant inclusive curriculum and new scholarship and research about previously underrepresented groups are used as resources and drawn upon to not only to enrich the learning experience but also as a path to enabling pre-service teachers practice in the classroom. Similarly, pre-service teachers' motivation, interest and enthusiasm are used to further their personal and professional development. In so doing, pre-service teachers struggle with the ideas, values and social interests at the heart of the different educational and social visions which they as future teachers must accept, reject or resist. The strategy of 'problem posing' assists pre-service teachers to detect bias and prejudice in texts and often reflects aspects of the 'hidden curriculum', unmasking the political and cultural role of education of which many pre-service teachers are unaware. Such intellectual and emotional growth opportunities allow pre-service teachers to reflect on the nature of their own socially constructed knowledge and identities. Throughout this process, pre-service teachers use their understanding of diversity and social justice to explore their experiences of teaching and learning and then become comfortable about embracing their own ignorance as a driving force in building their individual picture of the world. A trialectical understanding of community education pedagogy can be understood through the interplay of Soja's (1996, p.10) three spaces: the imagined space (policy making, planning and 'mapping'); the real space (what teachers actually do), and the lived space that incorporates civic capacities and capabilities (Rowan, Mayer, Kline, Kostogriz & Walker - Gibbs, 2015). The lived is referred to as "the space where all places are, capable of being seen from every angle, each standing clear...a space that is common to all of us yet never able to be completely seen and understood" (Soja, 1996, p. 56).

The pedagogical model of community engagement takes its concern from thinkers who see community engagement work as a teaching method (Casey, 2009); to enhance global mindedness (Walters, Garii & Walters, 2009) and as a way of facilitating social change that enhances feelings of competency and efficacy (Cipolle, 2010) and for refugee student transition (Author, 2015; 2013). Moreover, in the teaching degree at Western Sydney University, it is mandatory for pre-service teachers to engage in sixty hours of community engagement for the Masters of Teaching in the primary and secondary degree. Pre-service teachers therefore complete three field based teaching practices, two traditional professional practicums (as part of the conceived and perceived space) that meet the policy requirements for field based professional practice and an additional community based practice (real, lived space), unique to teacher education at Western Sydney University.

Refugee Action Support is a specific community engagement initiative in the secondary program that uses reflective and experiential pedagogy to foster pre-service teachers' intellectual capacity as agents of change while providing targeted literacy and numeracy support to humanitarian refugee background students who have transitioned, within the previous two years, from Intensive English Centres (IECs) to mainstream secondary schools in Western and South Western Sydney. It is an innovative pedagogy often characterised by its orientation towards developing pre-service teachers' civic responsibilities, citizenship skills, and community action (Author, 2012). RAS provides academic literacy opportunities of previously determined un-crossable linguistic and cultural divides; guides tertiary and school students on a developmental journey in environments of difference and a diversity; presents exciting opportunities & possibilities for expanding intercultural understanding; and helps educators broaden assumptions about teaching and learning, equity

and access and about the changes and tensions in teaching and learning that characterise our new times. These understandings are usually evident in the space where pre-service teachers participating in community-based service-learning as a parallel practicum experience develop the ability to stand aside from the 'naturalized' practices of schools, (Gallego cited in Vickers 2007, p. 207) to gain an understanding of the contexts of their lives and the lives of their students. This experience allows pre-service teachers to develop flexibility in their teaching to accommodate and support diverse student contexts.

Thirdspace (Soja, 1996, p.10) or real, lived experience can hence be seen as spaces or experiences that encourage pre-service teachers to interact and connect with school students in unique ways that do not necessarily occur in day-to-day classroom interactions and which can shift and change for each person. These transformative characteristics allow pre-service teachers to have power over their experience to create a truly rewarding teaching experience where:

*Everything comes together subjectively and objectively, the abstract and concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the discipline and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history (Soja, 1996, p. 56-57)*

While many of the schools in Western Sydney have gone on to employ pre-service teachers who have worked in the RAS program as tutors, there is no formal documented evidence to indicate exactly how many RAS pre-service or bilingual primary preservice teachers have been employed by the schools. Nevertheless, these graduate teachers who do get employed by the schools in Western and South Western Sydney commence their careers with a strong awareness and commitment to the needs and aspirations of students in the region (Author & Brace, in press).

The RAS program has had many successes since it began in 2007. There is a significant growth in the number of secondary schools involved in the program from four to thirty with pre-service teacher involvement increasing dramatically from 200-3000 and refugee high school student numbers growing quite substantial from 200- to over 600. Additionally, there has been considerable interest in the program ranging from the general public through to other education and non-profit organisations both within NSW and from other states in Australia. The RAS model has been adopted by other universities namely, Charles Sturt University and the University of Canberra. Moreover RAS *develops self-confidence in preservice teachers* in the caring, safe learning environments of the tutoring centres. This allows tutors to tailor teaching strategies to specific students' needs, thereby producing better outcomes for the refugee students. Second, preservice teachers become *aware of bias and prejudices* when they were matched with tutees that were significantly different in terms of ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status.

Finally, as primary and secondary preservice teachers become more skilled and confident at reflection, they *consider more innovative and strategic ways of reflecting on practice*, particularly in teaching refugee students and culturally and linguistically diverse students. What this means in practice is that when preservice teachers become teachers with classrooms of their own, they will have the experience and knowledge they need to create an inclusive classroom environment (Author & Brace, in press). Hence it is through third space that the classroom:

*becomes an expanded world of learning and literacy practice, [where] the roles also become reversed, as every space and place in the world becomes readable or interpretable as a classroom (Soja, 1996, p. xi).*

## Conclusion

While many pre-service teachers may have wide ranging cultural and linguistic skills they are not always acknowledged or utilized in schools. Finding the time to facilitate opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in linguistic ethnography and work with bilingual material in pre-service literacy courses is increasingly challenging, particularly in a climate where graduating pre-service teachers must produce learning portfolios of achievement of 'Standards' and Teaching Performance Assessments.

Taking up Soja's conceptualization we contend that third space is not different, but encompasses first and second space and reconstructs it to form a third, different or alternative space of knowledges, learning and Discourse. We consider a form of learning that links pre-service teachers' and students' personal, social and cultural contexts outside of the university and classroom, for example, by using students' first language to facilitate and enable second language learning. In this way we can challenge the divide between every day and school-based literacies and instead exploit the ways schools-based and everyday knowledges can grow into one another to enhance learning (Gutiérrez, Bien, Selland & Pierce, 2011). The construction of 'third space' for pre-service teachers' learning occurs as they become pedagogically reflexive and reflective, and develop relevant and meaningful curricula and classroom practices and assessments for their students that transform the classroom space to one where teachers and students co-create the "lived Spaces of Representation" (Soja, p.10).

Similarly, the body of knowledge that emerges from community service learning hence facilitates in universities and higher institutions, transformative change that is based on quality and engaged civic leadership. With such knowledge, pre-service teachers acquire teaching and learning that will allow them to critically examine the role society has played in their own self-formation. Civic capacities hence represents a genuine unity of theory and revolutionary praxis where knowledge is seen in a societal and historical- development perspective that highlights its transformatory potentials. This is done firstly by helping pre-service teachers see themselves in ways which are radically different from their own self-formation and secondly by showing how certain experiences like community engagement learning can overcome and change learning and teaching if they are conceptualised differently. The past neglect of traditionally voiceless students, in particular, places tremendous pressures on teachers, and the function of pre-service programs would be to provide effective opportunities for pre-service teachers to develop effective strategies for disadvantaged students when operating in the real, lived, third space (Author & Brace, in press). The university-school-community engagement model understood within this trialectic of space offers many new opportunities for the emergence of learning situations, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be otherwise disengaged from learning.

*A knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived.*  
(1996, p. 31)

This links to Soja's theorising of bell hooks (1994), the latter focusing on the periphery rather than the centre as a "critical turning point in the construction of other forms of counter-hegemonic and subaltern identity and more embracing communities of resistance" which according to (Soja, 1996, p.97-98), "reconceptualizes the problematic of subjection by deconstructing and disordering both margin and center...and new spaces of opportunity and action are created, the new spaces that difference makes" (Soja, 1996, p.98). Real/ lived third space is a unification of worlds, in which the funds of knowledge in the first and second spaces inform and build upon each other in an effort to advance action. The real, lived space

is a way to bridge the binaries that conflate home experiences, places and discourses on the periphery (first space) within university culture, or places and discourses in the centre (second space).

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