Critical Community Building in Teacher Education: Rethinking Classroom Management

Jeannette D. Alarcón and Silvia Cristina Bettez

Abstract

In this article, critical community building (CCB) is posed as a promising practice for teacher education. The authors engaged in action research in order to investigate the usefulness of the tenets of CCB for shaping experiences in a classroom management course. The overarching goal was to inform a teacher educator's practices in establishing equitable learning spaces. The objectives of the investigation were twofold. First, we aimed to build trust in the learning community so that we could address controversial topics related to education, specifically in the area of classroom management. Second, we hoped that preservice teachers would take up and name CCB as part of their own pedagogical practice. Our guiding question was: When CCB is intentionally embedded in a teacher education course, how might preservice teachers' description of their understanding be used to refine CCB practices within the context of teacher education? Action research was employed so that the authors could use student data to inform teaching practices. Data sources included observations during instructional time, student work products, audio recordings of small group discussions, interview transcripts, and collaborative debrief and planning notes. The co-authors coded and analyzed data individually and collaboratively. Preservice teachers revealed that participating in activities guided by CCB principles resulted in what they described as: (a) increased meaningful interaction and interdependence, (b) instructional strategies that enhanced learning, and (c) shifts in thinking about traditional notions of classroom management.

Key Words: critical community building, culturally relevant pedagogy, preservice teacher education, classroom management, equity

Introduction

As preservice teachers prepare to enter the profession, experiences with classroom management practices that foster student voice, promote equitable opportunity, and build trust are key. However, there remains a lack of emphasis on developing critical awareness as a skill for examining and understanding accepted forms of traditional classroom management practices in teacher education. When teachers talk about future classrooms and learning environments, they seldom consider the need to engage culturally relevant pedagogy as a framework for establishing procedures, routines, norms, rules, and other essential processes (Milner & Tenore, 2010; Nieto, 2000). Statistics show that disproportionate numbers of students of color are negatively disciplined through traditional classroom management approaches (Mayworm et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2009). Teachers are often taught to "manage" by constraining students to fit particular ways of being. We believe moving from a focus on teacher-controlled management to creating an atmosphere in which all students feel like a part of the community has the potential to increase equity and a sense of security for *all* students. Critical multicultural education scholars indicate a need for increased emphasis on equity-oriented practices in teacher education in order to provide preservice teachers with experiences for fostering equitable learning environments (Alarcón, 2016; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Nieto 2000; Sleeter, 2018). Such space exists within classroom management courses that centralize asset-based framing and are infused with practice geared toward justice-oriented education.

Critical community building (CCB) has been put forth as a strategy of social justice education in higher education classroom and professional development settings. (Bettez 2011a, 2011b; Bettez & Hytten, 2013). Bettez (2011a, 2011b), expanding upon literature regarding community building (Hall, 2007; Pharr, 2010), defined *critical* community building by articulating three main tenets: (1) maintaining an open web of connections; (2) engaging in active listening with critical question posing; and (3) making a commitment coupled with accountability (Bettez, 2011a, p. 11). The first tenet refers to the need to create a dynamic and fluid learning space where students and teachers are seen as contributors to knowledge-building in the classroom while also fostering relationships that support difficult learning moments. The key factor in the second tenet is the inclusion of *critical* question posing. In the context of teacher education, and specifically classroom management coursework, critical

question posing leads to facilitated dialogue that helps preservice teachers better understand their roles establishing a more inclusive learning environment. The third tenet is meant as a pathway toward establishing mutual respect with the goal of promoting equity.

Alarcón, the first author, is a teacher educator who promotes an increased awareness of and practice with equity pedagogies that are appropriate for PreK–12 classrooms. As such, Alarcón drew upon the CCB premise as a tangible, culturally relevant strategy for guiding preservice teachers in rethinking classroom management. The authors co-designed and conducted an action research project by intentionally implementing the principles of CCB in a teacher preparation classroom management course. The overarching goal of the project was to inform practices that establish equitable learning environments by employing culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally relevant pedagogy is commonly seen as an effective pathway to increased equity in public school classrooms and other educational spaces (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2014).

During the course, we encouraged CCB by providing preservice teachers with a framework for understanding the concept and asked them to commit to specific forms of small group work to promote open dialogue and space for all voices to be heard. We presented CCB to preservice teachers in two ways. First, we introduced the concept of CCB, distinct from (non-critical) community building, as a classroom management strategy that centralizes active listening and voicing commitments for engaging in the learning space as integral to creating an environment where critical question posing is centralized. Second, preservice teachers practiced CCB as a strategy for fostering a trusting classroom culture where everyone invested in considering the perspectives of others in order to understand complicated issues that arise throughout the school day.

Theoretical Framework and Related Literature

Results of our literature review indicated a renewed focus on traditional community building as a child-centered approach to classroom management. However, there is little indication of an emphasis on criticality in this area. This study adds to the literature addressing both classroom management and culturally relevant pedagogy by examining the impact of intentionally enacting and promoting a CCB environment. Our work is situated within three main bodies of literature: child-centered classroom management, culturally relevant pedagogy as a pathway to justice-oriented classrooms, and CCB in learning environments. We begin with an overview of a child-centered orientation, next we provide foundational information regarding culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice education, and finally we present previously published work highlighting CCB.

Community-Centered Classroom Management

The notion of classroom management, in most cases, refers to the ways in which teachers handle time, movement, instruction, and decision-making in classrooms. Traditional approaches to classroom management include a variety of models such as behavioral approaches, systematic approaches, and integrative approaches that combine instruction and management strategies (Hardin, 2012). Beginning in the late 1990s, the notion of child-centered management techniques has been preferable to antiquated disciplinary action as teachers work to create engaging learning environments while simultaneously shaping students' behaviors (Perry & Weinstein, 1998). In many cases, child-centered approaches incorporate three main strategies: empathetic listening, assigning positive intent to behaviors, and teaching children to use choice language (Pereira & Smith-Adcock, 2011). While a child-centered focus continues to be held up as desirable practice, the tension between the teacher's authority in the classroom and making space for student-led decision-making persists (Tzuo, 2007). Building from these premises, a next step could be an integrative approach that builds from a community-centered learning environment and allows for co-construction of knowledge among students and teachers via dialogue and open communication (Lloyd et al., 2016; Meltzoff, 2001). A *critical* aspect is realized when people learn to speak across differences in order to learn to examine and analyze the systems of power that permeate society (including classrooms). Strategies such as question-posing can be used for moving toward fostering critical community. Developing a sense of criticality is essential in working toward more just educational environments and access to relevant educational opportunities.

This work endorses taking up equity pedagogies that help preservice teachers make sense of systems of power. However, teacher educators must remain mindful of cultural differences that may be at odds with certain premises of critical pedagogy, such as teaching students to question authority (Greenfield et al., 2000; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008). As such, it is important to include explicit instruction for facilitating dialogue with students and families that promotes understanding the usefulness of a democratic approach while also maintaining order via mutual respect and accountability. To achieve this goal it is important to consider variance in communication styles across cultural difference, particularly in terms of interactions between adults and children and varieties of group interactions (Lustig et al., 2006; Nelson-Barber & Dull, 1998). One goal for raising critical awareness and promoting community building in classrooms is to centralize historically marginalized ways of knowing and to reveal civic pathways for correcting long-standing inequity in schooling.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Justice-Oriented Practice

We have found that although social justice is often a central theme in cultural and social foundations graduate programs, "teacher education program surveys indicate that 'diversity' is often relegated to a single optional course" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 149). Furthermore, there is no guarantee that within "diversity" courses social justice issues will be directly addressed. When we speak of social justice, we are referring to "*critical* social justice" (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2011, p. xvii, emphasis in original). A critical approach to social justice refers to specific theoretical perspectives that recognize that society is stratified (divided and unequal) in significant and far-reaching ways along social group lines that include race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. Critical social justice recognizes inequality as deeply embedded in the fabric of society (i.e., as structural) and actively seeks to change this. Educational spaces can be sites for teaching about the complexities of society by helping students understand how communities work. By providing a learning community where preservice teachers are engaged in tackling social issues related to education on micro and macro levels, teacher educators provide an opportunity for them to experience culturally relevant pedagogy.

As educators and researchers grounded in a social justice orientation, we believe in the importance of examining systems of privilege and power (Allen et al., 2017; Delpit, 2006) in all aspects of teacher education; this moves beyond mainstream notions of incorporating diversity. As Hackman (2005) explains,

> Social justice education does not merely examine difference or diversity but pays careful attention to systems of power and privilege that give rise to social inequality and encourage students to critically examine oppression on institutional, cultural, and individual levels in search of opportunities for social action in service of social change (p. 104).

Thus, our work is predicated on recognizing and understanding this critical social justice complexity as well as helping preservice teachers experience it in tangible ways, such as CCB.

Critical Community Building

We assert, along with others (Bettez & Hytten, 2013; Renner, 2009), that community building is integral to promoting equity in education. We set out to examine the ways that preservice teachers described their understanding of CCB. Thus we planned for purposefully implementing a CCB framework in a teacher education classroom management course.

Maintaining a web of connections requires operating with an attitude of openness and inclusivity, attempting to build bridges, and making conscientious efforts to be welcoming and hospitable. Engaging in active listening in

a critical community context entails seeking out dialogues across lines of differences, aiming for reciprocity in which both the speaker and listener can learn from the dialogue, recognizing that listening is impacted by structure and space, engaging in critical self-reflexivity, and asking critical questions. Block (2008) in his book on community argues that:

> Commitment and accountability are forever paired, for they do not exist without each other. Accountability is the willingness to care for the well-being of the whole; commitment is the willingness to make a promise with no expectation in return (p. 71).

We used these definitions as a framework for the work teacher educators and preservice teachers did together in the classroom management course.

Of late, restorative justice has proven a popular approach in schools. The main premise of restorative justice is that students will learn to take ownership when they have transgressed against community-established norms and practices or against individual community members (Zehr, 2015). Some of the practices in both the CCB approach and the restorative justice approach are similar, for example, the use of circles to address important learning community issues. However, the main distinction is that CCB highlights helping preservice teachers to understand the foundational skills needed to forge the learning community in the first place. In other words, engaging in CCB helps all members of the learning community understand interactions of the whole as opposed to individual relationships. We assert that both are important. It is our view that establishing a space for students to ask each other critical questions and expect their views to be valued will result in a classroom community that centralizes learning about differences and how to work together to solve problems in a proactive way.

Using CCB as both a management and instructional strategy provides a pathway for preservice teachers to disrupt taken-for-granted power dynamics embedded in school settings. Relationship building is key to both teacher retention and promoting equitable learning opportunities for students (Nieto, 2000; Phelps & Benson, 2012). CCB centers relationship building as a key component to establishing interdependence in classrooms. Further, it promotes rethinking teacher–student and student–student relationships. We assert that this approach has the potential to help teacher educators provide tangible experiences with culturally relevant pedagogy. As reported by the Bridging Cultures Project (Greenfield et al., 2000; Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008), it is key for teachers to understand many students' collectivist backgrounds in order to create culturally familiar and appropriate learning environments and instructional opportunities.

Researcher Context

Alarcón is a faculty member in teacher education in a college of education at a large public university in the southwestern United States. Bettez is a faculty member in cultural foundations in a school of education at a mid-size public university in the southeastern United States. Both of us are committed to and have previously written about social justice praxis. Bettez has conducted research and writing about CCB for several years (Bettez 2011a, 2011b; Bettez & Hytten, 2013); however, up until this point none of the research had been conducted within teacher education. Alarcón emphasizes culturally relevant pedagogy, social justice education, and equity in her work with preservice and practicing teachers. We engaged as co-researchers for this action research project. Alarcón was the course instructor.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to understand the ways in which teaching candidates seeking a Master's degree and initial licensure make sense of CCB in order to inform future teaching practices. During the course of this study, we engaged CCB practices for employing culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom environment. The preservice teachers were asked to describe their experience and the potential for including it in their classroom management plans due at the end of the course. The guiding research questions were:

1. When critical community building is intentionally embedded in a teacher education course, what do preservice teachers describe as the impact of the approach?

2. How might the descriptions be used to refine critical community building practices in the context of teacher education?

Methods

The action research was set within the parameters of a classroom management course taught as part of a teacher preparation program at a midsize public university in the southeastern United States. The course is a requirement of the university-based, Master of Arts in Teaching initial teaching certification program. We employed action research in order to present a data-informed promising practice in the field of teacher education. Because we employed reflective methods, the course instructor was able to use student-generated data to improve her own practice when implementing CCB. Finally, we found action research an appropriate method because it promotes professional dialogue about teaching practices (Sagor, 1992).

The main data sources were artifacts (student work, teaching materials), observation notes, planning/debrief notes, and audio recordings of small group discussions. The main purpose of the study was to understand Alarcón's teaching practice. As such, document analysis was enlisted across data sources. The authors engaged in reflective dialogue during meetings before and after class sessions as points of triangulation. Finally, 9 of the 16 (56%) preservice teachers enrolled in the course agreed to be interviewed about their understanding of CCB. The preservice teachers who agreed to the interview represented minoritized perspectives along race/ethnicity, gender, and age lines, and/or had expressed a commitment to engaging culturally relevant pedagogy. While this sample size is small, the insights provided informed planning for subsequent implementation of CCB in teacher education courses. Table 1 captures demographic information about the nine interview participants.

Table 1. Preservice Teacher Interviewees

Preservice Teacher (pseudonym)	Grade Level Certification Sought	Self-Described Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Age
Sabita	Secondary ESL	Indian descent	Female	32
Lorraine	Middle School Math	African American	Female	50
Mary	Secondary ESL	White	Female	24
Amber	Middle School Math	White	Female	28
Jack	Secondary ESL	White	Male	24
Greg	Elementary Education	Latino	Male	24
Irene	Secondary ESL	Asian American	Female	28
Debra	Elementary Education	White	Female	30
Jennifer	Middle School Science	African American	Female	40

We were able to capture preservice teachers' reactions and learning throughout the duration of the course and identified links to the language, activities, and questions used to elicit the responses. The main purpose of the study was to inform future practice for raising critical awareness, CCB, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Nine preservice teachers agreed to interviews and provided descriptions of what worked well and what challenges they faced when considering implementing CCB in their future classrooms.

Context of the Study

The classroom management course took place during a five-week summer session and met 19 times (2 hours each). The first several sessions were devoted

to introducing the preservice teachers to a variety of frameworks for classroom management. During session six we began developing class learning commitments. This is a central component of CCB and became our introduction to the approach. Over the next seven consecutive sessions, Alarcón directly emphasized defining and engaging in CCB as a pathway for developing culturally relevant pedagogical practices. The authors created activities that would result in experiencing CCB, and a co-instructor helped to facilitate the small group dialogue. Preservice teachers were asked to explore the ways the framework could inform their classroom management action plans. For example, in order to encourage preservice teachers to move beyond non-CCB toward CCB, readings highlighted notions of connectivity, active listening, and commitment as foundations for our own learning community (Sleeter, 2018). As a follow up to reading about CCB, preservice teachers engaged in the process of naming community commitments and discussing appropriate ways to hold each other accountable. We finished this segment with small group dialogue capturing ideas for implementing the framework and strategy in their future classrooms.

During subsequent sessions, assigned readings focused on cultivating a mindset informed by culturally relevant pedagogy and applying these principles to classroom management practices (Ladson-Billings, 2009; Milner, & Tenore, 2010; Weinstein et al., 2003). After reading about the framework, preservice teachers analyzed case studies depicting scenarios in which teachers should consider issues of equity in making decisions about consequences for behavior. In other words, the case studies illustrated a clear-cut rule violation in the school setting while at the same time providing sociocultural contexts calling for teachers to make individualized decisions that demonstrated an antibias stance based in culturally relevant pedagogy as opposed to making decisions based upon generalizations. Here again, we followed up with a dialogue around implementing culturally relevant pedagogy in designing the classroom management action plan.

We followed a similar format over the seven sessions that defined the data collection period, beginning with a reading about culturally relevant pedagogy, followed by an experiential activity, and ending with a dialogue centralizing the application of culturally relevant pedagogy. We chose this instructional format in order to aid in collecting data that would bring forth the links between Alarcón's teaching practice and preservice teachers' descriptions of understanding CCB. We used responses to prompts and the interview transcripts as points for triangulation. Ultimately, the goal was to help refine practices for using CCB and culturally relevant pedagogy frameworks in the teacher education courses taught by Alarcón. While we did use preservice teachers' reported experiences and reflections to guide our understanding of their perspectives, they

were not used to make claims about student learning per se. Instead, the focus of the study remained on practices that might inform rethinking classroom management courses in teacher education. Specific teacher learning moments (where Alarcón is positioned as the teacher) and recommendations for practice are discussed in the implications section.

Data Collection

First, we created several small written assignments with the aim of gathering information about the preservice teachers' perceptions of course content and activities related to CCB. These included written responses to open-ended prompts asked at the end of each class that were used to guide debriefing sessions focused on progress and reactions to particular session topics. All participant work samples were considered and analyzed as relevant data. Second, we conducted observations during selected class sessions when the focus was explicitly teaching about or engaging in CCB practices or culturally relevant pedagogy. Bettez attended these sessions to take field notes. We also audiorecorded small group discussions that were transcribed and analyzed. Observation field notes were taken at various points throughout the 38 hours of class time. Lastly, we conducted individual interviews (45 minutes–1 hour) with nine of the preservice teachers who took the course. The nine were selected because they were the students who consented to both analysis of their work and an interview. Additionally, the preservice teachers who had named community building and/or took up culturally relevant teaching in the classroom management action plans they submitted at the end of the semester were considered. This latter criterion made their insights particularly useful for making course revisions because we asked the preservice teachers about how course activities influenced the decisions. Including this variety of data sources allowed us to triangulate (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2009) the data during analysis. Engaging in collaborative data analysis enabled us to gain a rich understanding of the connections between Alarcón's planning and carrying out instruction in CCB and culturally relevant pedagogy. The collaborative aspect added a layer of trustworthiness thereby providing evidence to inform revisions to teaching practices as well as share results with the broader field of teacher education.

Analysis

We began data analysis with coding the written work and field notes to determine the ways preservice teachers articulated and/or defined CCB, either explicitly or implicitly, taking up culturally relevant pedagogy either explicitly or implicitly, and examples of instructional practices/experiences that facilitated their learning about CCB and/or culturally relevant pedagogy. The coding

involved marking portions of texts by identifying "a word or phrase that symbolically assign[ed] a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" (Saldaña, 2009, p. 3). Initially, we individually coded the same documents and then conversed with each other to create a preliminary codes document. We then continued to code separate documents, adding to and refining our coding list, and occasionally coded the same documents in order to add to the trustworthiness of the analysis via peer coding and debriefing (Glesne, 2011). We searched for patterns and created categories to organize our findings, ultimately uncovering themes drawing from Rallis et al. (2007) who explicated the move from categories to themes in this way: "Think of a category as a word or phrase describing some segment of your data that is explicit, whereas a theme is a phrase or a sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes (p. 282)" (as cited in Saldaña, 2009, p. 13). We employed the coding and theme identification to analyze the nine interviews with the goal of further understanding the ways in which participants defined and articulated using CCB as a foundation for enacting culturally responsive classroom management. After analyzing all the data, we compared themes among participant responses and data sources in order to find consistencies and discrepancies in descriptions of CCB and the connections participants made to developing classroom management action plans grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy. Additionally, we looked for indications of the ways in which the course instructional and pedagogical practices informed preservice teachers' work and articulations. Pseudonyms are used in the discussion of findings.

Findings

Data analysis revealed that enacting a CCB approach in the teacher education classroom resulted in what participants described as: (a) increased meaningful interaction and interdependence, (b) instructional practices that enhanced learning, and (c) shifts in thinking that complicate traditional notions of classroom management. The following sections are organized thematically to inform potential revision to teaching practices that centralize the *critical* aspects of CCB going forward.

Increased Meaningful Interaction and Interdependence

We purposefully worked toward meaningful interaction and interdependence in a variety of ways. Beginning on the first day of class, we engaged in small group work promoting trust-building and listening in order to provide experiences the preservice teachers could implement in their own classrooms while simultaneously establishing our own learning community. Interacting with each

other right away, the preservice teachers introduced themselves by interviewing each other in pairs. Several were visibly pushed from their comfort zone as evidenced by initial silences, indecision about who should share first, and nervous laughter. However, the opportunity to learn about their classmates seemed to increase participation when we developed our class expectations together later in the same session. Some days later, when introduced explicitly to the concept of CCB, students drew heavily upon their previously created class expectations of mutual respect and active listening to revise our class commitments. Table 2 includes the final commitments the preservice teachers and instructors agreed to around the midpoint in the summer session. Each tenet of the CCB definition is listed, and examples of the learning community's commitment are listed in the column below and exemplify the priorities of the group.

Table 2. Commitment Definitions

Connectivity	Active Listening	Group Accountability
·Create space for honest answers ·Refrain from advice-giving · Ask questions to seek clarification	· No interruption · Ask questions and connect responses to themes	· Be accommodating and expect others to accommodate · Monitor your own behavior with attention toward equity

Through a facilitated group activity involving adding and altering, we reframed the community commitments using a lens more oriented toward culturally relevant pedagogy and equity. Ultimately, we reached consensus around the classroom management course community commitments. It is important to note that active listening was continually emphasized across student responses to in-class assignments. When asked about active listening during the interviews, all nine participants named observable behaviors that indicated "active" listening but still did not articulate that the goal of the listening was for understanding. This indicated that Alarcón needed to draw out distinctive attributes of active listening using a CCB framework such as asking questions to elicit deeper understanding and student-led facilitation.

Returning to work on our community commitments over several course sessions drew attention to the time investment we made to this activity. Alarcón shared this reflective moment with the preservice teachers when we discussed the importance of devoting time to establishing the classroom environment. The community commitments became key when preservice teachers worked in small groups to tackle controversial topics related to education and teaching. During one whole group discussion of the text, *The Dreamkeepers* by

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2009), Greg (who seldom participated in whole group discussion) shared a vulnerable moment from his student teaching experience. When asked by Bettez about his decision to do so, he pointed to the work we did to build the community commitments as "something that bonded the group together."

Small group activities ranging from creative projects to dialogue were consistently and intentionally implemented in the course to promote CCB. When asked about her most memorable experience in the course, Amber stated:

> Well most any time we did—well we did group work every day—but group work where we were drawing the pictures of the different community things that we felt were important in the classroom, where we made the posters [expressing our own ideas].

All interviewees noted group work as a key factor in facilitating students' co-construction of new knowledge, particularly for being open to different ways of interpreting course content. The activity Amber is referring to is a group mapping activity wherein students created a visual representation of important considerations for teachers as they mindfully used culturally relevant pedagogy to frame classroom management action plans. The fact that several preservice teachers referred to group activities indicated it as a practice Alarcón would retain for building both content knowledge and relationships within the classroom. Additionally, mention of a specific arts-based activity indicated that creative projects provided an outlet for helping preservice teachers talk through a variety of ideas and then reach agreement on how to represent them visually. In order to reach this level of agreement, listening with the goal of understanding was strategically used during group work. As Jennifer noted when talking about problem-solving during group work, "with seventh graders, you know getting them to listen is…I like the idea that they can listen to each other and decide things together. Then, [I] can use their ideas to solve issues that come up." In this example, Jennifer shows a move toward seeing herself relinquish some control over what happens in the classroom but understanding that developmentally, the students may still need guidance. The experience of small group work for multiple purposes provided Jennifer with ideas for engaging students in setting the tone in the classroom.

Preservice teachers recognized the value of applying CCB principles, such as active listening, with all classroom interactions. When asked about how practicing CCB could help build relationships with teammates, Lorraine noted,

> If you work in the group, a lot of things build up about how to work together, your listening skills for one thing...you learn good listening skills and communication skills. You learn how to communicate to others

> because you might have an idea, but if you can't get it across to others
> [that could be a problem].

In the excerpt above, Lorraine confirms the importance of understanding listening as a skill that can be used in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes beyond teacher–student interactions. Although the class was geared toward student–teacher interactions, as the class progressed, preservice teachers were asked to consider the variety of relationships they would be engaged in as teachers. Often, they focused on building relationships with students and overlooked the fact that they would have to engage with other adults regularly (i.e., students' parents and family members, professional colleagues).

Lorraine goes on to say, "the community building within the classroom I think is a good idea, and you know, you can build it around so many different things." Lorraine clarified in a follow up conversation that by "things" she meant topics and issues that arise in classrooms and schools. She named the importance of not only listening for understanding but having the space for communicating various ideas. As Lorraine indicated, "how" people work together is as important as what brings them together. We found that providing many and varied instances that promoted connection within the group resulted in an engaged learning environment, thus validating community-building-oriented instructional decisions. A second important learning point for future planning is that, like Lorraine, most interviewees did not directly mention the critical aspects of community building that I felt I was highlighting during the sessions studied. This indicates the need for a deeper treatment of critical pedagogy as a framework for the course.

Small group work and practice with active listening in a variety of configurations provided opportunities for increased understanding among preservice teachers, which in turn enhanced the feeling of mutual respect among them. As Jack noted,

> I don't really remember any big disagreements to be honest with you...I
> don't think I remember any huge debates, but I just think that just the
> whole classroom, [how it] was created from day one lent itself to what
> I just said an open atmosphere….So I can't really remember any hard
> discussions or anything like that.

Jack's recollections indicate that, despite the fact that we often talked in class about potentially controversial topics including racialized perceptions, varying ideas around parental involvement, and disciplinary stances, people listened to each other and engaged in asking questions in ways that prevented conflict. Interestingly, Debra contradicted Jack's recollection by noting tensions that sometimes arose during group work. However, she also shared that

forging the commitments helped to make these interactions less "intense"; "less 'I have to be right.'" This indicated that the commitment became helping each other to make sense of new and sometimes difficult ideas. In terms of teaching, it confirmed that time spent developing commitments was worthwhile and that more could be brought forth in terms of understanding power dynamics in group work. In addition to small group work and activities that emphasized building classroom community, the preservice teachers began to understand how making purposeful instructional choices influenced student engagement. The instructional choices made while working with this particular group helped create a space where question-posing enhanced learning and where students felt their ideas would be considered.

Interview and observation data indicated that instructional work promoted connection between peers, consistent active listening, and mutual respect as their familiarity with each other increased. Audio recordings of small group work indicated several instances when students grappled together to figure out how concepts from the reading on culturally relevant teaching might look in their future classrooms. In some instances, questions from the small groups were brought forward for the large group discussion indicating mutual respect for each other's opinions and ideas.

The data also revealed the need for increased attention to explicitly teach about the importance of critical pedagogy for promoting educational equity. This was evidenced in the interviews, with eight of the nine describing the importance of community building in more traditional terms such as "getting to know your students," "making sure there is representation," and "communicating respectfully with parents." Only one preservice teacher talked about community building in more critical ways such as helping students to value difference and "speak up when other teachers put students down." This indicated the need to teach about the notion of criticality more explicitly in the beginning of the course. The next section addresses our second finding, connections between learning and instructional practices.

Instructional Practices That Enhanced Learning

While the instructional practices/strategies employed are mainstream by themselves, intentionally framing them as CCB practices and naming the ways they were used as culturally relevant pedagogy helped the students to see the strategies as more than just tricks of the trade. Interviewees described the following practices as the ones that enhanced their learning: (1) sharing power in the classroom in terms of decision making, (2) promoting co-construction of knowledge via cooperative learning, and (3) facilitating an environment of mutual respect between the instructors and students and among the students.

Prior to the course beginning, the co-instructors met to talk about the type of classroom environment they would promote. Taking community building as integral to establishing expectations and ways of interacting, we often included icebreaker activities and class meetings in our daily plans. With an eye toward introducing CCB, we included readings that would help the preservice teachers find points of connection between what they knew about community building and reaching beyond simply liking each other. Additionally, we worked to create an environment where students felt able to include the instructors in dialogue and ask honest questions during whole group discussions. Sabita stated,

> Shared power between the professors and students [created] a very friendly atmosphere…it was not like there was a distinct line between "I am the professor, and you are the student." There was still an understanding of those demarcations, but there wasn't a constant feeling of that difference. We were still a community of collaborators working to advance our knowledge.

Though Sabita did not name specific instructional practices in her quote, she described the impact of our practices. She noted a "very friendly atmosphere" indicating a level of comfort and trust when interacting with the instructors. But she also pushed toward a more critical stance by mentioning that underlying power dynamics remained intact, though she did not feel the instructors exploited them. Finally, she described a key understanding of the importance of students seeing themselves as holders of knowledge alongside teachers. In terms of informing teaching practice, Sabita's reflection sheds light on what may have been a missed opportunity in terms of content building with the goal of a more explicit articulation of the ways instructional practices were connected to the environment we eventually created.

Mary shared that the "turn and talk" practice contributed to her comfort level. She said, "Like you had us do the turn and talk and discuss our ideas with our neighbors to see what their views were and [share] our views….[We] created discussion between ourselves." The instructors framed this practice as a way to increase participation among students. Use of discussion prompts also highlighted the goal of understanding the other person's message. Mary went on to say these practices worked to "create a relationship." She expressed that the turn and talk strategy made sharing with the whole group less intimidating, "then we did that with everyone in the classroom...we all got to know each other, and it built up the community real well." Mary's descriptions indicated her pathway to understanding how instructional practices could be used to facilitate community building. Further, she saw relationship building as beneficial to student learning. We used the turn and talk strategy in a variety of

ways. Approaches included scaffolded question-posing aimed at helping pre-service teachers become comfortable talking with each other. As the preservice teachers became more familiar with the process, we used the strategy to evoke stance-taking with regard to classroom management and discipline. Additionally, turn and talk was described to students as a scaffold toward whole group discussion and as useful for encouraging a variety of student voices, especially those not often heard in the classroom. Finally, Mary also emphasized the importance of the course format being "not lecture based" as key for building community and facilitating learning from peers.

Lorraine emphasized the importance of the course format as she described the impact that mutual respect between students and instructors had for her. She noted that when instructors consider the strengths and needs of students when making instructional decisions, students may feel more inclined to engage in learning. She shared, "You have some kids that are brilliant and just afraid to talk so you have to figure that out and then find a way to get them in groups where they will have an opportunity to speak out."

Throughout the course the instructors emphasized the importance of considering implicit bias and disrupting assumptions preservice teachers often have about students. Lorraine's learning evidenced her understanding that instructional practices can be purposefully selected to highlight students' existing strengths and cultivate new ones. The preservice teachers emphasized the importance of learning to hear and value multiple perspectives. This showed that they considered the importance of students helping each other through the learning process in ways they had not prior to the course. The shift in thinking became evident when analyzing an early in-class writing prompt asking them to define classroom management. After experiencing culturally relevant pedagogy via cooperative learning and defining community commitments, preservice teachers more explicitly noted that teachers are not the sole owners of knowledge and that students can learn from each other. It should be noted that they continued to grapple with becoming comfortable striking a balance between honoring that idea and the logistics of managing a classroom. This evidence provides a specific area to consider as teacher educators continue to hone teaching practices that forefront culturally relevant pedagogy.

Overall, the interviewees listed community building as a key component in planning for classroom management and expressed the ways that it enhanced student engagement in learning. According to those interviewed, the community commitments created in our class for engaging in discussion helped to enhance content knowledge building by helping students come to consider differing perspectives while working toward a common learning goal. They also demonstrated and articulated connections between enhanced student

engagement and instructional practices that highlighted collaborative work among students and between students and teachers. In sum, the preservice teachers highlighted instructional practices in which instructors shared power, promoted co-construction of knowledge, and fostered an environment of mutual respect. The next section addresses our third finding, highlighting participants' ideas around the importance of CCB in their future classrooms.

New Notions of Classroom Management

The preservice teachers came away from the course with a belief that community building in classrooms is important to student learning. Most did not articulate a clear distinction between responsive notions of community building (such as class meetings) and CCB. However, most preservice teachers who were interviewed reported a desire to foster a positive classroom environment via community building above other traditional modes of classroom management such as systems based upon extrinsic rewards. Some of the interview participants did highlight CCB as important for teachers committed to drawing upon students' cultural wealth and those concerned with promoting equitable learning spaces. For example, Irene described how she learned from "the way we had class, a lot of discussion of the way we wanted it to be, and how we could be held accountable for group work; some of them did not like group work, but in the end we could figure things out in our own way." Irene was referring to the routines and procedures we put into place for co-constructing knowledge and using instructional practices like cooperative learning as systems of classroom management. Preservice teachers noted the ways in which CCB helped them imagine a classroom that was less teacher-controlled and a more community-based learning environment. This indicated that the readings and instructional practices we selected for the course where helpful in encouraging a new vision of classroom management. They described this shift in terms of becoming comfortable with community-promoting practices.

Finally, the participants expressed the need to think through obstacles to community building in classrooms in order to develop plans for use in their future classrooms. While the previous two findings validated instructional choices, the third finding has been useful for rethinking approaches to highlighting distinct features of CCB and also providing experiences that more closely promote transfer of these features beyond the teacher education classroom. It is important to include more discussion of how to navigate obstacles such as going against the grain in terms of behaviorist, school-based approaches so that preservice teachers have opportunities to learn about each other's ideas. In addition, including opportunities for preservice teachers to hear from experienced teachers who engage culturally relevant pedagogy could be useful.

Many of the classroom management action plans students handed in at the end of the course included aspects of community building. As the preservice teachers continued to engage in learning activities that called for collaboration throughout the term, student work products indicated increased investment in helping each other to learn. For example, students noted in exit tickets collected at the end of class that their level of engagement increased when working together in small groups toward a common goal. This indicates they connected a community-based learning environment to a new understanding of student interaction. Instead of framing student interaction as a potential disruption, the preservice teachers began to see these guided interactions as integral to students learning from and with each other. This idea disrupts deficit-based perspectives by shifting from the assumption that students' interactions will lead to chaos to viewing group work as enhancing purposeful learning as a possibility. Sabita extended the notion of decentering the teacher's control by pointing out the ways in which CCB approaches could include families:

> That is another reason why I think this concept of critical community building is highly important, and taking it from the multicultural standpoint is again very important...I hope to be able to create an atmosphere in my classroom where all students will feel a part of that community, in fact that parents also feel a part of that community, because their contributions will be valuable to the students' learning as well.

This stance invites teachers to give up the role of sole authority to include various perspectives. As Sabita further noted, "we also built on that knowledge to be a classroom community on our own and that allowed us to experience firsthand how it is possible to manage to do this." Here she described content knowledge building as a group endeavor rather than an individual act. She stressed the importance of experiencing this firsthand by pointing out that it helps preservice teachers to plan and facilitate classroom environments that include CCB practices in terms of both classroom management and instruction.

The preservice teachers grappled with the fact that the school districts they are most familiar with implement campus-wide disciplinary systems. The main concern discussed during our class was the emphasis on extrinsic rewards and punitive punishments that seemed to be the norm in public schools. Many voiced the value of community building, critical or otherwise, for establishing a positive learning environment. However, they recognized that this could be challenging if they were alone in their efforts. As Lorraine pointed out, "The way the administration is set up [could be an obstacle]. If your administration is set up like one of those really traditional [ones] that don't really see the need for [it]…that is a barrier to get that teacher to try and get that set up."

Here Lorraine explicitly named traditional stances around student discipline among administration as a potential barrier. She also alluded to the idea of teacher isolation as a barrier in implementing the strategies we practiced in class. This indicated the importance that she placed on teachers coming together to support each other in taking up culturally relevant pedagogy in both classroom management and instructional practice. Though Lorraine did not name CCB explicitly, her mention of teacher agency as key to disrupting status quo practice indicated her view that professional support is a necessary form of CCB and is integral to a shift to using culturally relevant pedagogy in her future classroom. This segment of data brings to light ways that activities geared toward developing professional agency and ownership of teaching practices were used. The descriptions of CCB and culturally relevant pedagogy indicate that students learned during the experiences while at the same time showing that the experiences fell short in providing specific ways for students to name CCB and culturally relevant pedagogy as the framework. This highlights the importance of being mindful when planning for future courses of employing strategies that help build preservice teachers' articulation of CCB and culturally relevant pedagogy that can be added to students' repertoire of professional communication.

Through interview responses, preservice teachers articulated pathways and barriers to CCB practices in schools. They highlighted the importance of teachers finding ways to share power in the classroom and ways to embrace community building practices. Shifts in thinking beyond relationship building with students to consider the need to do this with other adults was also a key aspect of learning. Overall, the experiences we provided during the course highlighting CCB as a tangible way to practice culturally relevant pedagogy in classrooms enhanced participants' understanding of the frameworks. The study was a success in terms of providing relevant information that can inform teaching practices with regard to CCB and culturally relevant pedagogy. In the next section we discuss implications for teacher education.

Implications for Teacher Education

Alarcón used the findings to inform revisions to instructional practice using CCB as a vehicle for enacting culturally relevant pedagogy in teacher education. Sharing the outcomes of this action research provides a look at a promising practice for facilitating preservice teachers' understanding of classroom management as space for using just practices to ensure equitable learning environments and opportunities for teachers and students to build community within the classroom. This action research builds upon work centralizing

culturally relevant pedagogy with an equity lens in teacher education (Alarcón, 2016; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sleeter, 2018). In the current literature, promoting CCB is positioned as having the potential to enhance dialogue regarding issues of power related to social justice; however, no empirical studies had apparently been done to examine the effectiveness of this technique in teacher education. The action research presented is a step toward filling that gap. As stated previously, we had two main questions entering this research study. Related to our first question, "When critical community building is intentionally embedded in a teacher education course, what do preservice teachers describe as the impact of the approach?", we uncovered informative findings. Those interviewed articulated that the learning community established over time had positive impacts that included (a) increased meaningful interaction and interdependence, (b) instructional practices that enhanced learning, and (c) shifts in thinking beyond traditional notions of classroom management.

Increased meaningful interaction and interdependence relates directly to social justice work and culturally relevant pedagogy. Lee Anne Bell (1997) defines social justice as "both a process and a goal… [it entails] a society in which individuals are both self-determining (able to develop their full capacities) and interdependent (capable of acting democratically with others)" (p. 1). Given that recognizing interdependence is a key aspect of social justice, recognition of the importance of connection, active listening, and mutual respect as positive aspects of the course is encouraging. Further, experiencing such practices helped preservice teachers to acknowledge increasing the space for collaborative and just decision-making as a viable option to traditional classroom norms centralizing notions of individualism and competition. Importantly, they began to see the connection between facilitating a sense of interdependence and classroom management by using instructional practices that supported that goal, such as cooperative learning activities. Through supporting each other in learning within the classroom, the students demonstrated shifts in thinking, including seeing the value in honoring a wider variety of contributions to the learning environment. As such, they could articulate reasons to diminish punitive practices, which we know disproportionately affect students of color and perpetuates marginalization. Given descriptions of the CCB approach, we consider the framework a promising practice not only for courses addressing issues of classroom management, but for any course aimed to help develop the skill sets for promoting equity, inclusion, and access in their classrooms by deliberately building a sense of community.

Related to our second question, "How might the preservice teachers' descriptions be used to refine CCB practices in the context of teacher education?" we found that purposefully working to de-emphasize traditional teacher–

student power dynamics was key to preservice teachers' understanding the CCB approach as distinct from other approaches to establishing the learning environment. Given this, the main point of refinement to practice is attention to experiences that help reveal and work toward de-emphasizing power relationships in classrooms. Delpit (2006) asserts, most often teachers in classrooms enact a "culture of power" that privileges some students over others, providing inequitable learning opportunities. Preservice teachers in this study remarked upon the shared power, co-constructed learning, and mutually respectful environments built through shared CCB practices. Over the duration of the course, several traditional instructional strategies were employed (i.e. text-based small-group discussion, turn and talk, assignment of roles for small-group work). However, the difference in implementation surfaced when these strategies were discussed with preservice teachers. Instead of naming them as well-worn and trusted teaching practices, the potential for using them to build mutual accountability among students and create trusting spaces for sharing different ways of knowing was emphasized; they recognized that *how* the practices were framed could enhance community building. The implication for teacher education is promising because indications are that teacher educators do not need to invest in acquiring a new skill set for promoting criticality and equity in teaching. Rather, long-standing practices can be reenvisioned. In sum, the study demonstrated the ways in which preservice teachers experienced important shifts that revealed a CCB approach as viable for establishing classroom environments based upon shared power and mutual respect both between teacher and student and among students. The CCB approach shows promise in that it promotes equity and justice-oriented education in both teacher education and PreK–12 settings.

We have two recommendations for future research. First, there is value in following up with these teachers once they have had the chance to establish their own classroom environments to see which CCB practices they took up initially and which, if any, they continue to refine as they become experienced teachers. Second, the framework is useful establishing communities of practice for teacher educators who seek to work collectively to refine critical pedagogical practices across disciplines. As such, future research questions could centralize understanding how teacher educators engage CCB in order to promote collective sense-making for professional development.

Limitations

The preservice teachers rarely used the term "critical" community building in work products, interviews, or conversations. Although not articulated as explicitly as we hoped, the data revealed that they demonstrated shifts in

understanding of how building community can lead to actions and understandings that are related to creating more equitable classrooms. Despite the limitations of studying CCB as culturally relevant pedagogy within a single course, we view reported and observed shifts as important building blocks in understanding the instructional practices that support criticality in teacher education. We believe that if a CCB approach were modeled and implemented throughout a variety of courses, then more students would be able to explicitly articulate the framework's connection to their intended practice in terms of culturally relevant pedagogy and equity education. In addition to supporting more exposure to the concept over time via multiple courses, we feel that the short timeframe for the study did not allow for a deep treatment of the concept, *critical pedagogy.* In subsequent semesters, foundational work around this topic will take place earlier in the course.

References

Allen, A., Hancock, S. D., Lewis, C.W., & Starker-Glass, T. (2017). Mapping culturally relevant pedagogy into teacher education programs: A critical framework. *Teachers College Record*, *119*(1).

Alarcón, J. D. (2016). Enacting critical pedagogy in an elementary methods course: A move toward re-imagining teacher education. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, *7*(2) 149–170.

Bettez, S. C. (2011a). Building critical communities amid the uncertainty of social justice pedagogy in the graduate classroom. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, *33*, 76–106.

Bettez, S. C. (2011b). Critical community building: Beyond belonging. *Educational Foundations, 25*(3–4), 3–19.

Bettez, S. C., & Hytten, K. (2013). Community building in social justice work: A critical approach. *Educational Studies, 29*(1), 45–66.

Bell, L. A. (1997). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 3–15). Routledge.

Block, P. (2008). *Community: The structure of belonging*. Berrett-Koehler.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). *Walking the road: Race, diversity, and social justice in teacher education*. Teachers College Press.

Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflicts in the classroom.* The New Press.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.

Greenfield, P. M., Quiroz, B., & Raeff, C. (2000). Cross-cultural conflict and harmony in the social construction of the child. In S. Harkness, C. Raeff, & C. M. Super (Eds.), *Variability in the social construction of the child* (pp. 93–108). Jossey-Bass.

Hackman, H. (2005). Five essential components for social justice education. *Equity & Excellence in Education,* 38, 103–109.

Hall, D. E. (2007). *The academic community: A manual for change*. Ohio State University Press.

Hardin, C. J. (2012). *Effective classroom management: Models and strategies for today's classrooms* (3rd ed.). Pearson.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal, 32*(3), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children.* John Wiley & Sons.

Lloyd, M. H., Kolodziej, N. J., & Brashears, K. M. (2016). Classroom discourse: An essential component in building a classroom community. *School Community Journal*, *26*(2), 291–304. https://www.adi.org/journal/2016fw/LloydEtAlFall2016.pdf

Lustig, M. W., Koester, J., & Halualani, R. (2006). *Intercultural competence: Interpersonal communication across cultures.* Pearson/A and B.

Mayworm, A. M., Sharkey, J. D., Hunnicutt, K. L., & Schiedel, K. C. (2016). Teacher consultation to enhance implementation of school-based restorative justice. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *26*(4), 385–412.

Meltzoff, N. (2001). Relationship, the fourth "R": The development of a classroom community. *School Community Journal, 11*(1), 259–274. https://www.adi.org/journal/ss01/Chapters/Chapter19-Meltzoff.pdf

Milner, H. R., & Tenore, F. B. (2010). Classroom management in diverse classrooms. *Urban Education*, *45*(5), 560–603.

Nelson-Barber, S., & Dull, V. (1998). Don't act like a teacher! Images of effective instruction in a Yup'ik Eskimo classroom. In J. Lipka (Ed.), *Transforming the culture of schools: Yup'ik Eskimo examples* (pp. 101–105). Erlbaum.

Nieto, S. (2000). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education.* Longman.

Nieto, S. (2014). The Brown case at 60: Lessons learned. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 50*(3), 103–105. https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2014.931155

Pereira, J. K., & Smith-Adcock, S. (2011). Child-centered classroom management. *Action in Teacher Education*, *33*(3), 254–264.

Perry, K. E., & Weinstein, R. S. (1998). The social context of early schooling and children's school adjustment. *Educational Psychologist*, *33*(4), 177–194.

Pharr, S. (2010). Reflections on liberation. In M. Adams, W. J. Blumenfeld, C. Castañeda, H. W. Hackman, M. L. Peters, & X. Zúñiga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice* (2nd ed.; pp. 591–598). Routledge.

Phelps, P. H., & Benson, T. R. (2012). Teachers with a passion for the profession. *Action in Teacher Education, 34*(1), 65–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/01626620.2012.642289

Renner, A. (2009). Teaching community, praxis, and courage: A foundations pedagogy of hope and humanization. *Educational Studies, 45*(1), 59–79.

Rallis, S. F., Rossman, G. B., & Gajda, R. (2007). Trustworthiness in evaluation practice: An emphasis on the relational. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *30*(4), 404–409.

Roseth, C. J., Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (2008). Promoting early adolescents' achievement and peer relationships: The effects of cooperative, competitive, and individualistic goal structures. *Psychological Bulletin*, *134*(2), 223–243.

Rothstein-Fisch, C. & Trumbull, E. (2008). *Managing diverse classrooms.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Sagor, R. (1992). *How to conduct collaborative action research.* Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers.* Sage.

Sensoy, Ö., & DiAngelo, R. (2011). *Is everyone really equal?: An introduction to key concepts in social justice education.* Teachers College Press.

Skiba, R. J., Eckes, S. E., & Brown, K. (2009). African American disproportionality in school discipline: The divide between best evidence and legal remedy. *New York Law School Law Review, 54*, 1071–1112.

Sleeter, C. (2018). Learning to teach through controversy. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 54*(1), 18–22.

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Tzuo, P. W. (2007). The tension between teacher control and children's freedom in a child centered classroom: Resolving the practical dilemma through a closer look at the related theories. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 35*(1), 33–39.

Weinstein, C., Curran, M., & Tomlinson-Clarke, S. (2003). Culturally responsive classroom management: Awareness into action. *Theory Into Practice, 42*, 269–276.

Yin, R. K. (2009). Case study research: Design and methods (4th ed.). Sage.

Zehr, H. (2015). *The little book of restorative justice: Revised and updated*. Skyhorse Publishing.

Jeannette D. Alarcón is an associate professor of teaching and teacher education in the curriculum and instruction department at the University of Houston. Dr. Alarcón's research addresses teacher learning with a focus on culturally relevant/sustaining pedagogies, teacher learning over the career span, and teacher learning in terms of facilitating the learning environment. Correspondence concerning this article may be addressed to Jeannette D. Alarcón, PhD., Associate Professor, Teaching and Teacher Education, University of Houston, College of Education, Farish Hall 318 E, Houston, Texas 77204, or email jdalarcon2@uh.edu

Silvia Cristina Bettez is a professor in the educational leadership and cultural foundations department in the School of Education at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. Dr. Bettez's research centralizes critical community building as pedagogy in higher education and community learning spaces.