"I Don't Like Not Knowing How the World Works": Examining Preservice Teachers' Narrative Reflections

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It is inevitable that in the process of teacher-preparation courses students reexamine their commitment to become teachers. This reflection of purpose sometimes occurs during prerequisite courses when students experience conflict and unease as they learn about the challenges of public school teaching. It is also prompted by the sheer amount of work involved in coursework and student teaching. As instructors in both prerequisite and credential-level classes, we see the questioning process students go through. We believe this process of questioning, reflection, and recommitment is vital to developing

a strong identity as teacher. We are prompted to explore this process because of our commitment to preparing teachers for excellence in diverse classrooms and the nature of own continually evolving philosophies of teaching and learning. We want students to be fully aware of their identity and position as they enter public school classrooms. We want them to have the tools to engage in reflection and problem solving to better serve their students. We want them to know their own worldview and to be firmly grounded in the notion that their worldview is not the only frame of reference and that their students' cultures, languages and worldviews are resources that must inform the classroom community and classroom instruction.

This article is representative of a larger body of work on reflective narratives and narrative reflection that has been ongoing for a number of years. We, the authors, have pursued various iterations of the research topic in various classes at various institutions. We have documented that students focus on skills and attitudes that place them in favorable positions for working with diverse students (Ulanoff, Prado-Olmos, & García Ramos, 2001; Ulanoff, Prado-Olmos, Vega-Castaneda, & García Ramos, 2001; Prado-Olmos, Dome, & Ulanoff, 2003) and that such positions allow them to begin to understand the sociocultural contexts of the classrooms in which they will teach as well as the personal lenses through which they participate in those contexts. It further influences them to question the contexts in place in relation to the education of students from diverse ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Ulanoff, Vega-Castaneda, & Quiocho, 1999; Ulanoff & García Ramos, 1997).

In this article, we explore how students process class readings, assignments, and class activities as they come to see themselves and their future teaching situated within the framework of their own cultures and experiences. This paper focuses specifically on the use of weekly narrative reflections of students enrolled in two sections of a course on cultural diversity in schooling. As such it investigates the following research questions:

1. How do preservice teachers come to understand the importance of their past and present experiences for their role as teachers?

2. How can preservice teachers come to understand the lenses through which they view education and their role in it?

3. How can instructors help preservice teachers situate their teaching in ethnolinguistically diverse classrooms?

4. What role does the use of narrative reflection have within the framework of teacher education?

This article examines the role of ongoing reflection in a preservice teacher education program at one suburban, public university in southern California. All teachers in the programs receive the Cross-cultural language and academic devel-

opment (CLAD) or bilingual CLAD (BCLAD) credential upon completing the program. Given their future roles in teaching children from diverse backgrounds, instructors infuse issues of culture and language within both prerequisite and methodology courses.

Theoretical Framework

Our research is guided by the current literature surrounding the topics of reflective practice, teacher research and narrative inquiry. We approach our teaching from the perspective that our role is to facilitate our students' roles as reflective practitioners (Schon, 1983), recognizing the role they have to play in terms of examining and impacting practice. Students come to our programs with a myriad of background experiences that most likely will be different from the diverse groups of students that they will teach. It is important that they begin this reflective process by examining who they are, why they are as they are, and how their identities will affect their teaching and thus the learning experiences they teach.

We further believe that it is important to situate teaching and learning within a sociocultural context/discourse in order to create an environment where students feel free to explore their own experiences and assumptions in relation to how they will approach their own practice. As Marsh (2002) argues,

> the various discourses that define what it means to be a particular type of student or teacher at this particular moment in the US are rooted in the social, cultural, historical and political contexts in which schools are situated in this country. (p. 460)

Reflective practice has been the subject of much discussion in the field of education. Zeichner and Liston (1996) argue that teachers need to learn early on to be "kidwatchers" in their own classrooms. They suggest that the notion of teachers engaged in reflective practice "is a rejection of top-down forms of educational reform that involve teachers only as conduits for implementing programs and ideas formulated elsewhere" (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 4). Since teachers bring an insider view to this reflection (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990), it allows them to bring their own voices to the discussion of what is important in education. As Schon (1983) states, "the professional realizes that his technical expertise is embedded in a context of meanings" (p. 295).

Cochran-Smith (1995) argues that teachers must begin their journey toward reflective practice by examining both their own experiences and the tacit assumptions they have about teaching and learning in order to begin to instantiate their roles as teachers. She states:

> In order to learn to teach in a society that is increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse, prospective teachers . . . need opportunities to examine much of what is usually unexamined in the tightly braided relationships of language, culture, and power in schools and schooling. This kind of examination inevitably begins with

> our own histories as human beings and as educators — our own cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds and our own experiences as raced, classed, and gendered children, parents, and teachers in the world. It also includes a close look at the tacit assumptions we make about the motivations and behaviors of other children, other parents, and other teachers and about the pedagogies we deem most appropriate for learners who are like us and who are not like us. (p. 500)

Tremmel (1993) likens this examination to the practice of Zen. He maintains that such self-examination is often forgotten as future teachers become overwhelmed with endless theories and techniques that are discussed, proposed and shared in their preservice courses. He feels that educators need to take "a step back from theoretical entanglement and ask fundamental questions about what and how teachers are thinking and why they are doing what they are doing" (p. 454). This would include examining how assumptions based on experiences color the way teachers practice their craft. He argues that we also must allow teachers time to become reflective practitioners rather than expecting them to fully understand their roles in the one or two years it generally takes to complete a teacher education program. "To become reflective and mindful practitioners, we need to learn to become aware of the workings of our own minds and, simultaneously, to let go of involvement in our own thoughts and feelings while plunging ourselves, mind and body, into the center of teaching and learning" (Tremmel, 1993, p. 456).

Zeichner and Liston (1996) further argue that teachers develop their own "practical theories" based on their own values and how these values influence the curriculum they choose and they methodologies they use (p. 43). Zeichner and Liston discuss the notion that teachers also are influenced by the social contexts in which they are practicing. This would include rules and regulations that come from without and that often constrict what a teacher may or may not do in her/his own classroom in terms of teaching and learning. As Schon (1983) suggests:

> A practitioner's reflection can serve as a corrective to over-learning. Through reflection, he can surface and criticize the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized practice, and can make sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience. (p. 61)

One means through which teachers can begin to explore their own experiences is through the use of personal narrative. Within the framework of personal narrative teachers examine their own autobiographies situated within the sociocultural contexts of schools and schooling as well as in the larger contexts that surround them on a day-to-day basis. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that narrative inquiry is a means of coming to understand one's own experiences and therefore may serve to influence the future. They further discuss the notion that narrative inquirers don't just write stories; rather they also "record actions, doings, and happenings" (p. 79) as they engage in narrative reflection.

Elbaz-Luwisch (2002) suggests that teachers are regularly asked to reconcile the disparity between "their personal understandings, values, and commitments, and the external requirements of teaching elaborated by policymakers, parents, and members of the public" (p. 405). As teachers become effective reflective practitioners, they often begin to question, and later challenge, such restrictions that are imposed on them and their students.

Ritchie and Wilson (2000) discuss the notion that teaching is inextricably tied to "telling stories" and that personal narrative is part of the larger concept of teacher development. They argue that while narratives are "critical instruments in personal and professional development" (p. 83), they may also serve as sources of socialization. They also explore the route that teachers take from "silent outsider to authoritative insider" (p. 76) and argue that teacher narratives facilitate the evolution of "their emerging dialogic conceptions of teaching, learning, and literacy" (p. 67), which are often challenged within autocratic school systems guided by state policy and mandates.

This notion of challenging autocratic school systems can be seen in California where recent legislation has mandated how second language learners are taught as well as how literacy instruction must be conducted. Given the diversity that exists in California, this makes it increasingly important that future teachers at least begin to examine their experiences in order to be clear about their own practical theories in relation to the students they will teach. This paper explores the use of personal narrative as a means of facilitating teachers' development as reflective practitioners.

Method

In this article we examine the narrative reflections of 74 students enrolled in two sections of a course that is a required prerequisite for the teacher credential program at a small state university in southern California. This course is titled "The Role of Cultural Diversity in Schooling" and focuses on culture, definitions of culture, culture contact, racism and discrimination in public education, and aspects of cultural differences such as language, class, religion, and gender. The course serves to frontload some of the essential concepts related to teaching and learning in ethnolinguistically diverse classrooms in order that students will enter the credential program with some background knowledge and experience related to the education of diverse students. Issues of diversity, multicultural education and language are also infused into the rest of the program. The idea of frontloading these concepts is especially critical due to the fact that graduates will be teaching in increasingly diverse contexts; the university is located about 45 miles from the Mexican border, yet it is also in proximity to a Marine base and the home of a former grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan. It is important to note that notions of equity and access exemplify both the College of Education's and the university's mission statements.

The two sections of the course where data were collected were team-taught by two of the authors of this paper during the spring 2002 semester; the other authors either taught this class or a similar one in prior years. The course content is standardized in that all instructors use the same set of textbooks and choose from a common list of course assignments. Instructors are free to add readings and/or assignments and to deliver the content according to their own styles and preferences. Curriculum includes a variety of readings, videos, activities and discussions designed to not only teach about cultural diversity, but to impel students to begin to question certain assumptions they might have in relation to race, class, gender and language. Topics include defining culture, the role of culture in schooling, issues of language, race, class, gender including notions of white privilege, as well as an historical overview of "isms."

Although most of the students in the program will likely teach in ethnolinguistically diverse settings when they graduate, the vast majority of the students enrolled are white and monolingual English speaking. Seventy-five students were enrolled in the two sections of the class where data were collected. Fifty-six were females and 19 were males. Twelve students self-identified as Latino/a, one was Black/African American, five were Asian American and one was Pakistani. The remaining students in the sample were White/Caucasian. Approximately 13 students were older than 35 and were entering their second or third career. The rest of the students were in their 20s and completing BAs in preparation to enter the teaching credential program. The students in the two classes are representative of the university population.

We collected and examined 508 examples of student writing/reflections during the spring semester of 2002. Students wrote weekly reflections on the course readings, discussions and classroom activities. We told students to think about what they were reading or what happened in class each week and to write about something that "caught their attention." We explicitly stated that we did not want a report of what was discussed or what they read. We wanted them to react and think about what happened each day in class. We told them to express their views and perspectives on class discussions, activities or readings. We also told them that we would be reading their reflections in order to better understand teacher induction.

Classes met twice weekly. The reflections were due during the second class session of each week. We spent the first ten minutes of that class session sharing reflections. Students passed their reflections around the tables or desks and read each other's work. Students then commented on the reflections. The professors collected the reflections and commented on each of them.

Data analysis was based on a review of all the student reflections. The two class instructors read all reflections on a weekly basis. They read the entire body of reflections for a second time at the end of the semester, this time looking for patterns and themes across reflections. The data were coded for topic of writing, elaborated content and attitude presented and the weekly activities/readings referred to in the

reflection. Patterns were thus identified as they surfaced and these were used to further identify salient themes and (later) categories within and across each data set. Propositions were formulated from this process of data analysis and were further developed to address the specific research questions. Questioning and reflection on the data was a recursive process as a way of allowing the findings to be firmly grounded in the data.

Once the initial themes were identified, the third author of this paper examined the themes and the reflections for inconsistencies in order to explore the data from more of an outsider position and to facilitate the generation of categories. Once categories surfaced, exemplars of each category were selected for further analysis. Throughout the examination of the data it was our intent to understand the cultural and experiential contexts that our students bring to the table in order that we might better facilitate their induction into the world of teaching.

Findings/Results

Examining the weekly narrative reflections allowed us to derive evidence in order to address the specific research questions listed at the beginning of this paper. As is the nature of qualitative research, we also discovered answers to questions we had not set out to address. Both groups of findings will be discussed below.

The analysis of data initially produced four categories into which the reflections were divided. These categories were derived from themes that emerged during this process. The four categories were: *culturally aware, open, superficial, and defensive.* Upon further examination of the reflections we decided to add a subcategory, *apologetic* to the *open* category. The boundaries between open and apologetic were often blurred at best. In fact, at times students wrote both types of narratives within the same reflection. Therefore we will describe both categories together. Table 1 lists the four categories and one subcategory that emerged during data analysis. It is followed by a more comprehensive description of each one.

Culturally Aware

We categorized 107 student reflections (21%) as culturally aware. In this category students displayed an ability to make connections between theory and practice as well as their own experience and emotional/cognitive development. They discussed the issues (e.g., racism, cultural/language differences, privilege) in a sophisticated intellectual and emotional manner. Students felt free to be direct and clear with their ideas in writing as opposed to class discussion. Students questioned their future roles as teachers, especially when examining tensions between what they remember as schooling and the "lessons" they learned in class.

For example, one young white woman reflected on the role of teachers as they try to understand diverse students:

Every year more and more schools are becoming culturally and linguistically

Table 1
Emerging Categories
(n=508)

Category	%	Characteristics	Example
Culturally Aware	21	Students discussed racism, cultural/linguistic differences in a sophisticated intellectual and emotional manner.	*Children come to classrooms with their background as well as their baggage, as teachers we need to understand this and be prepared to help the student succeed.*
Open	36	Students display an understanding of the issues presented in class and often express a desire to "fix" the educational system.	*Through the playing of BaFá BaFá game a couple of weeks ago, I realized how much we actually conform to our culture that we are accustomed to.*
Apologetic		Students are very critical of their own (or their culture's) role in oppressing "other" peoples.	*I feel so guilty for all the struggles many people go through.*
Superficial	40	Students only scratch the surface in terms of discussing classroom issues; students appear to have no strong opinions either negative or positive and maintain shallow positions, never exploring issues deeply.	*The last few classes have been very interesting, it was neat to hear how each group interpreted the Spring book.*
Defensive	3	Students display strong negative emotions to course content. They refuse to believe issues discussed in class actually exist.	*. . . I believe that many people are looking for racism. If people would stop looking for racism it would go away.*

> *diverse. Teachers need to understand that every student has a different history and that history gives that student different perspectives. Children come to the classroom with their background as well as their baggage, as teachers we need to understand this and be prepared to help the student succeed. Every child is different and is going through different events. Teachers should set up their classrooms as well as their lesson plans to reflect the differences of the students. Culture is a very big thing in the school and teachers need to start preparing.*

She makes clear connections to the classroom and needs of the students. The student also begins to formulate a framework for including culture even though it is very

general in nature. It is obvious that from her experiences in learning about the culture of schooling she is aware that there is a need to understand the cultural contexts her students will bring with them.

A young white male reflected on how he learned to integrate himself into a new culture while working in New Orleans, Louisiana. He wrote extensively about learning two distinct cultures–his workplace culture and the culture of the city. He used his workplace to learn more about the dominant African American culture of the city:

> *The dominant culture of "New Orleans the city" or "New Orleans on the street" is, and was for me, African-American; and these men and women were quite different than the few whom I had interacted with in school, or on the field, or on the court. They spoke to each other with body languages and English that I had never heard before. I saw more African Americans on one bus than I had seen in my first twenty-two years of life in California. These men and women differed from me not only in color, but in education and privilege as well. I never before considered myself privileged: I was one of the poor kids at a rich college and my clothes were always humble.*
>
> *When I would get off of the bus, I would enter an accounting department where the dominant culture was that of efficiency and prudence. My explicitly [cultural] knowledge was apparent; my implicitly [cultural] knowledge ran deep. Two gentlemen in my department were African American: AumRa and Wallace. Inside of our micro-culture in Accounting, we began to trust each other very much. They were highly regarded by other African Americans. It wasn't long before the majority of my friends at work were Black. I began to hear myself speaking and laughing like them, even when I wasn't amongst them. It was listening carefully to AumRa and Wallace that gave me insight, implicit knowledge and cultural competencies. It was in trusting myself to speak my mind to them that I was given the confidence to approach the bus stop each day with an increasing potential for assimilation into an African American culture in Louisiana.*

This student applied numerous analytical concepts from the class to reconstruct a personal experience with crossing cultural borders. He noted his new awareness of his own privilege and lack of experience with the African American community. He recognized that he had implicit cultural knowledge of his workplace culture and used that knowledge and informants to help him understand the larger, more unfamiliar culture. He also acknowledged that he was the learner and the person who needed to adapt and change.

A final example of this category comes from an older African American male student. He retired from the military and decided to become a teacher. He wrote in reaction to *American Tongues* (Alvarez & Kolker, 1986), a video that documents a myriad of dialects and language varieties of English throughout the US. We used this video to introduce the topic of language diversity:

> *. . . What moved me more than anything else in the film was when the African*

American father said, "I don't want my kids to sound white." Even though I knew exactly what he was talking about, I was surprised to hear a father say that about his children's use of proper or standard English.

My father was a self-educated man who had an insatiable appetite for the written word. Somehow he kept me sheltered from the broken English that was widely spoken in my predominately black neighborhood. It was common in my childhood neighborhood for the children and parents alike to communicate with each other in broken English, which is today referred to as Ebonics or Black English. Since I was part of that culture, I did not pay much attention to the language spoken. Yet, because of the way I talked, I can remember being ridiculed by my peers because of my use of standard English during my high school days. The kids called it talking "proper." In fact, even today, many years later, I am reminded about what I sound like to some African Americans.

Once when I worked as a recruiter for the Marine Corps in Orlando, Florida, I made a phone call to one white family who invited me over to discuss the benefits of joining the Corps with them in person. When I got to the door, the young potential recruit said, "You don't look the way you sound!" I knew exactly what he was talking about.

There is in fact a special bond [that] people have who speak the same language. And, I have learned that this bond goes beyond skin color. In other words, in some communities, if a person who is Black speaks a dialect other than the one spoken in that community, he or she is alienated from the entire group or made to feel different.

This student connected deeply with an issue presented in the video. He was able to articulate his experience of alienation as a function of language. He noted that ties are not always based on skin color and that cultural experiences can vary within member of the same groups. He also commented how the labels we apply to aspects of culture can change (broken English vs. Ebonics/Black English).

Open

We found that 184 (36%) student narrative reflections that fell into this category, but this category is confounded by the presence of a subcategory that we call *apologetic*. Here students displayed an understanding of the issues under discussion. They typically related them to their own experiences and expressed empathy and the need to change their own thinking or the thinking of others. A common theme centered on students' willingness to be critical of themselves and each other. They often apologized for racism or other acts of oppression that we studied as part of the historical contexts of schooling. Within this form of reflection, students also emphasized "poor me" or "I'm so sorry" rather that the "what can I do?" In addition, students whose reflections fit into this category often demonstrated a desire to fix the educational system. Moreover, it was virtually impossible to separate *open* from *apologetic* in that many narratives contained both the

category and subcategory within the same reflection. This is demonstrated in the examples below.

One young, white female reflected on how she felt presenting her family background to the class:

> *The class presentations on our family history and our experiences with diversity show how cultural backgrounds differ. We all interpret ourselves differently. It is very interesting to see the diversity among the class. The presentations were wonderful and their creativity was impressive. . . . It is great how people are willing to share so much personal information to classmates that they just met. It makes it a very comfortable environment for sharing and learning. I will present my family history today. I do not feel nervous because I know that the class is accepting and others have shared their intimate stories. I feel that it is a comfortable environment for me to open up and be honest. My classmates have shared themselves with me and I believe they deserve the same respect and honesty from me. I want to get to know my classmates while getting to know myself. . . . I believe this class will give me even more insight into others and myself.*

This reflection is one example that demonstrates just the *open* category. This young woman was ready to take on the task of exploring herself and others. She felt a positive environment in the classroom that fostered respect and openness.

Another young, white female reflected on her feelings after we completed a complex experiential exercise that involved the whole class. We played the simulation *BaFá BaFá* (Shirts, 1977), an activity that divides the class members into two distinct cultures. The students must visit the other culture and try to figure out what is going on. She wrote:

> *Through the playing of the BaFá BaFá game a couple of weeks ago, I realized how much we actually conform to our culture that we are accustomed to. When the class was asked, who would want to switch cultures no one raised their hands. I was somewhat shocked because it had only been about an hour of playing that role and we all had conformed to thinking that ours was better. It makes me think of how often I am guilty of the same thing in the American culture. That frightens me! I do not want to walk around with a feeling that I am better than someone of a different culture. Recognizing that I have developed this attitude is the first step and doing something about it is what I will proceed to do.*

This student clearly had an eye-opening experience in the simulation. It caused her to deeply reflect on her own behavior and attitudes. She used the terms guilty and frightened to describe herself. She claimed that she will make some changes. Hopefully she will take this newly developed awareness and create positive action in terms of her own teaching and classroom environment in the future.

One last example comes from another white, female student. She is a non-traditional student, returning to school after raising a family and having another career. She reflected on a video we watched — *The Shadow of Hate* (Guggenheim, 1995). The video documents how America has consistently disenfranchised vari-

ous groups throughout our short history. This student was struggling with moving beyond guilt to action.

> *This video brought many complicated feelings that I have to the surface. I often find it difficult to read about or watch information regarding the struggles of other cultures, especially when it is due to oppression by white people. Don't misunderstand, I am appalled at the way many cultures have been treated by white people, and that is probably why I find it difficult to reflect on. I feel so guilty for all the struggles many people go through. It is not like I have had a perfect life; like so many others, my childhood and teenage years were filled with poverty and other issues that caused me a huge amount of distress, but watching other people have to struggle just for basic rights and necessities really hurts me inside. . . . I have noticed that I have tremendous feelings of guilt. . . . I am not quite sure what is causing these feelings in me, but I refuse to give in to them by removing myself from uncomfortable situations. It is very difficult for me to express these feelings, thanks for listening.*

Superficial

There were a total of 145 (40%) narrative reflections that fell within this category, more than in any other category that we observed. The *superficial* category is characterized by the students' lack of depth while processing the experience and tended to occur around a common theme. The exemplars used, unintentionally, were from the same class experience dealing with linguistics and culture. Whether it was due to a lack of empathy or interest was difficult to determine in the analysis. However, common adjectives such as, "interesting," "neat," "fun," "sad" or "enjoyable" appeared repeatedly without explanation. Students seemed to have no strong opinions either negative or positive, and they maintained superficial positions. The reluctance to examine past experiences and make connections with their own emerging theories reinforced the need for continual exposure to these concepts.

One example of this category came from a white male in his early 20s; his comment epitomized the lack of depth and processing experienced by many of the students at various times throughout the semester. He wrote:

> *The past two days of class have been very fun. The video,* American Tongues *was funny, and at the same time interesting to see how much variation there is with American accents. Not just accents alone but with words that are common in one area and uncommon in another. Taking the BITCH [Black Intelligence Test for Cultural Homogeneity, Williams (2002)] test was also another entertaining piece of material that was also educational. I learned a new thing or two about how language can differ from region to region. It makes me wonder how standardized testing can be brought to a happy medium. I can never see this happening because there will always be someone writing the test that has a certain bias due to his/her upbringing in an average normal society.*

This student seemed more amused by the exposure than moved by it and stated

obvious facts about regions that have never been a secret in the US. He was unable, or unwilling, to open himself to the experience at hand and, thus, incapable of grasping the valuable perspective.

Another student, a young white female, wrote of the same class session:

> *The last few classes have been very interesting, it was neat to hear how each group interpreted the Spring* [Spring, 2001] *book. Some of which I got from reading the book myself, some interpretations brought new meaning and a new outlook into the text. Some of the students had a very strong passion when they were talking like if what they were saying were very important to them. I also had the opportunity to meet with my reading group one day and it was a good start into what we were looking at doing. We didn't really get a lot accomplished because we didn't have the opportunity to read the book. It would be good if we were allowed some class time to work in our reading groups. I am looking forward to seeing the groups present their reading novels. It will give me a chance to hear about other books and maybe find something else to read that will interest me.*

This student did not even choose to deal with the content matter directly, but rather made references to the text and the method of presentation rather than comment on what was being presented. She spent more energy complaining about time allotment in class to work on assignments than on addressing the issues being discussed.

Defensive

Only 15 (3%) narrative reflections fell into the defensive category, where students displayed strong emotions and reactions to activities and discussions. These students lacked an ability to see outside of their own worldview and actively refused to consider anything else. They typically believed that since "I don't do this, it doesn't exist." This egocentrism can prove to be detrimental to the learning processes of young children. These preservice teachers questioned the need to make education accessible to all students; rather they wanted to know why students couldn't accommodate to their instruction. To an extent, these responses demonstrated a level of denial and rationalization that operated as defense mechanisms to allow these students to function within their reality. Yet, if they are to be prepared to teach today's student, they must be willing to closely look at their own biases and prejudices.

One reflection, in particular, set the standard for this category. The young white female who wrote this reflection struggled throughout the semester with the issues and topics discussed in class. In fact, two of her reflections made it into this category, which was not the case for any other student. She wrote:

> *After the discussion we had in class on Tuesday I have a lot to say. I feel that in our society today many people look for excuses regarding racism. I may offend people by saying that, but I feel that it is true. I am a white upper-class female and I feel the effects of racism everyday. I don't just experience this with my friends who*

are of races other than white, but on myself a white individual. For people to say that I do not know what it is like to feel direct connections with racism is a fallacy. Being white has many disadvantages. Take for instance the fact that white people cannot have "marches" or "walks" to celebrate being white, this is racism on other ethnicities, yet people from other backgrounds can participate in these events celebrating their heritage. The same goes for movies and television shows. If a movie or television show was made consisting of an all white cast, this show would be considered racist or discriminatory. Yet there are many movies and television shows with people strictly of one race. Take for instance the cable network known as BET "Black Entertainment Television," if WET "white entertainment network" was a network on cable then it would more than likely not be on or would be cancelled quick. The same goes for awards shows. There are award shows for the Latin-American population in movies and music, and same for African-Americans. If we "European American" people would like to have an award show for all white actors/actresses and music artists then it would be a racist event and would be canceled. For someone to say that white people do not experience racism really "pisses me off!"

I hate to say this also but I believe that many people are looking for racism. If people would stop looking for racism it would go away. I understand that the racism experienced by some people will not simply go away, but if we continue the education we have begun on racism and left it at EDUCATION and not focusing on finding racism, then it would be less prominent. An example of this would be allowing white people to have an awards show for white artists without having to point out that there are only white people and this is wrong. If equality is going to be achieved we need to stop looking for racism and start educating ourselves on how to stop it.

Many people believe it is easy being white, but it isn't! I cannot be proud of my race and my color without being considered a racist. For me to take pride in who I am to the degree non-whites do with themselves, it would be in the wrong. I cannot say I have white pride without someone of another color thinking it is a racist comment. I don't look at people who say "brown pride" or "black pride" as racist, but as proud. But because I am white I cannot say this! I guess all this comes down to is that WHITES EXPERIENCE RACISM TOO!

While the reflection expresses a strong position, the student fails to note or question the numerous contradictions she presents (e.g., "continue the education we have begun on racism and left it at education and not focusing on finding racism"). She views the world in terms of what the "other" has as opposed to anything she, as a dominant group member, has. She fails to acknowledge any notion of white privilege but rather sees any focus on race or ethnicity as privilege for the "other" that automatically costs or displaces herself and her cultural group.

Discussion

In the process of data analysis we discovered that students engaged in more in-

depth reflection when the activity or discussion was intense or controversial. It seemed that the more emotionally and intellectually involved the students were in any specific class activity, the more deeply they reflected on that activity. This, of course, may be tied to their own "personal practical knowledge" (Conle, Li, & Tan, 2002) and/or reactions to course content that creates situations where students are forced to examine and confront their own assumptions. Their reflections revealed more about their thoughts and feelings than about classroom discussions or student actions during activities, perhaps due to the narrative's "range of influence" on deep-seated beliefs (Conle, Li, & Tan, 2002, p. 448). Conle, Li, and Tan (2002) suggest that this range of influence can be "entrenched, powerful, intellectual learning (p. 448)."

Our findings indicated that student responses fell into four distinct categories and one subcategory: *culturally aware, open (and apologetic), superficial* and *defensive*. It is clear from examining the data that we need to be more specific about the purpose of reflection, the parameters for reflections and the task, in general. While we could argue that more than half the reflections demonstrated either cultural awareness or openness to cultural diversity, we must clearly examine why 43% of responses fell in the categories of superficial and defensive. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) discuss the notion of "received knowledge," where individuals, specifically women in their work, understand learning to be "receiving, retaining, and returning the words of authorities." Since 56 of the students who participated in this study were women, it is important to consider the implications of their own identity development as it relates to their understanding of issues surrounding race, class, gender, culture and language.

The categories that emerged from the examination of our data reflect a notion of cultural identity development as a dynamic process that is gradual in development (see Banks, 2003, for a comprehensive discussion of his typology of six stages of cultural identity development). The following discussion addresses these issues, along with our findings, as they relate to the research questions.

Understanding the Importance of Past and Present Experiences in Relation to the Role of Teaching

It is a difficult task for preservice teachers to even begin to understand the impact of past and present experiences on beliefs and actions, specifically those related to teaching, and how those beliefs and actions will influence their teaching (Melnick & Zeichner, 1998). Engagement in activities that ask them to begin to question, to essentially challenge their own assumptions, helps them to begin to look at things from a variety of angles. During this course we engaged our students in a variety of classroom activities including the reading of specific texts and articles, viewing of videos related to ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity and even engagement in a cultural simulation. We used these activities to help them come to understand their own identities and explore their beliefs and attitudes about

students from different backgrounds than the ones from which they themselves came (Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas, 1998, p. 168). We further created a risk-free environment where students were encouraged to respond to course content in either agreement or disagreement.

Reflecting on such activities, specifically the use of narrative reflections written in response to both general course content and specific activities, readings, and videos, also served to impel our students to further examine their own assumptions and how they will impact their "professional possibilities" (Conle, 2003) in educating ethnically and linguistically diverse students. From the students' reflections, we were able to see how some students were making the connections between theory and practice at the same time others were exhibiting resistance and defensiveness toward anything remotely designated as multicultural.

In terms of the data presented here, students' reflections characterized as defensive and superficial might fall toward one end of Banks' (2003) typology of stages of cultural identity development. Many of those responses demonstrated attitudes of preference for the students' own cultures as well as a belief that their own group was in some way superior. Some responses indicated that students were working to clarify their own cultural identities (Banks, 2003) as evidenced by their willingness to consider the positive attributes of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. Others reflect a beginning move toward biculturalism (Banks, 2003) with students displaying an awareness of the diverse world around them and beginning to develop a perspective outside of their own. These students had a strong sense of self and were ready to explore other cultural groups.

Understanding the Lenses through Which Education Is Viewed

Preservice teachers bring their own experiences, biases and assumptions to teaching. These experiences, biases and assumptions are shaped by and help to shape the lenses through which they view the world, education and their own roles. Again, understanding these lenses is a challenging task for preservice teachers, especially those who have grown up in the monoculture. Instructors have a similarly challenging task in helping these future teachers understand how these lenses can impact the opportunities to learn that they offer their students.

One of the first steps is to begin to question and sometimes this doesn't come easily; hence the title of this paper. During class discussion a white male stated, "*I don't like this; I don't like not knowing how the world works. I thought I knew. Now I am not sure and I don't like it.*" The students in our classes consistently demonstrated resistance to change in their reflections; this was even obvious in those reflections that demonstrated cultural awareness and openness to cultural diversity. It is possible to describe this resistance in terms of the particular *discourses* that the students bring with them to the course content. Bakhtin (1981, in Phillips, 2002, pp. 17-18) describes discourse as a powerful factor in how we come to understand the way the world works, or how we think it works. In this view, the defensive student who describes being a

recipient of white racism is actually a subject of the discourse of racism herself, having appropriated the dominant discourse.

While a discussion of the dominant discourse and its relationship to our preservice teachers' experiences and knowledge is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to explore how this knowledge will relate to their roles as teachers. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) describe "subjective knowledge" as the move from an external orientation to knowledge and truth to one that is personal and intuitive (p. 54). They suggest that when teacher candidates are confronted with ideas that conflict with a dominant discourse that has been internalized, they often return to the safety of what they perceive to be the way the world works (p. 64). They may thus demonstrate a resistant stance in their narrative reflections or even an unwillingness to reflect deeply on the issues presented. This conflict may help to explain the large number of superficial and defensive responses in our sample (43% of total sample).

Furthermore, students may also use such reflections to support deeply embedded racist assumptions and beliefs, rather than to begin to look at things from a more critical perspective (Fendler, 2003, p. 16). Clearly one semester-long course is not enough time to change attitudes and beliefs; it *is,* however, enough time for students to begin questioning assumptions. The question that persists for us is how can we help our teacher candidates to move from acceptance of this dominant discourse to a place where they can critique information they receive and challenge that discourse? And how can we know that we are not just trying to superimpose one world view, *ours,* on another, *theirs*?

Helping Preservice Teachers Situate Their Teaching within Relevant Contexts in Ethnolinguistically Diverse Classrooms

Many of the preservice teachers began our class with limited exposure to diverse classrooms and a growing concern related to changing demographics in the classrooms where they will ultimately teach. It is our role as instructors to not only begin the dialogue surrounding culturally and linguistically appropriate practice (see Gay, 2000 for a comprehensive discussion on culturally relevant teaching and Peregoy & Boyle, 2001, regarding issues of second language literacy), but to also present content that allows our students to examine ways in which schools have traditionally ignored such practices and excluded certain groups of students (Delpit, 1995).

In order to help our students understand the importance of culturally and linguistically appropriate practice, one of the key features and ideas we present in the class is Banks' (2003, 2001) model of the levels of integration of ethnic content in classroom curriculum. These levels range from the contributions approach, focusing on heroes and holidays to the social action approach, which advocates student decision-making and action on critical social issues. We ask students to begin developing their own theories of teaching and learning and to incorporate a commitment to multicultural education that will promote social action. By exposing

preservice teachers to a variety of readings, activities, videos and cultural simulations and then having them write narrative reflections on those experiences, we facilitate their journey toward understanding the roles they will play as educators and the steps they will need to take to ensure equity and access in their own classrooms.

The role of Narrative Reflection within the Framework of Teacher Education

Based on experiences with preservice teachers taking the course entitled "The Role of Cultural Diversity in Schooling," we believe that narrative reflections are one tool that educators can use to help their students begin to examine the lenses through which they view the world and how their own experiences will influence the teaching and learning that goes on in their classrooms. The narrative reflections allowed our students to examine their own experiences, privileges, biases and assumptions in relation to course content and activities. The reflections helped them to begin to question their own assumptions and the realities surrounding those assumptions. And finally, the narrative reflections allowed us to see where our students, soon to be teachers themselves, stood on the journey toward understanding what they need to know to be effective teachers in ethnolinguistically diverse classrooms.

It is important for teachers to reflect on issues of ethics and morality in addition to the nuts and bolts of teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 75). In this work with our preservice teachers, we attempted to use narrative reflections to help them explore the lenses through which they will construct practice in their own classrooms as they become teachers. We asked our preservice teachers to reflect inwardly (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 75) to explore their own assumptions about race, class, gender, culture and language. We also asked them to examine the impact of those assumptions on their behaviors in order to understand how those behaviors will affect their roles as teachers.

Narrative reflection can be an important part of a teacher education program. As Schon (1983) suggests, narrative reflections can help students identify and examine deeply embedded understandings that are the result of continued cultural experiences that go on in schools. By examining these understandings and the lenses through which they view these understandings (e.g., cultural or linguistic stereotypes, attitudes toward learning, assumptions about motivation), preservice teachers can begin to question the validity of some of their deeply entrenched beliefs.

Conclusions

As instructors we learned some valuable lessons from examining the reflections of our preservice teachers. First, we need to be more specific and direct about what reflection is and is not. This became obvious as we dealt with the high number of superficial reflections that did not examine issues in any depth. Students need

practice in critical self-examination and finding their voices (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986), and it is our role to model and demonstrate what it means to reflect on issues, activities, discussions, etc. in such a critical manner. According to Conle (2003), reflecting on experiences — specifically in this case, course content and discussions surrounding such content — may help students to make connections to their own lives, experiences and actions (p. 11).

Second, the reflections acted as a means of assessment that gave us different pictures of individual students and the classes as a whole. Specifically, we believed one of the classes was not engaging with the material in meaningful ways because their behavior and discussion in class was muted and stilted. However, in their reflections the students often displayed serious thought and more insight than we had first expected. This has implications for the manner in which we structure class activities, discussions and readings as well as how we evaluate student participation and learning. The nature of narrative reflections may help students begin to ask questions and move to understand things differently than before encountering the course content upon which they reflected (Conle, 2003).

Lastly, asking students to read and reflect on each other's writing created an environment of trust and support. While the largest number of reflections was *superficial*, which in addition to the aforementioned discussion on identity development may also have been a result of knowing that reflections would be shared, Fendler (2003) argues that public reflection is one way to demonstrate the power of reflection to students. She states: "To overcome the conservative tendencies of reflection, one remedy is to introduce a social dimension to reflective practices, making reflections public and available to critique among peers or critical friends" (p. 17).

It is critical that future teachers develop their own practical theories of education based on who they are, what they bring to teaching, and who their students will be. It is also important that they begin to make the connections between their theories and the practice they will undertake as they move into their roles as teachers and away from the university classroom with its own social context, one that undoubtedly influences the narrative reflections they write (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 34). Reflecting on their own experiences as a means of contextualizing the lenses through which they will approach teaching is but one means of examining who these future teachers will be in the classroom and how this will impact the students they teach. It is hoped that the reflections reviewed here will give us insight into the ways in which we, as teacher education instructors, can facilitate our preservice teachers' growth as they come to understand their roles in education. We also hope that as reflective practitioners they will continue to grow as teachers throughout their teaching careers, looking at their practice from both within and at the social context in which it is situated (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 59).

The use of narrative reflections in a course on cultural diversity is one way to help preservice teachers begin to examine their own assumptions and biases in terms of teaching, learning and schooling. By examining these reflections we hope

to be able to change our own instruction to understand where the gaps lie in terms of preservice teacher experience in relation to diverse teaching contexts and what needs to be done in terms of the continuing evolution of our course content.

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